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**MULTI-AGENCY WORKING IN LOCAL CHILDREN'S SERVICE
PARTNERSHIPS:
SO MUCH PROMISE BUT SUCH VARIED RESULTS**

by

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Abstract

At a time when Multi Agency Working (MAW) is being suggested by Central Government guidance as a preferred way of working for Children's Services, standards of MAW provision are being reported as variable in quality.

This research is undertaken with the aim of contributing to the understanding of MAW and improvement of working practice. This study seeks first hand views and perceptions of the broad provision, outcomes and developments within a cross section of Multi agency working (MAW) provision for Children's Services. The research involves typical users and providers of a region's service provision.

This research is centred on qualitative data from a cross section of respondents involving children, parents, agency professionals, school users and providers. Data is drawn from observations of meetings and interaction and extensive interviews. Using a structured agenda, interviews are delivered to those both providing and receiving support. MAW is found to be varied in both its quality and provision. Variety is found to be due to:

- a) the failure of strategic management to provide recognised and understood oversight, support, guidance and control
- b) an absence of a clearly agreed body of MAW research based knowledge
- c) inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and
- d) a consequent lack of data and training programmes

This research confirms the strengths of MAW, for example, in terms of the clarity of inter professional interaction and understanding and the clear importance of this to child protection, and suggests protocols to assist future development.

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Abbreviations and acronyms referred to within this study

ADHD: Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

AHDC: Aiming High for Disabled Children

ARC: Adolescent Resource Centre

BSA: Basic Skills Agency

CA: Children Act 2004

CAF: Common Assessment Framework

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CB: Cluster board

CBR: Cluster Based Review

CC: Children's Centre

CDO: Child Development Officer

CDRP: Crime and Disorder Reduction Programme

CFE: Children Families and Education

C+L: Cognition and Learning

CIB: Citizens advice bureau

CM: Cluster Manager

COGL: Cognition and Learning

CP: Child Protection

CPO: Child Protection Officer

CPP: Child Protection Panel

CYPP: Children and Young Persons Plan

CWDC: Children's Workforce Development Council

DGSF: Department of Children, Schools and Families

DFE: Department for Education

DFEE: Department for Education and Employment

DFES: Department for Education and Science

DOE: Department of Education

DOH: Department of Health

DM: District Manager

E: Education

ECM: Every Child Matters (2003)

EP: Educational Psychologist

EPA: Educational Priority Area

EWO: Education Welfare Officer

FLO: Family Liaison Officer

FSO: Family Support Officer

FWA: Family Welfare Association
GP: General Practitioner (family doctor)
H: Health
HT: Head Teacher
ICT: Information and Communication Technology
ISR: In School Review
KCA: 'K' Council for Addiction
LA: Local Authority
LAC: Looked After Child
LACS: Local Authority Children's Services
L+COG: Learning and Cognition
LCP: Local Children's Partnership
LCSM; Local Cluster Support Manager
LCSP: Local Children's Services Partnership
LEA: Local Education Authority
LSHA: Local Strategic Health Authority
MATD: Multi Agency Theory and Development
MATCh: Multi Agency Teamwork for Children's Services
MABSS: Multi Agency Behavioural Support Service
MAW: Multi Agency Working
MAPS: Multi Agency Panel
NZ: New Zealand
OASIS: Counselling service
OfSTED: Office for Standards in Education
P: Police
PBR: Partnership Based Review (successor to CBR)
PCSO: Police Community Support Officer
PCST: Police Community Support Team
PCT: Primary Care Trust (Health)
PEP HD: Primary Excellence Programme Head Teacher
PRU: Pupil Referral Unit
PSA: Primary Support Advisor
PSHE: Personal, Social and Health Education
PSYCH: Psychologist
REC: Research Ethics Committee (Health)
REMA: Dartford Minority Community Achievement Service (MCAS)
RQ: Research Question

SCAG: Severe and Complex Accessibility Group
SEF: OfSTED Inspection Self Evaluation Form
SEN: Special Educational Needs
SENCO: Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SIP: School Improvement Partner
SS: Social Services
SSLP: Sure Start Local Programmes
SW: Social Worker
TAC: Team Around the Child
T4U: Time for You Counselling Team
TIE: Theatre in Education
UEA: University of East Anglia
UK: United Kingdom
VS: Voluntary Services
YCRO: Youth Crime reduction Officer
YHA: Youth Association
YISB: Youth Inclusion Support Board
YISP: Youth Inclusion Support Panel
YOS: Youth Offending Service
YOT: Youth Offending Team
YP: Young Person
YS: Youth Service

Chapter One

Aim and focus of research investigation

In this opening chapter I intend to introduce and provide an overview of my main aims for undertaking this research. I will show what I intend to discover and how I have arrived at my research design. I will introduce the approach to my research task and how my background and professional experience might contribute to or influence this research.

This thesis is entitled 'Multi-agency working in Local Children's Service Partnerships: So much promise but such varied results'. I have sought through this thesis to gain a deeper understanding of the functioning of Multi Agency Working (MAW) and examine if the structure and effectiveness of MAW can be improved and inter agency concerns identified. An examination is made of the working that exists within the schools and settings served by support agencies of three local school clusters within one region of a large Local Authority.

It is hoped that findings from this research will aid both those in Children's Services charged with delivering MAW and those in schools, children's centres and other settings receiving support. It is also anticipated that findings will aid training and support of those charged with undertaking MAW.

Major recent changes in political will and focus have resulted in many significant cuts in funding, staffing and a resultant worrying reduction in the general incidence of MAW within many children's services in England. Despite major cuts, the need for effective multi agency working to continue remains high and central to the delivery of effective children's services, especially the safeguarding of all children, in particular the most vulnerable. This research took place at a time when funding and support for development of MAW was widely available. By capturing and examining the positive and negative experiences and developments of everyday practice of MAW, it is hoped that findings and insights will greatly aid future planning and provision in an increasingly challenging and restrictive environment. This thesis recognises the continued importance of MAW in the ever changing world of education and children's services. The Department for Education (DFE) remains committed to the effective use and development of MAW (DFE website, 2012).

This thesis will examine the nature and quality of agency working and interaction of ten agency officers working with both primary and secondary aged children. Within seven primary and two secondary schools plus one secondary setting, the work, experiences and views of pupils, Head Teachers, teachers, parents and staff will be examined as

they seek to support, interact and respond. By studying the interaction and workings of a specific area of children's services it is hoped a deeper understanding will emerge of the complexity, impact and needs of this dominant paradigm of MAW and the development of children's services. The key agencies involved are from the statutory service of Education, Health, Social Services and Police. Further support comes from a wide range of smaller supporting non statutory and voluntary services.

1.1 Structure of the thesis

Chapter One provides the aims, objectives and overview of this research, sets the scene for what was done and how, introducing research questions and methodology.

Chapter Two reviews the development of important aspects of multi agency working both nationally and within the chosen study area through literature and policy documentation. The rationale for guidance introduced by the DfES in 2005 (UEA. 2005) as a catalytic agent for positive change is examined as is the aim to seek an increase in care, safety and support of children and young people.

Chapter Three describes and justifies the research methodology and implementation. I will show how and why I have identified the incidence, quality and quantity of MAW.

Research data and findings are reported in Chapter Four with analysis of data findings given in Chapter Five. Chapter Five also provides the evaluation and synthesis arising from the findings.

Chapter Six provides conclusions and proposes indicators of the principles of best practice in MAW. It identifies developmental steps and major obstacles likely to be managed or overcome.

1.2 Research questions

The topic for this research is multi agency working as it occurs in School Clusters now commonly known as Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSPs). Research questions address four areas of development and are all set within the context of School Clusters.

From an exploration of the literature and documentation regarding MAW and from my personal experience of this working practice, four key areas of concern have arisen concerning the development of this way of working. Four research questions have been constructed to address concerns and these are:

1. What is the role of strategic management in supporting the process of Multi Agency Working as perceived by multi agency workers?
2. What are the inhibiting factors in relation to multi agency working?
3. How are inhibiting factors being overcome at the operational level? What aspects of multi agency working might now be regarded as good practice in the operational context?
4. What are the principles that might be derived from identified examples of good practice?

The first question concerns understanding of MAW; the role and impact of strategic management in supporting the MAW process. How multi agency workers perceive strategic management from their work face perspectives. What is the influence of strategic managers and their actions, policies and strategies for MAW? Who is involved and are they equipped to drive change (Williams and Sullivan, 2010; Edwards, 2008). Do senior managers fully understand and value MAW and might their actions be undermining rather than enhancing agency interaction and growth (Hunter, 2003; Dyson, 2009)

The second question concerns the variable rates of growth and provision found in the development of MAW (Audit Commission, 2007). Question Two will seek to discover why this important government backed approach has failed to take off in some areas and not others. Are there factors present inhibiting the development of MAW (Dartington, 2004; Allnock et al, 2006; Asthana, 2006). Factors noted are those identified by respondents during structured interviews and arising from observations, interviews, field notes and local documentary evidence.

The third question arises from Question Two. If inhibiting factors exist then how do those involved in MAW attempt to overcome these factors at the operational level (Dyson et al, 2009; Wheatley, 2006; Broadhead and Armistead, 2007) My study area contains a mixture of schools, teams and agencies, some facing problems and some noted for their innovative and effective practice. By identifying and gathering examples of successful practice from a wide range of settings it is hoped that data will be typical and of value when helping others.

The fourth question concerns effective practice. As a practitioner I have experienced the effectiveness and potential of MAW. I have seen it successfully implemented and developed in various settings but there remains much criticism of multi agency working especially in poor urban areas where Child Protection and Safeguarding are of great importance (Williams and Sullivan, 2010; Laming 2003, 2009). Is MAW the best

approach or way forward especially at a time of financial cuts and loss of personnel? If it is the way forward what are the aspects and practices of MAW identified as constituting good practice? What are the indicators and principles used to identify and achieve good practice and what is it that good practice is seen to be achieving that bad practice is not? Finally, armed with better understanding of the dynamics and structure of MAW, how might we better move forward? (Tunstall, 2007; UEA, 2007; Edwards, 2008; Broadhead and Armistead, 2007).

1.3 Outcomes

After completing this research I hope to further the development of professional practice especially in problematic environments by helping agencies working with and supporting children to develop and maintain effective, creative and coordinated agency working. It is hoped that those involved in MAW will be able to better monitor and more easily reflect on the effectiveness of their practice. My desired outcome is improved and sustainable care and protection for our children.

As the aim of this research is to establish a critical understanding of MAW by using research to increase understanding of current practice and so develop and improve provision it is my aspiration that all findings will be shared as widely as is possible.

While MAW has been fostered by central government in recent years, records show both the uptake and the efficiency of MAW in England has varied greatly. Within the field of child protection and safeguarding, failures and shortcomings in interagency cooperation and working has been identified as a significant area of concern (Badman, 2010) and contributed to a number of child deaths (Laming, 2009).

While the need for children's agencies to work together in a coordinated manner is clear (Laming, 2003) (Every Child Matters, 2003), the environment within which officers work continues to change and the challenges facing officers to implement MAW continue to build. For such an important area, little research has been mounted to identify, understand and explore the development of MAW.

My own experience of MAW arose from time spent as the Head Teacher of two special schools supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and as an officer advising schools about Personal, Social and Health Education. Here I met and worked with many agencies supporting children and Children's services. I later gained further relevant experience and insight of supporting children and young people, their schools and families when working as a Cluster manager and OfSTED Inspector.

While the quality of MAW is formally measured by OfSTED, inspection of individual agency, school provision and local authority Children's Services formal monitoring appears to be minimal. Monitoring of the quality of MAW relies in many areas on informal user feedback to local Children's Services, Cluster boards, Children's Centres and local agency teams.

1.4 Rationale of this research and its educational relevance

Government aims for every child - whatever their background or their circumstances - to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being (DfES,2004a)

These objectives have put great pressure on many of the agencies involved in provision of services for children. Officers find that they now need to create teams in new ways, share information and work more closely together (DCSF, 2008).

Originally published in 2003 as part of the DES Green paper *Every Child Matters (Great Britain, 2003)*, this aim provided the foundation stone upon which organisations at the time of this research sought to provide children's services. The government's aim for children's services to team up in new ways, sharing information and working together was central to developing new ways of working. With such high expectations and increased requirements now requested from an often complex network of providers, concern grew as to the efficiency and impact available from such a service (Atkinson 2002). The three main areas of concern that arose are that:

1. agencies may not always coordinate their work, leading to fragmentation, dislocation and replication of support which can be frustrating and bewildering to the families, schools and young people supported,
2. some agencies may become isolated silos of support as they develop very distinctive identities and professional practices. Such differing ways of working are rarely fully understood by families and other agencies. Cooperation and coordination of support and staff training can become complex and, in some cases, problematic,

3. a continuing occurrence of high profile child abuse and child death enquiries has highlighted the failure of Children's Services to effectively guard all children and young people, especially the most vulnerable.

There has been a growing campaign to increase collaboration between children's services and to ensure that improved inter agency working is a key policy priority (Sloper, 2004, p571). To help agencies work together much credibility has been given to this style of professional and agency interaction known as Multi Agency Working (MAW). MAW is described as different services, agencies, teams of professionals and professionals and other staff working together to provide services that meet the needs of children, young people and their parents or carers. This indicates what it is (in imprecise terms) and what it is to achieve (in similarly imprecise terms).

Promotion and reliance on this ill defined way of working has grown considerably in recent years despite there being limited understanding or research into its effectiveness.

Agency coordination

'Working together' suggests the simplest of aims especially when accompanied by a common desire and government funding. While professionals have long seen advantage in working together (Wigfall and Moss, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2004) sometimes implementation of ideas proves more problematic than expected. Such appears to be the situation facing those working in England's Children's Services (Dyson et al, 2009).

Traditionally, children's services have been provided with minimal coordination by the government empires of Health, Social Services, Housing and Education. Each service was the responsibility of an individual government minister, council committee or quango board (Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002, p15). Proud of their individual styles, each professional body often set dress code protocols and many other rules, regulations and terminology (Hudson, 1987).

Since the death of Maria Caldwell in 1973, successive enquiries have also called for improved interagency working, communication and better coordination. This is only one area of concern and in successive government policy documents (DOH, 1997; DES, 1998; DOH, 1999; DOH, 2001) promoted flexibility especially when working with other agencies, pooled budgets and integrated provision. While requesting change, such directives did not outline how it might take place (DfES, 2004a) and the informative ECM website (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk) and more recently the official Department for Education and Science (DfES) website (www.dfes.gov.uk), has set out an outline and toolkit to show how agencies and their professionals are and might work together.

Progress appears to be mixed. Government documentation and most research papers have focussed on implementation of policy with limited recognition that implementation could involve new and even ground breaking ways of working as with MAW. Evaluation of the impact and feasibility of policy recommendations has only recently started to emerge. While the complexity of inter agency work is now being recognised, relatively little is known about outcomes, the effect of such changes and, in particular, what MAW means to the officers providing and those experiencing change.

Guidance frequently focuses on the qualities of those delivering services and the existence of differing tribes with their own customs and languages that explains why people fail to communicate. Comments from those in schools suggests people from different agencies enjoy working together and are often keen to coordinate but are stopped or hampered by simple everyday communication problems such as incompatibility in computer systems not talking to each other and databases that are not accessible. Heavy workloads hinder and minimise valued meetings and training opportunities. Minimal budgets and strict rules also frustrate the efforts of even the keenest professionals as they seek space to address local issues and effectively think their way forward.

The best and most valued support reported by Head Teachers comes from those who listen, understand clients' needs and provide timely and relevant advice regardless of language, custom or agency (Watson, 2008). Another concern is the differing perceptions of various layers of management and their interaction styles, which can offer effective support or impede the implementation of policy. Are different levels of management working in a common direction or is each layer working to a different priority? Does national policy override identified local need and do the accountant and budgetary trends override both?

Agency isolation and complexity

While the market economies of the 1980's and the Thatcher years extolled individuality in service providers, the Labour Party policies from 1997 brought marked changes to the operation of children's services. With a desire to fight poverty and exclusion through the use of multi agency working and cooperation it was now important that instead of individuality agencies now developed their commonality. At this time I was involved in the challenge of building a new large multi agency network. I was interested in building new and more efficient ways that people might work together and seeking how people best support teamwork within Children's services and within the research local authority.

For some workers, individuality brought confidence and security of practice and territory. Professionals were now being asked to step outside of this security and share. Concerns varied from possible loss of status, identity and territory to fear of failure in often ill-defined new working structures (Anning, et al, 2006). Some viewed budgets as a source of power and titles and protocols as a part of professional status which might be lost by embracing new working practices (Fitzgerald, G and Kay, J, 2008). Many practitioners, especially those working with clients, welcomed new practice. Others found change problematic; they chose not to embrace change but to continue to follow traditional work practices and so slowed the rate of progress (Hudson, B, 1987).

For some agencies, life has been problematic, especially local voluntary services (NCB, 2012). Often established as a local charity in response to specific events, the work ethos and dedication of staff is usually very high (NCB, 2012). However in times of financial hardship as funds become harder to find these services have had to adapt and change to stay viable and keep practicing. For some the final move has been to merge with a large national charity, which may mean closure of local offices and increased isolation from a locality and traditional areas of support (Thomas, 2009).

Protection of vulnerable children

Following a number of child deaths between 1973 and 1989, enquiry reports recommended better training of staff, increased cooperation and coordination between statutory services and demand for more resources (Hanvey, 2003). What the reports highlighted was the failure of agencies to work together (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008). Reporting on the death of Victoria Climbié in 2003, the Laming Review did not focus on the weaknesses of front line staff who were seen acting on behalf of their organisations but on the gross failure of the system (Laming 2003, para 1.18). Laming placed blame with those in senior positions who carried responsibility for the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of local service. Laming said that effective support for children and families cannot be achieved by a single agency acting alone. He saw success depending on a number of agencies working well together with a clear line of accountability (Laming 2003, para 1.30). The future was focussed on managers who could work effectively across organisational boundaries and with the exchange of information within and between agencies.

Whether Laming's judgements were influenced by his own problems as Director of Social Services in Hertfordshire, or by the terms of reference of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry is not known. Some of Laming's ideas - such as the establishment of Contact

Point as an information sharing system - have been problematic (Fitzgerald & Kay, 2008, p65). Generally Laming's report has been far reaching, influencing Every Child Matters, which set out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and then the resultant 2004 Children Act. The Act enabled a number of changes to be made to the way we support and ensure the safety of children. The most significant change was to ensure those working with children would be alert to the potential risks and dangers that children face and are aware, trained and linked to secure a full 360 degree provision of coordinated care and support around each child.

This was easy to say but a lot to achieve. Introducing multiple new initiatives was a great risk and also reliant on achieving considerable agency cooperation, staff skills, training and agency working. Since 2003 government policy documentation and guidance for the many initiatives introduced has continued to stress the importance of MAW as a means to achieving effective inter agency working. Since 2003 the incidence of vulnerable children being abused or losing their life has continued.

1.5. Research Challenges

Following seven years of high profile national guidance and support for interagency development, MAW continues to be recommended in government policy documents. Agencies have created many structures such as committees, boards, panels and teams to enable interaction, communication and coordination. While MAW appears to be spreading successfully through the work of departments of Children's Services (UEA, 2007), there currently continues to be little evaluation of the impact or effectiveness of this mode of working.

Recent research of outcomes notes the quality of interaction within MAW may not always be as consistently high as hoped (UEA, 2007). Research has also shown MAW to be more complex than originally expected and as such not easy to implement (Frost et al, 2005; Dyson et al, 2009). Child protection is only one area of children's services to experience MAW, but because of the importance of child safety and because each case of detected serious child abuse or death is investigated, outcome data is available. Concern continues to rise in recent reviews of child deaths resulting from unsatisfactory cooperation and coordination between statutory services.

Evaluation of MAW would help improve interagency working as well as aid development of agency coordination and cooperation and therefore the implementation of ECM. With many varied definitions, use of the term MAW varies between agencies making its

evaluation problematic. With such a breadth of definition it is not surprising that MAW is used interchangeably when discussing integrated working (Percy-Smith, 2005). Atkinson (2001) describes the terminology as 'muddy' and Lloyd, Steel and Kendrick (2003) describe the area as a 'terminological quagmire'.

In the absence of a reliable body of knowledge and agreed definition, agency members continue to meet, train follow national advice and guidance and as best they can. Recent research by The Audit Commission (Anning, et al 2008) (UEA, 2005, 2007), casts doubt on the simplicity of MAW and identifies the complexity of introducing or examining this mode of working.

1.6 Contribution to new knowledge

The challenge of this research is to help understand and communicate what has enabled MAW to occur successfully, to look critically at how current needs are met and to identify if change is required. It is hoped that the distinctive characteristics of MAW will be highlighted and better understood.

As noted earlier, as an Education Officer (retired August 2008), I have experience of schools working with their support agencies as they seek to bring about change and improved outcomes for children within the research area. Key elements of my work have involved the provision of effective MAW and on local agencies working together with parents, children and schools seeking to provide high quality and carefully coordinated support. Through twenty years of Special Needs teaching and Headship supporting many children from areas of deprivation and social disadvantage, I experienced the fragmented and often idiosyncratic but well meant nature of agency and school support as we became increasingly aware of the vulnerability of children.

Between 1990 and 2008 I served within the Education Department of a large Local Education Authority (LEA). As County Drug / Health Education Adviser and later Coordinator for Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) from 1990 to 1996, I had responsibility to help guide the develop of a newly emergent curricular area and oversee multi agency support teams for my area of responsibility to 900 plus schools. I worked with senior officers of statutory and non-statutory, voluntary and community agencies to establish and build a large and diverse multi agency team (possibly the largest in England).

Prior to this time schools were encouraged to compete in an educational market place. Many agencies had developed their own approach, language, culture and customs tailored to their chosen specialism. These agencies responded to the specific needs of

each competing school. With the arrival of a Labour Government came the ending of competition and the opportunity to seek to work together and build more effective ways of working, something I had long been interested in for many years and had explored while working within Special education.

My experiences indicated MAW can work well. As an advisor and coordinator of an emergent area of the school curriculum, I enjoyed both the freedom to innovate as well as the opportunity to maintain flexibility with relatively low levels of accountability.

In later years as Adviser to and later Coordinator of a Cluster of schools, I experienced decline in professional autonomy, funding and flexibility. Agency richness continued and officers started to focus on the structure, uniformity and consistency of their services. Officers and professionals were keen to serve their clients but heavy work commitments and caseloads, reduced funding and increased accountability became areas of increasing worker concern.

Having been Head Teacher of two Barnardo's schools and especially interested in the safety and security of all children especially the most vulnerable, I became involved in the development of County Child Protection procedures and training. In later years every effort was made to improve safeguarding. While we were always aware that national and local organisational and political decisions had the potential to impact in various ways, our challenge was always how best to respond for the sake of the child and their family.

This study will make reference to the current debate on the role of MAW in education; other and newer ways of working will be examined as well as the need for methodologies to enable emergent social concerns to be addressed.

1.7 Methods

Because of the breadth of this research task and the need to both survey the range of people and environments as well as capture sensitivities of human interaction I have used mainly qualitative methodologies to capture the finer points of human interaction.

The central question is broad and regards the exploration of MAW.

- What is MAW?
- What are its needs?
- How do they relate to the environment in which it is used?

To do this I will look at

- what is happening currently in a defined area
- government guidance, perceived hopes and good practice
- history and influences on development

To ensure I capture the views and differing perspectives of key players involved in supporting children, I will meet with and interview:

- a. Children and Parents
- b. From schools, parents teachers and Head Teachers.
- c. From agencies supporting Children's Services, officers of varying grades representing the statutory agencies of Health, Education, Social Services and Police, Youth Service, Voluntary Services, YHA, Disability, Special Educational Needs and Educational Welfare.

This study will provide a Bottom Up Perspective, it has not been possible to interview senior managers or Children's Trust members so the views of local or regional strategic management are not verified.

1.8 Definition of terms

The term Children will refer to Children and Young People and the term Cluster and Cluster Board will refer to Partnerships, Local Partnerships and any other re naming of local self help groups of schools under the direction of a local Board including local Head Teachers.

For this study Multi Agency Working is defined as

'Different services, agencies, teams of professionals and other staff working together to provide services that meet the needs of children, young people and their parents or carers' (ECM website, 2009)

Other terms are sometimes used implying similar meaning including inter professional, multi disciplinary, inter disciplinary and inter agency (Barrett et al 2005). While the ECM definition chosen most clearly aligns with practice observed, other approaches to MAW do exist giving rise to confusion over issues of how to best understand and implement MAW. The most common approaches have their own definitions and the ones that I am most aware of are:

1. MAW in which services are integrated; there is one manager or coordinating structure dealing with and responsible for a number of officers.

2. MAW where there are multi agency teams with each agency retaining its managerial chain of command but heads of each agency meet together as equals and where there are common points of contact between officers.
3. MAW where different agencies and professionals support children, families and local structures such as schools and children's centres and where they rely on common points of contact such as multi agency panels.

The first model of MAW is an integrative model and the second and third interactive models, each involving different service agencies, teams of professionals and other staff.

Additional note

This research examines Multi Agency Working as practiced in one region of a large shire county between 2008 and 2010. Interviews and observations took place between October 2008 and July 2010 - a period of stability for the staffing and leadership of the host Local Authority (LA). The host LA was during the preparation and start of research, viewed as a five star organisation by Central Government and received additional funding, many of the agency and school staff involved had worked in the study area for many years and were known to each other.

At this time funding was available to encourage the development of improved school and agency interaction especially for the support of vulnerable children. One year after the period of research major financial cuts and reorganisation took place and senior management retired. This Local Authority has since reorganised, received a critical OfSTED report citing shortcomings in child care provision in many areas of the County including one of the three Cluster areas chosen for this research.

Chapter 2

Literature review

By the close of the twentieth century, 5326 local authority partnerships had been identified serving children's services in the UK. Some were national and large, others small and local. Some such as Sure Start have now existed for many years (Newchurch, 1999). All consisted of a number of agencies and professionals working together in various ways. Developments in Children's Services in the last decade have increasingly focussed on inter agency teamwork, cooperation and multidisciplinary teams as a key feature of quality and effective delivery (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008).

While partnerships and teamwork have grown, literature and media reports show recent enquiries into child deaths have given rise to high levels of concern for the quality of both coordinated children's services and the professional teamwork they provide (Baby P: Haringey, 2010; Bobbie Phillips: Bexley, 2010; DCSF, 2010):

While child welfare and care are relatively modern services in this country so are the characteristics of 'pulling together' - now more formally understood as the concept of multi agency working (Connelly, 2008).

In this chapter and review of the literature regarding MAW, I will show how my research questions have arisen from a number of initial questions and concerns from the literature and other sources. I will also seek to use the literature to confirm new ideas and lines of enquiry linking Issues. The final choice of research questions will be summarised at the end of this chapter.

The literature of MAW shows how it has been defined as it has evolved to become the key approach enabling the functioning of children's services in England and Wales. While the literature shows what MAW is, the forms it can take and how inter agency support within children's services has grown. It does not show that with growth and increased usage of this term that multi agency working has become a catch-all term to cover the very varied physical actions of agencies working together.

MAW is described within the literature in three main ways. Firstly it is within historical and descriptive accounts that seek to explain the functioning of the work of children's services. Secondly, it is within National and Local Government policy directives and supporting materials which seek to stimulate, advise and guide good practice. Finally, it is within the research findings of those seeking to measure, further understand and improve the effectiveness of multi agency support for children and young people.

2.1. Issue One: Defining multi agency working (MAW)

My first research question is:

‘What is the role of strategic management in supporting the process of Multi Agency Working as perceived by multi agency workers?’

My first questions arise from the variety of concerns shown in the literature and that continue to be found in provision of MAW. From concerns in the literature and provision my first research question centres on the quality of management and in particular the received strategic management guiding MAW.

Issues identified in research articles show many shortcomings exist and concern for the low level of understanding of some of those responsible for the management of MAW. My first question seeks to go beyond the literature and explore whether a more general lack of clarity and understanding is restricting the development of MAW. What have been the effects of lack of clarity on strategic management and might such an environment not only impair daily running but also inhibit development of MAW with a low incidence of MAW based research and restricted provision of suitable training? (see Chapter 4: pages 47 and 130)

Despite general use of the term Multi Agency Working (MAW) in documentation of Children’s Services, the literature of MAW describes a widely varied and poorly defined method of working. MAW is shown evolving from common practice and as such now represents a range of actions. While often promoted in agency documentation, I found MAW has until recently only rarely been defined or described with there being little commonality (Wigfall and Moss, 2001). Such a range of definition or description is shown when comparing three that are commonly quoted.

Wigfall and Moss (2001) say yes to collaboration and define MAW as ‘*a range of different services with some overlapping or shared interest and objectives, brought together to work collaboratively towards some common purpose*’ (page 71).

Fitzgerald and Kay (2008) describe MAW as including individual support from agencies without overlapping or collaborative multi agency interaction. Warmington et al (2004) says neither yes or no to MAW involving collaboration, and describes MAW as involving more than one agency working with a child and/or parent, but each agency may be unaware of the others that are involved with the family. Disagreement about the breadth of activity of MAW is further compounded by lack of clarity as to the depth of such activity. Central government documentation describes MAW as an important and complex activity occurring at all levels of interaction and encompassing integrated

services as a sub set of activity (Every Child Matters website). This avoids the issue of whether MAW is just concerned with agency interaction and cooperation or whether there should be the development of common management structures. While some see guidance providing freedom for development, a more likely reason was the limited understanding of MAW existing at this time. The Children's Work Force Development Council (CWDC), a fellow government agency, disagrees with this assessment and describes MAW itself only being a subset of integrated working (CWDC, 2009). Other non government definitions seek only to link MAW to particular activities.

The Early Years Foundation (EYF, 2007) describes MAW as central to good early year's policy. All are narrow definitions failing to agree or effectively describe MAW. For the school clusters of my research area the definition of MAW used is that provided by the national ECM website. The ECM agenda specifically required different professionals to share expertise and information with each other and so this government website defines MAW as *'different services/agencies, teams of professionals and other staff working together to provide services that meet the needs of children, young people and their parents or carers'* (<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk>) This is a minimal definition purposefully leaving freedom for different agencies to work independently but to cooperate where circumstances require it.

Within my first research question it is important that I explore possible damage caused by the impact of vague definition and lack of clarity such as may be experienced when seeking to frame research projects or monitor and evaluate progress.(Chapter 4, page 93) The failure of Central Government, child care agencies and their professionals to agree a common definition of MAW is, I think, more deeply problematic than many have realised and possibly still seriously inhibits development, exploration and sharing of best practice. By restricting research and development there is little clear direction for those seeking to evaluate outcomes and measure the progress of this style of working (Robinson et al, 2008). Attention is now starting to be drawn to the difficulty of isolating why and how a particular outcome of MAW has been achieved (Everychildmatters.gov.uk, 2003 onwards), and evaluations are starting to be made of the impact of MAW within some ECM initiatives such as Children's Centres and Children's Trusts. Evaluation is a concern of this research.

The impact of MAW is referenced in relation to three key areas: improving outcomes for children and families, benefits for staff and services and providing what children, young people and their parents say they want (ECM website, 2003). Interestingly we do not know if children and parents either wanted or understood what MAW was or if they preferred reliance on professionals who understood concerns and communicated them

clearly. While such indicators and outcomes provided a great step forward when monitoring and evaluating progress I note the growing use of a variety of terms to describe integration of children's services. With no clear definitions existing confusion exists, with some terms being used interchangeably (Robinson et al, 2008).

Defining MAW

As MAW becomes more widely practiced it has been increasingly referred to as integrated working (ECM website). Such a development of terminology might provide increased definitional leverage and highlight how agencies increasingly work together but does not improve clarity. Other terms define both the level and depth of interaction. The term *networking* describes informal contact and communication between individuals or agencies and may be a precursor to deeper levels of integration. From the positive experiences of working together, I note closer and more detailed methods of working evolve as the workforce build trust and understanding of each other's work practices (Robinson et al, 2008).

I wish to explore if a common vocabulary is evolving (Chapter 4, page 93). Does joint working describe professionals from more than one agency working directly together, moving towards integration to deliver a quality service? At a deeper level, inter agency working provides another term to describe more than one agency working together in a planned and recognized way (Robinson et al, 2008). Coordinated working usually describes more formal working to ensure organisations take account of each other's strategies and activities in their own planning.

I recognise that sometimes issues will be pertinent to only a few agencies, such as health screening. At other times issues will be common to all agencies and relevant to the policy agenda of each. Issues such as social exclusion or community safety are known as cross cutting issues. A strategy positively noted within the literature within the broader umbrella of MAW is the construction of *Multi Agency Panels* (MAPs). MAPs are composed of practitioners who remain employed by their home agencies and agree to meet as a panel on a regular basis. This is an example of multi agency as opposed to inter agency working and is closer to the co-operational end of the continuum of MAW. For younger children a panel may be known as a *Team Around the Child* (TAC) (ECM Website, 2009). Most of the above terms are in common usage. A less familiar term is *Trans Agency* or *Trans Disciplinary working* describing relevant agencies responding to specific issues as and when required in a coordinated manner. These agencies do not

have to be formally linked and, if issue led, could provide an alternative to integrated services.

Local Children's Services Partnership (LCSP) is another recent term used to describe localised joint working or partnership between local schools and support agencies. In the County in which this research is based, there are twenty three LCSPs and all have evolved from Cluster groups, all under the control of a County Children's Trust and each run by a Partnership Board made up of representatives of education and the key agencies serving that partnership. This structure has developed from Clusters and involves greater involvement of agencies in the management panel that oversees the running of the Partnership and strategic management by the local Children's Trust. (To reduce complexity in this study all Clusters and Partnerships are referred to in this thesis as Clusters.)

From such wide ranging definitions and descriptions the model provided within the government's ECM document 'Change for Children' (DES, 2004a) as being about different services joining forces in order to prevent problems from occurring in the first place, is the most useful for the purposes of this analysis.

MAW forums

MAW is also seen as an effective way of addressing the wide range of cross cutting risk factors that contribute to poorer outcomes for children and young people. It is also an effective way to support children and families with additional needs and helping to secure what might be regarded as improvement in their life outcomes (Children's Workforce Development Council, CWDC, 2007). This definition helpfully identifies three main forums where MAW is in common usage:

1. Multi agency panels - where professionals from different agencies meet regularly to discuss common issues often case conferences examples being Team Around the Child meetings or Cluster Based Reviews.
2. Multi agency teams - where professionals from different agencies decide to form into mixed agency teams each containing particular members ideal for addressing specific issues. The team can be short lived or ongoing. Examples being the multi agency teams set up by agency members of particular Cluster or Local Partnership groups. Most members retain membership of their agency. Of less success has been the appointment of free standing multi agency teams.

3. Integrated services - following the Children Act 2004 and legislation requiring Local Authorities to establish cooperative partnership working agencies were often integrated especially the large statutory agencies of Social Services, Education and Health plus the Police. Here management structures were combined, agencies were fully controlled and governed, budgets were shared and staff were appointed to positions for specific roles and time scales. Such arrangements usually worked until budget cuts increased. While chalk face workers were keen to support integrated services senior officers were less supportive.

Interpersonal factors

For each type of formation, the management structure, employee links and scope of engagement are given however all give a structural perspective of a very people rich, people centred activity. MAW appears as the mechanism enabling people to effectively interact.

I am concerned that with lack of clarity and understanding, the complexity that workers bring to a situation will not be fully recognised within MAW. Before the introduction of the ECM framework, existence of strategic guidance for MAW had been minimal both at national and local levels. Guidance described the opportunities and positive attributes of MAW but curiously failed to provide specific ideas of either what to do or good practice. Such omission might have pointed to a general lack of understanding of the complexity of joint working and the emotional and social aspects of multi agency working. ECM gave five welcomed outcomes broken down into twenty five specific aims for guidance. The LA was required to establish cooperative partnership working aimed at improving and integrating children's services, especially education, social services and health. Improvement was sought in speed of intervention, strength of leadership and multi professional working.

Guidance and training

Despite many management studies having identified the importance of relationships and feelings in the work place and the warnings that social science research had recorded outcomes but failed to record interpersonal client dimensions (Hargreaves,1999), central government documentation has often continued to focus on structure rather than interaction and so avoid addressing the many difficulties faced when implementing MAW (Humes and Bryce, 2001) This belief that if structures were right interaction would

follow provided a simple model to follow but most likely highlighted the general lack of understanding of qualitative factors, especially interaction and relationships. . Alarmingly, the government's own five-year strategy identified collaboration and partnership in this country as 'so diverse and provision incoherent and bitty' (DfES, 2004). With the introduction of what the media described as the 'Government's landmark legislation' and the detailed and comprehensive new ECM framework, I remember excitedly searching for formal guidance on how to introduce and develop this new way of working entitled MAW. The guidance given consisted of eleven words:

This joining up needs some local brokerage to make it work. (DfES, 2004, p4)

No mention had been made of what local brokerage might be. Such limited official guidance did little to support either the manager or worker and again suggested little to no understanding and awareness of the complexity of multi agency styles of working or the many interpersonal dimensions involved that have now been noted by researchers. I am keen to see if understanding and awareness have improved. Williams and Sullivan (2010) in 'Why do we still get it wrong?' noted a main cause of MAW failure still being the need for greater understanding of the complex interplay, structural factors and influence of individuals with better management of these factors. That these concerns continue to exist in 2010 is a major concern of this research and is why my first research question will focus on management and specifically the strategic management of MAW. Research carried out by UEA and NFER in 2005 into the implementation of the Children Act 2004 (Realising Children's Trust Arrangements) identified situations where multi agency progress was hampered by the interpersonal problems of communication and understanding. One respondent noted:

Change is still uncertain. We have to accept that what we are talking about is not just structural.... Professionals in one space have their own perspectives and their own motivations and suspicions about each other. (UEA, 2005)

Further direction in 2006 set out to ensure support and guidance regarding the implementation of MAW. By then guidance was provided on how agency members should work together. While there was reference to actions and structures, there was still little or no mention of the interpersonal dimension or the complexity of relationships. Since 2006 guidance from central government appears to have steadily improved. Many officers valued and used the ECM website with its multiple information pages and training links, examples and resources and links to the National College of Leadership (NCSL) where a Multi Agency Team Development programme (MATD) provided a six month comprehensive support programme. This training aimed to help deliver outcomes resulting from the ECM agenda. A change of government led to the ECM website

receiving a banner on each page stating 'the content on this site may not reflect current Government policy' and confusing users. Yet again official worker guidance had failed. While the ECM web site helped get wheels turning, recent additions to the DfE site now give examples of successful practice and provide some direction however no mention is made of suitable training opportunities.

There are a range of issues to be explored:

1. Does lack of clarity and understanding exist in definition and structure of MAW and what impact is noted on structure?
2. Poor guidance and possible limited understanding of complexity and needs re human interaction.
3. Strategic impact, on whom, and are those managing equipped to drive change? Could their actions be undermining interaction and growth?
4. Other influences on structure and interaction.

Agency interaction and the growth of difference

Many of the problems currently facing MAW are noted in the literature as tracing back to the development of national government departments especially during the 1980s and 1990s.

Poor interaction is identified as a continuing problem of MAW provision but interaction has occurred regularly between Health and Social Services for many years. In areas of deprivation the literature also shows Housing, Police and Social Services successfully experimented with joint working as long ago as the nineteen sixties and seventies (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002, p58). The 1977 White Paper *Policy for the Inner Cities* (DOE 1977) notes the need for a coordinated approach at central government level and the creation of Education Priority Areas (EPAs) and Community Development Projects involved the construction of partnerships between central government, local authorities and universities to experiment with joint working.

With so many years experience of partnership and interaction why do problems continue to exist and what is the exact nature of these problems? Research literature points to lack of understanding of something called 'historically based interpersonal issues' and the resulting complexity. I am keen to explore if such issues still exist and if they reflect existing tribalism within and between agencies or a result of differing silo cultures and terminology. Issues of difference started to grow when in 1970 the government of the

day was said to be overloaded with its institutions over reaching themselves and unable to deliver their policy objectives (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002, p 15).

The growth of silos

The King Report of 1975 suggested national government required re-fashioning. To cope with overload, authority was divided between separate government departments. This was said to start the growth of departmental silos between which there would soon be much difference and little interaction.

Spending on the newly developed government departments was seen at the time as a sign of 'political virility' (Hecllo and Wildavsk, 1991, p 235). Government departments and their ministers were described being proud which often made them appear idiosyncratic in their communications, workings and procedures (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Policy development, decision making and programme delivery were all areas where agencies worked independently. Each agency was now evolving a strong professional identity bringing individual approaches to problem identification and solution (Hudson 1987).

For children's services that required agency coordination and team work, government action was now fostering diversity. The development of Governmental empires of Health, Social Services, Housing and Education evolved different practices and built division and difference between services. Each service was now the responsibility of different masters, an individual minister, committee or quango board (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002, p 15). This development of a silo structure was seen as positive and enabling each agency to better focus on and address the issues it specialised in, however as agency differences evolved and identities grew, barriers to agency integration developed. Agency and operational conflicts increased, some between branches and levels of government. A further problem arose from departments having shared oversight of local problems but now approaching them in very different ways, often with little or no coordination.

While recent research literature has identified and linked such developments to problems of interaction within MAW I am concerned that such a commonly held view might now be outmoded as agency workforces learn to understand and manage their differences. Through my research question one, I will seek to check if agency difference (such as language) remains the dominant concern affecting interaction or whether the real difference lay not with agency workers but with resistance to change from more senior managers interested in retention of budgets and identity . With the development of differing oversight, funding and management procedures, government departments

started to differ greatly in their organisation adding great complexity for those agencies they worked with (Richards and Jervis 1997). A further hindrance to MAW was the diverse internal structure each department now had. Health was a national bureaucracy run with direct political control at the highest level of central government; other departments, such as Social Services, were more autonomously run and more closely linked to local participation and need which helped shape their structure and response. Different underlying organisational designs meant government departments were now impaired in their ability to coordinate action (Richards and Jervis, 1997).

Many children's agencies came out of, or were closely linked to government departments, so as differences grew they were reflected in agency structure, practice and terminology. Differences are shown in the literature and media clippings leading to a lack of understanding and mistrust creating further tensions between agencies rather than collaboration (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Such differences - if they exist - will be explored in both research questions one and two.

While the literature points to the major problems of difference, personal experience and observations paint a very different picture of the workforce seeking to overcome barriers and addressing problems that exist. I must explore the current reality. If this continues to be a problem can I identify for whom? I will be interested to see if difference remains a problem specifically for strategic and senior managers.

Strategic Influence of MAW

Political change that occurred from 1997 with the return of Labour ideology has been noted by some commentators as having had a profound impact on inter agency working and MAW (Anning et al, 2008) (Dyson, 2009). In describing a University of Leeds based research project examining benefits and drawbacks of Multi Agency Team Work for Children's Services (MATCH Project, 2002-2004); Anning describes the return of a Labour government to Westminster in 1997 bringing a marked change of direction and a desire to reform public sector provision. The then Prime Minister Tony Blair was noted outlining four key principles for reform:

1. High standards of provision and full accountability,
2. Devolution of decision making about service delivery to the front line to encourage diversity and local creativity,
3. Flexibility of employment so that staff are better able to deliver modern public services,

4. Promotion of alternative providers (from the private and voluntary sectors) and greater choice for users.

While there is no mention here of multi agency working, there is evidence of government action to stop the division of services with full accountability of agencies against a common set of targets. While not clear who would monitor such services nationally, local authorities appear to envisage building and overseeing service partnerships, however it was not yet clear if policy would be stronger on aspiration than substance. One concern would be the possible tensions that could arise between national and local priorities and their impact on agency interaction. The formal systems of national government could also hinder local creativity and experimentation provided by increased inter agency cooperation. Points three and four alarmed those who saw coded language for redundancies and privatisation but to others encouraged the development of MAW and empowerment for local delivery of services. In 2002, Alan Milburn, Secretary of State for Health, furthered the development of MAW by stating:

The old style public service monoliths cannot meet modern challenges. They need to be broken up. In their place we need to forge new local partnerships that specialise in tackling particular problems local communities face. (Milburn, 2002)

Within a year a Government Green Paper entitled ECM was seeking to lay a foundation to help agencies work together. While superficially this was very positive and motivated many involved in MAW, I am concerned that MAW was starting to be taken over by those seeking vehicles to achieve political ambitions and that the claimed success of the MAW model of working might have made it appear a quick fix panacea. If this situation existed, the priority would have been speed of implementation and not rigour which would have required construction of expensive and time consuming monitoring, evaluation and training programmes. A two year study by Anning et al (2006) of the daily realities of delivering public and voluntary sector services through multi agency team work showed concern for reform of public sector employment embracing inter connectivity, joined up working and self help within public services. This move was coming from both central government and local practitioners who pooled services as they sought to develop community safety and local challenges.

The Labour Party's aim was officially stated as reshaping services. To achieve this use was made of what was initially called 'joined up' or integrated working. Agency services, especially those of government, were seen as having potential to be more flexible, local, comprehensive, efficient, and effective with reduced overlap (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008).

Joined up working was declared as central to Labour's aim of reducing poverty and social exclusion through policy and legislation. Guidance followed, highlighting the

benefits of working in such an integrated way (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008) (Lloyd, et al 2003). Reference to government action is important because while guidance extolled the virtues of this new way of working together, only minimal reference was made to the complexities of interaction or human elements to be addressed. Personal experience corroborates literature evidence of political aims, however it also shows that at this time the needs of effective MAW were not clearly identified or known to those in central government. If lack of understanding, enthusiasm for change and weak worker guidance had allowed poor implementation of MAW it is not surprising that such progress was questioned by some. Government documentation such as the Department of Health (DOH) paper 'The New NHS, Modern, Dependable' describes services (NHS, 1997) advising workers to work closely with other agency officers such as social workers and nursing staff when delivering to a local population. Experience of this earlier period suggests advice was often not taken and little change occurred in working practice. It is not surprising that variety developed in the provision of MAW. Good practice was free to speed ahead on its own while poor practice was free to continue with few checks or boundaries. With much development occurring and a strong central government thrust for implementation, little was done to focus on evaluation and measurement of impact (Tomlinson, 2003). Interestingly by 2005 Frost (2005) saw further need for joined up working bringing positive outcomes for service users, enhancing processes for professionals working together and offering a synergy of service delivery leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness. In the same year the DfEE published a paper entitled '*Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs*'. This paper aimed to develop inclusiveness within education and schools by use of multiple agencies working together to support vulnerable children with special educational needs. This conferred an important responsibility for MAW but still checks and balances were lacking. The issues include:

1. Political influence and impact of general lack of understanding of MAW especially the human elements,
2. Impact of central government involvement, improving consistency in provision and standards of MAW,
3. Increased care responsibility for MAW but continued lack of checks and balances with no focus required on achievement and impact studies

Politicians were now keen to bring about change but not fully aware or appreciative of the great complexity within MAW. The high profile support of governmental action started to give rise to common approaches but with few attempts to monitor progress

and check effectiveness problems remained. By 2004 the Children's Minister Margaret Hodge was starting to realise the complexity and difficulties facing MAW when she said:

“That sort of lack of mutual trust and respect for the different professional backgrounds - not sharing the same vocabulary and language; certainly not sharing the same sort of understanding of child development and child protection - is an enormous problem.” (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008)

2.2. Issue Two: Problems facing MAW

Involvement of MAW in the support and care of vulnerable children

Wide spread consultation with many bodies concerned for children's care and wellbeing helped MAW develop, and busy and diverse networking to start to appear between agencies serving Children's services. This communication enabled networks of reporting and security to be built around children, especially the most vulnerable. Where provision of MAW is effective, support and protection is good but what if provision of MAW is not good?

My second research question asks:

‘What are the inhibiting factors in relation to multi agency working?’

This question must help to explore and understand the limited consistency in practice that so threatens and undermines MAW and the factors and challenges now impacting on and threatening the effectiveness and support provided by this way of working.

Research question two will examine the functioning of MAW and the ongoing concern about links between the quality and consistency of MAW and continued incidence of abuse and deaths of vulnerable children. Much has been done to try and improve MAW but it may be that there has been an over reliance on structural reforms.

Growth of public concern

Alarm around my second research question is high because since 1973 the number of children dying from abuse and neglect has continued to rise.

Between 1973 and 2003 an average of eighty children died each year as a result of abuse and neglect (Laming, 2003) and links have been made to failures within agency working. By 2008 the number of deaths from abuse and neglect reported by OfSTED had risen to 156 per year (Gilbert, 2008). Currently the DfE report 509 similar Child Death Reviews completed in England for the year ending 31 March 2012. Since 2008 the number of children in England subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) arising from neglect and abuse has risen sharply year on year from 29200 plans in 2008 to 42850 in 2012, a rise of 47%.

Following the death of Maria Colwell in 1973 a number of high profile child abuse and murder cases found many similar causes. As a result structural change to working practices was sought for those supporting vulnerable children. Change rested with the professionals involved but results were limited. It was not until the Laming enquiry of 2003 that large scale government led action was taken to increase cooperation and coordination between statutory services and improve training and inadequate resourcing. Government action was not to be restrictive but to encourage aspiration and creativity.

The death of Justine Beckford in 1984 had impacted on the Children Act of 1989 where inter agency working was placed at the heart of the Social Services remit and the role of parents was strengthened. Agencies were expected to work with parents over child welfare. However in 2001 yet another shocking death of a young girl called Victoria Climbié triggered high level media concern and political pressure resulting in a hard hitting review by Lord Laming in 2003. Earlier initiatives such as the 1989 Children Act similarly focussed on structure but also moved towards interaction recognising need for Social services to work closely with parents to help protect vulnerable children. CP procedures of the time were noted as overly cumbersome.

Addressing problems facing MAW: Central Government response

Laming importantly reported the presence of many problems spread throughout children's services. The literature of the time shows a great deal of positive attention given to the review, welcomed for helping to bring about the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper and the following Children Act, but Laming was also roundly criticized (Hunter, 2003; Ivory, 2003; Devaney, 2003; Douglas, 2003; Gosling, 2003). Criticism ranged from Laming wasting an ideal opportunity to undertake a radical reorganisation of provision to the ability of services described by some as demoralised and under funded to respond to heavy demands and possible risk of damage to Children's services.

Laming described his review as the most far reaching re-conceptualisation of policy and practice in Children's Services (Laming, 2003). Such a term was puzzling. Laming did identify that problems existed in many services especially Health, Social Services and Police but his response was traditional, structural and managerially based and less conceptual than the 1989 Act. Laming appeared not to recognise or acknowledge the progress in MAW understanding and practice identified within the literature of the time especially the important contribution of positive interaction, feelings and relationships.

Laming's review was described by Dyson et al (2009) as very detailed and highly critical of the current provision within children's services, a landmark in state intervention. Laming's review was also remarkable in the degree of criticism levelled at the state. By including recommendations of Government this implied that Government was also vulnerable to criticism. When one considers the resources available to the Government it should not need such a report to tell them what to do or how to act.

While the Government's ECM Green Paper and resultant Children Act of 2004 has outlined change and provided a framework for multi agency delivery of services, such a move has also formalised procedures for Child Protection (Porton, 2006). The literature has made much of the similarities between Laming's findings and those of earlier child death reviews (Fitzgerald and Kay 2008; Anning, 2008) but few authors have questioned the size and complexity of the task that Laming suggested without gaining understanding or consideration of the many forces and inter personal issues at play especially in areas of high deprivation where many child deaths occurred. Laming recommended wholesale overhaul of Children's services to combat social exclusion (Dyson et al, 2009).

Laming's reorganisation relied on structural change, a favoured approach of previous governments that researchers had found gave rise to few changes (Dyson et al, 2009). The need was now recognised for government to view the Climbie affair in the wider context of social exclusion and service reorganisation, not just strengthening of Child Protection (CP) procedures (Dyson et al, 2009). Dyson, Anning, Fitzgerald and other authors described the ECM Green Paper as restructuring services to put the child at the heart of policies and reorganisation around their needs. However this move towards the breakdown of organisational boundaries presented by providing multi agency working to a proposed framework of desirable outcomes was seen as a radical step (Every Child Matters , 2003). Suddenly from the Minister down, officers were meeting with their opposite numbers in other strategic agencies and reviewing actions against five key outcomes. Work was once again very much focussed on helping protect children especially the most vulnerable. Working at this time did not feel like rearranging the furniture but more a time of radical change (Thomas 2007a).

While Dyson, a Manchester professor of Special Education, questioned Laming's reliance on structural reform with its chequered history, the influential Dartington Warren House Group (Warren House Group 2004, p4) viewed structural changes as part of the solution. However ECM was in danger of perpetuating the belief that problems can be changed by training, moving administration and management and increasing or decreasing centralisation and specialisation (Warren House Group, 2004).

When interviewed at the time of the Laming enquiry, few managers were willing to offer comment after such a scathing report in which Laming had criticised the quality of care provided by statutory bodies and accused all senior leaders involved of wide spread malaise and poor leadership. Some academics have suggested Laming's vitriol sought to cover up governmental failings but his criticism was aimed at senior leaders of both government and statutory agencies alike. Those who did comment described Laming as having ruined the best chance to transform Child Protection Services claiming that 'instead of radical reform we get another overbearing line of management structure' (Hunter, 2003). My concern is that lack of understanding of interpersonal matters by senior officers (of which Laming had been one) led to a traditional structural response.

The literature of MAW provides little insight into the ability of heavily overstretched and over burdened services to respond to such large, lengthy and far reaching changes. Some questioned the wisdom of introducing so much change at this time and the possible chance of failure (Dyson, et al 2009). Also questioned was the difficulty of linking computer systems to form the (now cancelled) National Database (Anning et al, 2008). A key aim of development of MAW has been the desire to establish a central National data base to quickly and accurately guide and inform and such difficulty has hampered progress and development of CAF.

First hand accounts of the time seriously question the ability of the existing services to cope with Laming's 108 major recommendations (46 of which had to be implemented within three months) however a study of the recommendations shows many to be very specific and address identification of poor practice and the need to quickly put in place sound practice to protect children. For example recommendation 22 addresses placing of children in temporary accommodation and states:

'an assessment must be made of suitability of that accommodation and results of assessment must be recorded on the child's case file. If the accommodation is unsuitable this must be reported to a senior officer'. (Laming, 2003, para 4.77)

Meeting this recommendation is not an onerous, time consuming or expensive task; it would take little more than a staff briefing to greatly improve staff practice and child safety. Larger tasks were given six months and the formation of new panels and bodies two years. The specific nature of the recommendations, while giving a large number of recommendations, did help address implementation of good practice. A union representative is quoted as saying that each enquiry finds that understaffing and overwork in Social Services departments leads to a demoralized, stressed workforce but this was not being addressed (Hunter, 2003). Such comments may have reflected tension generated by government entry into what had always been seen as professional territory but most likely addressed professional fears that while reorganisation may

initially appear to address problems, without better staff resourcing, especially training, and remuneration of social workers little was likely to change in the long term and problems would persist.

Surprisingly, while so much has been written about ECM and the Children Act 2004, I have found little in the literature of MAW seeking to describe or explain political dimensions surrounding the Laming review, such as the imperative placed upon government to be seen to be addressing problems and providing change. Why did Laming rely on old approach styles and not consider certain qualitative issues and was the size and highly critical nature of his review politically driven or more likely a genuine attempt to improve services? Was too much sought too quickly from what was known to be in many inner city areas a badly overstretched and fragile system?

More importantly, has Laming’s review impacted positively on current day provision of MAW and crucially are children better protected today than they were in 2003? While the number of children annually requiring a Child Protection Plan for neglect or abuse has continued to rise year on year (Figure 1) it could be argued that this figure may also reflect the increased ability of Children’s Services to better identify and support vulnerable children. Either way there has not been a drop in the number of vulnerable and neglected children identified.

Post Laming: Is MAW involvement in Child Protection a positive move?

Child protection procedures were formalised and through the 2003 Every Child Matters Green Paper (ECM) and Children Act of 2004, a framework for multi agency delivery of children’s services was developed (Porton, 2006). Recent research (Williams and Sullivan, 2010) (O’Brien, 2009) (Audit Commission 2009) shows how longstanding concern with MAW still exists. My research question two will explore the current reality and state of provision of MAW by examining what is not working.

Numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP)					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Neglect	13400	15800	17200	18700	18400
Abuse	15800	18300	21900	24000	24450
Total	29200	34100	39100	42700	42850

Figure 1 Children subject to a Child Protection Plan 2008 - 2012

Following the Laming review of 2003, considerable legislative and structural change occurred but while new government initiatives and guidance looked comprehensive and promised much, I am concerned that reports of MAW continued to show great variance in quality. The five outcomes of the ECM green paper were to fundamentally change the way the agencies of children's services thought and worked together. Coordinated multi agency working was central to the support of every child. MAW was now not only a preferred way of working but considered essential to providing effective and safe children's services (Every Child Matters, 2003) and support for children and their families.

Vulnerable children were to be protected by a detailed framework containing new structures such as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). In 2008 Fitzgerald and Kay wrote:

It is disturbing that thirty years of investigating serious child protection concerns still shows poor communication, lack of information sharing and lack of coordination and cooperation between agencies to be major determinants of failure. (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008: 28)

Since 2008, CAF has been introduced but I remain concerned that while government documentation (DCSF, 2007) showed how workforce reform would help officers work together by providing similar conditions of service and engagement, multi agency training was expected to provide agency workers with a common set of skills and understanding (DOH, 2001). Here lack of understanding of what was possible and a lack of research had led to unachievable expectations of integrated training being made and reliance on more untried structures and ways of working.

Further documentation set out the proposed role of Children's Trusts by those seeking to implement the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and met many difficulties. Few questioned or challenged the complexity or enormity of such a task (Hunter, 2003). The Audit Commission has now reported back on the shortcomings and development needs of Children's Trusts but, as Dyson et al (2009) noted, over expectation and high demands of a weak system have challenged and threatened potential failure. The National Database has had to be closed and the implementation of CAF continues to develop.

For those seeking to implement the many other findings of the Laming Review there has been much to describe the positives and possible gains of using MAW but little research

evidence to inform, help and guide their implementation and consequently problems and inconsistencies appear to survive.

As I examine the breadth of problems facing MAW I am increasingly aware of the complexity of interaction faced with the MAW model of working and the dangers of over simplistic thinking and lack of knowledge and understanding. While some seek to focus on understanding of the person, others such as Bennis (1996), Fulop and Linstead (1999) and Inkson and Kolb (2002) follow a transactional approach, noting that for effective action to occur it is important to understand the task and how it may relate to customers and community. Good managers might take both perspectives into account but to what degree and in what order or manner?

Development of interagency working

Another issue to be considered for effective MAW to happen is how individuals from different agencies should come together to form effective teams, bearing in mind the differences they bring (Frost, N and Robinson, M, 2005; .UEA, 2007; Novlan, 1998)

A fine example of such problems faced is shown by the 'Tomorrow's Schools' initiative (Novlan, 1998). In 1988 a dilemma faced the government of New Zealand as they sought to create a radically new devolved education system using Boards of Trustees supported by local teams of advisers. In an effort to break down centralised control and as part of the 'Tomorrow's Schools' Initiative, the Department of Education was dismantled and the responsibilities of the many Boards of Education devolved to school trustees. Support officers who had worked in statutory and non statutory agencies were appointed to free standing multi agency teams who were to respond to schools as and when a local need was identified (Novlan, 1998).

The Tomorrow's Schools initiative was a central government structural strategy designed to provide radical public sector reform. Local advisory teams were directed to work together and develop a detailed understanding of the communities they served.

Shortcomings soon developed some were related to lack of funding and the heavy workloads of school leaders (Minto, 2006) but many were due to lack of suitable professional oversight of team members and failure to fully understand the task at hand.. Members were not in regular contact with their service seniors and were not kept informed or trained in current developments.

As well as suffering lack of professional support, teams became increasingly isolated from other agency officers. At first schools were satisfied with support but over time criticism of officer efficiency grew. These multi agency teams were eventually disbanded

in 1998. MAW was still seen as the way forward for Education in New Zealand and with refinement of professional linkage was retained as a way of working that continues to this day (Wylie, 2001).

The Tomorrow's Schools initiative showed that if multi agency teams are constructed it is important that they receive close professional support (Monson, 2006). This enormous and expensive national failure showed the potential danger to a nation's education system of flawed and poorly researched national guidance. Wisely in England, ECM guidance fostered individual creativity and development by local authority agencies and not a one size fits all structural top down response. New Zealand's experience highlighted the importance when bringing officers together to work in new configuration to ensure:

- effective monitoring, evaluation, oversight and training continue
- agency members continue to maintained close links with their mother agencies (to ensure support, oversight and training)

In 2003 Lord Laming had suggested that staff from different agencies must fulfil their separate and distinctive responsibilities with a number of agencies working well together (Laming, 2003. p6). The Tomorrow's Schools initiative had shown Laming to be right, further highlighting the complexity of introducing MAW and the professional, interpersonal, structural and procedural barriers to be addressed. Since 2006 many research articles have returned to examining structural issues and the intricacy involved in MAW, especially structure (Wheatley, 2006), the impact of time limited projects (Sullivan et al, 2006) and leadership issues (Frost and Robinson, 2007). The implementation of MAW in New Zealand has now been successful (Wylie, 2001) but in England it is still found to be erratic (Audit Commission, 2009).

MAW and the quality of guidance

As already noted, a key factor affecting the implementation of MAW has been the quality of available guidance, especially as most guidance for MAW has come from central government and was originally predicated on multi agency work being successful and not overall use (Frost et al 2005:188). At this time there were few conceptual frameworks or theoretical structures upon which to base guidance and little training available. The selection of MAW as a preferred way of working appears to have been based on simplistic assumptions. Children's agencies were perceived to all have similarities of structure and function that would easily combine with common language

and terms with mutually understood procedures and practices and technologies that could be easily shared (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008).

Trusting government directives, agencies and their officers gave time and effort to developing something based on a false assumption. Where officer and agency experience was high, members had the skills to mix easily, and crystallized their response. For less experienced teams with limited understanding of the cultural importance of shared values, beliefs, ideologies, language, rituals and myths, progress was much slower (Warmington et al, 2004).

Well intentioned workers were found to be experiencing great difficulty and frustration while seeking to implement change (Warmington et al, 2004). In 2005 the University of East Anglia (UEA), in conjunction with the National Children's Bureau, carried out the first evaluation of Children's Trusts. This survey identified the slow progress of inter agency development and, for MAW, the important difference of transactional and transformational action. Agency members were keen to work together but progress was hampered by problems of communication and understanding (UEA 2005). When interviewed a local authority officer noted:

What we are talking about is not just structural, it is actually personal as well because if you get a group of professionals in one space they all have their own perspective and their own motivations, and their own suspicions about others and all the rest of it...We are meeting together in rooms but we are not really talking.(UEA, 2005, p 35)

Four years later in 2009 the Audit Commission report '*Are We There Yet*' has again identified problems, finding little evidence of arrangements to coordinate services showing better outcomes and evidence of professionals navigating around centrally directed approaches. I believe that despite the enthusiasm of the workforce, implementation of MAW may have suffered from the limited understanding and piecemeal implementation of central government.

It is important that we know why so little progress has occurred; why professionals should be navigating around centrally directed approaches and if support is available. To both the inexperienced and many experienced workers, MAW continues to appear a complex and ill defined way of working. Research question two will check to see what damage has been done and if and how difficulties such as contextual barriers are being overcome.

It may be important to consider the difficulties of managing different people who will have formed increasingly complex work place groupings. In recognising the

complications that people bring with them - multiple realities in terms of their identities, roles and their loyalties - combined with the possibilities of duality in terms of identities in the context of ever changing situations brings this complexity and is given emphasis in our attention.

Management of relationships between individuals both within and across agencies is paramount to the success of MAW in the work place and Fulop and Linstead (1998) offer some suggestions in relation to this. While others (Inkson and Kolb, 2000, p 311) place emphasis on leadership as identifying purpose, establishing direction, gaining commitment and providing motivation, Fulop and Linstead focus on topics such as inter organisational relationships and teams as clearly a part of models of working in the future.

In contrast to a view of management in terms of either control of relationships supervising as the head and hands of the organisation or as entrepreneurs bringing together people for mutual gain, Fulop and Linstead (1998) suggested that managers could not manage without monitoring and developing relationships:

As managers we have to ascertain what is related and how this in turn changes: how change in one part of the team affects others or prevent them from doing so...We need to know how to best establish, maintain or change relationships and how existing patterns of relationships can give rise to constraints and how these can be addressed. From all of the above what arises should be the understanding, the skills and qualities to manage these relationship demands. (Fulop and Linstead, 1998, p6)

If managers need to develop relationships to properly understand and manage their work force needs, are Local Children's Trusts failing to do what they were designed to do? Are Trusts working effectively if those involved in MAW know little of their existence and relationships are few and mainly restricted to a few little read website articles?

MAW and the impact of Environmental issues

Concern for the effectiveness of MAW highlights the strong impact of environmental issues such as political steer, funding uncertainties, organisational change and agency re-organisation. All are shown in the literature to adversely affect agency interaction and effectiveness (Fitzgerald and Kay 2008). Edwards et al in 2006 reported the importance of boards to give strong strategic leadership and the difficulty emphasized by any turbulence that may surround the future of an initiative. When reviewing the implementation of Pathfinder Children's Trusts in 2007, the University of East Anglia (UEA) noted implementation was particularly affected by shifting policy priorities and

agency restructuring. UEA also noted tensions existing between the integration model suggested by ECM guidance and the pressure for change often found within individual services.

Allnock suggested local contexts could generate further challenges such as those of conflicting local agency priorities i.e. social care focussing reactively on high level need and education focussing proactively on early intervention. Allnock went on to show how differing agency boundaries and poor agency co-terminosity in country areas could increase costs and officer workloads. Issues such as rurality, the inaccessibility and spread of populations in rural areas against high density and accessible urban areas greatly added to cost and complexity (Allnock et al, 2006; Asthana et al, 2002).

Matters were further complicated by Percy-Smith et al (2005) who found little positive impact of partnership working when studying strategic partnerships for children. Given the high cost of integrating services, Percy-Smith questioned the value of such actions and asked that more be done to demonstrate that the limited outcomes found were justified. He suggested that lack of evidence may be due to the dominant focus on integrated processes rather than on outcomes. The key message was that while it is important to share your agency's good practice, it is also important to measure the effectiveness of your approach. No suggestion was made for the difficult task of implementing an outcomes approach, especially when measuring or demonstrating the financial benefits that may arise from integration of services and provision of a better quality of service to children, young people and their families.

Despite problems, is MAW the best way forward

In a study of Scottish literature, Brown and White (2006) found studies suggesting integrated services may be no better or could even be negative in terms of outcomes for children and that improving the organisational climate of single agencies could be more beneficial (Glisson and Hemmelgarn 1998). An assumption that MAW had to involve strategic integration. These studies resulted from analysis of multi agency work outside of England and Wales. Some of the studies cited were based on an analysis of North American experience in Knoxville, Tennessee. The key message was that we cannot *assume* that integration will lead to improved outcomes and should check the effect and impact of what we do.

In England research literature of impact studies shows improvement with many positive outcomes for MAW. As early as 2003, evaluation of outcomes for children by Pettitt studied the two agencies of Health and Education working together and reported

measurable improvements. Improvements were identified in behaviour, peer relationships and academic attainment as CAMHS services worked with children in a range of schools. Fitzgerald (2004) also reported positive views of MAW with agency workers reporting high levels of user satisfaction. Similarly Halsey (2005) identified many of the positives of working opposite other agency members as being related to MAW. This was especially true for the sharing of expertise, learning through discussion and joint delivery. While positive impact for the client can elicit a favourable professional view, favourable staff conditions may or may not have impacted positively on outcomes providing a questionable improved outcome

The DCSF (2008) have published further evidence of the positive effects of MAW. A national longitudinal impact evaluation entitled 'On Track' studied multi agency work to reduce levels of youth crime and anti social behaviour. The study occurred in twenty four areas of high crime and deprivation. Researchers monitored and tracked progress within 1100 services and noted positive impacts on children, and on their families and young people's attitudes to schools (DCSF 2008, rb 035) however the quality of this research is not verified and we have no way of knowing that respondents have not sought to give government that which they wish to hear. The Impact of MAW remains a key area for research.

Ideas for further refinement of MAW

As ECM guidance circulated, Warmington (2004) stressed the need for all agencies to become skilled at inter agency working and so ensure that collaboration is effective and the most is made from inter agency contact. Goodwin (2006) was concerned about the persistence of different agency cultures and Boddy et al (2006) saw a need to challenge these different cultures if agencies were to move to a more person centred approach with no one agency dominant over others. At this time, two cultural issues were high profile, i.e. the levels of commitment to inter agency support and differing views regarding the involvement of parents and children. These two issues will be examined within research questions two and three.

With improved agency working, two cultural issues were now high profile: the levels of commitment to inter agency support and differing views regarding the involvement of parents and children. Tunstall et al (2007) saw an explicit commitment to partnership and integration as central with possible different levels of involvement. He recognised that not all agencies would be at the same stage of development and that agencies (such as the voluntary services) often had significantly lower manpower and resources.

In conclusion the main inhibiting factors noted for the development of MAW have been the limited consistency found in the provision of support for vulnerable children, lack of parental involvement, poor senior management and malaise occurring in child related services of both Government and Children's services, lack of understanding of interactive and integrative skills and the lack of monitoring of the quality of MAW.

Working in an environment of increasing cuts and economies, Bell (2007) suggested that where managers do not have integrated working as part of their core work their efforts will be vulnerable to changes in work priority and real ownership may not be embedded. Would a change in senior management bring with it an understanding of the need for these commitments and how might this be guarded?

2.3. Issue Three: Achieving good practice and success

My third research question is:

'How are inhibiting factors and contextual barriers being overcome at the operational level? What aspects of multi agency working might now be regarded as good practice in the operational context?'

While problems may exist and practice may be variable there are many involved in MAW who have been working hard to understand and address the problems and barriers that they face. As problems are overcome a bank of good practice is now being steadily built.

Since the introduction of the ECM agenda (2003) studies have been made of successful implementation and development of new ideas in agency interaction and more effective MAW. Research question three will seek to explore positive and constructive developments occurring within the study area.

Elements of MAW have started to be fine tuned. For example, Robinson et al (2008) identified types of enablers associated with integration. Miller and McNicholl (2003) brought study forward by examining planning between partners and offering a number of valid and effective methods for integration. They showed how research could enhance good practice by providing greater clarity to that which you did. Miller and McNicholl illustrated in detail the structures assisting integration and went further to show effective organisation attending to structure and process at each level that agencies reach, with flexibility being seen as an important attribute. By reference to eight key factors enhancing inter agency improvement all agencies were given important guidance to help understand how best to approach and develop agency interaction. Miller and McNicholl (2003) suggested:

1. Mapping and developing care pathways
2. Upgrading and interaction of electronically based recording and document systems and processes
3. Integrating service delivery at frontline level
4. Planning and service delivery at strategy level
5. Integrated performance management at strategy/operational level
6. Modelling of processes for organisational change and capacity building
7. Modelling of routine/procedural processes within integrated services
8. Modelling of inter professional joint activities

Anning and the MATCh Project research team built on this work pushing forward understanding especially of the inter personnel dimensions of interagency decision making to address joined up working. The team found the following fifteen key areas to require consideration when developing inter agency working:

1. Joint procedural work and inclusive planning systems involving especially key agencies,
2. Clear lines of accountability as agency collaboration often adds complexity or blurs,
3. Employment conditions that do not restrict, recognising that professionals with clear identities may be asked to reinvent their role,
4. Leadership and vision from senior officers. In the MATCh project senior leaders were found to be highly skilled and effective managers working on the cutting edge of practice development (Anning 2008).
5. Role clarity and sense of purpose so all have a clear sense of what they do and how it contributes to the team,
6. Addressing barriers caused by differing agency status/hierarchies including avoidance of jargon, acronyms and other divisive means,
7. Agreed strategic objectives, shared core aims by involved agencies giving clear sense of shared enterprise,
8. Transparent structures for open inter agency communication (a problematic area with agencies having different attitudes and procedures for sharing of information),

9. Co-location of different agency service deliverers, shown by Frost (2005) to enhance understanding of roles, learning and communication,
10. Acknowledging the role of all team members - especially peripheral members,
11. Acknowledging professional diversity of agency members and celebrate role difference,
12. Awareness of impact of change on service users i.e. think about your clients,
13. Joint client- focused activities,
14. Ongoing support for professional development as staff will be facing new ways of working within new boundaries and groupings,
15. Paying attention to specialist skill retention avoiding fear of loss of skills and becoming a generalist.

More recently Atkinson et al (2007) identified nineteen factors that facilitate change and 104 factors for effective practice strategy for MAW.

Locality based groupings and services such as School Clusters are providing excellent development areas and support with their clearly defined and often small communities (Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008). Much valued local support has also been spawned by locality facilities such as Children's Centres. Early Excellence Centres (EECs) and Sure Starts. Local Programmes (SSLPs) were clearly defined and their growth and development carefully studied and researched. NESS (2007) showed they evolved from a multi agency approach and a multi departmental governmental process.

Boddy et al (2006) suggests there may be no single model for structural integration, therefore structural configuration needs to be adaptable to feedback from different levels of integration. Wheatley (2006) suggests developing the capacity for change of groups of agencies but recognises that this would not be a quick process. Further advice from Percy-Smith (2005) aimed at strategic management and planning, relating organisational form to strategic purpose and shared vision Percy- Smith also notes the importance of leadership, focusing on outcomes and the need to involve children, parents and the voluntary sector.

Another important cultural challenge to be explored by research question three is that of service user involvement. How should agencies meaningfully involve children, young people and their families? While little guidance is available, a description of good practice does exist. Anning et al (2008) and Edwards et al (2006) have found little

evidence of children and their families being involved, especially in development of integrated service development.

The UEA (2007) study also reported variable involvement of families and their children. In her analysis of the Children's Fund, Edwards (2006) pointed to a need for children and families to become more involved in a variety of ways. Edwards extolled the development of 'Knot' working in which service users are able to feed back on their experiences of services. She warned that parents and children may appear as a threat to professionals as their views are not confined to agreed agency views (Edwards et al, 2006).

2.4. Issue Four: Identification and development of good practice

My fourth research question will be:

What are the principles that might be derived from identified examples of good practice?

This research question will seek to examine how high standards of MAW provision can be maintained and shared. It aims to examine what constitutes good practice as well as how good practice is identified, enhanced, distributed and maintained. Principles will be identified and discussed.

If professionals are to increase sharing they need an understanding of each other's practice and protocol. Frost and Robinson (2007) show how sharing inter professionally can give better understanding of agreed protocols with co-working, work experience and work shadowing helping to generate better understanding along with the construction of key principles for the effective running of MAW. This might well be my first principle.

A second principle may concern leadership attitude and capacity the importance of vision and commitment and the requirements in terms of capacity. At the strategic level, Broadhead and Armistead (2007) have noted leadership attitude and capacity as being important along with continuity of personnel, career pathway and progression.

A possible third principle is that of a shared work base. This is an expensive but effective development; it is being assisted by developments in communication technology. At the operational level, Jones (2004) notes the importance of everyone working in the same building and of locality-based working. Frost and Robinson (2007) also notes the importance of staff from different agencies being able to learn together and gain a deeper understanding of each other's roles, a noted advantage of co location.

A fourth principle could address the need for agencies to learn. Warmington (2004) drew attention to the need for agencies to learn to analyse and learn from their tensions and difficulties as well as focus on their insights and innovations.

In 2004 I note the literature of MAW showing concern still rising regarding the fragmentation that had occurred between mainly governmental agencies (DfES, 2004). When evaluating the success of Early Excellence Centres (EECs) as early as 2002, Bertram had found the challenges to integration to be understated. Bertram stated that deep transformational change would be required to move multi agency services into a cohesive / comprehensive web of support for children and families with the potential to impact on cycles of deprivation (Bertram et al 2000). Here Bertram recognised the important role multi agency working played in enabling a network of support for vulnerable children and the need for a principle to consider the safety role of MAW.

Recent developments within MAW

By 2006 with little noted improvement, concern rose as numerous studies and reports identified the continued existence of earlier weaknesses and some started to question the usefulness of MAW. Greatest unease came from outside of England. Aware that many key agencies were still developing their own separate identities in England, some argued there must be ways of working that could respect and utilize that difference. However complexity was a concern in Scotland. Brown and White (2006) carried out a literature review of barriers to integrated working in the Scottish system and discovered four main areas of concern existed. These were concerns about:

1. funding integration,
2. cultural differences between professionals,
3. clarity about roles and responsibilities and the purpose of partnership working,
4. problems of leadership and organisational climate.

Brown and White concluded that the viability of integrated working complexities are unlikely to be overcome to produce the intended benefits unless a clear and sustained focus on long term outcomes for clients is maintained. With growing experience in England of running and maintaining the required level of inter agency cooperation, concern was also increasing as to the high cost of this style of multi agency working. Managers noted a need to identify if this working pattern was cost effective in delivering the best service.

Another important study in 2006 was that of Allnock who studied Sure Start Centres and identified three general areas of challenge to implementing effective inter agency working. These were:

1. contextual barriers and political climate,
2. organisational challenges ,
3. cultural issues.

While my research questions will help show what is being done to understand and improve the delivery of MAW, I must also seek to shown how users intend to effectively ascertain and improve the impact of their services. Glasby and Dickinson (2008) have raised concern that the limited literature on MAW focuses on process and not outcomes with research describing models of MAW rather than effectiveness in improving practice, what MAW sought to deliver, and the current circumstances and direction of MAW. MAW had been seen as a means to an end and not the end in itself.

While agencies are keen to integrate, many structural concerns remain such as agency difference of policies, procedures and system which need to be similar if they are to blend (Robinson et al, 2008). A prime area of conflict has been the sharing of computer systems, files and confidential information. DCSF guidance (2007) sought to deal with such matters with training and support for the use of the Common Assessment Framework. However at the time of my research many agency members and professionals remained unaware of common guidance including their own agency directives.

A further concern is the data complex because different agencies have different areas of professional focus and so respect and collect different types of data often on systems that have little compatibility with those of other agencies.

While Anning et al (2008), Wheatley (2006) and UEA (2007) have all identified needs when seeking to share information especially relating to confidentiality issues, little appears to guide managers through such sensitive areas. Agreements at senior management level remain poorly conveyed to the workforce leaving workers refusing to provide information, fighting to protect cancelled directives and in some cases refusing to cooperate with other agencies. A further problem for which little guidance appears to exist is the organisational challenge of aligning agency boundaries to reflect their different sizes and wealth and the many different agency approaches that exist to the management of funding.

Positively, Glasby and Peck (2006) highlight the importance of agencies remaining aware of the need to achieve settlement from all the organisational forms that occur.

Despite the many difficulties faced, Williams and Sullivan (2010) still see inter agency working as making best use of scarce resources, as well as design and delivery of resources to meet complex inter related needs for citizens, communities and service users.

Recent investigations into multi agency working show mixed progress (Audit Commission 2009; Williams and Sullivan, 2010; O'Brien et al 2009). An evaluation of two major multi agency initiatives in recent years shows that inherent problems of collaboration and policy contexts can be overcome (Fitzgerald and Kay 2008). The 2007 evaluation of the Sure Start initiative shows that, from a slow start, organisations are now learning their way towards the achievement of anticipated outcomes.

From descriptive accounts, identification of many shortcomings, difficulties and structural concerns, the literature has moved on to identify key enablers and examples of good practice but still worryingly identifies inadequacy in provision and long term concerns continue.

Latest research findings

As I start my research programme, what are the very latest messages that I must consider and are there additional implications for this study? The development of local Clusters and Partnership, and locality services are now moving at a pace.

Children's Centres provide many examples of how agencies can come together in disadvantaged areas to collaborate and deliver services from shared sites. By working together and studying impact they are now achieving their expected outcomes. The Children's Fund has also been an example of how a highly specified initiative has been able to bring together both statutory and voluntary agencies in local partnerships.

Edwards and Fox (2005) studied the development of Partnership Boards noting that those who developed cross agency learning progressed, developed new forms of collaboration, networking, analysis and new effective structures. The literature shows that despite all the stresses and ambiguities of current policy contexts, MAW continues to do well. However Dartington's Warren House Group (2004) reminds that structure is not enough and that space is required for professionals to make sense of the situations they face and provide effective strategies.

Dyson et al (2009) suggests professionals are most effective when free to work not only beyond organisational boundaries but beyond targets and priorities imposed centrally. This is a far cry from the reality reports of Hunter (2003) which, at the time of the first

Laming review, show high levels of staff demoralisation, thirty percent vacancy rates and a stressed work force charged with speedy implementation of major structural change

Williams and Sullivan's latest research in Wales highlights that although practical and theoretical advice is available on collaborative working they find low outcomes due to the need for better management and better understanding of the complexity and interplay of structural factors and influence of individuals. Reorganisation of local authorities and restructuring of budgets continue to cause serious damage and in some cases undo many months of good work and practice. Inappropriate leadership and lack of resources are also found to continue to hamper progress.

Williams and Sullivan (2010) see a need for research to continue to explore and to inform future practice, especially the dynamics and interplay between structural change and those concerning individuals. They see continual government fostered reorganisation and structural change as entirely superfluous if other influences are not understood, addressed and factored into potential policy interventions.

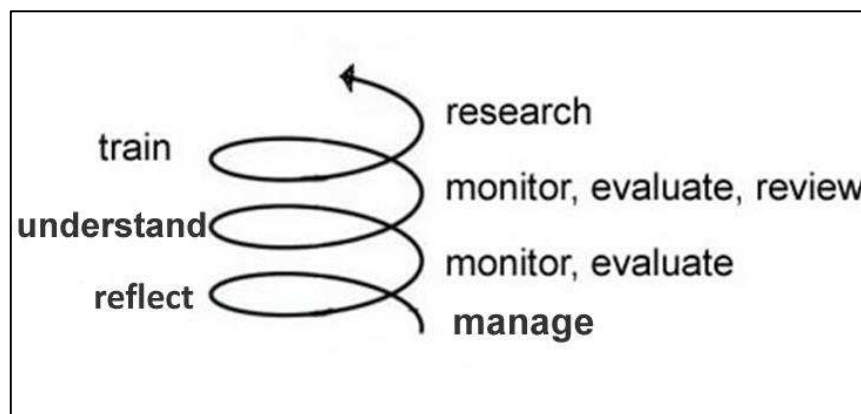


Figure 2: Issues identified within the literature for the successful development of MAW.

The importance of effective management is shown with the presence of research programmes, monitoring, evaluation and review to develop successful understanding of the effectiveness of structures and processes. Time for professionals to meet, reflect on practice, understand and train is also noted.

Figure 2 also provides a conceptual framework from which to explore the development of MAW.

Next steps

My next step is turning my research questions and concerns into an effective programme of research.

My first research question must help me explore and understand the current impact of imprecise definition and its impact on the understanding of MAW especially by senior officers and those with responsibility for strategic management.

Special attention needs to be given to the impact on MAW of both structural and interactive matters. Do managers fully understand value, support and seek to enhance multi agency working, interaction and growth?

2.5. Summary

My first research question is:

‘What is the role of strategic management in supporting the process of Multi Agency Working as perceived by multi agency workers?’

This question seeks to embrace the following concerns arising from a consideration of the literature, media and experience:

1. a lack of clear description and definition hindering monitoring and research, limiting understanding and affecting strategic management and guidance,
2. central government practice negatively affecting the quality of agency interaction and team work by inherent encouragement of difference in culture, practice and language,
3. failures of agency interaction, communication and team work reported in both the media and legal enquiries, shortcomings reported in support structures, communication, training and monitoring facilities agency and professional interaction.

My second research question will be:

‘What are the inhibiting factors in relation to multi agency working?’

Four issues concern me:

1. Why is the provision of MAW so inconsistent?
2. How successful has the follow up ECM initiative been and its impact regarding MAW provision especially where with overstretched and overburdened services?
3. What other issues and forces might still be impacting negatively on MAW?

4. If political aims were to improve the care of vulnerable children, why has provision of MAW continued to be so variable?

My third research question asks:

'How are inhibiting factors and contextual barriers being overcome at the operational level? What aspect of multi agency working might now be regarded as good practice in the operational context?

Here the issues are:

1. What, who and how helps most, best forms and sources of support?
2. What are the key enablers?
3. Are there unexpected positive sources?
4. How are those with poor practice and problems best helped to move forward?
5. What influences, practices and systems help address inhibiting factors and contextual barriers facing MAW to be effectively overcome and addressed?

Finally my fourth research question:

'What are the principles that might be derived from identified examples of good practice?'

This will examine how best practice might be carried forward and comprehensively shared. How can best practice be implemented and maintained enabling consistent outcomes?

My final concern will be that my research methodology enables qualitative judgements to be captured and recorded to gain a comprehensive understanding and ensure accuracy of data.

Chapter Three

Research design and methodology

3.1. Aim of study and research questions

Aware of the many concerns that the literature identifies as still existing within the provision and structure of MAW I will study MAW within a defined geographical region. I will seek to examine the relationship that exists between the structural features, the impact and the effect of those adults and children receiving and involved in MAW. By studying key findings identified within the literature of MAW, I hope to provide a greater understanding of the dynamics involved in effective MAW practice and help identify needs for future development

With experience of the organisation, running and improvement of Children's Services within a County of England, I am aware of the important role of Multi Agency Working (MAW) within Children's Services. Having been involved in the development of this style of working and being aware of its potential, I hope through this study to help improve understanding of MAW and so aid and develop implementation, practice and effectiveness.

MAW is a style of agency working that has evolved in recent years and is now widely proposed within UK Governmental guidance. MAW seeks to improve interagency effectiveness, cooperation and support especially within Children's services.

The aim of this study will be to:

- Identify people's understanding of knowledge, process, area and readiness for change,
- Develop a critical understanding of how management, especially strategic management, is impacting on the support and development of MAW,
- Critically explore forces that may be identified as inhibiting development of MAW,
- Establish a critical research basis of understanding and to assist the development of principles for good practice.

By increasing our understanding of the knowledge and level of experience and understanding of those involved it is hoped that capacity for improvement and change will be indicated and it will be possible to see where and how effective training may be

required and provided and at what levels. Hopefully the causes of any mismatch of knowledge and experience will be identified.

As MAW brings together national, regional and local objectives the influence and coordination of management at various levels is seen as critical. The influence of strategic management is important to the development and success of MAW as it involves and impacts on a range of agencies, many with differing styles of practice, language and custom. This study will seek to identify if any potential agency differences or priorities are proving problematic and explore their possible impact on MAW.

By seeking to identify forces impacting on the current development of MAW I will seek to identify and study that which enhances the development of both positive and negative forces so they can be further identified and understood to aid management development, planning, training and implementation. From improved knowledge of MAW I hope to help develop a critical research basis that will assist the development of principles of good practice.

Questions

From an exploration of the literature regarding MAW and from my personal experience of this way of working, four key questions have arisen concerning the development of this way of working.

My first research question concerns and explores the role and impact of strategic management and whether it is enhancing or hindering the development of the MAW process. What is the influence of strategic managers, who is involved and how are they equipped to drive change? Do senior managers fully understand and value MAW and might their actions be undermining rather than enhancing agency interaction and growth.

What are the key drivers managers should be using to establish and develop the role of MAW? MAW is an approach fostered by government policy to steer the development of Children's Services. For the strategic manager, what drives this policy, from a governmental, regional and local perspective, and do perspectives align?

My second research question concerns the varied rates of growth in the development of MAW. Why does MAW fail to take off in some areas/settings and not others? Are there factors inhibiting development of MAW and if I study those within my study area will findings be typical of other areas? Factors noted will be those identified by respondents and arising from observations and local documentary evidence

My third research question arises from question two. If inhibiting factors exist then how do those involved in MAW attempt to overcome inhibiting factors at the operational level? My study area contains a mixture of schools, teams and agencies, some facing problems, some noted for their innovative and effective practice. By identifying and gathering examples of successful practice, will this data be typical and of value when helping others?

My fourth research question concerns effective practice. As a practitioner I have experienced the effectiveness and potential of MAW, I have seen it successfully implemented and developed in various settings but there remains much criticism of multi agency working especially in poor urban areas where Child Protection and Safeguarding are important. What aspects and practices of MAW are identified as constituting good practice? What are the indicators used to identify good practice and what is good practice seen to be achieving that bad practice is not?

Finally, if armed with better understanding and practice within MAW, will this lead to further progress and effective development of MAW?

3.2. Data location and design of research programme

To ensure selection of suitable schools and agencies the following criteria and procedures were applied:

1. During the research period is the school likely to be free from inspection and other major external or internal pressures?
2. Have I already selected a school of this type?
3. Is this school's catchment area and social composition typical?

Respondents were sought from a typical cross section of research area agencies including education. Officers had to possess firsthand experience of working within school clusters of the study area. Schools chosen similarly had to reflect Infant, Junior and Primary provision of a typical size and control. Secondary schools had also to represent typical type and size and not be chosen for ease of research.

Some respondents also held managerial roles within their agencies. Agencies chosen represented statutory, non statutory and voluntary organisations and will not be identified to protect identity of respondents. Having selected schools and agencies I carefully selected officers, school staff, children and parents for their typicality.

3.3. Research Clearance and Entry

Following selection of research settings and respondents, entry permission was sought from the Chief Education Officer for Schools and local agency staff managers and (in the case of Health) the local Research Ethics Committee (REC). To interview school staff permission was sought from Head Teachers and to interview children permission was sought from parents and carers (see Appendix II).

Local Strategic Health Authority research clearance permission was referred to a higher panel to gain permission to interview a Health based member.

To ensure a good working relationship with chosen schools and make sure that staff felt free to openly express views, special attention was given to initial contacts and the building of trust and understanding fostered

Data collection and development of research tools

Construction of interview tools passed through three stages of development. To ensure suitable rate of data capture and uptake, use of a questionnaire mailed to MAW workers was dropped and focus given to a smaller research sample and increased use of delivered structured interviews.

Fixed, flexible and combination research designs were considered (Robinson 2008). Fixed designs offered carefully predefined methodology such as fully structured interviews that with a guaranteed return of data could be evenly applied to various settings. Flexible combination designs with unstructured interview plans did not offer sufficient consistency for meaningful comparisons to be made between varying research settings and were rejected.

The three Clusters cover a common geographical region that is socially cohesive and know to have pockets of deep deprivation. Two Clusters cover an old riverside town containing many large inter war Council estates and newly built fashionable housing. The third Cluster straddles the London M25 Ring Road boundary. It is a mixture of commuter area and farmland. The area includes significant numbers of Traveller families who have traditionally relied on seasonal farm work.

Local schools consist of traditional primary and secondary provision with many Church Aided primary schools. At the time of the research, the area had only one large Academy and no independent Faith schools. An urban Roman Catholic primary school and a rural Church of England village primary are included in the research sample. Primary schools tend to serve specific local communities which they seek to

understand and service. At the start of the research the population of the three Clusters exceeded 100,000.

I started by constructing an interview schedule for Head Teachers. From my literature study, observations and early meetings I formed a list of key issues and themes to explore (see Appendix I). I then decided in which order to address these.

The Head Teacher interview schedule was trialled with the aim of reducing the questions to a single side of A4 paper (see Appendix Ib). Questions were checked for clarity and ordered to gently walk respondents into the interview schedule. Limited questions were open and observational rather than judgemental.

By December 2008 a common set of interview questions had been formed (see Appendix Ic). Following trials, the questions and layout was improved to give greater guidance and clarity. Version three in April 2009 (see Appendix 1d) further improved the interview schedule assisting respondent understanding. For each respondent group the vocabulary, sentence construction and order was checked and modified to take account of differing audiences, i.e parents and young people (see Appendix Id).

A common set of interview questions were designed covering similar topics but constructed with wording and phrasing adjusted to assist each group of respondents (Appendix I). Flexibility was built in to allow interesting or unexpected rich lines of data to be followed and explored. The order, wording and flow of questions was deemed important with questions and subject matter enabling respondents to be led in and carefully walked through what appeared as a non threatening and coherent series of questions.

Question one introduced research and field of operation in an open ended easily answered manner. Early questions sought to elicit descriptions; positive and negative judgements of that which exists of historical, current and new developments related to MAW.

Once into the interview, strategic management was explored from different directions and data compared and triangulated. Increased focus enabled key areas to be examined in greater depth. For example respondents were asked about personal knowledge of key legislation related to MAW, in other questions reference was made to the same legislation and data explored and triangulated. Comparison gave a more accurate picture of actual knowledge and understanding.

Specifics and examples were sought to avoid vagueness. Terminology and acronyms were fully explained and respondents were encouraged to ask if there was anything they did not understand.

The research sample totalled sixty respondents. When important insights or questions arose from interviews they were reflected upon and fed back into the research programme.

Key Topics to be explored were drawn from key literature and document studies and cross referenced with personal, key officer and Head Teacher experience and comment. The length and duration of questionnaires was balanced to properly address and tackle issues and gather sufficient data while being manageable, focussed and able to be administered within busy work schedules.

For parents and children, interview depth and duration were also carefully gauged. Children were interviewed for ten to fifteen minutes and young people for thirty minutes. Parents were interviewed for thirty to forty minutes and officers for forty five minutes and longer as required. Examples of all questions used and subtle changes for each respondent group are given in Appendix I.

3.4. Trialling and development of interview programme

All structured interviews and observations were piloted in both primary and secondary schools. Respondents were told before pilot interviews this was to be an early trial session. After interview extra time was given for discussion and reflection on structure, understanding, accessibility and interviewer approach. Introduction of the questionnaire, timing and requirements, recording of the session and any changes or additions were examined.

Piloting occurred over a number of weeks enabling reflection and experimentation for both the interview approach and research questionnaire to be tested and adjusted to ensure respondent understanding and effectiveness (Appendix I). When piloting questions with agency officers it was important to ensure access to a suitable spread of untainted officers available for final interview.

Head Teachers were concerned with practical aspects of which staff, pupils or parents might best be interviewed, final decision resting with the interviewer. Teachers were concerned with how respondents might interpret questions leading to trials of different wordings. All adult respondents were asked similar questions, the structure of that given to children was different but addressed similar areas.

Piloting occurred in five schools covering primary and secondary phases and with two agency officers. After piloting, increased time was given to initial introduction, scene setting and introduction of ground rules. The wording of questions and timing was adjusted, in some cases more than once. A major challenge was to ensure busy staff

had time to stop thinking about current work responsibilities in order to focus and apply themselves quickly and fully to research tasks and questions.

Pilot respondents included two Head Teachers, two teachers (one a SENCO and one a Child Protection Officer), two groups of children and one parent plus two officers drawn from different agencies. I included data from the last three trials because the final agreed format had been chosen and respondents were from my research area. The data collected provided a rich source of insight and information which I did not want to dismiss. The content was thought to be valuable and of use to research.

Results could also be triangulated against school and officer respondent data to check validity. The three pilots where data was kept included an experienced male Head Teacher of a church primary school, an experienced female class teacher from a school serving an affluent area and finally an experienced female teacher adviser serving schools in an urban area.

To ensure data was captured use was made of both interview notes and an electronic recorder for which I sought respondent agreement. In reality notes proved a very useful running record with respondents often asking me to remind them of what they had just said or where they had gotten to before following a line of thought. We found this easier than rewinding the recorder. At the conclusion of each interview I asked each respondent if they were satisfied with the interview and offered for them to read my notes. One quickly scanned my notes and another asked for a copy as they had enjoyed thinking about MAW and wished to have a record of their thoughts.

Directly following each interview I listened to the recording and reviewed my running record and logged details in my field diary if necessary. I also reviewed all recordings and notes for a second time a few hours later. In a few cases words or phrases were changed. Trialling showed attention had to be given to gaining unobtrusive and audible recordings resulting in a digital recorder and new microphone being purchased during trials.

Once trials were complete interviews started. School staff, were interviewed first, starting with Primary schools then three Secondary schools moving on to agency officers. During trialling changes were designed to help focus on key issues and questions arising for that specific group. After meeting in schools with the Head Teacher, the interviewer talked first to school staff moving to pupils and parents and finally Head Teachers, this was ideally completed during one visit. Lastly, to enable any issues arising from interviews within a school to be explored further, the Head Teacher was interviewed.

At the time of initiating this research programme the study area contained no independent Faith schools and only one very large and atypical Academy. A decision was taken to focus on Local Authority school provision as this was most prevalent and it was within these schools that most MAW occurred. Within the study cohort were examples of an urban Roman Catholic primary school serving an area of high social deprivation and a Church of England village primary school serving a large rural area.

In three schools more than one visit was made to fit with busy staff routines and workloads. In two schools, interview appointments were curtailed rather than continue in unsatisfactory conditions. In the first school, the Head Teacher had important issues arise which demanded her urgent attention as they impacted on the entire school. Rather than interview a distracted Head Teacher we agreed that I should return at a calmer time.

On arrival at a second school, the Head Teacher admitted that she had forgotten to make the necessary arrangements for my visit. She said she would quickly rectify the situation and free the required staff and pupils as well as herself. Despite clearances and permissions having been obtained I asked that the school routine remain unchanged and that I return another day. I was concerned that my data would reflect staff and pupils being placed in an unusual and stressful situation. Upon my return with clearances re set, interviews at the school proceeded smoothly and I was thanked for my flexibility.

3.5. Research programme and detail of research settings

Primary schools selected included a typical cross section of large, small, denominational and community infant, junior and primary schools typical of the area. At secondary level, three schools were chosen serving different types of communities reflecting MAW in the study area. Schools selected included:

- One large urban Victorian infant school serving a working class owner occupier area.
- One small village Church of England primary serving a mixed rural community
- One rural primary serving a poor community including traveller families.
- One medium sized Roman Catholic primary serving an urban area of deep deprivation
- One large urban primary serving a large council owned estate

- One large urban primary serving an area of mixed affluence
- One medium sized urban junior school
- One large PFI urban secondary serving a poor community
- One medium sized girls' secondary high school serving a large urban and rural area with mixed affluence.
- One medium sized mixed secondary school serving a mixed catchment.

The last secondary school mentioned had to withdraw from this research programme due to unexpected OfSTED related pressures. A Secondary pupil referral unit was selected as a suitable replacement.

Within the schools selected for study, ten Head Teachers, ten teachers, four parents and carers as well as seven groups of children. Parents and carers were given the option to be interviewed in pairs and all children and young people were interviewed in pairs or groups. Children were selected from a single sex secondary school, a mixed PRU, a large junior, primary and a Catholic primary school. Parents and Carers were selected from an infant's school, a junior and a primary school. Most teachers had special responsibility for either Child Protection/Safeguarding or Special Educational Needs and experience of working with support agencies.

If a new focus developed during interviews emerging issues were addressed. I found this was helped by my prior knowledge and experience of working with this group of schools and the flexibility of my research tools. This led me to view issues in a different way and so move my own thinking forward to a better and broader understanding.

Research Programme

To collect suitable data, a carefully compiled interview schedule was constructed. With a small, defined area and specific number of possible respondents in mind, a structured agenda interview was chosen. Such an agenda offered consistency of content and delivery to all those interviewed and provided opportunity to ensure respondents understood questions which were also able to be explored. Individual interviews provide good opportunity to explore respondent experiences and feelings.

From examination of recent surveys, questions were constructed to address key areas of this research. Possible questions were discussed with selected officers and compiled into a structured agenda. Draft agenda questions were piloted with ten officers, two parents and two groups of children. Results were discussed with respondents for their

perceptions and ease of understanding and changes made. While the content of each question remained the same vocabulary was tailored to the respondent group and a welcoming opening question was added. The length of the agenda was also shortened to fit school routines (see Appendix II).

As noted earlier discussion with Head Teachers and agency officers showed recent LA /Health Authority surveys and questionnaires suffering from low uptake and data return. Investigation indicated level and pace of staff workload in both schools and agencies to be a key factor with few staff feeling able to give adequate time to either understanding or carrying out requests. My concern was how to avoid a low return and guarantee respondents gave due care and attention to their involvement. As a result careful contact was maintained with all respondents and I personally delivered all structured agenda interviews to catch problems and ensure consistency of delivery.

Copies of questions to be asked, topics and times were emailed to Head Teachers if requested. I stressed that I did not want staff spending time preparing answers. When requested, letters were sent to all parents and carers outlining research aims and objectives. When requesting to interview children, a letter outlining the research and a form seeking parental permission were sent via their school Head Teacher. By being transparent about research I hoped I could be more rigorous and searching when interviewing and that respondents would be confident to fully express themselves and not shy from difficult or sensitive issues. When arranging to meet agency staff individually or at meetings information was again provided.

Having chosen and piloted structured agenda interviews, respondents were now selected as typical and representative of a cross section of the research community. Issues arising were dealt with promptly to help ensure quality data was forthcoming and my research reputation would be such that I would continue to be welcomed.

3.6. Selection of interview respondents and other data sources

Within schools while Head Teachers were chosen due to the typicality of their school, many teacher respondents were selected because of their coordination of children's special needs (SENCOs), child protection, safeguarding or pastoral issues. These teachers were usually point of contact for agency staff and had most responsibility for MAW within their schools. Head Teacher advice was sought when selecting parent and child respondents.

Within primary settings children were selected from years five and six. These children were thought to have received agency support either in or outside of school. Aged

between nine and eleven, they were able to offer valuable contributions as receivers of MAW. No children were selected from infant schools. Children were interviewed in small groups, usually open school rooms known to them. Care was taken to outline interview context, procedure and people involved and the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

Within secondary settings young people were selected from both key stage three and four with their ages ranging from twelve to fifteen. All were selected because of experience of receiving multi agency help and support. Many young people chosen exhibited high levels of social need. All were pleased to be interviewed in small groups where they gained confidence from each other. At the start of each interview main aims and objectives and confidentiality of the research process was explained.

Parents and carers varied in their experience and confidence of agency interaction. Some were keen to be interviewed individually and confidently expressed clearly constructed views, while others liked the security of small group interview. All parents were given clear and careful explanations of the aims and objectives of the research programme and the confidentiality of the process.

Teacher respondents were mainly experienced, having had wide ranging contact with key children's agencies. Many had served schools for many years and had experience of working with officers from Education, Social Services, Police and Health. Most Head Teacher respondents were experienced and 80% had served their schools and communities for many years; they were confident to speak their mind and all were keen to assist improvement to local MAW.

Agency officer respondents were generally very experienced; they possessed varied professional backgrounds and held a variety of different responsibilities, ages ranged from mid twenties to near retirement. Most officer respondents knew their areas well and many knew officers from other key agencies.

In schools Head Teacher and Teacher interviews occurred in professional settings of choice. I asked that respondents be freed from duties when interviewed and was not prepared to interview in busy public areas as these locations were fraught with distractions, offering little confidentiality and poor audio recording. Parents were interviewed in groupings of their choice to aid confidence and children were interviewed in pairs or groups with arrangements and clearances being organised by their school. I supplied information regarding my research details aims and objectives and parental clearance forms.

The literature on MAW (DfES, 2004; Fitzgerald and Kay, 2008; Williams and Sullivan, 2010) suggests great variety may exist within agencies supporting schools. Complexity is provided by both the variety of respondents and schools chosen and whether their responses are consistent or differ. With limited resources available, as noted earlier I decided to increase my research and school and agency officer interviews now became a key area of data gathering.

Here are details of the role, gender, experience age and responsibility of respondents:

Head Teachers	<p>Gender: Female 6, Male 6</p> <p>Experience: large 5, medium 5, small 2</p> <p>Age: older 7, mid 3, younger 2</p> <p>Responsibility: Cluster 4, County 1</p>
Teachers	<p>Gender: Female 11, Male 1</p> <p>Deputy Head Teachers: 4</p> <p>Experience: large 6, medium 4, small 2</p> <p>Age: older 6, mid 4, younger 2</p> <p>Part time: 3</p>
Parents	<p>Gender: Female 5</p> <p>Age: older 4, younger 1</p>
Children and young people	<p>Group one: 6 pupils (3 male, 3 female); aged 10-11; involvement with health</p> <p>Group two: 5 pupils (2 male, 3 female); aged 9-10; involvement with Police, Health, Social Services</p> <p>Group three: 2 pupils (2 female); aged 9-10; experience of agency support.</p> <p>Group four: 14 pupils (8 female, 6 male); various ages 6-11; involvement with Police, Health, Social Services; school council</p> <p>Group five: 2 students (2 female); aged 13-14; involvement with Education Welfare, Police, Health, Social Services</p>
Officers	<p>Gender: Male 5, Female 7,</p> <p>Agency: Voluntary 3, large statutory agency 6, smaller statutory</p>

3,
Position: Senior manager 5, junior manager 4, officer 3
Age: older 4, mid 7, younger 1
Contact: primary only 0, secondary only 1, both 11

Figure 3: Respondent details.

Interview details

<i>Interviewees</i>	<i>Experience of MAW</i>	<i>Number</i> +	<i>Trials</i>
Children and Young people	5+ years	7 groups	2 groups
Parents and carers	5+	4	1
Teachers	5+	10	2
Head Teachers and leaders	10+	10	2
Agency officers	10+	10	2
Totals:	Respondents 60 +	Interviews 41	Trials 9

Figure 4: Respondent experience of MAW, number and trials.

Other data sources, staff meetings, observations, conversations and field notes

To record and experience interaction and decision making, notes recorded systematic observations of meetings and officers working in the field. As Koshy (2005) notes to avoid the pitfall of distorted interpretations, being over focussed or attracted to what one wishes to see an observation schedule was constructed. My observation schedule included:

1. Aim / special focus of observation
2. Meeting title / location / date
3. Members plus seating plan and observer location
4. Duration of meeting/ percentage coverage

This schedule was also used to record behaviour patterns and the number and type of interactions. Flexibility was built in to enable recording of comments and unexpected outcomes. In line with the model suggested by Hopkins (2002), the process was discussed with those being observed and feedback given after.

A research diary of field notes and other relevant observations and reflections was kept. Records were made of observational notes such as people giving and receiving support and anything thought to augment, provide richness, breadth or depth or challenge research findings.

Diary recordings included:

- Ideas as they occurred, evaluations and quality of progress. Feelings on happenings and impacts on this study.
- Descriptions of interviews and surroundings; my immediate thoughts on progress.
- Any relevant developments or impacts happening outside of my study.
- Notes from pre and post interview discussions and observations.

Diary entries helped thinking with entries acting as prompts to previous thoughts.

Documents available or suggested by respondents were collected along with a survey of central government and local government documentation and directives. Agency and staffing directives were also sought along with job descriptions, minutes of meetings, guidance and structure plans.

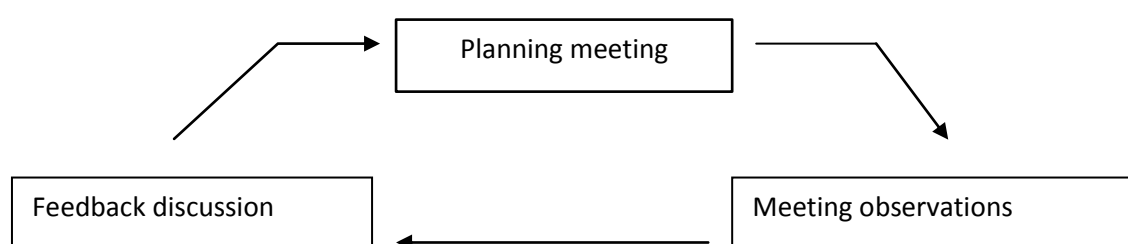


Figure 5: Recording data from observation of meetings

Included was what, why and how observations were made. The interviewer's actions sought to be unobtrusive with non judgemental feedback and adhered to the criteria agreed with those observed.

Recorded observations enabled analysis and reflection of interview content away from and without constraints of interview settings and captured information on interaction and

attitude and anything unusual or unexpected. Notes and incident logs of events and behaviours were kept. Recording was recognised as potentially invasive and the interviewer checked to see if such action was acceptable and not affecting respondents. Respondent agreement covered use of the recording and what should happen once research was complete.

3.7. Research reliability

By giving account, reference and justification of my generated data, I sought to show how and where it relates to my research questions (Mason 1996, p146). Similarly when asking questions awareness was made of the possible consequences of questioning, ensuring all interviews and questioning were done carefully and fully understood. By showing clearly my data source and connections (Mason, 1996, p4) I have sought validity and also helped relate to wider claims so that it remains possible to extrapolate from the data sample. Throughout the text where key points of reference are sought to the data record a three figure code is given (i.e. 12/ 45/5) the first number indicates the assigned number of respondent providing data. The second number provides the page number within written record (Appendix III) within which respondent comment is stored and the third number indicates question number recorded on that page and in answer to which comment was made. My analysis will also relate to things beyond the material at hand (Silverman 2000:111).

3.8. Data collection, Management, reliability and verification

To aid collection of data, relevant documentation was examined to help inform interviews. Interviews were ordered and coded to aid data gathering. Research started with schools first as this was the most familiar environment, so that issues could be more easily explored and understood. First visited were primary settings and then the potentially more complex secondary settings where I always asked to meet first with the senior manager of the setting, i.e. the Head Teacher. Following visits to all school settings and armed with insight from data gathered interviewing moved to agencies and officer respondents.

Documents were viewed as data sources in their own right. (Denscombe, 2003: 212). Books journals, agendas, minutes, reports and strategy documents, web pages and government and LA guidance and publications were now sought and examined for data to inform, improve understanding and help triangulate and validate interview findings.

Minutes of meetings and reports provided available, accurate, agreed accounts but were noted as being selective and representing a particular perspective.

All recorded conversations were considered a source of data. For interviews, a digital recorder was used. Planned use of a camera was dropped as while most respondents were uneasy about being videoed they were all happy to be voice recorded. Difficulty was also experienced in trial sessions selecting suitable video locations that picked up facial and body expression if more than one person was present. Use of a small audio recorder and small microphone meant intrusion was minimised. All digital recordings were downloaded and stored electronically in one secure accessible place. From this data store, computer aided search and analysis took place when needed. This method was not comprehensive as key data was often provided after formal interviews had ceased.

Transcripts were made of key interviews. Notes were also made of all other interviews to aid data analysis. After each interview recordings were studied and compared to running records made by myself during interviewed. Following checking of recordings against the written record any missing important data was added. Running records proved an accurate and succinct accessible record of all interviews and were of great use when analysing and coding. Transcripts were also made of interviews selected of each group of respondents and cross checked.

Agency officer interviews took place in a variety of locations usually related to the agency the person worked for. Having been involved with MAW, locations were all known and my face familiar to key figures. I had to be aware of ethical issues relating to stress and to ensure that my presence did not provoke unexpected reactions. I had to be aware that people gave a genuine view and did not seek to please. Luckily previous working together to develop effective MAW had addressed building good team work and members being able to express their views and concerns. Knowing ground rules of dress code, language and terminology commonly used within different settings was viewed as important if I, as interviewer, and they as respondents were to be relaxed and at ease.

Respondents appreciated receiving clear information as to the aim and objective nature and duration of interviews. Most respondents were keen to participate. If any reticence was noted respondents were asked that worries or concerns be mentioned. During two interviews school situation emergencies led to interviews being paused and in one case reset due to staffing problems. As a familiar person who understood the environment, respondents said they were happy to share the situation knowing that I would understand the action they might need to take.

Data reliability and verification - triangulation

Denscombe (2003) and Cohen (2003) highlight benefits to research of obtaining data from a variety of sources. In key areas, quality of data was enhanced by triangulating data collected from both differing and corroborating perspectives. Data has been collected from a variety of different settings in both schools and agencies, and from a variety of respondents representing differing levels of involvement in MAW at managerial, provider and reception of services as well as relevant documentation. Data collection occurred while the interview programme was running making this study technically a concurrent embedded approach rather than a pure concurrent triangulation approach (Creswell 2009, p213-214).

A greater level of data reliability was sought by ensuring that data was collected from a variety of sources and by the use of a consistent research methodology and interviewer. Use of a consistent interview framework helped identify differences in setting, agency or practice. Variance in data was related to setting factors and helped elicit sources and perceptions at each setting. All investigation was completed by me to maximize consistency, research framework and human interaction was kept constant.

At all times every effort was made to avoid bias. By clearly stating my position as researcher through this research and my own background I hope to have identified where personal beliefs and bias may exist. I have sought to authenticate data findings by building on literature of research findings and feedback from my respondents and doctoral supervisors.

To ensure internal validity as previously noted triangulation of data has been employed and the respondent has acted as a data check. I have also involved peer examination by a fellow doctoral student and from the outset clarification has been recorded in writing of any potential researcher bias and also addressed under the heading 'Researcher position in the field'.

3.9. Ethics and personal values related to the research area

This investigation is being undertaken with the full approval of the Local Authority, Senior Agency officers and the informed consent of all interviewed. Collection of research data was also approved by the heads of schools and agencies involved. It is in line with The British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for

educational research (BERA 2004). As already mentioned all respondents were given a full description of procedures, use of data and confidentiality procedures and the opportunity to amend or withdraw part of the interview transcript if they so wished with confidentiality. All respondents were given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the research programme and were offered a final copy of research findings.

Having chosen the schools, agencies and representatives of the area to be involved, care was given to ensuring full confidentiality was maintained. I met with the Chief Education Officer (CEO) to outline my research plan and seek permission to enter schools. I then met with senior officers of the school district, clusters and support agencies to alert them to my research plans, plus Health SRC. I sought at all times to be open and transparent with respondents. All respondents were informed of full permission having been given, relations with their senior officers being at this time very positive. I received only positive comment and respondents felt they were also given permission to take part and make comment.

All data and recordings were stored with reference codes rather than names. As no personal data was stored on an electronic database there was no implications for the Data Protection Act 1998.

I also considered how my presence, or the research programme, might have a detrimental effect upon any selected institution or agency. Whilst keen that my data would reflect the tough and raw edged problems and decisions of real life, I also had a responsibility to ensure my research did not undermine or damage that which I studied and from an efficiency perspective, that schools had the manpower and ability to respond to my demands. Such action was taken to improve the validity of my data and not to acquire a soft or easy research option. At all times I exercised care and caution as these were people that worked with each other and I had to ensure that my actions would not undermine or in any way impair the quality of their work or support provided. I did not make value judgements or report on the quality of anybody's work. When offering respondents confidentiality I sought to encourage openness and avoid any recrimination following publication of research. I did not find this to be the case but remained alert and at key stages of my research sought by data triangulation to check the nature of respondent comments. I did say that if it ever proved necessary to divulge names I would first inform those officers and schools involved; to date this has not been necessary.

At the start of my research I worked as a Cluster manager and as such it was possible that Head Teachers and teachers may have felt dependent on my positive judgements of their work and school. I did not find this to be an issue but continued to monitor and

triangulate respondent comment. Upon my retirement my situation changed but I remained aware that school staff may have been concerned about the possibility of me passing comment on to successors. To deal with such situations my strategy was not to involve schools where I thought this might be an issue or where I had in recent years had to make public judgements or where high levels of insecurity existed.

One secondary school was dropped from the research programme following a critical OfSTED inspection. At all times I had to be as open as possible and provide transparency in all that I did.

Personal values and relationship to research area

My interest in MAW arises from first hand experience as a professional involved in the development, delivery and receipt of multi agency support within Children's Services. I worked within my research area with some national involvement where work patterns were still developing.

I am aware of the potential impact of my professional role as a past local leader, manager and practitioner, regional and national team member, the impact of my work on others and my understanding and possible bias. At the time of interview I was known to all Head Teacher respondents, three quarters of teacher respondents and most officer respondents but not to child or parent respondents.

Knowledge of school and agency settings helped when arranging interviews. My position as both an insider and outsider helped give understanding but hampered fresh learning and perceptions; firsthand experience of both settings and tasks required of respondents appeared to give credibility and increase respondent confidence.

Interpreting results

A data approach of Miles and Huberman (1994) was chosen for data reduction of all data analysis. Identified data was colour coded, scanned, selected and ordered enabling findings to have a workable approach (Appendix V). Key codes were memorized enabling meaningful scanning of data and ideas and so enabling questions to be explored.

Coding addressed my four research questions, each further sub divided into policy, process and practice related data. Data was analysed by reference to respondent group noting their type of school or agency. Where other issues arose they too were given a code, logged and reflected upon (Appendix V).

Texts were analysed and issues for each code identified and logged. Once logged by code, all data was further analysed and reduced, patterns were noted and data was ordered into a logical form. Patterns and issues arising were further examined before being written. In some cases the act of writing gave rise to additional patterns and links being identified and existing links being questioned.

Interview notes and transcripts were colour coded, all documents were photocopied and codes applied. All relevant data was collected and all other material was now excluded. From codes, two lists were compiled: Issues and Comments. Those parts of my data not coded were revisited to ensure all data had been fully examined. Coded data was revisited as in a number of cases data was registered under more than one code. This process helped further develop understanding of data and often gave rise to further scanning and coding.

Structure of research findings

To fully report findings of this research into the functioning of MAW I will present data from interviews, observation and documentary evidence. I note where data supports issues which were identified within literature and where they were not supported, as well as how such issues might impact on the provision of MAW.

To aid understanding of research evidence key points will be coded to enable reference back to original evidence, respondent interviews, observational, diary and other research notes and records. Respondent data will be coded to the person interviewed (4/24/3), page number where recorded (4/24/3) and question answer (4/24/3) as recorded in my running record of all respondent interviews (Appendix III). Observational, field diary and other records are referenced in the bibliography.

Findings are presented in four sections:

Section One will report on strategic management and its role in supporting MAW. As part of this section I will add insight by examining understanding and knowledge of MAW amongst senior managers. This examination evolves from a wider study of knowledge displayed by different groups involved in provision of MAW. Special attention will be paid to the level of knowledge and acquisition of understanding of strategic managers with implications for local, regional and national management and Safe Guarding of children.

Section Two will report findings related to structure and practice and that which might hinder or inhibit effective provision and delivery of MAW taking place. Here the comments of Head Teachers and Officers will be reported with these two groups of

respondents supplying the majority of data. Here the five most commonly reported areas of concern will be individually reported on.

Section Three will examine that evidence which enhances and fosters successful functioning, growth and the forward progress of MAW. Here will be reported findings on how the inhibiting factors and contextual barriers reported in Section Two are being overcome Reference here will be to the experiences and observation of my interview respondents.

Section Four will start a process that will continue beyond this research programme. This section will report on the discovery of possible principles that could stand as examples of guidance to good practice. Each of the four sections will also focus on policy, implementation and practice of MAW.

The literature of the development of MAW highlights three potential problems to bear in mind:

1. paucity of research findings especially of the impact and outcomes of MAW,
2. lack of clarity over terminology, structure and impact of MAW,
3. concern regarding the quality of support for vulnerable children, especially the failure of interagency communication within MAW.
4. Developmental shortcomings impacting on MAW

Special attention has been paid to all four issues especially child safety within number three and structural development within number four. The development cycle of MAW will be examined against successful practice within Children's Services where the evolution of MAW should ideally show a smooth upward progression developing knowledge, understanding and practice (Figure 4,p63).

Definition

Strategic planning is defined as projecting where your association expects to be in five, ten, fifteen years and how your association will get there. It is a systematic planning process involving a number of steps that identify the current status of the association including its mission, vision for the future, operating values, needs (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), goals, prioritized actions and strategies, action plans and monitoring plans. Strategic planning is the cornerstone of every common interest community. Without strategic planning the community will never know where it is going, much less know if it ever got there. (Foundation for Community Association Research, 2000)

While the above definition shows strategic planning following a linear pathway, within the developing and complex world of MAW, strategic management may well involve adaptable aspirations and employ modelling of possibilities. Development might be more a process of exploration and opportunity.

This section will focus on the impact of management decisions and respondent's general perceptions and understanding of MAW.

I was aware that the environment of Children's Services was and is ever changing, especially in relation to safeguarding of pupils for which current and updated rules were checked and observed. In my next chapter I will address this matter in greater detail and show how data was coded and interpreted. In Chapter Four I will present the findings and data gathered, its effectiveness, efficiency and discuss how far literature review findings have been supported.

4. Chapter Four: Research data findings

In this important chapter I think it important that I first give an overview of how research data has been arranged and organised for analysis. Research findings have been divided into four main sections, each aligned to my four research questions, addressing MAWs strategic management, inhibiting factors, overcoming barriers and achieving success and identification of key principles for best practice.

In section one my main research theme is that of strategic management and support. Here data has been organised in two ways firstly comment regarding outcomes of strategic actions, procedures and support for MAW organised according to respondent groups, these being Head teachers and teachers, officers, parents and children. I will attempt to then cross reference these findings gathering evidence of MAW knowledge, understanding and location from my different respondent groups.

For sections two, three and four research findings have been organised by section. In section two data has been organised according to most prominent negative concerns and the top five have been given in order of strength. In sections three and four the top five positive and most effective actions impacting on MAW have also been assembled for further analysis and comparison between settings.

Section one: Strategic impact: respondent perceptions, respondent knowledge of MAW.

Section two: Constraints and barriers: data addressing five main concerns

Section three: Strengths and progress: data for five main areas of progress and impact

Section four: Protocols and principles: data re five main areas for best progress

Figure 6: Layout of research data findings

Findings of section one indicate high levels of respondent concern regarding strategic support for MAW. Respondent knowledge of this area is poor with few understanding the role of the local Children's Trust and limited In service training opportunities. Concern arises for the impact on Child Protection services. Data for section two indicates weak strategic leadership and management of MAW, the existence of poor lines of communication between front line workers and strategic managers and a general lack of quality control.

In section three findings show close agency cooperation and support to exist, the development of sound multi agency professional partnerships family centred thinking and provision and understanding fostered by increasingly supportive local Clusters.

Finally section four provides a collection of principles and protocols gathered from respondent experience of successful outcomes regarding structures, procedures and work practice. Here the importance of effective communications and good understanding of the complexity and interconnectivity of MAW functioning are evident.. All research evidence has been collected from first hand observation and experience of MAW functioning given by respondent practitioners, providers and users.

Data has been recorded as reported and will be analysed in a number of ways. When working with children we have learnt to listen and value what is said. Here respondent comment has been equally valued, the question for analysis being 'why have they said that and possibly what lay behind such a comment'.

4.1 Strategic management of MAW: Respondents perceptions and knowledge

My first research question seeks to identify the role and impact of strategic management on the quality and process of MAW, an area where the literature of MAW raises concern but shows little research to have occurred. Many Head Teachers, Teachers and Officers (40%+) make reference to experience of low quality strategic support, comment is often as a complaint and sometimes made with great feeling (4/21/3), (5/32/7). That so many respondents note the presence of little strategic management of MAW, is seen as an important finding (6/37/2c), (1/7/2).

Respondent knowledge and understanding of both management and planning of MAW appears initially to be limited (3/16/9), (5/32/7), this finding is in line with national research findings. Strategic management of the introduction of MAW and its development also appears limited. When asked about MAW related inter-agency training, respondents gave little or no comment, a quarter plus look puzzled and gave no response. Those attending County training describe it as of limited value (3/16/10) and five respondents noted a need for training (14/98/6). Overall respondent understanding and support appeared restricted.

Agency officers are the only respondent group to view MAW and agency interaction strategically. Teachers, Heads and Agency Officers criticize strategic managers, such as

County Senior officers, as being out of touch with the reality of MAW (12/78/20),(5/32/7) and needing to learn about current practice (17/109/2b), (4/26/7). Of note while quick to criticise, some of these respondents had difficulty identifying their own strategic managers (22/129/10).

While suggesting County officers improve and update their practice, few respondents made reference to ensuring quality control of their own work. One officer respondent asked if senior officers of the County were 'losing their grip' regarding what they were doing; also noted by an officer was a need for practitioners to keep their seniors informed as to what is happening (20/122/10). Leadership, management and knowledge of good MAW practice appears limited, supporting a mixed quality of provision. What do respondents think?

Strategic management: Views of Head Teachers

Half of Head Teacher respondents express critical views of the strategic management they received for MAW at both national and county levels. Heads question national and regional strategic support, policy and practice, they know of some strategic managers but not all and interestingly none had a clear idea of the important strategic function of their local Children's Trust. Three Heads are unsure whether to describe their strategic support as either good or bad and are not sure what they are judging.

Another area most Heads view as problematic is communications. As busy officers, clear and effective communications are highly valued. Heads feel processes need improving at strategic level by the addition of County guidance such as regular briefing notes. Five Heads think they are not kept suitably informed of developments and change at either county or national levels. Few Heads know of or use the Children's Trust website called Trust Web, which is found by one Head to be cumbersome (3/15/5). Heads note that with so much change and development occurring, when information arrives it is often in the form of flows of unsorted messages, problematic and requiring management. Strategic support and communications for Heads multi agency working appears generally unsatisfactory and limited.

Heads express the need for strategic managers of MAW to be more active, helpful and practical (4/26/7).

Locally Clusters are reported seeking to help provide basic overviews of new developments with many Head Teachers relying heavily on information provided at local Head Teacher meetings (7/44/3). Here strategic management is noted as starting to develop from both the Cluster Manager (CM) and Cluster board (CB) but not to the

extent outlined in the CM (LEO) job description (Appendix VII). Cluster support for Head teacher's strategic needs - while limited - appears to growing.

Strategic management: Views of Teachers

Teacher respondents were more outspoken than Head Teachers. Comments came from those in Primary and Secondary settings, working with agency staff, many located in schools. Because children's many social, health and learning needs are now receiving specialist agency support, respondent teachers had been involved in many meetings outside of the classroom.

With the introduction of MAW, three teachers note there having been no strategically organised help to understand or plan the introduction and development of the multi agency way of working.

Three teachers are unsure what is happening and those questioned in an infant school report minimal knowledge and understanding of recent developments in MAW including one not understanding the meaning of the term MAW.

At secondary level one respondent teacher noted only their leaders were helped to understand MAW related developments and changes. As a teacher this respondent wanted to be included in local MAW related discussions and kept informed of developments at both local and national level (13/921/5).

Teacher respondents felt many fellow staff were not aware of developments within MAW either at local or national level or what was happening regarding agency support and inter agency working. Interestingly teachers are more critical than their Head Teachers of County strategic support noting directives being sent without any form of prior notification or consultation. Teachers are annoyed that regardless of planning schedules they are often expected by strategic managers to stop and implement what they critically describe as manager's 'flavour of the month' (4/26/7).

Teacher data provides examples of little respect existing for a generally unknown and faceless body of strategic managers described variously as 'those at the centre, senior managers or strategic managers'. Criticism appears to be generally aimed at county officers showing lack of consideration or understanding. County courses and meetings were singled out for criticism as being often not useful, too long, set at difficult times and in distant locations.

Communications appear less of an issue for Teachers, few know of or use the local Children's Trust website and many, while aware of the ECM website, do not use it.

(11/77/5) For teachers strategic support and guidance especially from County appears to be limited.

Strategic management: Views of Agency Officers

Agency Officer's strategic concerns for MAW are high and similar to those of teachers. Officers are concerned that MAW is not being well managed at the national level. Officers agree with teachers that some schools are unsure of their roles and feel at national level much is done to them and handed down by national government without regional or local consultation.

Officers unlike Head teachers are generally positive about being kept informed of development and change. Seven officers feel they are kept well informed of what is happening to MAW at national, county and local levels.

'At national level officers feel the Children Act 2004 has done much to make people aware of the jig sawing of often disjointed new initiatives' (1/7/2)

At County level many officers report attending informative away days and briefings organised by their local Clusters. Interestingly, they used the County website more than national sites. One officer says:

'I know by what is sent to me or in front of me; Team meetings, a lot of professional development. In this county you are well looked after. Training in my agency is second to none, and if a case is put to District Managers for, say, child protection, it can happen.' (16/106/5)

Such attitudes and training opportunities appear to exist within a specific agency or within a specific cluster and some Officers speak positively of their agency training. While positive about local organisation and some county developments, the same officers are also critical of shortcomings of strategic management at national level, noting much has been left to local development. .

'Management could be improved. We're missing out on a lot of strategic leadership' (1/7 /2)

Overall, Officers think the sharing of MAW based information is variable and could be improved and while one officer from Social Services notes training as second to none (16 /106/5) the other nine officers are less glowing, describing personal and professional training as generally lacking. Maybe one agency's training is very good however respondent replies give no sign of this training being shared with other agency members..

‘Agencies doing their own training are not providing or appear not to be sharing their opportunities for those from other agencies to join in.’ (17 /110/5)

Officers are aware that many school staff and parents remain unaware of their local Children’s Trust (14/97/3). Locally organised work shadowing is thought to help but need is identified for programmes of high quality training to be mounted and shared between agencies. If delivered by just one agency such as Education, officers note a danger that no one agency should look to be dominant. Additionally officers note if an over reliance on one agency, funding cuts could stop that agency’s support for MAW and jeopardise local training provision (14 /98/3).

While critical of strategic management at national and regional level, officers saw much good work starting to emanate from Cluster Partnerships (20/120/4). Local managers are starting to develop and address MAW related issues at local meetings and in well received local newsletters.

‘I do my best to inform workers’ (20 / 121/5)

Local Officers see the importance of supporting front line workers who are sometimes ‘unclear’ regarding MAW (20 / 121/5). Officers question whether County officers are as informed as those of the local Cluster. If County officers carrying important MAW related strategic responsibilities are not well informed, local officers ask what might be the impact on senior management decision making.

‘Yet another reason why some Head Teachers, teachers and officers are concerned that strategic management is sorely needed, missing’ (1 /7/2), ‘lacking’ (6/37/2c)

Emerging findings of Strategic management

1. Literature raises many concerns but few answers
2. All types of provider agree problems of quality and support
3. Worryingly low level of understanding of strategic Local Children’s Trust
4. Lack of teacher respect from poor perception of consideration and respect
5. Absent but starting to emerge from local Cluster management.

4.2 Impact of knowledge and understanding of MAW

The challenge I now face is that while respondents have provided much critical data and comment, they have given few positive descriptive comments regarding the impact of strategic manager’s might work. To gain an understanding of impact I next examine the MAW specific knowledge base of each group of respondents. Ideally all should have

been strategically equipped with a general understanding and equally well informed of the main aims, objectives, skills, legislative and non legislative drivers of this new way of working.

Returns from five different respondent groups should indicate how effectively managers have ensured the understanding and knowledge of their work force involved in MAW. I next examine the data returns from four groups of respondents.

Understanding of MAW by Head Teachers

From nine respondent Head Teachers and one secondary school, data shows eight to have a sound basic understanding of MAW. Three Heads give some negative comment with two showing limited understanding of some aspects of the MAW process.

Many Heads note:

‘Agencies now have the same aims and objectives, are working closely together and achieving outcomes. Closer working is now under a single agenda.’ (3/1/1)

‘There is now an obligation to work together, share information and those that know better to act on their behalf, loco parentis and duty of care.’ (5/2/14)

Five Head teachers have indicated good knowledge of MAW stating positively that there are now agency professionals in schools, especially for the vulnerable’ (3 /14 /2a). They have a key support role, additional to that of subject and form teachers. All Heads know of their multi agency support teams that advise them especially about who best to use, to decide and to contact (13 /85 /2). Heads note growing awareness of what different agency officers do and show an increasing involvement in Cluster management (8/57/2) helping augment the specialist professional support available to their children and schools. While bringing added responsibility and work load to Heads and Teachers, Cluster support also brings a great wealth of insight, knowledge and depth to their schools and community.

Heads and Teachers are also becoming more aware of their areas of weak understanding and need to know more:

‘Lack of understanding of each other’s professional language’ (3 /14 /2c)

‘Professionals in schools) feel undervalued voice not listened to, not fully consulted.’(3/14/2c)

‘Multi agency meetings, too many, overwhelming, do not work.’ (4 /18 /2)

At local Cluster level the above respondent comments show agencies and schools managing and some times muddling through. Concerning policy, many Heads note improved coordination and improved ability to focus on the needs of their children

through a trusted local planning and review process. The aim of MAW is now widely viewed as “getting people together, talking the same language and getting more involved”.

While cooperative working is sought, no comment is received on how strategic issues, (such as handling of interagency problems or dissent within MAW) is handled. Two large agencies are noted as being sometimes difficult to work with (3/14/1c) but there are no reported strategies present. Many Heads show good understanding of positive gains that MAW brings (3/2a/14), but speak equally eloquently of children’s needs frustrated by continuing shortcomings such as lack of involvement of certain important key officers from large agencies such as Doctors (GPs) (7 /44/2).

Head Teachers have much to say about the everyday practice of MAW. When asked about the structure of MAW, who is involved and how effectively agency workers respond to individual child needs, the results are positive. Main statutory agencies of Health, Police, Social Services and Education are described as active along with Voluntary Services (VS) which is generally well respected. VS are noted for being flexible and allowing staff to join and shadow their working, to learn more. Many Heads speak of having or developing good understanding of the aims and objectives of such a new way of working despite the demands on their precious time. National guidance such as that for ECM are known, used and valued by many who liked the clear messages and focus of the five outcomes, what children most importantly need. The ECM website is recognized and used by some but not all (4/21/4).

Understanding of MAW is seen as coming from national guidance such as ECM and locally from Head Teacher’s professional and local support systems, meetings, information sheets, briefings and more recently away days. Those in regional authority whether strategic managers or local Children’s Trust members are not praised and come in for significant criticism. Local Cluster managers are however viewed positively (21/123/2).

Trusts: ‘remote’ (4/22/3), ‘not clear to me’ (4/29/2), ‘not much’ 8/64/3, ‘no particular view’ (12/86/3)

‘(Strategic) Managers, what do I think of them? no not a lot.’ (7/50/7), ‘those in ivory towers with wonderful ideas’ (5/535/7)

Head Teachers make only passing mention to the lack of monitoring and evaluation of current structures, however their concerns highlighted that such a need exists. As noted, two Head Teachers admit their own knowledge base requires improvement and that they need to be better informed on MAW. Managers at national level are viewed by

many Head Teachers as sometimes distant and detached and likely to impose change without discussion.

From the above, Heads seek to keep themselves informed but appear to lack many important strategic structures such as conflict procedures, quality control, training and guidance structures. Strategic management looks to have a light presence with many important structures lacking

Understanding of MAW by Teachers

While Head teachers show possession of knowledge of MAW, the views of teachers are weaker and surprisingly different. Teachers and their assistants perceive MAW not as involving a broad range of agencies working together but as the work of much smaller educational and school based support services augmented by the larger agencies of Social Services, Health, Police and Voluntary Services.

As well as educational services, nine teachers note school nurses as key member of their MAW team. Seven note only educational support services. Five teachers see Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and voluntary support bodies as key members of their MAW team and secondary school teachers also identified drug support, youth service, child protection and Connexion officers as key members of a school based MAW team.

In affluent areas a lower incidence of agency support and involvement is noted. School staff have less idea of who is involved in MAW and how such involvement functions. Respondent say they are not aware of local structures, aims or objectives of MAW. National and regional knowledge of MAW and its influence appears to be equally limited.

Teachers claim an awareness of key national legislation, especially The Children Act (2004) and County developments however when questioned only one teacher showed knowledge and understanding of the Act and local arrangements. Seven teachers indicated a general understanding of ECM but none was aware of the work, role and strategic importance of the local Children's Trust.

Teachers show mixed and in some cases significant lack of knowledge of MAW which in the absence of strategic oversight and support leaves MAW poorly defined and understood and those that teachers support clearly at risk. At schools where Head Teachers understand MAW this knowledge is not always shared with teachers (10/67/5). Teachers do not appear to augment their knowledge of MAW by sharing or exchanging information as happens amongst Head teachers. Such an absence of understanding is of great concern and an area not identified within the literature on MAW.

Understanding of MAW by Parents and Children

If Head Teachers perceive MAW as the work of a range of statutory, non statutory and voluntary agencies, and teachers and school staff see this as the work of mainly school support teams, how do parents and children - the receivers of support - view MAW?

Parents take their support seriously noting that MAW is a policy and process that gets the right person in front of them - whether officers, doctors or school nurses.

Parents are aware that different agencies are helping their children and schools, and that the aim of MAW is to help bring services and skills from a wide range of places and agencies to support their children.

‘All runs smoothly and people work together. Parents need more information re what is available, sheets where to go to, help for parents who wouldn’t ask.
(8/54/9)

Parents view MAW as an important process accessing higher levels of expertise and helping support bodies outside of schools position themselves to help children.

Parent’s knowledge of the work and practice of different support agencies appears limited and related to their child’s own specific needs. Parents are reliant on their children’s school for information. A few schools hold parent evenings with the school nurse and police community support officer (PCSO) present. Also the school PCSO might deliver a short news letter. Aside from such support most parents rely heavily on the knowledge and understanding of their children’s teacher and assistants. When asked about their own awareness of MAW, some parents say they are happy and that their school keeps them informed. Few have any awareness or understanding of key national or regional legislation or developments regarding MAW.

Regional and local training and information for parents exists but none aids understanding of MAW. Training for parents or teachers has been checked and found to no longer exist either locally, regionally or nationally. Worryingly, parents appear to have complete confidence in their school teachers for information and understanding of MAW although there is no strategic body to highlight their plight, guard or tell them otherwise. This is another area of great concern not identified within the literature on MAW.

Understanding of MAW by Agency Officers

The most detailed understanding of MAW policy and practice comes from agency officers some of whom have legislative responsibility within their roles. Agency officers note, having opportunities to attend national and regional training on MAW. Officers view

MAW as being important because it enables professionals to come together to assist and support vulnerable children. Officers recognise that linking is complex but important as MAW connects through Clusters, schools and various forums and groups of professionals to the vulnerable.

Respondents of this group recognise that officers from different agencies may have different priorities or a different ethos however they feel MAW involvement should be made as broad as possible to involve many agencies including those from the voluntary sector. Officers liked to view MAW from a strategic viewpoint rather than refer to agencies by name using group terms such as statutory, voluntary or third sector support. Strategic management provision receives mixed review and while some see the local Children's Trust as carrying out an important role, not all agree and one leading officer comments:

'Trusts, maybe it is supposed to be invisible, don't see a lot coming out of it. What is it?' (23/132/2C)

Five respondent Officers (50%) attach importance to the process of working together to a common clearly defined goal/outcome. Two officers question the term agencies, preferring terms such as 'strategic partnership' or 'our group voice'. One officer thought that terminology used within MAW may no longer be correct or keeping pace with national changes. Another officer did not like the term MAW preferring instead 'Integrated Support' or 'Integrated Working'. Again here is an example of strategic agreement lacking over definition and terminology. What is the impact of such vagueness and is it to be expected in a fast developing area? The mechanism and the workings appear more important than who is involved, highlighting the complexity of different terminology with some terms having different meanings to different agencies. No strategic guidance appeared to exist

Some officers see the business and voluntary sector as important to their work and an area that not all officers understand. Most officers see the process of MAW as involving a broad range of agencies which they rarely name individually. When pressed, six officers cite health, four mention education and voluntary services, three point out social services and youth services and two refer to the Police. All mention and value the work of voluntary services.

Officers appear to gain from some sort of strategic guidance regarding training however there remains much that is muddled and unclear. Officers seem to be gaining some strategic support from their local multi agency involvement. Officer knowledge of MAW appears not to be of high quality but better than that of teachers and parents.

Key Messages

- + Clusters listening; trying to support**
 - +Officer opportunities; work and learning in schools**
- + Increased agency understanding; work shadowing**
 - County officers: lack of understanding and consideration**
 - Limited strategic involvement and few training opportunities**
 - Teachers: limited MAW knowledge for supporting Parents**
 - Strategic officers: not understanding workers roles and needs**

Figure 7: Key messages - Knowledge and understanding of MAW

4.3 Strategic Management: Impact on regional support for vulnerable children

A further area not fully embraced by research literature on MAW is the potential shortcomings in current strategic management that impact on support for vulnerable children. What might be the impact of shortcomings in knowledge and understanding of MAW and could it threaten the MAW systems used to support provision of security and safety for local children? Lord Laming (2003) in his enquiry report stressed the importance of all in children's services working together to protect children:

'Support for children and families cannot be achieved by a single agency acting alone. It depends on a number of agencies working well together.' (Laming, 2003)

Concerned that decision making on MAW might be compromised, respondents were asked if they think strategic managers at County level have a clear understanding of MAW and its relationship to safeguarding. One concern is whether managers would know what to value and guard or would their budgetary pressures and concerns be allowed to override and potentially threaten this important safety provision and aspect of MAW.

'The centre and centre governors are often not aware of what they are doing and already doing or done eg 'CAF forms.' (4/27/7)

Many respondents cite as an example of strategic officer incompetency a recently run training course. Shortly before interviewing began, County Managers took a strategic decision to provide and oversee two days of training to support the implementation of a national strategy roll out to improve support for vulnerable children. Training was intended to address the implementation of a new coordinated National Common

Assessment Framework Form (CAF) planned to become an improved universal approach. The intent was to ensure all involved professionals have common access to reporting and are identically informed and aware in all areas of the country making for significant improvement in general and multi agency support for vulnerable children.

Firstly, Heads noted local strategic managers failing to grasp the overall importance of implementation of a common assessment form and importance of the CAF initiative. Deciding that as they were a large county, senior County Officers decided that their own identity mattered more and they needed to bring change and develop to the framework for more effective local use (3/17/10). The CAF was now no longer a common agreed assessment tool (4/27/7). Key officers from a broad cross section of local agencies, including many with heavy work schedules were invited to attend two days of training for the implementation of this new and locally adjusted framework.

With minimal worker consultation, County Officers constructed a training programme. Many locations were chosen and much money spent. Here are a few of the comments given by teachers, Head Teachers and Agency Officers when asked to comment after attending this training:

‘Done training, not helpful’ (4/22/10)

‘Introduction of CAF, a disaster’ (3/16/10)

‘Biggest waste of two days ever’ (4/28/4)

‘Real concerns re implementation’ 22/128/3b)

‘CAF needs more practical training’ (11/83/4)

‘Ill conceived training and support’ (3/17/10)

Further comments regarding the lack of ability and vision of County Strategic Managers were no more positive and reinforced suspicion that senior officer were out of touch and lacking in understanding and concern for both MAW (4/27/7) and more importantly Child Protection. A senior and highly experienced teacher noted with concern:

‘To be honest they’re (children) shifted from school to school; very vulnerable; Social Services closed the files on them. School expressed concerned horror. It is frightening, shocking; a mum applied for Education Otherwise (home education) Children slipping through the net. Social Services work load is too heavy, slipping through the net. I cannot go and knock at doors. Vulnerable children are not well served in some cases’. (13/92i/3)

Another noted:

'Children are slipping through the net through inter borough issues, boundaries and cost issues' (6/45/2b).

Head Teachers show the greatest concern. The key issues were the lack of understanding and quality of training content, overcoming agency cultures and lack of development due to funding problems (already noted in the research literature). County managers are noted now overriding long term planning and sending schools multiple short term 'must do' requests that as noted earlier are viewed as little more than 'little relevant flavours of the month. (4/27/7)'.

While my research area is generally perceived as progressing (8/59/11) many, safety related concerns exist, especially the speed of access and ability to respond to safety concerns (8/65/8). As all posts are currently filled on a permanent basis respondents note a great need existing for quality training to take place. Existing training is not viewed as successful and needed re visiting. Heads feel the system is not working and needs to be re launched.

'training has stopped and is being reviewed' (10/75/4)

'training is needed re safeguarding' (1/9/11)

'we have few vulnerable children so not aware' (2/11/3)

Experienced professionals are reported as not being listened to by County managers and are undervalued (3/15/2). Agencies carrying central responsibility for safeguarding are criticized as considering themselves as separate entities and not joining in as part of the local team (12/87/4). They are seen as not following agreed local protocols regarding use of terminology. Heads note this agency expecting school based staff to turn up at meetings at any time with no consideration for work or caseloads (8/62/7) and little feedback.

There are many issues and gaps emerging in the County system for particular groups of children regarding their support and funding. Looked after Children are seen as vulnerable and carefully watched and supported but if the child is adopted then care and support structures are stopped as children reach their most vulnerable point. Such county wide and national concerns are reported requiring intervention at a high level, possibly nationally and regionally.

With strategic oversight lacking, agencies are often not willing to fund what needs doing. People are not always working together and legal issues, red tape and funding problems are noted as progressing slowly (3/15/8). One concerned primary school Head Teacher notes in anger that her one recent Child Protection case has not been properly handled, her frustration is clearly visible. (4/20/10).

(Safeguarding concerns have been shared with responsible officers and confidentiality maintained.)

Summary of respondent group knowledge

Research findings indicate in three ways that strategic management of MAW is lacking. Firstly respondents show by shortcomings in their answers that there are large and important areas of knowledge that they are not aware of such as their failure to recognise the importance of quality control and the need for monitoring evaluation, and outcome measures. Only Head Teachers and Officers exhibit a working knowledge of MAW, with some officers gaining understanding from agency training and Head Teachers sharing their knowledge. Parents are reliant on teacher knowledge which appears to be flawed.

There appears to be little knowledge emanating from any form of planned introduction or ongoing training programme at regional or national level with a national programme having been stopped. Research findings have so far added insight into the lack of understanding and knowledge base of different respondent groups and start to raise questions to be discussed in Chapter Five about the impact of poor strategic management on MAW and especially knowledge and understanding of MAW - an issue not identified in the research literature.

Secondly respondents report shortages of strategic provision such as training opportunities. Very little appears to be known of the work and role of the strategic local Children's Trust. What is not known is if this is due to recent innovation at the time of research or if there is failure to engage effectively or that the role they have been given is still being established. Interestingly and possibly highlighting shortcomings in training, each respondent group has focussed their attention and knowledge on aspects of MAW with which they are most conversant and not on a broader understanding of issues and practice.

Thirdly there is critical comment of shortcomings in the strategic management provided. At the local level Cluster Board initiatives are starting to provide strategic oversight. Strategic intervention at National level had recently been via the Children Act 2004 and the ECM Green Paper but knowledge of associated strategic support and training appears to be limited.

Senior officers do not appear to fully understand or value the important role of MAW in supporting safeguarding procedures. Confidence in county senior officer knowledge, understanding and ability are all low. There appears to be a need to check that if there

are low levels of strategic management of MAW it is not adversely impacting on the safety of children especially the most vulnerable.

On a positive note many agencies report officers versed in the structure and working of schools. Those with minimal knowledge of schools now have local support as cluster schools design links and shadowing facilities to assist agency officers. Locally organised ‘away days’ are popular enabling Officers and Head Teachers to meet, learn about each other’s services and exchange information and views (20 /121/6) however teacher and parent knowledge of MAW remains a key area of concern in need of further analysis and support.

A. Strategic oversight and management	response	
	(+)	(-)
Respondent knowledge and answers	satisfactory	poor
Strategic provision		poor → none
Respondent descriptions of strategic provision		poor → none

Figure 8: Section 1: Summary:Strategic management of MAW

Knowledge of quality control	poor
Knowledge of strategic officers	poor
Knowledge of strategic management of MAW – Head Teacher, Officers	good poor
Knowledge of strategic management of MAW – Teachers, Parents, Children	
Impact of limited staff knowledge	

Figure 9: Respondent knowledge of MAW and process

Planned support for introduction of MAW	none
Training opportunities and provision	
national	none
regional	poor
local	limited
Role of Children's Trust	poor
Use of Trust Web	minimal
Use of Every Child Matters guidance and website	mixed

Figure 10: Strategic provision of MAW

4.4 Forces and factors inhibiting the development of MAW

In Section two research findings focus on addressing factors that might have a negative or detrimental impact on development of MAW with indicators of why MAW might function better in some settings rather than others. The concerns of those working within MAW are collected and findings of section one developed for further, broader correlations inhibiting development of MAW.

During research a group of respondents - Head Teachers, express both high levels of satisfaction and high levels of concern for areas and aspects of MAW. I am interested in reasons for a dichotomy and the fact many concerns of MAW continue to exist. What are the inhibiting factors of multi agency working, might they be related or are there other significant shortcomings or causal factors beyond strategic management?

General concerns

Key areas of respondent concern regarding development of MAW concerned:

1. Structural issues (examined in Section one)
2. Responsibility and related issues (partly examined in Section one)
3. Inter agency tensions
4. Finance / funding concerns
5. Communication and understanding

The most critical comments of MAW arise from Head Teachers and Officers. I start with their concerns as a route to discovering inhibiting factors. Data will be gathered under

the five headings provided above to show measures of association and hopefully identify patterns of possible causation. (see Figure 6).

Structural issues

Concern for the current state of MAW runs high with forty four out of one hundred and sixty Head Teacher concerns and eight out of seventy two officer concerns, issues such as fairness and equality being common respondent concerns.

‘We need a partnership of equals’ (6/37/6)

Head Teachers express concern that large statutory agencies might take power from smaller agencies and smaller, non statutory bodies such as voluntary agencies would lose power. Voluntaries and small charities are noted taking on many functions and duties once covered by larger agencies with small budgets giving VS agencies little opportunity for voice and influence over policy making. Here concern centres on the nature of leadership and accountability; the need for a partnership of equals requiring hierarchical structure within which lines of responsibility are traced (17/109/1).

Equality is viewed as an important issue; many Voluntary Services (VS) staff are volunteers and often receive different levels of professional training and support to agency officers. Some well educated and experienced volunteers are considered to be at a disadvantage having no suitable professional identity. Such people are noted as giving valuable support to charities often alongside their normal employment, receiving only minimal support. Volunteers reported a range of other difficulties such as attendance at day time, distant and costly meetings.

Similar concerns are expressed by three Head Teachers of urban primary and secondary schools wishing those in power would recognise the important input and role of everyone, not just senior officers. Respondent comment suggests senior officers may have a general lack of firsthand experience and understanding of MAW. Head Teachers give example of lack of recognition, understanding of the complexity and time that MAW related activities can take (9/63/2).

“Extra layers, too many meetings – time”. (9/63 /2)

Comments from Heads show frustration with the lack of consideration and understanding shown by those managing MAW especially at County level. While recognising such situations can arise from over enthusiasm, in this case with recent examples of failure to hand (such as CAF training mentioned earlier) confidence in officers working at County strategic level is extremely low. Training planned nationally but organised by County Senior officers is described as:

'Not helpful, the blind leading the blind' (4/18/10)

'CAF training poor' (9/ 63/2)

'CAF a disaster from the start; ill conceived training and support' (3/14/10)

Such comments come from Head Teachers of different sized and types of school - urban and rural, primary and secondary. All are polite, enthusiastic and concerned respondents. I also spoke with senior officers of the LA from Child Health, Social Services and Education, who have attended the same training programme. Their comments - while carefully couched - are equally critical.

I have also checked the minutes of past Cluster board meetings. Similar comments are found suggesting senior officers may have failed to fully grasp the complexity and aims of a new central government initiative relating to MAW and as such have been unable or incapable of quality controlling subsequent training content. Much criticism is also directed at regional and county senior officers who are criticized for their practice of handing out dictates which one Head Teacher noted being left to filter down to the workforce (5/32/7). What then might be the subsequent effect of such shortcomings at regional/county and national level, especially when related to future policy formation?

Head Teachers report concern that when policy is constructed and handed down from County or nationally, not enough consideration appeared to be given to the different styles of agency work and the way agencies arrive at decisions and responses. As such, Head Teachers and teachers with successful experience of effective agency working and their tried and tested approaches are now showing frustration at being told to work in other less tried, tested and effective ways. One non respondent officer told me:

'My experience of achieving successful MAW is, while keeping your immediate superiors well informed, for those higher up you keep at bay, just smile and give positive messages' (2007)

Lack of confidence in strategic managers appears to have led to keeping officers at a distance - a survival strategy to protect practice perceived as positive and at risk. Two officers expressed multiple concerns for the structure of MAW; they questioned whether aspects of MAW may not be fit for purpose.

'The strategy lacks linkage to workers on the ground' (3 /16 /9)

'Need to work from the bottom up not just top down' (6/ 37/ 2)

'top down ok but bottom starts half way?' (12/78/7)

Here the main concern is that there is poor top down and no bottom up interchange occurring between those working supporting children and their parents and their senior and strategic officers (12/78/7). Because of lack of communication, senior officers will

not be kept updated of progress and success. Officer perspectives are similar to that of Head Teachers:

‘We still need the Borough Council and Health on board, we need GPs’
(20/120/2)

‘The voice of young people and parents needs developing,’ (20/119/2)

‘Outside of school we often support pupils who clash with schools.’ (17/111/8)

The last quote is from Officers working with vulnerable children unable to cope with school routines operating outside of the school setting. Officers feel it important that communication systems work outside of schools as Officers work with many vulnerable children whom schools have failed to engage with or rejected. Fear exists that many senior officers based within the LA, appear to continue to show significant lack of understanding of MAW.

‘Does the centre understand the complexity?’ (19/119/10)

‘Where does power really lay, with school, officers or Local Authority?’
(18/115/8)

Officer comments are more constructive than Head Teachers, showing concern for how all agencies link together. When referencing “the centre” officers say they are referring to local - especially county and national - guidance, which varies with each agency and increasingly includes the local “School Cluster” (recently re named as a “Partnership Board”). Cluster Boards have developed as mainly educative initiatives driven and funded by the LA. If Clusters have been strongly influenced by educative thinking has this approach had any negative influence on other agency officers?

Unlike Head Teachers who express little understanding of the Local Children’s Trust, Officers show greater understanding and recognise the importance of good communications linking everyone as a structure including the Children’s Trust.

‘We need a structured hierarchy to understand people’s roles’ (15/ 102/6)

A Teacher respondent similarly recognises the need for all to be well linked and more aware

‘We need links to partnership’ (7/45/5)

Officers recognise the need for strategic management but go further and identify how this might happen. A senior officer of a voluntary service adds:

‘I would have a strategic process that filters down for area development by agencies including smaller community groups.’ (22/126/11)

This officer has identified the importance of involving everyone at local level. Like many Heads, two Officers are concerned with issues of equality and seek improved fairness

and balance in partnership, especially for the voluntary sector. This officer expresses concern that the local partnership, having grown out of an educational structure, might make partnership difficult for some.

Officers show good understanding of structural issues, the need for two way communications to especially serve the needs of both senior officers and workers on the ground.

In summary inhibiting factors affecting the structure and running of MAW include lines of communication not reaching or serving all involved in MAW. Information does not pass from workers to senior and strategic managers who appear to workers ill informed and at times out of touch. Secondly if no clear leadership is provided strategic managers of MAW may not be clearly identified and may be generally perceived as providing poor direction and guidance resulting in worker frustration and concern. Thirdly lack of perceived manager involvement and consideration continue to increase worker concern over provision of equality within the work place and between agencies. Lack of trust in senior and strategic management continues to grow with those working in MAW confused as to who is qualified to direct and guide them and what damage might be resulting from poor management and guidance.

Responsibility

Why are those involved in MAW having difficulty managing their responsibilities? Eleven negative comments centred on what Head Teachers described as their responsibilities and impact on MAW. Most respondent Heads regard the success of MAW within their schools as being a responsibility for them personally - their efforts and drive.

‘it depends on the Head Teacher and their commitment; lot of variety’ (3/14/3)

‘the Head Teacher has to drive it’ (4/18/3)

Two Head Teachers exhibit insecurity when responding by saying they are expected to know all the answers.

‘It is assumed we know answers to everything but we don’t’ (5/30/2)

‘There is pressure on Head teaches who should keep themselves briefed and not be as narrow as we are.’ (8 /58 /3)

Heads seek to be efficient but lack of time and heavy work commitments are identified concerns. Recognising the need to be informed on MAW activities and developments, two Head Teachers go further raising concern that school governors are also not briefed.

“Should we be looking at a multi agency rep on the governing body?” (3/17/15)

Is increased governor knowledge seen as aiding strategic management and development? Head Teacher concerns suggest a need for improved training and delivery if their knowledge base and feelings of security are to improve.

Two respondent Head Teachers who are concerned about the quality of staff and parent briefings, suggesting a need for structured and concise briefing sheets to be circulated either via local meetings or nationally via web sites and email.

An Officer from Health is concerned about the inability of agency leaders to properly support and fund MAW.

‘The top table needs to work together’ (18/114/3)

This officer felt there should be a responsibility for all agency seniors to help build leadership and inspire and develop relationships and integration. A very positive comment from Health that counters some of the more critical accusations suggests that officers from Health are less involved. Like Head Teachers, officers consider it is the responsibility of all involved in multi agency work to think at all times: what does it mean to come from different agencies?

Finally, like Head Teachers, a number of officers think the Children’s Trust could and would do more. One senior officer said:

‘Maybe it (the local Children’s Trust) is supposed to be invisible; I don’t see a lot out of it. What is it?’ (23/132/3)

For such a key strategic body to be described in such a way is of concern. Does it indicate lack of understanding or further shortcomings in care and responsibility?

In summary the following key points are found. Firstly Head Teachers feel that in their schools they alone should drive MAW. Senior agency officers do not appear so responsible and fail to sufficiently fund or support MAW. Secondly the top table of agency managers are noted as inhibiting development and needing to work together, take responsibility by helping all agency seniors to build leadership, inspire and develop relationships and interaction. Thirdly officers are concerned that a serious shortcoming is that not enough thought has been given to what it means to come from different agencies and that Children’s trusts take proper responsibility for the care and responsibility of their children. Finally many respondents feel that the local Children’s Trust should be more involved and take greater responsibility.

Some of the above points have already been raised in Section One.

Worker related concerns and tensions.

What is causing worker concern and affecting worker relationships? Head Teachers identify a strong role for themselves in ensuring and driving the development of MAW. They also recognize a significant need to develop better working conditions in and between agencies. This is reflected in twenty one of their concerned comments. Of note, an experienced primary school Head Teacher noted professionals worry that their skills are not being fully recognised:

‘Professionals feel undervalued their voices were not listened to, not fully consulted.’ (3/14/2c)

This comment describes both officer and Head Teacher frustration and fear new ways of working could under value professional status. It shows that while respondents report progress, there remains much to be done especially regarding relationships between officers and their schools.

While each Cluster has an identified manager to oversee development of MAW, schools have to identify their own needs and arrange involvement and support. Within a small primary, infant or junior school, such a duty will usually fall to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). This is often a teacher wearing many hats and frequently on a part time contract. With work pressures growing in such schools and budget constraints, time for enabling and coordinating MAW and multi agency support on top of normal teaching commitments are increasingly under threat.

Two Heads recognise problems exist within their schools identifying they and staff need to be better equipped, more knowledgeable and better briefed on MAW. Aware of development overload and budget constraints, they are unsure as to how such a problem might best be resolved. Here is another example of the growth of MAW creating new problems and staffing needs with extra staff time now being required.

Two inconsistencies in team work and support are reported by Head Teachers. One high profile secondary school Head notes not feeling part of a multi agency team (10/74/15) and a primary Head Teacher similarly notes feeling isolated from multi agency working (11/74/15). These two statements raise concerns. First, if the Head felt isolated what is the situation for their staff? The first statement is from an experienced much respected Head Teacher of a large secondary school. Further examination shows the school to be serving an area of high deprivation, to be heavily involved in MAW and with a well supported and involved school team and local officers. On closer inspection this Head Teacher is expressing concern that at senior levels of education leadership and management (where this Head often operated) there is not the same level of understanding and team work as is identified at the local level.

The primary school Head Teacher identified is relatively new in post, further highlighting the need for suitable training and support, increasing strategic planning need for Head Teachers and teachers. If Head Teachers do not feel part of the Multi Agency team then neither will their school staff and a serious situation will soon develop.

Head Teacher's concern is now for the quality of officer/school working and relationships, lack of understanding and worry about when and how to address MAW. This highlights the existence of inconsistency in provision and supports the need for provision and local delivery of quality training for MAW.

Officers and Heads each identify two worker issues; a need for quality training is highlighted. Officers are especially concerned that workers should understand the many differences that exist, especially between Clusters and other areas where different rules exist. Officers are concerned that work with parents needs more transparency than work with teachers and that part time workers need more help than full time employees as they often suffer from lack of confidence. A common and comprehensive training programme is needed for all workers.

Both Officers and Heads share concern that workers are often required to do too much, too quickly with a need for workers to stop and reflect. Officers note with alarm that Health Agencies could be *"a little bit not on board"*. While generally satisfied with the aims of new initiatives such as CAF, one officer does express concern as to how they are being implemented. Another officer identifies a further need for work shadowing.

In summary factors inhibiting the development of worker related issues are first a need for management training and the construction of a strategic plan identifying how work inputs and could locate together. Secondly better staff briefing and greater knowledge and understanding of MAW are required. Thirdly training for all staff is seen as vital but if coordinated by Education should involve staff from all agencies. Training should not be seen as Education taking over, i.e. training should be coming from all multi agency members. Finally workers need to share details and support one another. This is a key aspect of partnership and (as Head Teachers have identified) a good way of learning more about each other's roles and ways of working. Officers also note the value of a common, shared work location where staff can regularly meet, talk and improved coordinated work practice

Interagency Issues

Why are different agencies having difficulty working together? With agency specific language and communication being addressed, Head Teachers now call for further work to improve other cross agency issues. Eighteen critical Head Teacher comments

concern such issues. For many Heads frustration is not the existence of difference but the lack of action to address understanding of that difference. Here again are further examples of a lack of strategic planning and a further need for suitable training and shared work practice.

‘Do we know each agencies role, remit and how far they can go?’ 5/31/2

‘Each has their own perspectives and needs to work shadow others and work together’3/14/5

Two respondent Head Teachers running very different schools (a large urban secondary and a rural primary) suggest such a lack of understanding gives rise to some agency workers feeling marginalised and sometimes hindered in the way that they work. Certain agencies are particularly noted for their lack of understanding. Social Services are cited for defensiveness and Health for their refusal to consider alternate ways of working. Seven Head Teachers are concerned that while most agencies are trying hard to work together and be inclusive, this is not always the case for one agency whose workers are noted often guarding and fostering use of their own specific language and methodology.

All Head Teachers and officers note the need for further time together to increase understanding of each other’s working. While all but two Head Teachers speak positively of agency and school corroboration. A few individual Head Teachers are still critical showing there remains much to be done. In the absence of effective management and training, lack of understanding and frustration continue. Yet again, this is an opportunity for strategic introduction of effective work practice and training opportunities supporting all levels of employees from bottom to top.

‘There is still a blame culture between agencies’ (4/18/6)

‘Head Teachers are confused, agencies have different approaches.’ (3/14/10)

‘I’m a Head Teacher and nobody has sought my view’ (10/71/11)

Inter Agency tensions

Why might workers be in conflict? Both respondent Officers and Head Teachers report complete agreement that work shadowing is vital and workers need to learn and understand the different characteristics of each agency, their weaknesses and strengths. They should learn how each agency practices work sharing and develops the ability to listen, hear and find out before doing. Ideally everyone should understand everything and all recognise the key priorities of others work.

Interestingly, two Officers highlight a fear of some workers that involvement in multi agency work could lead to the loss of professional status. It was less clear who might take such roles, leading to officers becoming jack of all trades and masters of none. Would families and senior officers know who does what and more importantly would

generalist jobs be downgraded and command less status and salary especially at a time of expected reorganisation and budget cuts? One officer made the interesting point that at a time when so much was being achieved and so much support was needed:

‘each agency still has its own perspective on childhood and what is required and different data system.’ (15 /100 /2b)

‘With insecurity people will retreat to old think’ (15/102/7)

‘There is too much of a dependency culture’ (15/102/8)

With such deep agency differences still existing, officers are concerned that there is no drive to highlight their own importance or ensure that agencies have a willingness to move forward and extend their skills to listen and learn from each other and develop respect for the richness that each contributes. Once again strategic management and carefully focussed training appear to be largely absent from current provision. An officer from the voluntary sector suggests:

‘We need a clear vision from managers of what we are doing, about and why and share the content and drivers’ (22/128/4)

Interview recollections and emerging findings

First - officers should firstly show considerable concern for interagency working; from a need to learn more about each other’s agencies, work practices and ideas to fear of loss of professionalism and lack of value.

Second - officers and Head Teachers should recognise the need for better understanding especially of MAW and its complexity particularly in cross agency working.

Third - respondents acknowledge a need for better communication between agencies and better use of the capabilities and skills of their professionals.

Fourth - no suitable training opportunities appear to exist; there is an urgent need for cross agency training especially addressing awareness of agency variety and difference.

Finally - respondents note officers requiring more time in schools to work shadow and help develop understanding of the richness and value of the many differences that exist.

Finance

How are financial concerns impacting on the development of MAW? Many Head Teachers from both primary and secondary schools show concern regarding ongoing

improvement. They recognise that lack of finance could slow and possibly hamper the future progress of MAW. Most Head Teachers direct critical comment towards financial issues. Main concerns are the shortage of funds for current and future needs and especially impact on the recruitment of manpower and maintenance of effective strategies.

Funding sources are noted in many cases as short term and historical and it is importantly noted by two Head Teachers that agency seniors are often not keen to delegate funding as money equates with power. Time and money are felt to be awarded from a distance (1/9/9). Yet again here is an example of how effective strategic management can help address such matters at a senior level. This key point is identified by both Allnock (2006) and Asthana (2006) who recognize strategic support being required to ensure suitable future resourcing and budgeting.

While the development of Partnership Boards are reported as enabling some localised strategic management, financial power is reported as remaining within the domain of Senior Managers for use on maintenance of other traditional, more direct and reactive rather than proactive aspects of their agency work.

Agencies are noted by a Head Teacher as unwilling to fund what needs doing (3/16/8). Heads note the increased cost of MAW: administration, with staff attending meetings with many set during work hours and at distant locations. Heads say they are using what they have effectively but budget pressures are problematic in a recession (3/16/8). Here the advantages of local partnership are clear, meetings can be set locally and agencies (especially schools) can work together more easily and make savings such as joint commissioning of services (3/15/4).

Schools like working together but now claim they cannot afford the cost of the time required. Schools show through their enthusiasm for Cluster and Partnership working they can work together effectively in partnership but because funding lay mainly with the more distant senior management of each agency including education, future progress is uncertain.

In one part of the study area the sharing of funding has enabled two statutory agencies and two voluntary agencies to assist and provide much needed counselling services for needy children and young people in both primary and secondary schools (3/15/4) (Thomas, 2008). In a rare example of a programme of monitoring, evaluation and review, Head Teachers, their staff and agency officers have worked closely and ensured local needs are effectively identified, met and their effectiveness monitored. Head

Teachers have proved they can work closely with their Partnership Manager and carry out effective identification and commissioning of services.

While Professionals have proved what can be done at local level, they lack representation at a senior level to negotiate financial support and budgetary matters as noted by Allnock (2006) and Asthana (2006). At the time of interview only one school in the study area is an Academy. While this school has considerable control of their finance, key areas connected to MAW are still heavily dependent on LA funding.

Finally, following interviews, two Head Teachers confidentially express considerable concern that in the current cost cutting climate the future of MAW is at risk. Both Heads are concerned MAW has yet to provide the necessary data to prove its worth. While a Cluster representative attends County meetings and Cluster managers meet as a team, there is still no effective County structure for dialogue on MAW where the many positives and successes can be conveyed. Meanwhile within the local and national press, high profile failure of multi agency care of children continues to be reported:

‘In next twelve months worrying, will lose, as budgets squeezed. Will we lose the good stuff of ECM as budgets are squeezed?’ (13/90/14)

‘Our work is not yet established or fully understood’ (6/37/2)

‘Senior’s are not good at budget sharing; they are driven by different priorities despite each partnership having a plan’ (18/113/2c), (18/114/3).

Yet again concern was noted amongst Head Teachers because strategic power lay with senior agency officers and the Local Children’s Trust who oversee implementation of their local Children’s plan that MAW helps to support. Respondent replies suggest the work of the local Children’s Trust and senior officers are not fully understood or valued by any of the Head Teachers interviewed.

Officer comments include a suggestion that all agencies pay a percentage of revenue into the partnership and that voluntary sector members contribute a realistic amount; this would be difficult with some agencies having different financial years. A number of officers see the need for a funding base to be developed for consistency of provision.

Officers recognised it is easier to devolve funds if amounts go to all agencies but that this is rarely the case. Officers also accept that when funds are being allocated it is always harder to prove the case for preventative work as there is little hard evidence of outcomes currently available to show for one’s efforts (22 /127/2b).

Officers are concerned that under funding is routing money away from their service and they are now repeatedly having to approach extended school managers (20/120 /3). Also a lot is being asked of the Youth Service which is itself losing funding.

‘Is it really valued to be stretched and used in all ways?’ (20/120/3)

‘A preponderance of short initiatives don’t help as you get more money but little long term’ (22/127/2)

Funding is an example of where the presence and involvement of a strategic officer and senior support is essential. By the very nature of their job those working in the field are not able to attend County meetings to argue their case for funding. One officer suggests a senior manager should be appointed at Chief Executive level to both represent and promote awareness of the work and the achievements of the multi agency teams and MAW (23 /133 /11). Lack of management understanding of MAW teams and their work and achievement features in officer concerns, both during and outside of formal interviews. Considerable insecurity is noted arising from difficulty in gaining, sharing and retaining suitable funding streams.

In summary there is great concern over the current state and future prospects of funding for MAW. As work and responsibility within MAW grows and responsibility increases, funding appears to be shrinking. Those within Clusters find few opportunities to seek funds as in practice this lay mainly with senior County officers who are viewed as distant, out of touch and poorly informed. With little data available, there is limited opportunity to argue the true value of MAW and its effective school and agency work. Finally, sadly a number of key officers fear their current positions may soon cease as a result of funding cuts and a significant fall in the incomes of many agency and charities.

Respondents do not mention or consider cheaper alternatives to MAW or different ways of working or re focussing safeguarding and child protection funding. The overriding inhibiting factor appears to be the unwillingness of agencies to share their responsibilities and consequent funding with others for fear of loss of management control.

Communications and understanding

Head Teachers see a need for improvement in the management of communications. Three officers are concerned about the importance and nature of communications both to and between agencies. These officers are concerned that for maximum effectiveness they might not be kept fully informed especially about other officers and the other agencies they worked with, important during a time of great change. (1/10/14).

Inconsistency is shown with one officer from Social Services noting they are well informed and supported with agency training described as “*second to none*” (16 /103/5). Local ‘away days’ held every two months are also cited by many as effective for both Officer and Head Teacher communication. Only one officer feels they are generally well informed, engaged and happy with communications including their local newsletter and website (21/124/5).

Two officers are happy with website provision while a third is not and expresses concern claiming:

‘Those working in MAW are over-informed by the insatiable desire of the web to spread a soup of information’ (23/13 /5)

Worryingly, only two Head Teachers note regular use of the national ECM website, others know of but rarely use similar important sites claiming they are not user friendly or clearly signposted. The ECM site is more widely known but only used by four teachers. Reasons given for lack of use included limited time, lack of sign posting and aversion to reading on screen.

One officer identified the need to sort out data flows and information pools (23 /132 /5) and another noted the need to combine, use and analyse data from different agencies (23/133/5). Access to information was generally seen by officers as being at an appropriate level; this is a very different situation to that of Head Teachers, many of whom ask that information be selected and organised. Maybe agency officers are currently shielded from the desire of so many in education to inform Head Teachers of all that is happening.

In summary communication requires improvement for Teachers and Head Teachers. Better organised and more relevant information is required by all involved in MAW. Websites need to be more attractive to both Teachers and Head Teachers. Finally, the local Children’s Trust needs to improve its communications and website awareness.

Conclusion

Despite many successes, respondent comments describe much within the structure of MAW that is not working and inhibiting progress with layers of problems reported by some respondents. Strategic leadership and management appears to be an overall inhibiting factor as does an inconsistent knowledge base.

Arising from strategic factors is the contextual barrier formed by a lack of understanding of MAW with most understanding of MAW, the MAW process and agencies involved appearing to rest with practitioners and not strategic leaders and managers.

Transmission of knowledge to and between officers and front line staff is still problematic

with effective lines of communication not in place or established, especially between front line staff and senior management. Information when passed is shown as often requiring refinement and delivery management to be of use.

In the complex and fast developing field of operation of MAW, insufficient and poorly conceived and constructed training opportunities form a further contextual barrier hampering growth and development and delivery of knowledge required by those working in MAW.

Respondents report a further inhibiting factor: that senior staff especially those with strategic responsibility for budgets are seen as distant, out of touch, inactive and lacking in care and concern for those they have responsibility for.

With the development of MAW, respondents note further inhibiting factors as the need for all involved in multi agency interaction to be more vigilant and aware of the aims, objectives and needs of others working in such a complex environment. Professionals report their skills and achievements are often not fully recognised or credited with many currently fearing budget cuts will undermine progress and cripple future development, delivery and employment within MAW.

Inhibiting factors and contextual barriers are starting to be addressed at the local Cluster level. Head teachers and agency officers now recognise the need to meet, discuss and start to address these factors.

Section 2: Inhibiting factors and contextual barriers to MAW

- Poor strategic leadership and management
- Inconsistent knowledge base re MAW
- Lack of general understanding of MAW leadership and management
- Poor transmission of knowledge between frontline staff and strategic managers
- Poor delivery and sharing of knowledge
- Limited budgets and poor budget allocations
- Limited quality assurance and generation of performance data

Figure 11: Summary section two: Inhibiting factors and contextual barriers to MAW.

4.5 Forces that may be enhancing development of the multi agency way of working: Consideration of five common areas of positive development.

In this section of respondent findings, through my third research question, I now seek to record how those involved in MAW seek to and are overcoming inhibiting factors at the operational level.

An analysis of respondent's positive comments identifies five common areas of positive progress and comment. I now focus down into each and log what and why improvements occur and progress is achieved and why other areas might not be developing.

Common areas of positive development:

1. Improving multi agency provision , close agency interaction
2. Improving agency integration
3. Increasing knowledge and understanding
4. Improving professional practice
5. Improving manager influence and performance

What are the indicators to identify good practice and what is good practice seen to be achieving that poor practice is not? Is improvement brought about by structural change, qualitative improvements or both and will such good practice bring about the positive development of MAW? Respondent views are recorded giving first-hand accounts of what works and makes such a difference. Some recorded data may appear as simple comment but personal field experience of MAW indicates that within such comments often lay the qualitative indicators that can have such powerful impact on effective actions.

Also recorded are the most common issues cited within the literature of MAW. These will be related to findings. One hundred and fifty one positive comments are recorded during respondent interviews against two hundred and thirty two comments of concern. A positive comment is taken to be a respondent passing a positive judgement characterised by being pleased, liked or impressed.

Head Teachers make most positive comments: 78 in total which is 51% of all respondent positive comments. This is more than double the number made by officers and teachers. Officers make 25, teachers 29, parents make 12 such comments and children 7.

Teachers have previously noted they feel they are not well informed about MAW but being located in schools alongside children and being close to parents they are centrally located as keen observers with much firsthand experience of receiving and being involved in MAW.

Officers are keen to offer observations and analysis of MAW but provide fewer positive outcomes or examples. This situation is examined and thought to be due to their being more regularly involved in specific aspects of child support rather than overall provision and monitoring of outcomes. Head Teachers however provide the largest number of positive comments (78, which were 51% of all positive comments made). Centrally located within schools, with regular contact and oversight of children, and responsible for their overall progress and development, Heads are noted as well placed to identify measure and comment on outcomes both positive and negative.

Head's comments address both positive provision of MAW (34 comments) and better integration (25 comments), twelve comments address improvement in professional practice and seven address positive increases in knowledge. Officer comments cite positive developments in integration and service provision. Children's comments are concerned with improving the quality of support given by agency officers and teacher comments note improvement in delivery and development of multi agency provision.

issue 1: improving multi agency provision

Respondents provide many positive comments concerning provision of service. While most information concerns provision of MAW, some describes the quality of inter agency corroboration and description of advantages achieved through partnership especially at the local and cluster level. In all actions clarity of vision, purpose and action is seen as important (11/76 /1).

Head Teachers and teachers agree that much added value can be gained by encouraging the broad provision that close agency interaction provides supporting children both in and out of schools. While teachers especially valued support from education based professionals, Heads looked widely noting the support provided by working in a carefully coordinated manner with whole agencies and their professionals such as Health, Education, Social Services, Voluntary Services and the Local Council (3/14/1b). School nurses, Police School Liaison Officers (PSOs), a special school based behaviour support team and a voluntary family support agency were especially valued for their guidance and input with these officers able to work closely with children and

families both within schools and within the communities within which they live (4/18/1a), (4/24/1).

Close working was illustrated by the Head Teacher of a small rural primary school who especially liked her PSOs working in classrooms to informally attend school lunch on a regular basis. They are known informally to children and staff and are also able to listen, learn and respond to concerns. Staff note feeling well supported by the community cohesion agenda that the school is part of (4/20/2c). Heads of church schools noted with satisfaction improved contact with the local church community services and many agency professionals who are to be found working within their schools, supporting children of all types and ages, especially those thought to be most vulnerable.

‘There are more points out there leading to good agency support’ (10/71/2)

‘There are now multi professionals in school especially for the vulnerable’ (3/14/2a).

‘Huge groups of agencies getting the right person in front of a person ‘ (10/71/1)

An experienced rural Primary Head reports that officers are now able to keep up with school based changes (3/14/2a), and are working with schools developing their ability to step into gaps to provide wider support. By improving pupil and family support, teachers note their pupils being better prepared for learning, reconciling achievement of standards aided by ECM objectives for whole care (2/13/4). Within one study school, a large urban primary, progress was such that a visit was arranged from the Minister of Education (Thomas, 2007b).

An example was given of the difficulty once found in seeking support for adopted children. Agencies are noted by a small village school as working in concert to both identify and provide cover and support for such children.

‘They are now able to fill gaps in official provision e.g. if adopted you are no longer a LAC.’ (4/18/1b)

Officers especially value the different ways in which they are able to respond to school needs. In an infant school, nurses note the effectiveness of working closely with parents especially those traditionally difficult to reach. Nurses continued to work with class teachers in junior schools while in secondary schools they are now mentioned for the effectiveness of their Pupil Drop In advisory sessions and on site Sexual Health clinics. Outside of schools Health professionals are reported as successfully developing a range of different services placed to meet young peoples’ arising and identified medical and social health needs (10/71/1). With such varied roles, a village school notes much

depending on the excellent personality of the nurse concerned.(4/18/2) their understanding of the setting , clients and need.

Much activity is now provided by officers both in and out of schools however respondents make little mention of how much if any is reported back to inform senior officers. The local Cluster is seen as developing not only personal contacts but larger more meaningful agency links such as those between preschool play groups and feeder schools. Experienced primary school Heads note the development and advantage of improved agency relationships (5/32/4) and more coherent collaboration (6/37/1).

‘working collaboration enables contact with agencies and schools to provide a coherent programme of support’ (6/37/2b)

‘now no need to waste time sifting and sorting’ (6/37/3)

‘support is now available to parents not only to the child’ (6/38/4b)

The Cluster manager is also viewed as an encouraging friend of both Heads and Officers, as someone passing positive information via personal contact, emails, newsletters and away days (7/44/3). They are also positive and approachable people (21/123/2) with a skilled understanding of MAW. Fellow Cluster Heads are also noted by the Head Teacher of a large urban primary school as a very supportive team (7/44/3).

The Cluster was now seen to provide an important local common focus, providing overlap and coordinated local services (7/44/3b). The inception of School Cluster groups and later wider local partnerships was a strategic development initiated at County level, funded and driven by senior officers of the LEA and later LA in conjunction with key local agencies.

In summary, Head Teachers make positive comment on four elements of multi agency provision. Firstly the breadth of agency support developing and now available to support children of all ages and ability including the most vulnerable. Secondly Head Teachers note the development of clarity of direction and purpose and use of effective and often informal lines of communication where good working relations are fostered. Third, the growing skill of agency officers in identifying and meeting changing needs of children, schools and parents. And finally the increased effectiveness and coherence offered to the support of children by development of local Clusters / Partnerships and their management teams.

Those receiving MAW found much to be gained from closer interagency working. Children are very concerned with the nature and quality of support given by agency officers. Two ten year old children from a large urban junior school note:

‘I can talk to teachers, they listen’ (9/60/5)

'Firemen are best they try to help with books, plans etc. The Police just stand and talk to you' (9/62/5)

Such comments show officers engaging with their clients, some of whom are vulnerable, possibly damaged and at times highly suspicious. Children's comments show attraction to people who give individual attention and space; people who listened to what they have to say and who show a commitment to them (13/96/6). One child proudly describes her home mentor as giving four months support and speaks positively of their visiting every two weeks,

' she's a listener, does home visits; I have her number, talks to mum.' (13 /95 /2)

This child felt reassured by having been given her mentor's phone number and being told she could call her more often if it was felt necessary. The respondent appears pleased that the mentor trusts them and their judgement, shows a genuine interest in them and that they mattered - unlike the officer who stood at the front of the class and spoke in a general way, apparently showing little interest or concern.

I later asked eleven year old girls, pupils at a large urban primary, and ten year old boys from an urban junior school, if they would respect an officer talking in a general manner to a group? They said they do if the person is genuine and honestly wants to help them. These young people note they know by the person's voice and tone and if not sure they might test them to check. Even with younger children it appears there is a desire for adults to help them ideally in an individual manner. Many adult respondents similarly appreciate the individual attention, and the agency officer's ability when supporting, to listen and understand their specific needs rather than talk.

'calming down box helps us, also talk time with teacher who explains and helps' (9/60/1)

'They try to help us like internet safety talks, drinking/driving, cholesterol, diabetes, health, what could happen' (6/35/3-4)

Primary aged children note appreciating the support officers give and the strategies that their teachers employ to help them.

Two girls from a large urban secondary school are very positive about their support but then share special concern about the need for consistency of adults supporting them, especially teachers. Teachers, Officers and Head Teachers also note children appreciating consistency and having a person whom they know, understand and can trust.

'Teachers, for short periods, just get used to them, they change again and you get lost, mixed up.' (13/96/6)

Consistency is a very important element as many of these children have lost key family members or have little consistency in their lives.

Specific examples of good practice

Teachers liked the broad provision of services that were now available to them through MAW especially the very specific specialist services for children such as Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy. Speech and Language support was viewed positively by a number of teachers () as was support for Social Communication, Play Therapy and Wrap around Clubs providing after school and holiday provision. Theatre in Education (TIE) are noted by a teacher from a medium sized primary school in an affluent area as helping by providing specialist productions that address necessary health issues and a depth and quality of service that greatly assists the teacher and enhances the support schools can offer to their children and parents (2/11/1).

Services that were universally praised by teacher respondents were the Behaviour Support Service and Speech and Language provision (7/48/10). In both cases, especially the former, it was the practical commonsense approach of the officers concerned combined with a speedy response and ability to listen that was so positively noted. The ability of officers to listen and quickly comprehend a problem then assist teachers and assistants to design and carry through workable strategies, is much appreciated and noticed as lacking in the support provided by certain other key agencies. These popular and sought after officers are described as bright and intelligent and excellent communicators respected for their grasp of their specialist field and friendly manner.

Cluster based reviews.

Cluster based reviews (CBR) are noted by a number of respondents as one of the most successful and appreciated Cluster based services (21 /125 /7). CBR have existed for many years but why should they now be so highly valued? With the recent growth in multi agency interaction teacher and head teacher discussion shows their effectiveness to have developed strongly in many Clusters in response to local need. These have been greatly influenced and guided by the work of local agency staff and those involved in MAW. An example is given here of two Cluster based reviews observed during my research period concerning Child A and School B. Each was described by agency officers present as typical and shows the effectiveness of this particular multi agency strategy. Cluster based reviews are a strategic multi agency development in response to problems arising at children's case reviews. Each Cluster review process has developed its own unique structure in response to local knowledge and understanding. In the

research area these reviews are open to all children living and or schooled within that area and parents are able to seek pre CBR advice and guidance.

Child A: Landau Klefner Syndrome.

The case of a six year old boy referred to Cluster Based Review (CBR). Child A came from a caring, loving family and had always been well behaved with no history of health, social or deprivational problems. Behavioural problems had been noted occurring at school and been confirmed by parents. The child's class teacher and mother had attended a pre CBR meeting to which any teacher plus guest could attend to ask questions, seek guidance and raise concerns. Often this meeting provided the necessary support however in this case concern was raised about the possible causation of the child's behavioural change and whether there may be specific needs. Autism and speech therapy were to be explored.

A Cluster based review was called; the schools Special Educational Needs Coordination teacher (SENCO) and agency officers with experience of Autism, Behaviour, Speech therapy and Health were assembled. At the CBR Aphasia was described as an identified need and a programme of support agreed. The school and parents were also provided with help to address the child's behavioural changes. At the same time the child's doctor (GP) and Paediatrician had been involved as there was concern that a neurological disorder may exist. The review was suspended pending the outcome of medical tests.

At the follow up review meeting Mother and SENCO attended. The support provided to family and school were reviewed as was the child's progress. Medical test which had included an ECG and MRI scan had checked for neurological issues and brain tumours. While no tumours had been found evidence of seizures and sleep patterns suggested Landau Klefner Syndrome. The CBR panel noted the extreme rarity of this syndrome (two hundred known cases globally noted by the MD Health Profession Network) but were not only able to re assure the mother and school but a member of the CBR team (through knowledge of another child) was able to provide details of a world renowned specialist living less than ten miles from the meeting. The CBR panel were able to additionally provide a link to another family similarly supporting a child with Landau Klefner Syndrome and monitor progress.

Figure 12: Case study 1

School A

An Infant school serving a poor urban area with new Head Teacher and Class Teacher contacted CBR about a growing problem of behaviour management following an intake of particularly unruly pupils. Whilst the names of two potentially vulnerable children were given for cluster review, a pre visit by behaviour specialist suggested a wider problem.

The Head Teacher attended the CBR. The background and context were explored and two officers were assigned, one to run a short programme of staff training and the other to work with two teachers supporting specific children and assisting with the establishment of a parent support programme. As with all CBR cases, progress was to be reviewed both at the end of the intervention and after a period of six months had elapsed.

Figure13: Case study 2

Both of the above case studies confirm respondent's positive comments of the effectiveness of Cluster based review (CBR) and show how local agencies, parents and schools have progressed by working quickly and closely together to provide a comprehensive and trusted network of support. Response to schools appears quick, focussed and specific to a specific child or situation. Parents and teachers are reliant on the knowledge of specific officers invited to the review.

Support as noted is open to any child or school and while most referrals came from schools of the Local Authority and the area's one academy, enquiries are starting to be received from parents and teachers of private schools. CBR support had started prior to the ECM initiative but only recently has it developed into its current form with funded time being made available especially from agency staff to meet the needs of the individual child and parent.

Teachers like officers who listen to Head Teachers concerns and who are reactive to school concerns and requests such as that made recently for the provision of play therapy and for counselling services. Counselling is now offered by two local agencies - one for primary and one for secondary aged children working with school staff. Parent support advisers (PSAs) are liked by teachers in a small village primary for their proactive preventative strategies (4/24/4), enabling access to other professionals (4/27/1). An urban primary noted PSAs for the resources they are able to access to complete processes making a difference for the child (6/41/4b). Family action support groups located in urban junior and primary schools are similarly identified for listening,

bringing answers, maintaining good supportive communications and being practically minded (6/41/7), (9/65/3).

At a time of difficult budgeting, this multi agency achievement shows what is possible with careful inter agency cooperation and schools, Cluster and Education support.

Issue 2: Integration of school and agency services

Central to effective MAW, Head Teachers of schools of all shapes and sizes and different locations are reporting improved integration with most agencies with elements of health and social services being noted as the exception. Positive comments from primary Head Teachers concerned the manner in which people are now coming together with schools and the commitment being shown by all including parents (8/57/2b).

“Getting people together in the same room speaking the same language’ (8/57/1)

‘Barriers slowly dismantling was suspicion between agencies and prejudices, now going. Was little crossover, now going. Was little crossover but now aware of each other’s jobs and what different people do.’(8/57/2)

‘now full commitment from all and parents are on board.’ (9/64/4)

Parents are noted as understanding and supporting multi agency involvement. Similarly the planning and review process is reported on positively by the Head of the local secondary Pupil Referral Unit with Head Teachers liking the way the process embraces those around the child and that all agencies now seek to work with the young person (12/78/1). There is seen to be no duplication of service (9 /64/4). Heads especially like the increased recognition that school only serves the child for six hours of each day and that while this might be effective for academic attainment, there are many things in the rest of the child’s life that schools cannot address or are not best placed to do. The Head of a secondary aged Pupil Referral Unit is especially pleased that agencies and schools are now looking at the totality of the child’s life and working together so that no child should fall through the network of support provided.

To seek to provide a safety net for some of the most vulnerable children, a local pupil referral unit estimated key agencies are now spending 67% to 80% of their officer time in schools rather than their traditional pattern of meeting clients at their agency offices. Agencies working in this way are included CAMHS, Social Services, Youth Opportunity Service, a Substance Misuse Charity, Connexions, various Voluntary Agencies, Alternative Curriculum Provision,, Youth Service, Police and PCSOs, Education and Health (12/78/1b).

Specific examples

One Head Teacher of a small church village school spoke positively and gave a short example of the positivity possible from school and agency intervention and support. In this recent example a family had an adopted child with profound Special Educational Needs. There was a family split and the parent's relationship ended. The mother experienced great difficulty managing this child. The school sought help on behalf of the mother and child, a Cluster Based review (CBR) was called involving officers including officers from Cognition and Learning and Behaviour Support, and many agencies were consulted resulting in the assignment of the Multi Agency Behaviour Support Team (MABSS) to help work with the child during the day and support the family, especially the mother, during out of school hours (4/18/16). This mode of working is recognised as time consuming and more costly, however as outcomes are agreed locally it is much improved. Head Teachers, teachers and officers are reported as keen to pool services and resources where possible to enable such progress to continue. Extra funding is also made available from Education and channelled via the Cluster Manager and Board.

Often extra support would be added by local community groups, Church teams and Ministers who would also share their support and resources. In a recent case a fellow parishioner and parent alerted the Head Teacher of a church primary school to a vulnerable child who was possibly at risk. The school followed safeguarding procedures and quickly arranged support from key members (4/18/1a).

A number of Head Teachers note the importance of the Cluster having an integrated team (17/109/2). The Cluster Boards meet regularly with all Head Teachers and officer representatives able to attend a set number of meetings. Agency officers are represented on the board but representation appears to involve statutory agency members and only a few voluntary agency members (23/131/1).

An experienced primary Head Teacher is pleased to see marked improvement in a number of key areas. As well as closer working under a new single agenda (3/14/1), agencies no longer feel isolated (3/14/2a). Professionals work more closely (3/14/2) and in more collaborative and supportive ways (3/15/4). The partnership endeavours to educate schools (3/16/10b) and two way communications grow especially within the local partnership area.

In conclusion, Head Teachers of all types and size of schools and covering differing catchment areas make very positive comments about developments of four main areas of MAW. First the way professionals from agencies and schools now come together to

work in constructive supportive partnerships. Second, the individual child is being placed at the centre of school and agency thinking and planning.

A third positive is the broad network of specialists being built to coordinate a safety net of support and provision for all aspects and parts of the child's life both in and out of school.

Finally the development of effective integration of services at local Cluster level is enabling MAW to effectively take place.

Issue 3: Increasing knowledge and understanding

Head Teachers make only twelve positive comments concerning professional knowledge and seven concerning growth of knowledge of this way of working. This is a small response. Comments include some related to professional practice having improved because of increased speed of access and availability to support (8/59a/18), the need to keep up with current practice and the growing expertise of other professionals. Such examples involve new areas of care, i.e. where schools become corporate parents and the development of increased support for looked after children. For those children affected it is noted that care standards should be kept high and standards maintained (11/73/13).

Heads are now expected to work closely with agency officers and share knowledge of multi agency related issues, to meet, discuss and cooperate. Extra time and resourcing is now shown to be an important requirement. Extra resourcing enables traditional school management meetings and duties to continue avoiding Heads gaining increased workloads (3/15/4) and so enabling maintenance of good professional practice.

Head Teachers in two small rural schools make positive comment on the opportunities that improvements in MAW bring to the school manager and their professional practice. With officers increasingly reactive to school concerns (4/20/2a), the Head Teacher can now coordinate and manage agency responses (5/30/1). Heads (having identified children's needs) can now ensure a more effective response (9/65/10). In the absence of effective strategic oversight, local groups can be set up to monitor and evaluate (3/16/10b) provision of MAW and start to fill any local need for strategic management

People involved in MAW are now thought to be developing a better idea of what agency officers do and what data needs to be collected (15/99/2b). Communication is also noted as improving. When people meet they are thought to have a common understanding and can share information. A senior education officer observed that MAW is improving professional practice by preventing duplication of work and clearly defining roles (1/7/1).

Four officers spoke positively of the impact of the 2004 Children Act which they saw making a difference and impacting on the lives of children. They felt it put children clearly at the centre (15/100/3a) causing senior managers to take note. This was a catalyst for change (14/97/3).

ECM is also viewed very positively by three education officers because it helps them provide a shared language (15/100/3a) and increases the need for officers to focus on the outcome of their actions (19/117/3).

In general, officer's comments show many - often small - changes and improvements in organisation and practice providing positive outcomes for MAW with good indicators for the future. Agencies and schools are able to work together effectively and with understanding. Using Cluster support, needs are starting to be identified and jointly addressed despite the absence of effective County strategic management of MAW.

How are parents being served, and how are the improvements and changes noted impacting on them? Parent's positive comments address all four areas of development noted by Heads and officers; two comments address professional practice, two improvements in knowledge, three integration and the most (six) address the structure of provision receive mainly from schools.

Professionalism is addressed in the quality of services parents received mainly from teachers of their children. Comments concern teachers being available for parents, listening, seeking to understand and staff more recently becoming increasingly aware and concerned for their children's welfare. The study area is also described by one parent as being well run.

Both parents and children have positively identified people known to them being perceived as concerned about their wellbeing, and importantly showing commitment by making themselves available and giving individual attention. Positive comment has not been about the authoritative giving of advice but about sensitivity and people showing the ability to listen. One Head Teacher notes schools becoming substitute parents (11/73/13). Maybe here are examples of the need for schools to recognise the lack of broader family support; that many parents and children no longer have access to parenting and successful family life experience and knowledge. Comments from an urban infant school concern the strategies teacher used to ensure parents were well informed:

'Teachers fantastic, newsletters, parent mail and notice boards' (7/49/ 4a)

At a large urban Primary school, teachers ensure parents meet regularly and are consulted:

'School gives us lots of information on initiatives, parent survey which is well worded and good parent networks. We know where to look.' (8/51/4)

Integration was described as running smoothly and people working together (8/54/9). People from different agencies and schools are seen by another infant school parent as working in tune with each other with the child (needs) being at the forefront (7/50/9). Agency staff are noted as more aware and so more eager to offer help (7/50/8). This comment supports officer comments of increased understanding giving greater confidence.

Most positive parent comments concern the quality of provision. Parents at an infant school especially note the work of Police (PCSOs), Social Services, Education (LACs), (EWOs) (7/49/1). An example is the work of speech therapy officers who are praised for a quick response, for understanding what is wanted and good quality follow up (7/49/6). With teacher meetings and closer TA links, two parents from a large primary school feel they now know who to talk to or ring if they have a problem (8/52/4).

Here is an area of great potential for the future development of MAW. If parents and children can be increasingly involved as valued members of multi agency teams and communications develop to embrace them, MAW provision will grow. Parents feel direct agency contact should ensure support both through and outside of schools.

Officers make positive comment on the clearer understanding they now have of others' roles and responsibilities and of the better knowledge they have of safeguarding as well as the supportive work they are now able to do with parents (16/104/2). Officers appreciated being able to visit parents and schools, to be welcomed in and given time discussing cases in detail and gaining the full picture (19/117/2b).

One Education officer supporting children with learning needs noted that while those from different agencies have worked together for some time, this has not been so evident amongst middle and senior managers. There is now an expectation that middle and senior managers should also be working more closely together (15/99/2). This excited two officers who recognised the shortcomings of senior managers not fully understanding or strategically managing the development of MAW. At local Cluster level, school and agency middle and senior managers are now meeting at Cluster boards and other meetings such as staff Away Days. Officers especially appreciated the improvements occurring in agency and school integration. Away Days where agency and school staff mix and discuss their work are mentioned by both officers and teachers as a particularly effective way of understanding each other as individuals and developing trust as they held open conversations (19/117/2a). A senior education officer described Away Days as important because they help develop the services they provided

(14/98/4). Away Days helped managers keep focussed on local overall plans (19/118/4). A senior police officer especially liked the opportunities provided to understand each other's cultures (23/121/6), and the developing willingness to agree and drive strategies forward (23/123/2a).

Officers noted that nobody was seen to be excluded with all staff working to common clearly identified goals and outcomes (22/127/1). One officer from a charity based agency was very pleased that when they looked at interagency working there was evidence of support for disabled children (17/111/7).

Positive teacher comments concern the quality of support provided to schools by agencies. Officer comments are mainly concerned with quality issues concerned with the successful integration of agency services to schools. Eight teacher comments addressed agency integration, only two teacher comments and one officer comment address professional practice. Six teacher comments and only two officer comment are related to increases in respondent knowledge and understanding.

Issue 4: Improving professional practice

Integration featured in eight teacher comments. Despite the many negative comments regarding integration, here is data indicating that with improvements in professional practice, officers and schools are now helping to facilitate the integration of agencies and schools successfully. Teachers in a small village primary school note feeling they now had greater access through their professionals to a range of services (4/24/2c). Teachers in both primary and secondary schools mention better relationships with agencies, with teachers now knowing each agency's perspectives (6/38/8) and of people talking and sharing their concerns (13/91/1).

One teacher from an urban primary school noted the importance that exists for collaborative openness to effect change and a more professional service for clients. This teacher felt this enables them agency contact knowing their viewpoint and strengths (6/38/8). Another secondary school teacher notes all agencies now working in response to individual children's needs backed by a strong and trusted school pastoral team. This showed aims of the 1994 Children Act and ECM directive being met - an important and critical change from the days before the Children Act when agencies arrived to deliver blanket coverage of a 'one message fits all' campaign often agreed at a distance (13/91/1).

Interestingly when asked, teachers are aware of the Children Act and Every Child Matters, both of which are viewed as effective by many respondents helping to develop

their professionalism. ECM is viewed by a number of teachers as central to MAW developments in schools (4/27/2b). Agencies are now increasingly talking and sharing concerns through their professionals, enhanced by increased requirements to ensure safeguarding, especially of vulnerable children (13/93/1).

Improvements in knowledge and professional practice are also positively identified by primary school teachers and seen as reducing misconceptions (6/37/1). Teachers in a RC Primary and nearby state primary school both note there now being a much greater range of specialist knowledge available (10/67/3) and on offer, often with a speedy response (6/42/12). Teachers appreciate the knowledge they received from SENCO meetings. One teacher described a collective map of knowledge being built to provide an overall picture for agencies to see the whole picture. Such developments are seen as helping provide schools with access to higher levels of expertise and skills (10/67/1).

Increased contact with professionals of so many agencies is noted by teachers in a primary school serving a poor rural area. The extra contact has a marked impact on teachers' professional practice (5/30/26). Moving outside the shelter of school, teachers are reminded of their responsibilities (5/30/2a) and also that consistent standards are expected especially in the quality of communication and interactions.

Despite concerns for the future maintenance of the quality of MAW, teacher comments at the time of research show these fears to be unfounded. Worker enthusiasm to improve their own professionalism and maintain standards to help children and parents is said to be doing much to help address locally faced challenges.

Problems of agency difference, language and practice.

Varying agency practice and terminology are noted in research literature as a major cause of division and concern hindering agency integration and working. Respondent terminology and practice were examined and recorded data shows Heads and teachers to be positive about their local services. Agency language and terminology are noted as unproblematic and positive as long as locally agreed protocols are in place and followed.

Of concern are the actions of those choosing not to follow agreed protocols and procedures and the updating of terminology. Where protocols are not followed both Heads and teachers give negative comment with mention made of certain senior members of Health and Social Services who 'do not always understand school structures or use locally agreed protocols'. Here strategic protocols and controls need to be agreed and positioned. In general, language difference and terminology are not identified as problematic. Respondent findings do not agree with national research

findings that difference in agency practice and language is a major divisive factor, this is not seen in this study as causing a particular problem.

With the exception of three officers, respondents do not talk about or note having attended national or regional training but do see a need for greater understanding of each other's agencies and practices. Respondents feel that the development of strategies and protocols has assisted interaction and understanding and also that agency terminology, if understood, adds richness and deeper understanding to general agency work and is to be welcomed.

Officially strategic integration of agencies is starting to occur at County level. Social Services are now incorporated within the Local Authority (LA) and a close working partnership is developing with the local Health Authorities. In other ways, agencies still remained insular and protectionist with no official means for agencies to share funding and resources. Funding and resources are starting to be shared at the local level occasionally via unofficial routes. The third sector (voluntary and charity groups) increasingly use their more flexible structures to facilitate, provide services and take over what has traditionally often been statutory work. Voluntary sector officers often do not have suitable background experience or access to professional training sometimes requiring support and highlighting again the great need for improved strategic oversight especially related to training and support.

Issue 5: Improving manager influence and performance.

When asked how managers might best influence MAW, respondents have clear messages. One officer who is highly regarded and heavily involved in local development of MAW suggests they first develop a clear vision of what they do and why (22/128/4). With such a vision the leadership is strong and those with less of an overview are able to follow. Good senior managers are noted for sharing the contexts and drivers that enhanced and fostered the development of MAW (22 /128/5). By their clear thinking and confidence this officer felt they empowered their teams and like-minded professionals. These thoughts came from a manager of a third sector agency - somebody traditionally outside of County policy meetings, but now increasingly involved with the local leadership and management of MAW. Is this person able to hold views because they existed outside of the large powerful hierarchies of the police, health and social services? Structures of the large statutory agencies such as education are also noted. Officers and local managers within Clusters are being made increasingly aware of the difficult times that faced some agencies and the reality of having to meet important

agency driven targets (18 / 114/4) related to budget and work load. Here strategic management is seen as necessary to help protect, support and coordinate officer and agency priorities and challenges at a higher level beyond the Cluster. By better understanding each other's needs, agencies can also try to jointly address problems. Strategic management is needed to keep an overview and focus on future planning and provision of MAW (19 /118/8). While such developments are starting to happen at Cluster level and within the LA, with the growth of online guidance, local meetings and handouts, many staff still lacked the time to read and digest information leading to many requests for signposting of important information and developments.

With so much positive MAW development taking place at Cluster level and the development of local decisions to install strategic management, the Cluster and the Cluster Manager are seen as having important developmental roles for MAW.

Conclusion

Respondents have reported good practice occurring within the research area and generating much positive enthusiasm. By raising standards and driving change those involved are proving that for MAW, effective integration and improvement of professionalism and agency structure is effective and can occur often via relatively minor change. For positive change to occur, respondents have highlighted the need for skilful management and - problematically -greater resourcing and staffing. More achievable is a request for the continuance of the positive local support given by Cluster bodies to MAW development.

Having structured my recording of respondent observations and findings, analysis of findings will occur in Chapter Five where I seek to discover if any patterns, correlations or other relationships or questions arise from this data.

4.6 Principles derived from five identified examples of good practice with key points for implementation.

Through my fourth research question I will also record evidence of other aspects of multi agency practice that might now be regarded as constituting good practice in the operational context. I will seek to record evidence showing that positive practice identified by respondents within my research area May also be transferable to similar or other areas

Section 3: Forces enhancing development of MAW provision	
• School and agency professional partnerships	Very good
• Quality interagency working and understanding	Very good
• Child and family centred thinking and planning	Very good
• Development of broad network of support for vulnerable children	Good
• Development of effective interagency services	Good
• Cluster support	Positive to good
• Improvements to structure and professionalism	Very good
? <i>Agency difference of language, ideology etc not problematic</i>	

Figure14: Forces enhancing development of MAW

Principles associated with fostering quality multi agency provision

Within this study research shows quality multi agency provision greatly improving many aspects of services for children. From this study and research literature eight possible key areas for enhancing multi agency provision have been identified. Firstly the building of a co-ordinated multi agency community where all local agencies and services supporting children and their families are welcomed and encouraged to join together to form a rich and broad local provision of child and family support closely geared to local need (15/99/2).

Provision of services should be carefully managed and covered by an holistic plan that is both inclusive and fully understood by all service users and providers. The structure, leadership and management of the multi agency provision must be clearly understood and easily accessed. Once accessed, service layout needs to be straightforward and non threatening. Quality information on all services must be available in a manner that all users can easily understand regardless of their level of literacy. Movement between agency services must also be made as seamless as possible with help and support to hand (21/123/2). For such a provision of services to be constructed and maintained training may be required along with careful strategic management (15/101/3).

Key points for fostering quality multi agency provision.

- Breadth of provision and development of wider communities (Dartington, 2004).
- Identified, understood and agreed holistic plan for services (Dartington, 2004).
- Clear, speedy access to efficient services via an agreed system (Tunstall, 2007).

- Better use of resources. Quality information on services (Boddy et al, 2006)
- Seamless services, Involved communities, Clear messages (Fox and Butler, 2004).
- Full involvement of service users, better, positive experiences, (Fox and Butler, 2004).
- Empowering children through involvement, positive experience (Edwards et al, 2006).
- Reduce multiple assessment, better coordination (Miller and Mc Nicholl, 2003)

Principles associated with agency integration

Analysis of research literature and study findings suggests that for children's agencies to most effectively integrate all must clearly focus on the needs not of the agency and its practice but on the person and family to be supported (22/128/3c). Each agency must clearly show what can be offered to that person. Each agency should be clearly understood for what can be offered in the context of the service that each agency strives to deliver.

From better understanding agency interaction should be more effective and all should feel equally valued. Effective strategic management is vital especially the full involvement and effective informing/education of budget holders and managers (16/108/12).

All professionals should seek to fully contribute their strengths and abilities to address and foster joint working and sharing of resources to address an often wide variety of organisational, contextual and political challenges.

Key points for ensuring effective agency interaction.

- Movement from an agency centred to a person centred approach (15/100/3)
- Clarity and understand, what agencies stand for, strives for + deliver (20/121 /7)
- Understanding of each other's aims objectives and difficulties (23/131/1)
- Commitment by workers to the principles of MAW.
- Agreement + commitment of senior staff, strategic + budget holders (16/108 12/)
- Ensuring equality and all feeling valued (14/98/5)
- Foster joint working and sharing of resources (12/79/3)
- Seek to address contextual barriers and political pressures (22/129/10)

Principles associated with developing knowledge and understanding

While both respondents and research literature makes minimal reference to the success or otherwise of MAW related training and programmes (13/92i/4), other language is used such as “build capacity in understanding”. Respondents made much reference to the need for understanding and knowledge (12/78/2b), something that was starting to be addressed successfully at local Cluster level following needs assessment. Good practice exists along with effective training; this must be captured, understood and fully recorded before exponents are lost to the system.

With increased quality control, good practice should also be fostered for training potential and local research possibility for community need and change to be explored and understood.

Key points for ensuring effective provision of knowledge and understanding

- Training programmes from good practice, validated by those experienced in MAW ().
- Training needs identified by local and national needs analysis (5/30/2b).
- Work placement training, shadowing, practical application as appropriate (11/76/4).
- Larger, wealthier agencies assist those less wealthy (14 /98/5).
- Training, support involve all staff and agencies regardless of size/wealth (22/124/6).
- Training venues, locations duration, times designed to fit members needs (17/110/5+).
- Training widely publicised (6/41/5).

Principles associated with development of professional practice

Research literature and this study point to the importance of moving away from one size fits all directives (3/14/1) and the need to better understand and accommodate different beliefs and approaches (3/14/1). Difference and diversity must be welcomed and explored for the wealth and creative approaches that can be learnt to improve service. We need to better understand, respect and value each others approach and work. Professionals must work closely and support each other, especially those from voluntary based services or those working outside of their own professional area (3/14/16). This can be greatly enhanced by co location of services.

Key points for the development of professional understanding

- Understand and accommodate different professional beliefs (11/77/13).
- Work together on outcomes, develop trust, encourage risk taking and innovation (18/113/2b), (19/117/2a), (21/123/2a)
- Understand respect and show commitment to individual work styles. (3/14/1).
- Support voluntary staff to play a significant role. (3/14/16).
- Ensure professionals work close by and, where possible, in schools (3/14/2c).
- Co locate, enable learning, sharing, understanding, teamwork, and trust (21/123/2).
- People provide time and support to each other (21/123/2).

Principles associated with development of management and performance.

One of the key findings of this study is that a key area for the development of MAW is the development of strategic management and performance. Here key players must understand the importance of driving forward and increasing the capacity of the services they provide (21/123/2). Leaders and managers must understand the emotional aspect and work based pressures associated with innovation and change. By managing relationships sensitively, listening, guiding and building trust, agency workforce confidence will grow and set an example to those being supported. With workforce confidence will come the ability to discuss and handle criticism in positive ways.

Key points to ensure the development of management and performance.

- Willingness to drive forward and seek to build capacity (Percy-Smith, 2005).
- Strong leadership/management + emotional intelligence (Smith and Bryan, 2005).
- Multi level leadership for complex inter disciplinary relationships (UEA, 2006).
- Value shared partnership especially voluntary services and involvement (21/123/2).
- Tolerant understanding of MAW operation encouraging building of trust (21/123/2).
- Strategic process well informed by those above and below (21/126/11).
- Develop room for discussion, ownership, challenge and shared vision (21/125/7).
- Leadership showing similar values, inclusivity, openness, respect, help (21/124/).

Key aims

- ✓ **Aims common, agreed, understood, inclusive, holistic. informed reviewed**
- ✓ **Positive, seek, empower, listen to, involve especially children and parents.**
- ✓ **Construct agreed, seamless, clearly understood, valued, speedy services**
- ✓ **all committed to MAW especially senior staff and budget holders**
- ✓ **Each agency a clear offer, share resources, work together, people centred**
- X Avoid isolation, one size fits all, insecurity, defeatist attitudes**

Figure 15: Key aims for developing good practice

4.7 Research Findings - Overall Conclusions

Research findings show there to have been much positive development of MAW within the research area and much that respondents are rightly proud of (22/ 125/ 10,12) running alongside significant areas in need of development.. Within section one research findings shows there to have been little strategic management of MAW especially at regional level. The strategic structure that does exist does not run smoothly. There appears to be a low level of knowledge and understanding of MAW existing amongst senior strategic managers. There also appears to have been shortcomings regarding the strategic introduction and running of MAW that have existed for some time.

Research shows quality control to be minimal, that little has been done to monitor, evaluate or review the effectiveness and running of MAW within the research area and there have been few outcome studies made. Strategic management is starting to be introduced at local Cluster level. Senior officer knowledge and understanding of MAW appears to be low. There is need to review safeguarding procedures linked to MAW.

In section two many areas within the structure of MAW have been found to require development. Strategic leadership and management is present but problematic with there being major faults within the lines of communication between all involved in MAW.

From the highest to the lowest levels, strategic leadership is viewed by many of the multi agency workforce as lacking input and understanding; it is seen as distant, out of touch, inactive and lacking in care or concern. A fear exists amongst those involved in MAW that with little understanding of MAW at senior levels, the LA will not properly address identified weaknesses but will allow financial pressures to over ride concerns and undermine and ultimately destroy local provision and progress in MAW.

In section three, good practice within the study area is found to generate enthusiasm and help development of a successful quality service. Successful agency integration helps raise standards and drive change. Improvements exist, especially local Cluster school support, structure, efficiency of service and professional working and support. Highlights are the development of good relationships, increase in knowledge of MAW workers and development of clear lines of management at local Cluster level.

Finally in section four from a study of research findings five sets of principles have been identified and compiled, that will need field trialling and possibly further development beyond the scope of this research programme.

In Chapter Five I will analyse the findings reported in Chapter Four to see if patterns and connections may be made and so enable a deeper understanding of the provision of MAW.

Chapter Five

Analysis of research findings

With research findings organised into four sections, each addressing four research questions, data will now be analysed to seek meaning, patterns, links and questions that might arise. For each section main findings will be noted to enable further analysis to be made within and between research question data.

5.1 Section one: Research Question One

Research question one: What is the role of strategic management in supporting the process of MAW as perceived by multi agency workers.

Perceptions and knowledge of MAW

Within this section data is examined in three ways, first, from the perspectives of respondents involved in the daily running and functioning of MAW. Secondly from respondent's observation and views of national, regional and local initiatives including directives and governance influencing the environments within which MAW has to operate and thirdly from the critical detachment of the researcher.

As a relatively new way of working initial interest is on how little mention is made in research findings of the introduction of MAW (zero quotes, Thomas, n.d)) while many references are made to a need for better understanding and knowledge especially of people and structures involved (26 quotes, Thomas, n.d). Is strategic planning failing as mentioned in research literature or - more seriously - is MAW suffering from a general lack of understanding and knowledge and might this situation be causing strategic managers charged with implementation of strategic policy to fail? Or third, are those involved in MAW expecting too much from strategic managers?

Respondent comments (20 quotes, Thomas, n.d) critical of strategic management suggested strategic managers might be let down by their low level of understanding of aims, objectives and principles of MAW. The question arises of suitability; who is involved and how are they equipped to currently drive change? The question arises:

Do senior /strategic managers show understanding and valuing of MAW and are their actions - however well meant - hindering rather than fostering agency interaction and growth?

First impressions from respondent comment are of mixed and sometimes low levels of understanding and practice existing within the study area. Strategic managers are only interviewed at the local and not national or regional levels. From respondent

observations and concerns six key areas of focus are noted each centring on possession of knowledge

1. Location of knowledge of MAW and strategic implications
2. Lines of communication carrying knowledge
3. Measurement of outcomes and generation of knowledge
4. Provision of training and transmission of knowledge and understanding
5. Knowledge and its impact on safeguarding and the protection of children
6. Knowledge and understanding of MAW at the local level.

Does possession of knowledge play a vital role or is this but one example of work force over expectation, further examination of shows:

Location of knowledge and strategic implications

Analysis of research findings indicates knowledge of MAW varies across the workforce with most knowledge and understanding resting with Head Teachers and Officers, two of whom are local strategic managers. Officers gain insight and information from their practice and some agency training and Heads receive this from fellow Head Teachers and practice within their schools. It is of concern that there appears to be no common body of knowledge existing regarding MAW, and knowledge does not appear to be widely shared.

MAW has been noted in research literature for many years as being hard to define and rarely are different models described (Sloper 2004). If hard to define with no common agreement of definition, could such a situation have restricted the organisation and framing of research? If research is restricted as noted within the research literature (Sloper 2004) the development of knowledge and understanding of MAW might have also been restricted with limited new research knowledge or understanding being generated.

Examination of respondent data points to knowledge and information on MAW also being generated by practitioners working in the field. While we are not sure if they have been encouraged to share their insights and understanding, the respondents most in contact with those involved in MAW are Head Teachers, Agency Officers and certain specialist teachers. Heads are noted having good general knowledge and officer's good specific knowledge.

The most detailed understanding of MAW appears to come from officers. Agency officers do have the opportunities to attend national and regional training on MAW. Officers see MAW as important in linking groups of professionals together to assist and

support vulnerable children. They recognise that linking is complex but important as MAW connects groups of professionals to the vulnerable.

Respondent comment and the literature note that officers from different agencies may have different priorities or a different ethos, however they feel that MAW involvement should be made as broad as possible to involve many agencies including those from the voluntary sector. Officers like to view MAW from a more strategic viewpoint and rather than refer to agencies by name, used group terms such as statutory, public and voluntary or third sector support. Officers also attach great importance to all working together rather than in isolation.

Such a local cache of MAW knowledge and understanding raises a number of important questions - one being who at regional and county level possesses such a good knowledge of MAW? Of concern respondent comment (6 /37/2c), (20/122/10) notes senior officers appear not to be receiving knowledge and understanding of developments being made in MAW or of the concerns arising from practice. Are officers not receiving information; is this so or is this just easy to make critical comment of superiors and part of a wider pattern of criticism-? Two important questions are firstly is there evidence of front line information not being properly transmitted and secondly and importantly if so can officers effectively carry out their role in the absence of accurate and up to date knowledge and understanding?

‘Respondent data suggests a very important finding that lines of communication to be at fault’ (12/78/7)

Lines of communication

Respondents note lines of communication running down from managers but not up from front line staff. A Head Teacher notes regional and central government often not being aware of what they are doing, already doing or have done (4/26/7) and senior officers just passing down ‘one size fits all’ directives on MAW from what is critically described as their ivory towers (5/32/7). If such a situation exists, are strategic officers informed? Have they been able to effectively manage and keep respect and how have respondents judged their advice and direction?

A teacher respondent gives evidence of poor quality strategic guidance and staff frustration; experienced staff are noted as often upset at having to stop effective practice and implement directed practices which may be outdated or ineffective (4 /26 /7). Here is evidence not of over expectation but of somebody perceived as a strategic manager providing poor direction and guidance. The teacher is further concerned for the senior

officers, guidance is noted as flawed and must improve as it is currently generating low worker moral and senior officers are losing respect.

Research findings are clearly indicating that for MAW to be effective knowledge and understanding must be transmitted effectively to officers and lines of communication developed to enhance worker/strategic officer interaction. Communications must be developed and completed to reach all staff involved in MAW.

Respondents suggest that MAW is much more complex than many realise. Is this groundless hype or worker over enthusiasm? If a body of knowledge and understanding actually exists and is to be transmitted a second important issue arises. If research findings on MAW have been restricted by lack of clear definition, where will the body of knowledge come from and how will it have been validated as accurate and representing good practice?

In the preceding sections failure to address an initial problem, that of definition and clarity of MAW appears to be giving rise to later more serious problems related to failure to construct an effective and agreed body of knowledge about MAW and to effectively transmit such knowledge to required locations. Lack of definition of MAW and failure of clarity could both be contributing causal factors of possible failure of strategic management of MAW.

If the initial problem facing MAW - that of definition - had been resolved would research have occurred and would a body of knowledge have developed or are there other factors to consider?

Measurement of outcomes of MAW effectiveness

Respondent findings and the literature on MAW note little monitoring, evaluation or review of MAW to have taken place. Why has such a situation occurred and how has the quality of MAW been demonstrated and effective good practice identified and measured?

With no agreed common body of MAW based knowledge to guide practitioners, officer interviews suggest difficulty being experienced when seeking to monitor or evaluate MAW. To decide what to monitor and evaluate and what might constitute best practice in schools and agencies where good practice existed, such decisions were usually left to the most experienced staff.

It appears from respondent comment that little or no monitoring or evaluation of MAW has occurred which may have resulted in a drift in standards and the existence of great

variety of practice. Such comment could be a measure of respondent ignorance however little evidence could be found within the research area of examples of quality control existing and when asked all respondents had difficulty either discussing or providing examples of good practice. A further issue might be the acceptance within respondent interview schedules that complex public body operations such as MAW can have their performance effectively measured by standard quality control measures such as outcome measures.

Only recently have outcome measures been introduced to MAW and with little available guidance, the setting of outcome measures is noted as also being difficult. If there exists difficulty in defining good practice and monitoring and evaluating quality of provision and practice, how will this impact on the development of MAW provision and might it be the cause of a very wide existence of standards, noted within research literature?

Impact of knowledge and understand of MAW as viewed by different groups of respondents

With respondents identifying the need to move and disseminate a body of knowledge on MAW to those needing to know, the question now arises as to how, and who is responsible for dissemination? Who also has sufficient knowledge of MAW to undertake such a task especially if there is an absence of strategic management? Training needs have been mentioned by respondents as being urgently required but being few in number.

If standards and quality of provision of MAW are not being properly monitored or evaluated then further questions arise as to how a quality training programme can best be constructed. What body of knowledge will the trainer select and in the absence of quality assessment how will they know it represents good practice?

With so much insecurity existing within MAW practice might respondents be seeking to pass blame for their apparent lack of knowledge and do we have evidence that workers might be failing to take up or access training provision? Examination of County and Cluster training provision showed there to be very few training opportunities for MAW and interagency development but little evidence of why this situation exists.

A further problem is who within which respected organisations is likely to validate content once a training programme has been written? With so many problems still to be overcome this might explain the current shortage of national and regional training schemes addressing the implementation and development of MAW and the continuing existence of varying levels of knowledge and understanding existing especially within

the strategic management of MAW. With different agencies having differing perspectives and priorities this issue appears to be both urgent and complex, who does have the best view as to how MAW should be implemented?

While respondents might speak positively of a need for training we have no evidence of how well they might value and support such a provision. If training is so important why have respondents - especially Head teachers and officers - not sought to mount training within their Clusters? A deeper question might be respondent's perceptions of strategic management against self help provision. Should strategic managers be ensuring suitable training provision and do Head teachers and Officers fully understand strategic management both regionally and within their local Cluster? The Cluster Manager asked 'who is my strategic manager'? Examination of the job description of the Cluster Manager showed him to be a key local strategic manager.

If a programme of training is developed a further problem is that without an improved profile, will senior/strategic officers value the need to spend time and energy acquiring extra knowledge and understanding of MAW or will it be viewed as something problematic that can easily be avoided, cut to save money, so removing the problem.

A conceptual model has been developed to show how MAW may be influenced and possibly hampered by the presence of key factors such as limited understanding, limited monitoring, evaluation and review and limited training availability. Recent research by UEA (2007) and Boddy et al (2006), shows progress and improvement of MAW to still be very mixed across the country.

The normal linear development cycle of a successful practice (diagram 1) is shown to involve the increasing acquisition of knowledge, skills, practice and understanding, driven by increasing standards, knowledge and understanding from ongoing programmes of research, monitoring, evaluation and review, validated training and review of outcome measures. With development of agreed good practice and procedures, validated training programmes are written to ensure consistency and high standards of delivery. Progress continues on an upward spiral (Figure 16).

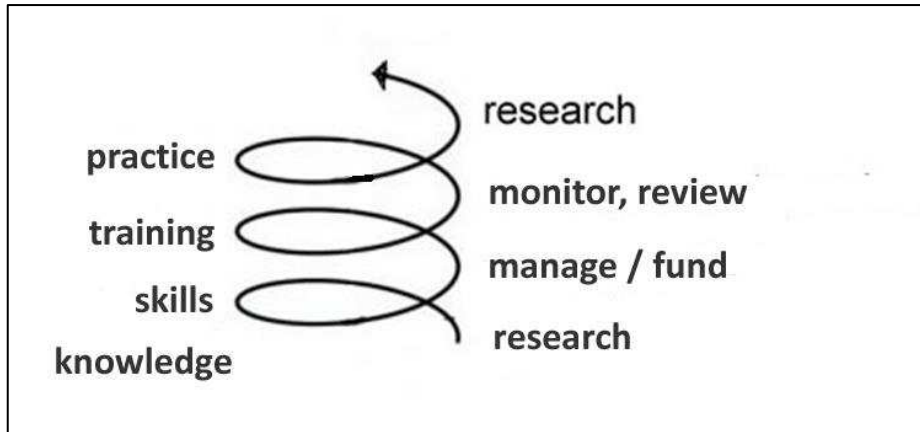


Figure 16: Linear development cycle plus research findings

Such an evolution of MAW should ideally show a smooth general upward progression of knowledge and practice (Figure 17) however within this study and within research literature (UEA 2007) MAW progress has often been found to be erratic and linked to user everyday experience and practice with little formal transmission of knowledge or good practice (Figure 18).

Where limited knowledge restricts research, where limited and varied structure restricts monitoring and evaluation and where such variety makes training difficult, analysis of findings from this study importantly indicate traditional routes of progress might well be hampered leading to high variability in practice.

The complexity and unpredictability currently experienced within some areas of MAW practice may thus be generating dynamic development and adding to the complexity of MAW.

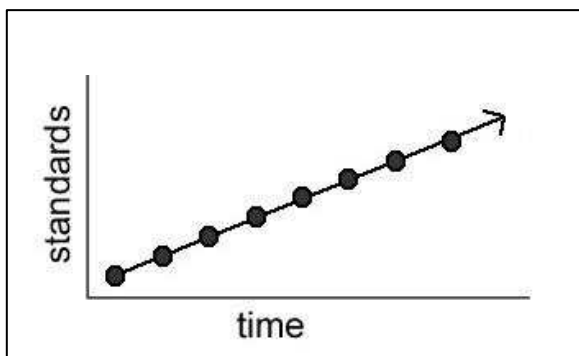


Figure 17: Linear development

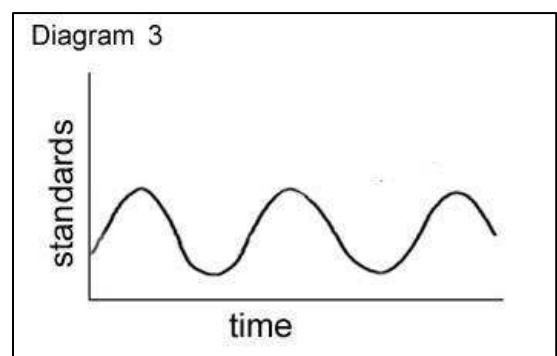


Figure 18: Dynamic development

Currently where there is stability and linear development, there appears (in the absence of training) to be great reliance on staff knowledge and experience. Chances for

communication occurs so enabling successful MAW practice. With movement and loss of the most experienced staff, highs and lows in staff knowledge and understanding can start giving peaks and troughs and inconsistent provision (Figure 18). Laming (2003) studied problems occurring in areas of high deprivation, under funding, high staff turnover and low stability and where literature of the time (Hunter,2003) noted staff getting locked into a complex dynamic situation.

Strategic management: impact on regional support for vulnerable children

If the developmental pattern suggested in sections one to four above exists, what might be the ramifications of such a development and might there now be key areas of MAW development requiring urgent attention? Concern is heightened by respondent data of the work of senior education officers of the research based county and the quality of their provision and oversight of critical training. An important countywide programme of training sought to introduce a new multi agency Common Assessment Form (CAF) and improve support for vulnerable children. Many respondents are critical of CAF training describing it as:

‘worst training ever’

‘a complete waste of time,’

‘ill conceived training and support’

‘introduction of CAF a disaster from the start’

Examination of the facts (ch 4, p 19) suggests responsible senior officers did not understand either the aim or the content of the training which they designed and offered. Senior officer lack of knowledge and understanding of MAW and lack of communication with front line workers is clearly shown and appears to have been at fault possibly restricting their ability to judge and verify the content. The result was much money spent; the training box ticked but children still at risk and vulnerable.

Budgetary pressures are currently causing further concern over the potential loss of many experienced staff from the study area removing further knowledge and good practice from the field of MAW. The need for MAW as a central component for seeking to protect children remains as high as ever. By linking professional providers, agencies and users MAW should help provide a network of care, security and vigilance around children that is expected to quickly respond and inform of risk or guide children away from harm.

An important concern of this research is that if MAW is not being effectively managed, is it able to shown itself able to provide this network of care so necessary for protection of the most vulnerable children?

While Cluster based developments seek to strengthen MAW, in recent years regional cuts in provision of MAW and those providing such a service come at a time when required Child Protection Plans (CPPs) have risen annually from 29200 to 42,850 over a four year period. Public and media concern have also grown steeply for the increased discovery of damage and abuse and the yearly steep rise in deaths of vulnerable children (for statistics see Figure 1). Media concern and public anxiety has increased as many cases have come to light involving adults traditionally viewed as figures of trust and support (grandmother's boyfriend, the local priest or bishop, television and radio personalities known for helping children, school teachers etc). In such circumstances both children and their families require the specialists within the agencies of children's services to be well trained and operating and interacting at a very high level of vigilance and efficiency. With the concerns raised in this study can we be sure that MAW is not contributing to the decline in the safety of children - especially the most vulnerable or is MAW helping enable children to be securely guarded within an increasingly dangerous World?

If lack of knowledge and understanding of the value and current role of MAW leads to Senior Officers failing to recognise or support those guarding children (especially our most vulnerable young people) respondent findings and officer interviews suggest urgent action may well be required.

From this study, examination of issues raised in sections 1-5 above suggests that to be safe there is a need to:

1. audit the knowledge base and understanding of MAW of officers involved and linked to MAW especially senior and strategic managers,
2. Check lines of communication especially between those with strategic management responsibility and front line worker and verify extent of knowledge base required,
3. disseminate basic information where required and mount training to develop broader long term understanding of MAW,
4. ensure known centres of MAW excellence are linked to those overseeing quality control and those involved in safeguarding of children,
5. ensure development of effective interaction and communication between all practitioners, strategic managers and budget holders,

6. ensure MAW is clearly defined and its function within children's services understood. especially involvement and links to safe guarding of children,
7. review the strategic role of local children's trusts.

Knowledge and understanding at the local level

With knowledge and understanding of MAW located mainly with Head Teachers and Agency Officers, why is teacher knowledge and understanding so limited? With parent respondents noting they are well supported (7/49/4) especially by schools, why is their knowledge base also low?

As mentioned in Chapter, teachers complained that while Heads were kept informed on MAW they did not share this knowledge with their staff. Also it is likely that for the majority of school teachers, especially in more affluent areas, they will be focussing on pupil's learning and the school curriculum (2 /13 /14).

With parents trusting and relying on teacher support and information they may not be aware of the general shortcoming in teacher knowledge and understanding - a fact not identified within the research literature. This unsatisfactory situation appears to have arisen from yet another failure of strategic management to address transmission of knowledge to both teachers and parent/carers.

Respondents note much positive support and informative comment starting to be provided locally by individual Clusters responding to identified school and service user needs. While it is to be expected that respondents will report favourably on their own known work and achievements it is also good to see the local workforce taking responsibility for their identified needs - taking the initiative rather than relying on a dependency culture and looking to others for guidance.

It is not known if workers feel confident enough to take responsibility for their problems and whether they have a clear vision of their local chain of strategic command.

If teacher and parent knowledge is to be increased it will be important to develop the local training and school based opportunities for teachers to learn from their Head Teachers and local officers.

Successful transmission of knowledge appears to be happening at the local level and involves local away day training which, while expensive to provide, is cited by respondent Heads and Officers as of great value with teachers lacking consultation and involvement, work shadowing is valued by teachers.

A surprise finding relates to much in the literature of MAW showing that officers and school staff might have great difficulty sharing and working together. Understanding each other's vocabulary, practice and terminology has over many years been reported in research literature as one of the greatest challenges facing MAW and a likely cause of the problematic development of MAW (UEA, 2005). Respondent data shows this not to be the case within the study area. By developing agreed protocols, Cluster members have enabled all staff to understand each other. By meeting at common agreed sites, getting to know each other and making time for general discussion, problems are being overcome. Both officers and school staff report having built trust in each other and are now starting to understand each other's agency practice, aims, objectives and peculiarities. Time and space to meet and talk are viewed by both respondents and researchers as centrally important but difficult to obtain in such cash strapped times (Dartington 2004).

Finding time and space appears of great concern, while those involved in MAW see value in their work they increasingly operate in school environments nationally and county driven by achievement of academic standards and locally driven by OfSTED inspection pressures. The environment is highly pressurised and one in which staff priority is usually response to heavy demand short time scales and performance expectation rather than open space and time for proactive and creative thinking.

A further problem arises if the development of MAW related knowledge and understanding is centred within each individual cluster. How will high standards be fostered, monitored and maintained across the twenty three plus clusters of the study County and other regions? Will there be need for strategic monitoring by senior staff? Further, if any agency refuses to cooperate or follow agreed protocols, who and how will such a situation be addressed and managed without overall strategic management?

Conclusions from analysis of Section One: Strategic management.

1. Concern that senior/strategic officer's lack understanding and value of MAW and that this maybe hindering agency interaction and growth.
2. Concern that no common body of knowledge and understanding of MAW appears to exist or being shared.
3. Concern that lines of communication between strategic/senior managers and front line workers may be flawed.
4. Concern that lack of initial definition and clarity of MAW have led to current lack of definition and clarity regarding MAW functioning and role.

5. Concern that such a lack of definition and clarity of MAW arises from a failure of strategic management.
6. Concern that lack of monitoring of MAW practice has led to a drift in standards and variety in provision.
7. Concern that lack of monitoring has impacted negatively on construction and provision of MAW related training.
8. Concern that factors one to seven above combine and interact causing increased complexity and variable outcomes for MAW. To strategically understand, analyse and address provision of MAW it is thus important that MAW be viewed systemically as a collection of interrelated interactions.
9. From points one to eight, concern arises that if MAW is not functioning properly it is not able to provide the network of cover required for safeguarding of children to be effective. Vulnerable children may thus be at risk.
10. Is the role of the local Children's Trust one of key strategic management?

5.2 Section Two: Research Question Two

Research question two: What are the inhibiting factors in relation to multi agency working?

Six important issues re considered.

While North American (Glisson and Hemmelgarn, 1998) and Scottish researchers (Brown and White, 2006) have questioned the aims of MAW and the ability of differing agencies to work together effectively, research findings in this report do not support such an assertion and show respondents generally support the multi agency aims of MAW. Some single this out as a strength; none speak out against it. Recognising that agencies are of various size and resources, Officers and Head Teachers highlight the need for fairness and equality between agencies and seek to maintain a partnership of equals (17/119/4). This latter point is important because while large statutory agencies such as Health and Education may be well funded, smaller voluntary organisations and charities are often not. They are, however, often the keenest, most flexible and most creative. Here the role of local Cluster or Partnership Boards, seek to play an important role providing local oversight and guidance.

While respondents of this study (which includes a member from a voluntary agency), view agencies (VA) as being the most popular, their enthusiasm brings potential problems to MAW. Usually with minimal budgets, these voluntary agencies are willing to

pick up unpopular and often time consuming tasks from their fellow larger agency partners. Currently VA staff are noted as being keen to be involved in MAW and to conform to all procedures. Potentially problems of autonomy could exist but currently strong management appears to make this unlikely.

The smaller charities are identified during this study often relying on voluntary staff often lacking the specialist professional training and experience required by statutory agencies. With a significant lack of MAW related training available and further need for transmission of knowledge and understanding, the concern is that some needs of children may not be recognised or met. Once again the complexity of MAW and the need for and sharing of knowledge and understanding are paramount. Importantly, officers do not want to exclude or alienate voluntary staff many of whom respondents note having skills but not a professional identity. At county level the minimal training mounted for agency members as has been shown through CAF training, can be of variable quality, some agency professionals have asked that all agencies be involved in training provision not just Education. Sharing training will be a sound move as this would enable all agencies and perspectives to be embraced, raise standards and at a time of budgetary uncertainty reduce reliance on a sole provider however as has been shown this idea is simplistic, many agencies are fighting to survive and mounting training would be well beyond their budget.

Professional practice

Research findings of this study show professionals reporting effective and progressive multi agency practice (especially school based contact), enhancing their skills, broadening their understanding and increasing their knowledge. However a desire from senior managers to reduce budgets reported at an observed meeting, suggests new structures of multi agency working might enable lower paid staff from other less well paid agencies to handle formerly specialist tasks. It is not surprising that professionals are now fearful of losing their specialist posts and recognition, and are in fear of being viewed as jack-of-all-trades, moving from a well paid specialist position to that of a lower paid technician. Staff complain that their specialist skills are not been recognised and their work not valued. Such fears show the value of ensuring all staff while working together, professionally keep their roots as members of their individual agencies where they will receive on going professional support and updating and where specialist professional growth can be properly addressed unlike the Tomorrows Schools structure of 1988 (chapter2, p27) where free standing groups of officers were drawn from members of different agencies.

Structural issues at national level

At national levels, creating new structures and arrangements has long been popular as political masters seek short term but highly visible responses to high profile needs. While there was much in Lord Laming's 2003 Review that pleased those looking for a structural response, respondent views of the subsequent Children Act and ECM Green Paper have been surprisingly mixed amongst respondents. The ECM initiative was viewed as providing welcome strategic assistance with the development of multi agency working and vocabulary to both assist and remind those in the field as they seek to protect vulnerable children. In practice few parents or teachers understood the Children Act 2004 and many did not access the support and guidance provided by the ECM web site. Here is an example of where a strategic response initially helped provide strategic leadership of confidence, knowledge and understanding at a time when it was most needed (18/114/3) but failed to provide ongoing general and practical support.

Ten years after the public concern and outrage that led to Lord Laming's review many structures and procedures have been put in place but child deaths and abuse continue to rise steeply, and outrage and public concern remains high. The Department of Education's Child Death Reviews completed in England (year ending 31 March, 2012) show from 4,012 child death reviews 784 are identified as having modifiable factors and of these 509 (65%) are classified as due to deliberately inflicted injury, abuse or neglect. Child deaths have therefore risen since the Children Act of 2004 from a yearly average of 80 deaths before 2003 to 156 by 2008 and 509 by 2012 - an increase in incidence of child deaths of over 600% over a nine year period. While such an increase in child deaths might be partly due to subtle changes in classification, the question remains: aside from positive respondent comments are current safeguarding procedures working and is the functioning of MAW a positive or negative causal factor?

Multi agency observation and feedback forms an important constituent part of the current process of protection but is MAW an effective way of monitoring and providing feedback response if quality and provision of MAW cannot be guaranteed. While MAW occupies an important position in helping protect children it is not a panacea and neither should it be. Lord Laming's review of 2003 and report of 2009 each identify shortcomings in knowledge and understanding of vulnerable children's needs. By 2009 Laming had identified the deeper needs of lack of understanding especially amongst senior managers and importantly those controlling budgets especially for recruitment and retention. By 2009 Laming was addressing the less politically attractive but deeper and more expensive issues such as the need for senior staff to improve their understanding and experience and the need to appoint someone who does understand

children's needs. The provision of relevant training and the building of a body of suitable knowledge is seen by both Laming and respondents of this study as central to service improvement. The problem remains of how to achieve without further overburdening or demoralising existing social workers and those seeking to protect children.

Social media has shown that speedy communication is possible amongst a diverse community and that there may be possible approaches other than MAW. Attempts to run services where agencies are standalone monoliths have not worked. As New Zealand's Tomorrow's Schools initiative has shown, creating free standing, mixed ability teams requires careful management. In this country, counties such as Surrey have long stopped running standalone mixed ability teams, and now coordinate their school and agency professionals to work together providing through MAW a multi agency network of support. Some people believe agencies should be set up enabling issues to be passed across them (trans agency working) so enabling agencies to individually focus on their core functions but use modern information technology to link together. Meetings would be fewer and funding problems might be less complex. Would less interaction give rise to a decline in understanding and communication - both clearly identified requirements of the Laming Review 2003 and 2009 report.

Responsibility

As a MAW network grows, who carries ultimate responsibility and are they going to be fully aware of their new responsibility? Head Teachers know their schools well and from their answers clearly know their responsibility for what happens within their schools. Of concern, do Heads view MAW as something everybody has a stake in and share responsibility or is this only for those with senior manager responsibility? Heads would be responsible for what happens in schools and strategic officers responsible for the wider multi agency environment. Both Laming's report of 2009 and research findings of this study agree that Local Children's Trusts are not functioning effectively and their strategic role is not yet fully developed or understood. To be fully functioning strategically the workforce must understand the role of Children's Trusts and Trust managers must fully understand and appreciate the needs of vulnerable children rather than being local worthies or figurehead appointments.

Officers appear to share information with Head Teachers within local Clusters, but are front line staff able to effectively feed back to Clusters and Strategic Officers or is there a need as Laming suggests for further strategies and training?

From respondent answers it appears that with the growth of MAW it is necessary to clearly map out and agree management hierarchies and areas of responsibility since the growth of multi agency working and lack of effective strategic management has restricted such development taking place. Should management be imposed or should workers gain the confidence and skills to freely interact in a professional manner? Only when needs have been identified and suitable structures discussed can agency members be in a better position to challenge and drive local progress and make necessary change at Cluster boards, thereby starting to address local area and county shortcomings in strategic management.

With Academy schools and local Clusters receiving greater freedoms to develop, what might be the effect of this and could there be a loss of knowledgeable senior staff from MAW related activity? With the role of the LA shrinking, who in the future, might ensure quality control and identify and deliver training? Will staff possess the knowledge base required and, with budget cuts, will the problem be exacerbated by cheaper, less experienced staff being appointed or will fresh thinking open up more efficient ways of working and address current problems? Currently no quick answer appears to be forthcoming.

Inter agency issues and tendencies

As agency members start to meet and cooperate, respondent comment suggests this is beneficial but problems still exist. At local level timings and locations must suit everyone; the teacher being busy when the social worker is not and the voluntary services representative seeking weekends when few others are free. Each agency has its own physical and time boundaries outside of which problems occur.

Respondents show differences of language, terminology and practice being overcome by frontline workers employing protocols, by talking, work shadowing and getting to know each other however problems do still exist. Problems persist partly because it is now the senior officers who have to authorise extra time and funds for meetings, joint working and projects to take place. In one of the study clusters many agency services had been co-located in one building. A forward looking Cluster manager (a third tier officer with responsibility for development of their Cluster group and local strategic management, known as LEOs), brokered and maintained this popular arrangement. (23/132/4) Arrival of a new and less experienced Cluster manager resulted in termination of the co-location arrangement and other progressive structures. Budget

savings have been made and agencies are now dispersed with many MAW staff upset and accommodated in an array of less suitable locations.

While frontline workers know the value of working together, decisions are taken by senior officers with other priorities. Frontline workers were not given the chance to express views or inform. It appears senior officers were fully briefed on budgetary considerations but not the work and success of the MAW team they displaced, the savings accrued through co-working and cost sharing and the long term savings of reduced child and family failure. Importantly when needed, critical outcome data does not appear from interview and discussion comment to be available or importantly accessible to senior staff. When seeking to show added value of qualitative data arising from MAW, research data gives no indication of the presence and availability of clear qualitative measures that can show MAW strengths and potential savings.

Financial and budgetary issues

Does MAW require extra funding? With support and protection of children and their families taking a higher profile a complex network of people and organisations has developed in the study area.

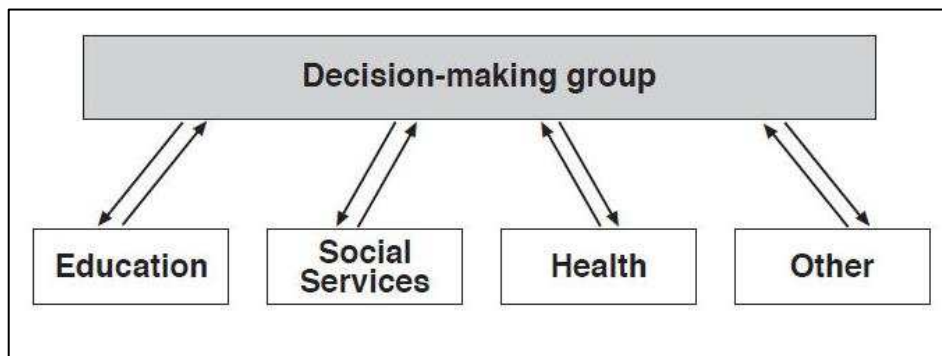


Figure 19: Complexity of MAW network in 1998

MAW has grown dramatically to meet such a role but respondents report suitable funding sources have not (22/127/2c). Unfortunately progress comes at a cost and as structures and manpower increase, new mechanisms are required to meet increased funding needs and pressures. Comparison of Figures 10 and 11 show how agency numbers and complexity has grown within one cluster of the research area over a ten year period between 1998 and 2008. Agency numbers interacting with schools within that Cluster grew from 4+ to 30+ agencies, an increase of 750%. The diagrams also show how thinking progressed from a hierarchical bureaucratic model centred on large

LA based statutory agencies to a dynamic web based network of agencies interacting and influenced by holistic and child/family centric models of care as fostered by the widely influential ECM onion model of agency support.

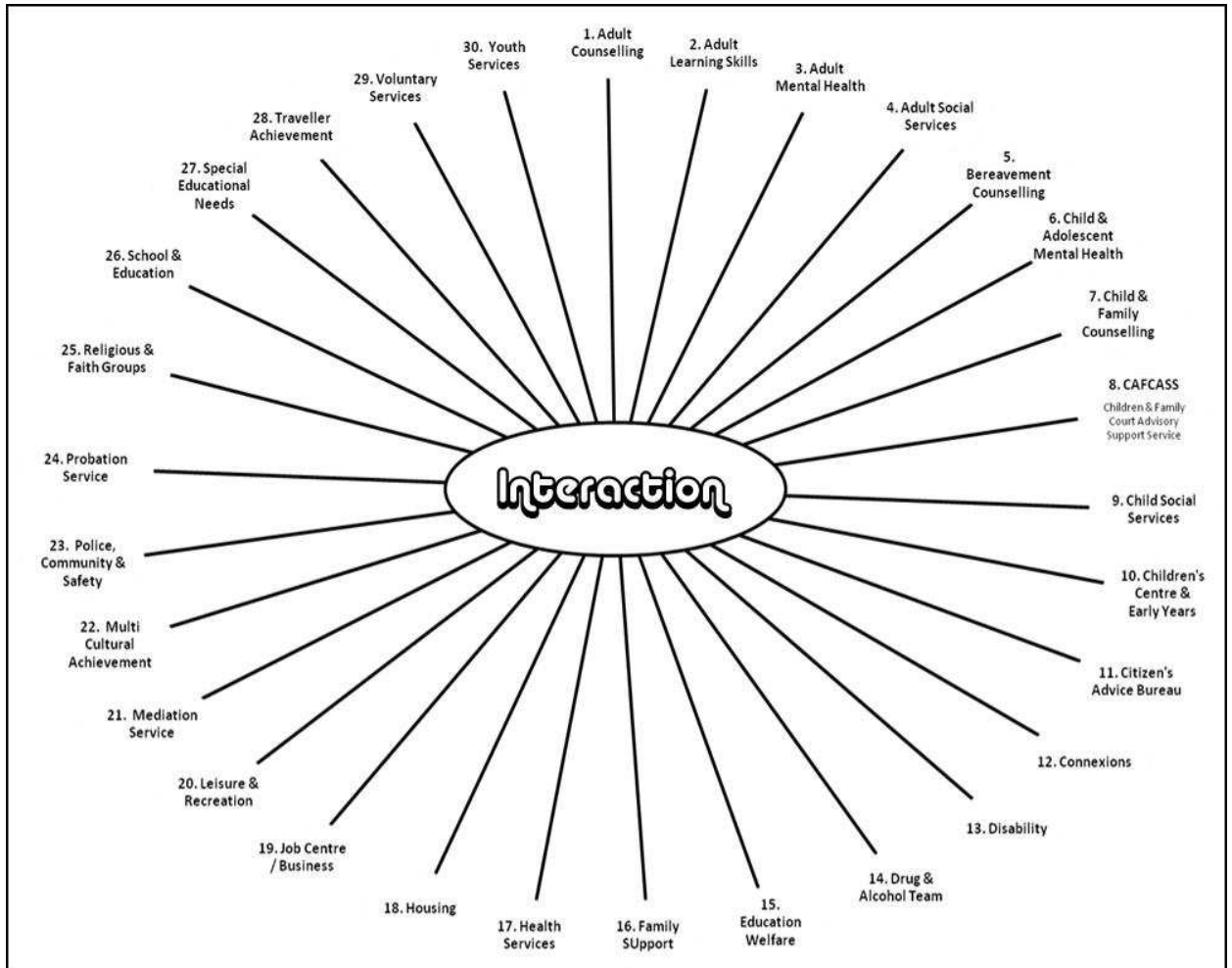


Figure 20: Complexity of MAW network 2007 – 2008

Respondents note that money represents power (23 /131/2c). Funding arrangements have been problematic. There is now a need for action to be agreed at a level well above that of Cluster level where the manager (LEO) has control of only a small Cluster budget. For the funding of MAW to be successful, increased assessment must improve senior officer and budget manager knowledge of this mode of working and its many advantages so that they can better argue for funds. A clear case will need to be constructed for MAW funding and, once completed, will require careful articulation and updating to those responsible for budget decisions and planning.

Such actions will need to be taken well in advance of any decision making. To enhance senior officer knowledge and understanding, learning time will also need to be considered. Those arguing for increased budgets will further need evidence of successful use of existing funds. With a history of minimal monitoring or use of outcome measures such data is in short supply. The many officers and schools providing good outcomes should be able to show positive practice and outcomes.

For budget managers MAW has quickly increased from humble uncoordinated beginnings into a large and increasingly complex mechanism that enables those supporting children to interact and successfully support them despite public awareness and understanding remaining low. All of the above requires extra funding.

Public concern for the safety of children continues to grow with media coverage reporting child abuse and the continuation of child fatalities often at the hands of trusted adults. If the network of MAW is to be protected and more efficiently used to properly protect children, then expenditure will need to be addressed and put on a proper footing to enable staffing costs to be covered, needs audited and a carefully constructed policy introduced. Unlike the Laming Review of 2003, needs must be matched to staff availability and capability and the ideas and guidance of those delivering services noted. Urgency in implementation will be important to protect children currently at risk.

Communication and understanding

An area of great concern to most Head Teachers and a few Officers is communication and understanding. Two officers note the importance of being fully informed and briefed with agency members aware of confidentiality rules but increasingly wanting to talk, communicate and share work related intelligence online creating a network of support. Officers identify the need to be kept informed of officer and agency contact details, specialism's and current activities. Good practice is reported as existing within Social Services where an officer notes being well informed and in receipt of quality training, possibly an outcome of the 2009 Laming review of Social Services performance.

Joint agency staff Away Days are greatly valued by Heads and Officers as providing time away from the stresses of work where people could talk, exchange ideas and jointly plan. Websites are also noted by three officers as helpful but the problem is quick identification and categorisation of information. The main problem is that in the short time available, information must be easily identifiable and quickly retrievable. Information flow is also identified by a majority of Head Teachers who suggest information be clearly signposted and for someone to sort data pools and manage information flow.

While away days and data flow are very helpful, should strategic managers be worried about such things? Both are costly and while affordable for large LAs for smaller groups self help must be relied upon.

While recognising that flow and availability of information is important, respondents note a need for information to be transmitted quickly between all involved in MAW if safeguarding of children is to be effective. This comment recognises the important role of the multi agency network in helping to monitor change and warning of potential child concerns and dangers. Children are viewed as being within a family structure surrounded by a network of professionals, each with a particular observation and perspective and each contributing to a whole picture of what is happening to any one child. Information observed by one person may carry little meaning in isolation but when conveyed to the network could help complete a much larger picture of great importance or even early stages of possibly danger. While vitally important could there be better ways of ensuring the protection of children?

Also, if lack of worker and officer knowledge and understanding are to be quickly addressed respondents have again identified the importance of good communication supporting an increase in the availability and quality of training.

Section Two: Conclusions

1. Multi-agency provision has grown and consistency of provision, especially where there are links to safeguarding, is now a major concern especially the integration of school and agency provision,
2. There is a need to improve knowledge and understanding, professional practice, manager influence and understanding of MAW if consistency and quality of provision are to be of a high standard,
3. It is necessary to ensure worker and agency effectiveness by ensuring interagency fairness, equality and partnership of equals especially in provision of training,
4. Respondents have a limited knowledge of Children's Trusts and their strategic role,
5. There are concerns for lack of support from strategic/senior officers over budget related issues,
6. There is a lack of information and data showing good practice, success and recent development of MAW,

7. Head Teachers are not sharing MAW related information with their staff teams.

5.3 Section three: Research Question Three

Research question three: How are inhibiting factors and contextual barriers being overcome at the operational level? What aspects of multi agency working might now be regarded as good practice in the operational context?

Five important issues Re considered.

Improving multi agency provision

Central to the development of MAW is effective multi agency provision. While it is to be expected that school and agency staff will talk positively about the nature and quality of their work, it is good that many positive comments have also been passed by Head Teachers of the importance and effectiveness of recent developments in multi agency cooperation and provision (chapter four, p56), (7/44/2). Holding a senior position in schools, Head Teachers will have access to an excellent perspective from which to overview agency/school interaction within their area. If progress is being made Heads will quickly notice positive outcomes occurring and similarly problems occurring.

Another important observation is that respondents make special mention of the recent work of school nurses and Police School Liaison officers, both work closely with children and hold important community briefs and are thus central to the development of local multi agency team working.

Respondent comments in chapter four show that while a need exists to improve inter agency cooperation much good ground work is now being laid often with help of the local Cluster Board (21/125/7). Work appears to be addressing lines of communication, worker skills and understanding; with improved links and communications with schools developing. Importantly worker confidence appears to be improving.

Integration of school and agency services

Central to the development of integrated services is the link between schools and agencies. Agency professionals within my research area note that they are now being increasingly welcomed by Heads into their schools with some developing a regular place both within the schools and within the school curricular programme. While respondents talk very positively of the Counselling and other support services now being offered to

children limited data exists on the impact of increased Integration within school and youth settings and if it is starting to prove especially valuable to the most vulnerable children within schools.

Agency staff are noted to be gaining an understanding of schools, with this they report confidence to step into gaps identified within school provision. Schools are reported as starting to view agency staff as key members of their staff teams. At this level much should now be possible to enhance school agency integration.

An example of good integrative practice appears to be the school nurse emergency drop in services which respondents describe as helping medical services through schools to reach hard to contact and at risk clients, parents and children. Here an impact study is now needed to measure the effectiveness of such an initiative.

As integration gathers apace, coherence of service is growing not only of agency/school provision but of staff understanding and skills. Working together, officers also report lines of communication developing and breadth of agency support growing.

I am very aware that in selecting schools for this research I sought a typical cross section of provision and so my data does not necessarily reflect all schools especially those covering the most deprived and problematic areas of my research area. Local agency officers cover all areas and from observation appeared to be seeking to support those most in need. As skills grow all schools should gain from increased integration within MAW.

While respondent comment was often favourable, observation of cluster meetings highlighted that some schools are taking longer to develop trust and understanding. Slower developing schools appear to have been identified and are receiving the attention of the Cluster managers – an example of local strategic manager support.

Especially noted is the growing involvement of parents and children in the development of services. Comments from children regarding their preferred style of officer delivery showed the users of local services to have both a critical eye and ear and much to contribute.

Similarly school staff noted preferring officers, who listened, understood and developed a supportive response and strategy. While parents and children are reported as being increasingly involved, little evidence was found to prove that they are being allowed to join or contribute to decision making. Some parent comment was noted as being still threatening to some teachers and officers as it comes from outside their professional framework and may challenge their accepted methodologies. Both parents and children

need to be carefully supported and the functioning of agencies and schools explained in a suitable manner

Increasing knowledge and understanding

A major problem inhibiting the development of MAW is lack of suitable knowledge and understanding, notably amongst teachers and possibly senior officers. Respondent comment suggests within a number of schools and within all three Cluster groups studied significant effort is now being made by both school and agency staff to improve the speed of access to information and support. Using increasing Cluster support there is now a need to keep up current practice and ensure developing expertise of both school staff and officers involved in the growing network of agency support.

While specific training is generally limited respondents report being updated with specific training on emergent issues such as supporting adopted children and those with specific needs. Small schools are especially pleased with this support. Heads note that identifying needs and agency staff ensures a speedy and correct response.

While it is good that local groups are starting to monitor and evaluate agency response, address strategic management within the Cluster and provide extra support to ensure existing structures and meetings are not damaged, the extra time commitment and cost is large. Members claim increased cost is offset by improvements in understanding. By learning more about each other's roles and what data to gather, duplication is being minimised and team member roles are being clearly defined. Professionals are said to be pleased as this should remove the fear that they will become generalists and lose their professionalism. While increased knowledge and understanding is said to bring greater efficiency, increasing budget constraints and loss of key staff could undermine such progress.

In choosing suitable respondents for this research only three senior agency officers were chosen and no officers were interviewed from the local Children's Trust. As such the views of senior officers, especially those with strategic responsibility, were not fully ascertained.

Improving professional practice

While some schools have complained about officer actions, much has been said about the attitude of some professionals from Health and Social Services. Familiar officers are generally highly regarded but a few less known in schools appear to be domineering and

refusing to follow agreed protocols especially around use of agreed terminology. Training is cited by Social Services as better than that of others. Social Services appear to view their approaches and training as superior suggesting that others - especially those in Education - still have a lot to learn. (chp4, p.39). Interestingly, those in schools were most critical of the attitude of certain officers from Social Services (SS) and Health (H) but not school nurses or Paediatricians. A few officers from Health appeared to be keen to leave agreed ways and vocabulary and return to that of their agency. Interest in the work of other agencies was also not high.

Concern exists here because while some agencies such as voluntary services appeared at meetings to seem reflective and eager to broaden the understanding and skills of their officers. This was not always the case for members from SS and H. While valuing their professional hierarchies, methodologies and terminology, the agencies of SS and H did not appear keen to run inter agency training sessions for professionals. During observed meetings and events most other agencies - especially Voluntary Services and the Police - appeared enthusiastic to do whatever would help.

Agencies are now increasingly sharing resources and in some cases jointly purchasing. Joint commissioning of both services and equipment is greatly assisted by the support of Cluster professional meetings highlighting the important developmental role of Cluster managers and Board members.

While much goodwill and support is emanating from school Clusters and certain agencies, a fear exists that if budget cuts and job losses continue some of the largest agencies (namely H and SS) might go their own way and support only that which affects their own targets. This would set a dangerous precedent for others to follow. Such a move would badly undermine current progress within MAW and bring into question the ability of the multiagency network to operate effectively and support current safeguarding procedures leaving vulnerable children once again at increased risk.

Improving manager influence and understanding

Head Teachers and officers showed a clear concern that standards and agreed understanding of management within MAW needs to improve. Also there is agreement that a clear message must be developed as well as a clear vision of what to do and why. If management is strong and direction clear others will follow. The context and drivers will also need to be shared.

Clusters were seen to be increasingly aware of the pressures on managers and different agencies. Vulnerable agencies were seen to need the security of clear strategic management to aid their planning and achievement of targets.

Improved strategic management was noted as an important part of the raising of standards and driving of change.

Section three: Conclusions

1. Respondent findings in section three help illustrate the progress in MAW that is being made and show that progress is achievable. Findings such as positive feedback from users, re-booking rates and provider comment demonstrate just how much progress can and is being made where conditions are right despite the many pressures facing agencies and schools.
2. Multi agency cooperation and Cluster support are now starting to impact and address long term shortcomings facing MAW.
3. Agency staff work with children in school, home and locality settings and are being well received. Agency workers are now able to develop school based skills, understanding and better communications.
4. Despite many concerns being recorded in this research, where conditions are right positive contact and good progress are shown by respondents as being achieved. Research shows that with Cluster support, good practice is being identified and training developed, often to address emergent issues.
5. Head Teachers are noted using their skills and overview to identify local needs and agency staff are reported as providing speedy and correct responses, greater efficiency and less duplication. Amongst these progressive workers, respondents confirm that improved national guidance would be welcomed.
6. The Children Act 2004 and associated Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' are seen as providing staff motivation through provision of a common language, framework and direction for progress.

5.4 Research question four: What are the principles that might be derived from identified examples of good practice?

In Chapter Four potential principles have been identified from research findings of good practice found within five key areas of MAW activity. For each key area of activity to be

effective, research identifies principles helping to contribute, to engage and to motivate those involved helping provide impact for their action and in other ways helping contribute to development and maintenance of high standards.

What might be some of the implementation challenges facing those seeking to use such protocols, keen to build an environment where MAW is most effective? By examining each of the five clusters of Principles, I hope potential issues might be identified.

The first cluster of Principles address provision of high standards of multi agency practice as noted in research literature and this research covers a period in time when much pressure and support exists to help enable multi agency working. Environments and understanding within public services are not static and most importantly future funding and support may change. Senior officer permission to attend meetings and re focus work may be difficult to obtain especially if funding streams and political direction change. Regardless of cost, children, especially those deemed as most vulnerable, will continue to require high levels of protection and support and here it is likely that provision of MAW will remain important to enable children's agencies to operate, interact and communicate at a high level.

With technological advancement inter agency cooperation and joint working look set to increase rather than decrease. Within even a stripped down service with tight budgetary controls, high standards will still be expected and sought. In such a pressurised environment where legal aspects of child care and protection may well have grown, the existence of protocols compiled in friendlier more relaxed and supportive times should still be of great value.

The second set of principles addresses achievement of high standards of agency interaction. Innovation and technology currently under construction should further enhance and develop agency integration and go far beyond current innovations such as the development of CAF procedures. Technology should aid development of focus and understanding of both clients and providers needs and should lead all involved to feeling more engaged and better valued enabling closer integration of both staff and client. Hopefully increased positive participation by both children and parents will blur the client /provide roles and bring both sides closer together. Regardless of budget, commitment of all involved will need to be high and while some agencies may cease to exist, key services and high standards will continue to be required.

The third set of principles addresses the development of knowledge and understanding, As has been shown, the possession of essential knowledge and understanding is

important especially if agencies are to be working more closely together address the needs of children. Knowledge of each other's agency and ways of working - and most importantly the needs of the children being served - should all be greatly enhanced.

As improved technology generates increased and improved quality control data, this should help develop training materials. In an environment that values knowledge, research opportunities should grow and with better understanding should come the generation of creative ways forward and hopefully reduction in the abuse and misuse of children especially the most vulnerable.

The fourth collection of principles addresses the achievement of high standards of professional practice. While standards of individual agency based professionals may be high, for interagency working the Laming review of 2003 shows how dangerously poor communication and interaction can lower the quality of professional support. There is a need to fully recognise that professional practice, while similar in many ways, has some very fundamental differences both in relation to professional understanding of a situation and in favoured response methodology.

With no agreed definitions or understandings of childhood and many other shared areas of concern, basics such as professional perspective could become very different. With improvement in understanding and joint working, trust should grow and common ground be built. With better knowledge of each other's professional working, confidence should be obtained to assist risk taking and the development of new and creative joint approaches to MAW.

There will as always be a need to show clear commitment to working with tolerance and understanding of different approaches. Close working with schools should aid professional coordination. It will also be important to foster chances for inter agency professional interaction as currently happens through Cluster Away Days. Co-location of work bases is another fertile area. While expensive to provide, it has been shown to greatly improve output, enhance inter agency working and importantly raise levels of professional skill and confidence. By providing opportunity for daily discussion, jointly analysing and comparing, joint planning and execution, professional skill and knowledge quickly develops along with closer working and growth of team spirit. In the future such professional opportunities may be much needed as fewer staff seek to address growing problems with greater accountabilities and reduced funding.

If the support role of LAs ceases and professional services are cut or outsourced, will the role of MAW be recognised and considered and will professionals have to develop new creative ways of meeting and enhancing multi agency linkage and professionalism?

Already many professionals are setting up hot desks and meeting at their local Children's Centres or schools. Current concern for the recent increase in high profile abuse cases may also lead to further help for professional support and guidance.

The final collection of principles has been developed to aid development of effective management and performance of MAW. The very varied standards of MAW provision to be currently found illustrates both what can be attained with good management and quality control and how low standards can drop without effective strategic management and control.

If MAW is to be properly managed no matter what future environment exists, it will be important that all involved in MAW first agree a willingness to develop capacity and drive up standards. To do this effectively the workforce will need to fully understand what they are doing and why. MAW will need to be clearly defined and an agreed body of knowledge shared between all involved in MAW through joint practice, work shadowing and training opportunities.

Managers of future multi agency environment will need to recognise the emotional challenges of working in such a complex and changing environment, supporting children who might when vulnerable also be emotionally damaged. The use of emotional intelligence will be central to success, especially if national direction is driven by a political agenda that may appear to be far removed from those priorities sought for MAW and the effective support of vulnerable children.

Shared working and partnership should be encouraged especially with and within the voluntary sector and trust should be built through tolerance. Strong strategic management should be influenced by listening to data and advice coming from both above and below. Open forums, discussion and transparency should all be encouraged where ownership of ideas, challenge and shared visions can co exist in a managed culture of organised shared understanding and purpose.

5.5 Summary of analysis and further steps

My first research question has highlighted not only serious shortcomings in the strategic management of MAW but the important role that knowledge and understanding play in both the running and development of MAW. Any principle chosen to address such issues will need to foster the building of capacity, analysis and learning from good practice and to encourage those involved to share and spread their understanding, to be inclusive and outward looking and to fully embrace service users and change.

My second research question has shown from a study of inhibiting factors the importance to MAW of principles that help enhance effective agency integration and multi agency provision. This research shows how agency integration will be improved by principles that value the person and help them show commitment and belief in what they do; where all will be equally valued with no agency dominance, where leaders and managers will understand aims, objectives, tensions and differences and be able to accommodate both organisational and political pressures.

Multi agency provision is shown by this research to be improved by principles that help add clarity to communication and clear examples and that help involve, empower, simplify, streamline and agree one system that brings more positive experiences.

Finally my third research question, by studying how inhibiting factors and contextual barriers are overcome, showed the importance to MAW of principles that may help improve the breadth, reach and delivery of professional practice and services. Principles will seek to aid use of resources to ensure quality information is available and understood by all and that clarity and the management and performance of MAW are enhanced.

Why is critical and positive comment to be found in such large quantities amongst a typical cross section of schools and agency staff, and why is there such a scattered evidence base? Analysis of research findings supports the presence of varying standards of MAW provision and links such a finding to seven key areas of need. MAW need and development is found to be especially affected by the first key area of concern: that of poor transmission and possession of a body of knowledge and understanding of MAW.

Knowledge and understanding of MAW has been found in this study to have had a key impact on the effectiveness of the strategic management of MAW. Six other often disparate key areas of influence and concern have also been identified as playing important roles in the successful growth of MAW. Some are known to the literature but many not yet reported. The seven areas of concern identified by this research study are:

1. The mixed levels of possession and transmission of knowledge and understanding found within MAW,
2. Worker distrust and perceived failure of the strategic management of MAW especially at regional level.
3. The importance of clarity of definition and structure in the development of MAW,

4. Limited dispersal and updating of necessary knowledge skills and understanding of MAW,
5. The impact of little or no reviewing of standards and progress within MAW,
6. The impact on knowledge and understanding of MAW of limited research opportunities especially within the early development days of MAW,
7. Limited training opportunities and their impact on staff updating and turnover.

Seven areas of hope identified by this research are:

1. That the many agencies associated with Children's Services are working together effectively to provide a network of quality service provision,
2. That given suitable support and leadership MAW, can help enable high standards of care and protection for all children - especially the most vulnerable,
3. That in the absence of suitable strategic leadership agencies have continued to value MAW and still managed to provide and ensure its provision,
4. That understanding within Children's Services has grown leading to greater collaboration and joint working,
5. That professionals see greater opportunity to interact and improve their quality of service,
6. That at the local level, partnership supported by Cluster structures and management appears to be thriving and proving that for MAW, inhibiting factors and contextual barriers can be overcome,
7. Most importantly service users are starting to become more involved and provide positive comment of MAW provision.

The true value of this research project goes beyond increased understanding of key areas of MAW to a better understanding of the very system they are all part of; the life and functioning of the MAW system examined. From research exploration of problem areas, the development of a new and potentially very effective way of working can be seen often struggling to develop. Research shows how without effective strategic management and careful oversight, nurturing and guidance the whole system of such a new initiative as MAW could still fail to achieve its potential.

This study demonstrates how from reduction, questioning and reorganisation of research data, analysis identifies how the key stages of development of MAW are so critically interlinked. When seeking understanding of any one aspect of MAW dysfunction, it is

important to consider the whole interrelated structure and not just its isolated constituent parts as has been popular practice.

While the literature of MAW identifies failure to clearly define and research MAW's complex structure and performance, this study also identifies further failure to monitor and evaluate development and provide valid training and show how all these may be related. Careful monitoring and implementation by some has led to good progress being made while in the absence of effective strategic management others less sure of their actions experienced many further problems.

Minimal quality control and continued lack of clarity of MAW has resulting in a system with few checks and balances and varying standards. Such freedom has been welcomed by some with experience but appears to have done little to help guide those responsible for the strategic leadership and management of such a system. A further and important concern is that lines of communication appear not to have developed effectively. The result of communication failure has been poorly informed strategic managers, lack of understanding of basic principles, processes and structures resulting in unchecked examples of weak management and loss of strategic confidence. In such a MAW environment there has been growth in the breadth of the standards found.

Where concerns have been raised, a need has been identified for staff training and dissemination of improved understanding. Still lacking formal structure and quality control, it has proved difficult to both compile suitable training material and gain validation for the quality of such work. In such an environment it has been difficult to address the systems needs and bring health and rigour to the MAW way of working. Shortcomings identified by researchers twenty plus years ago are still being found to be present in some examples of MAW practice. Against such a negative and frustrating background of the erratic and problematic growth of the MAW system concern has further grown because of the close relationship of MAW to child protection procedures and safeguarding.

While research highlights the difficulty that a system can continue to face if problems are not addressed as they occur, the positive dimension is that within sheltered and often small environments where care has been taken over implementation much good practice has survived. The system's problems have been addressed by those involved and progress has flourished. Here good practice has been captured and passed between workers. Research findings show that the system is starting to return to good health aided by local support emanating especially from the County's Cluster support system.

Analysis and reflection: Research methodology used to address research questions

This study was helpful to me as researcher providing important insights to be made about the location of knowledge and lack of understanding not identified within the literature. The unexpected nature of these findings provided a firm basis from which to address my first research question 'What is the role of strategic management in supporting the role of MAW? This question sought to explore and understand the impact on MAW of strategic management.

Through my first research question I intended to check people's perceptions of the running of MAW and learn more about its strategic impact, management and planning. As a relatively new approach to supporting children, I was interested to discover what had been the level of strategic planning and monitoring employed for the introduction and development of MAW. I was interested in finding out how high standards were achieved and maintained and to check the developing relevance and suitability of MAW. My respondents and their settings had been carefully chosen and worked well.

All those involved in this study appeared keen to cooperate. This was important because within the study area there had been high levels of critical comment regarding the manner in which previous research projects had been carried out. For this reason and to ensure consistency I chose to carry out all data gathering and interviewing and to personally manage all communication. On reflection I think this was an important and correct decision despite the risk of personal bias.

As many respondents added data I started to look for recurring and significant patterns in the data. Some, such as the importance of lines of communication, had already been identified in the literature. I continually returned to examining causation and links that might be made between the initial poor definition of MAW and subsequent failure to construct a significant body of knowledge and later staff failings. Much time was spent re running and exploring analytical approaches and categories to check possible impact of selection of analytical categories by size and not other groupings. Were respondent concerns fairly and evenly gathered? Was selection improved by my carrying out all data collection and, ideally, should I have included members of the local Children's Trust amongst my respondent group?

To further understand the environment within which MAW operated, I sought through my second research question 'What are the inhibiting factors in relation to multiagency working' to identify the challenges faced when implementing a programme of MAW. After compiling a number of different data selections I gathered and listed the key concerns identified by respondents. I hoped to focus on the main cause of concern

affecting MAW; however the list was wide and addressed what appeared - at first - to be a disjointed range of situations. Concerned that my results were too general with little pattern appearing, respondent concerns were compared and contrasted and divided into groupings to aid analysis.

My respondent data could be divided into five areas of development within MAW and further study showed that if organised in a certain way correlations existed and concerns could be interlinked with the short comings of one stage of MAW appearing to lead on to problems within the next stage of MAW development (Diagram 6). The wide range of problems affecting MAW could now be seen as a systemic issue, with difficulties and remedies needing to be viewed and addressed as a whole system. To date, recognised concerns had been considered individually and progress had often been limited and short term. DfE national guidance provided a toolkit to help address individual concerns.

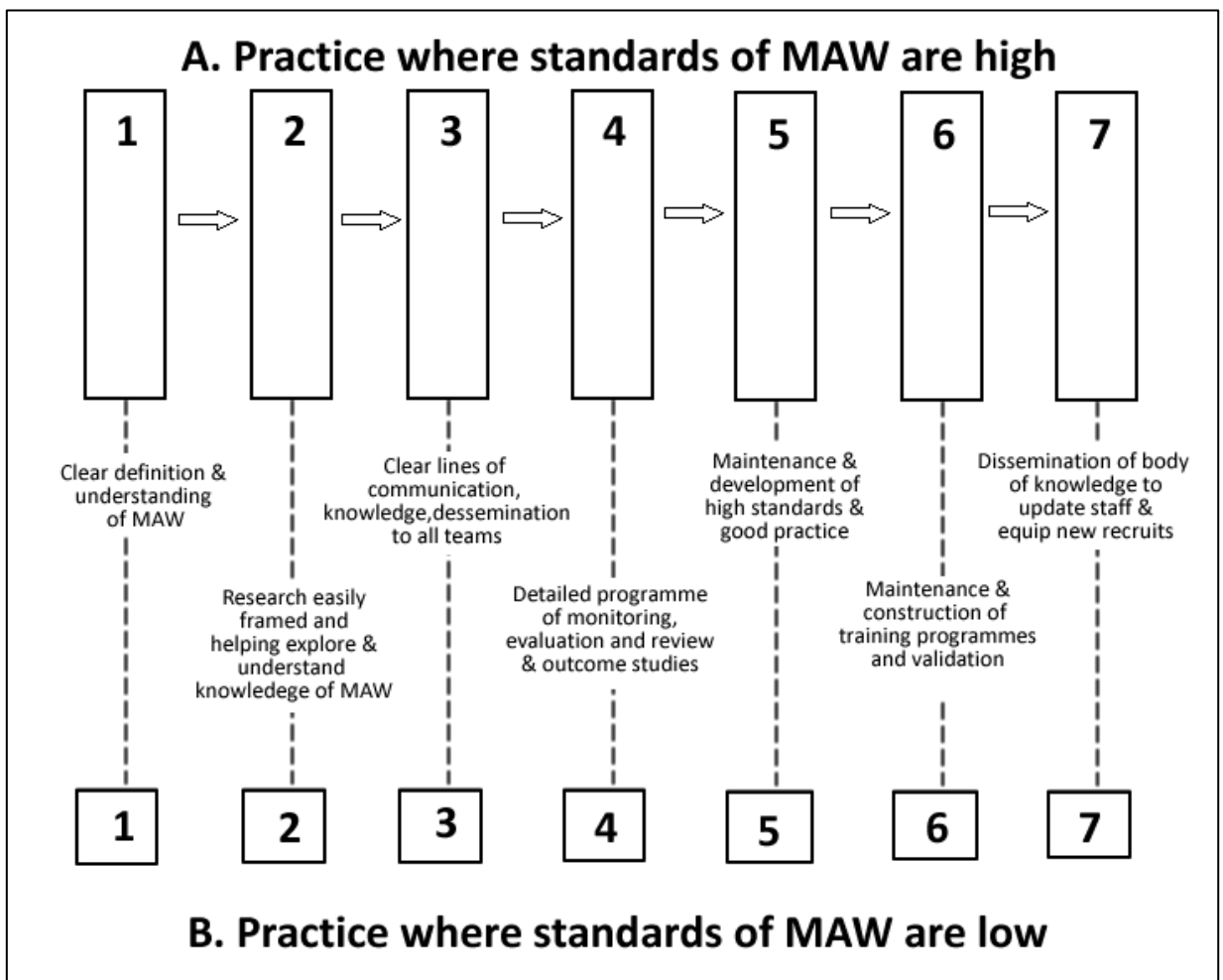


Figure 21: Diagram of constituents of high and low MAW practice

By recognising the holistic nature of a particular problem I could now more easily see how and in what order support and development might be required and planned; that future care and management needed to address the broader complexity of the whole

MAW system not just its constituent parts. My methodology had allowed a significantly wide data collection and reduction from which patterns could be studied to question and construct a model of MAW functioning.

My chosen data management system had allowed data reduction to aid analysis and new thinking applied to past problems and issues. This model appeared to greatly improve understanding of the many issues presented. The holistic and systemic approach both helped identify and understand problems and barriers providing a much improved methodology for understanding and addressing future needs.

I next sought to capture development factors which work, are perceived as good practice and could be useful in the future development of MAW. (Research question 3: How are inhibiting factors being overcome at the operational level? What aspects of MAW might now be regarded as good practice in the operational context?)

Finally with little data and written records existing on MAW and the literature providing mainly descriptive accounts of MAW as well as limited critical analysis having occurred, I sought to discover if research findings could be used to identify key principles for effective practice. I was particularly interested in those which concerned successful practice. (Research question 4: What are the principles that might be derived from identified examples of good practice?)

I sought to draw together the main threads of this dissertation and the key areas of interest identified by research questions with insights provided and questions raised by the critical literature review plus evidence captured in first hand observation and interview. The questions this study raises, the issues arising from research findings, possible fresh ways of viewing and new understandings all contribute to the possible implications from the results of this research. I need to apply this model to check for validity and to explore how this understanding might be applied to assist current improvement, rebuilding and possible re design of future MAW needs.

In keeping with good MAW practice, much of the work of my fourth research question will be carried out in partnership with officers and respondents beyond the duration of this research programme. I have given a few principles to indicate the likely direction of travel but am very aware that principles will be compiled in the light of a fast moving and changing environment. For this reason it is important that work continues with those most involved in the current development of MAW.

Because I was aware of the great inconsistencies that existed within the provision of MAW but not sure why, I sought to cover a breadth of provision as well as those people involved both as givers and receivers of support.

Thanks to the enthusiasm I received for undertaking this research and the very positive support I received from those I approached, I feel I was able to successfully carry out and implement the research design within limited time frames. I believe the methodology enabled the capture of suitable data which enabled questions to be asked and conceptual frameworks to be built.

I was especially pleased with the process used to select and engage with respondents and their settings. Having experienced firsthand the often 'light touch' approach of those wishing to study this area, I was pleased to have taken time before interview to carefully ensure each respondent had a full insight and confidence in their involvement in this research. As a result of this extra attention to detail I sense that respondents gave very careful consideration to my questions and opened up to me and shared with enthusiasm. I am also pleased at the support and thanks I received after interviewing, suggesting that my presence did not unduly detract from or upset the running of their service and may have in some way added by encouraging them to think a little more about their own practice.

To record information, an observation sheet was designed and used. Most meetings took place before interview questioning had occurred. While helpful in defining questions and deciding the focus for respondent selection, observations were not able to follow up issues raised at interview or support concepts arising which could have been further explored or confirmed.

A field diary was kept and comments were often lodged in accompanying notes kept and a running record held elsewhere.

The use of a running record taken as I interviewed each respondent was most useful. I have done this as part of my professional practice where I have been trained to capture an accurate and succinct record of all meetings and interviews. I first explained its use and sought permission from respondents. All respondents seemed happy and did not raise concern or find the running record intrusive. A number used it to aid their thoughts by asking for recaps of what they had just said.

The running record was most useful at the stage of data analysis. With many long interviews to transcribe, I was able to listen to interview recordings, check and if necessary augment the running record. The records were then checked to ensure they had captured the key information required. All records were ordered and paginated into an accessible loose leaf file, assisting coding and enabling easy movement between transcripts. The playing of original interview recordings with easy access to succinct written records when coding was particularly helpful especially when checking what

was said and the manner in which it was said. The use of the record made a mammoth task both possible and effective at a stage where research time was precious.

From first coding to the development of deep and meaningful themes

Respondent data was initially viewed from the perspective of negative, positive, interesting and unusual data returns (Appendix V). Results raised the question of whether I should re scan with themes aligned to my four research questions (RQs). As each RQ addressed a different perspective of MAW I could gather groups of themes and study recurring issues from differing perspectives.

In RQ 1 many themes were related to the absence of understanding of MAW such as no clear definition of MAW, poor communication of knowledge and finally lack of knowledge impacting on strategic management. RQ 2 gave rise to themes related to problems of knowledge such as differing professional practice and lack of understanding between agencies RQ 3 themes centred on how acquisition of knowledge helped the provision and development of practice, improvement of management and the importance of giving staff time to meet share, learn and reflect on practice such as at Away Days.

Now able to identify popular themes and move between differing perspectives I was able to move quickly and look for deeper and more complex causation and links. Parts 1-7 of Figure 21 page 175, identifies those key themes identified as most important for the healthy development of MAW. Further consideration, reflection and exploration of the data enabled me to go deeper and understand that many issues of MAW development seen as individual problems are in fact all inter related and should be addressed as such.

In conclusion I believe that my research designs and methodology of data collection was successful in enabling suitable data to be captured, compared, contrasted and analysed. For use in another research area and setting, adaptation may be necessary dependent on the location and research requirements.

Conclusions and recommendations: Future steps.

Suggested actions to help improve and achieve effective functioning of MAW:

1. That as a new way of working develops there will be times when front line staff may often be better informed and have a more detailed understanding of

technicalities than their superiors. Fast and comprehensive communications are essential if vital knowledge is to quickly reach all (Figure 21, page 175, items 1,7).

2. That new actions and ways of working must be clearly defined. Not to do so will leave researchers in difficulty when seeking to frame research and users vulnerable with a poorly researched framework of understanding (Figure 21, page 175, item 2).
3. That in a new emergent area of practice it is important that lines of communication are two way and that communications must extend between all working from front line workers delivering services through to the most senior officers, especially including those with responsibility for the planning and budgeting of services (Figure 21, page 175, item 3).
4. That a clear understanding is necessary to guide, monitor and evaluate and to help set effective outcome measures (Figure 21, page 175, item 4). Without outcome measures a full understanding of need and variation or shift in needs and overall effectiveness cannot be secure. Without such clarity standards may drop, or at the very least become variable (Figure 21, page 175, item 5).
5. Without a basic framework of understanding and detailed knowledge of effectiveness and needs, it will not be possible to construct effective training modules or mount a meaningful and carefully targeted programme of training support (Figure 21, page 175, item 6).

At national level, the DfE website now gives support and access to a toolkit to address any specific problems .

By providing local support, the needs of the MAW system are beginning to be locally identified and addressed and the outcomes are generally very positive however there remains much to be addressed.

Using and developing new methods at Cluster level, a senior leader of a voluntary/Third Sector agency experienced in the delivery of MAW worryingly described practice within the research area as 'way ahead of the London Boroughs' with whom she also worked (21/126/10), as having room for challenge, and an amazing place for shared vision. The recently appointed Cluster manager was described as 'inspirational' (21/126/12). The LA which in this study has received considerable critical comment, was described as generally at the head of its service level, very responsive, great value, vision and very supportive.(21/125/10) With such a glowing endorsement from a voluntary agency, a new threat now existed as financial cuts are made and support for the MAW system and networking is reduced. Shortly after my programme of research drew to a close, major

changes were announced within both the senior management structure and organisation of children's services of the LA. In 2010 the LA received a highly critical report from OfSTED and services were described as inadequate. Both a newly appointed Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive have now departed and further restructuring of services continues. A report by OfSTED in 2012 notes that services are now adequate.

In Chapter six, I will summarise and evaluate my research findings and make recommendations for dissemination, further research and follow up.

6. Chapter six: Conclusions

This chapter will explore the findings and conclusions arising from my research programme and literature review. The effectiveness of my research design will be examined and will consider how it has enabled the gathering and handling of data. I will also show how my research design has enabled other information to contribute and help to build a better understanding of the current provision of MAW as well as how my research design could have been improved.

I recognise that the presence of lists and targets have in many cases caused distractions possibly leading professionals to move their concentration and focus away from the central role of care and concern for children and their parents and carers. However in an attempt to provide brevity and a visual reinforcement to the findings of this research, I have synthesised themes that have emerged from data findings into collections of findings and suggested Principles, shown here as lists.

I hope the lists of Principles will provide clarity and a straightforward base from which further development and training may be built.

Summary of findings and conceptual framework arising from research questions one to four

This research has proved important in a number of ways. It has helped confirm issues identified within the research literature as being present, added research findings not yet identified in the literature and given added insight and understanding of the problem areas currently facing MAW. Most significantly this research process has enabled data to be handled, examined and reviewed enabling a significant new way of working within MAW to be identified. Important links and concerns have also been highlighted regarding safeguarding concerns. Key research findings made into the functioning of MAW are:

1. Findings from my first area of research concerning the role of strategic management in supporting the process of Multi Agency Working as perceived by multi agency workers.
 - The failure of strategic management of MAW to provide a recognised and understood programme of effective oversight, support, guidance and control.
 - That variable standards still exist within the functioning of MAW and that this impacts negatively on overall provision of MAW. That where standards are consistent and high, outcomes are usually high.

- That there exist a number of key areas of concern regarding MAW functioning; the most significant is the absence of a clearly agreed, defined and developed body of knowledge and understanding of MAW. This shortcoming has given rise to a number of developmental problems emerging as MAW practice has evolved and developed.
- That currently the most significant shortcoming of MAW concerns the limited and fragmented transmission of knowledge and understanding to senior officers especially strategic managers and the resultant impact on the direction and quality of MAW. This finding has not been noted within the research literature.

2. Findings from my second area of research focussed on identifying the inhibiting factors in relation to multi agency working.

- With a restricted body of knowledge and understanding of MAW, this study has increased insight and understanding into why early researchers found difficulty in framing and mounting their research projects and why much research has been of a descriptive nature.
- Insight has also been gained into the general lack of monitoring and evaluation of MAW and the resultant existence of great inconsistency found in standards of MAW provision. Lack of monitoring is noted in the literature but little has, until now, been said of its causation and how such matters should be addressed.
- Lack of availability of suitable training opportunities is confirmed and linked to the failure to construct an agreed body of knowledge and good practice of MAW. With little to agree on, both the construction of training programmes and their validation has been problematic.

Finally the two most significant discoveries of this research programme have arisen from:

3. Findings from my third area of research about inhibiting factors and contextual barriers being overcome at the operational level. What aspects of multi agency working might now be regarded as good practice in the operational context?

- First, the many concerns noted of MAW in 1 and 2 above are interrelated and concern various aspects of the same MAW system and structure.
- When seeking to improve MAW it has been a traditional approach to address individual problems often with the aid of a small tool kit. If MAW can be viewed as a holistic inter related system improvement needs and remedial action should

be more coherent, comprehensive and more effective. This systematic approach to fault finding - while elementary - appears not to be noted in the research literature.

4. Findings from my fourth area of research: the principles that might be derived from identified examples of good practice.

This has led to identification from research findings of good practice of thirty eight possible principles addressing five key areas of MAW functioning and development. Trialling and further development have still to occur beyond this research programme. Listed below is the collection of principles divided into five key areas of MAW concern.

6.1 Principles for fostering quality multi agency provision

- Breadth of provision and development of wider communities (Dartington, 2004).
- Identified, understood and agreed holistic plan for services (Dartington, 2004).
- Clear, speedy access to efficient services via an agreed system (Tunstall, 2007).
- Better use of resources. Quality information on services, clearly listed, available and understood by all (Boddy et al, 2006).
- Seamless services, involved communities, clarity in communications (Fox and Butler, 2004).
- Full involvement of service users, better, positive experiences, reduced waiting time (Fox and Butler, 2004).
- Empowerment of children through involvement, positive experience and clear example (Edwards et al, 2006).
- Reduction in multiple assessments through agency coordination and communication. (Miller and Mc Nicholl, 2003)

(Figure: 21 page 175, items 3, 4, 5, 7)

6.2 Principles for ensuring effective agency interaction

1. Move from an agency-centred to a person-centred approach.
2. Clarify and understand what each agency stands for strives for and can deliver.

3. Understand each other's aims, objectives, tensions and difficulties.
4. Clearly develop and show commitment by workers to the principles of MAW.
5. Agreement and commitment of senior staff especially strategic and budget holders.
6. Ensure no agency is dominant and all feel equally valued (14, 98/5).
7. Largest and wealthiest agencies to foster joint working and sharing of resources.
8. Seek to accommodate organisational, contextual barriers and political pressures.

(Figure 21, page 175, items 1, 3, 7)

6.3 Principles for ensuring effective provision of knowledge and understanding

1. Training programmes should arise from good practice and are validated by those experienced in MAW practice.
2. Training needs are identified by local, regional and national needs analysis (5/30/2b).
3. Work placement training, shadowing, practical application are appropriate (11/76/4).
4. Larger, wealthier agencies assist those less wealthy.
5. Training and support are open to and involve all staff and agencies regardless of size or wealth.
6. Training venues ,locations, duration and times to be designed to suit members routines whenever possible.
7. Ensure all training is widely publicised (6/41/5).

(Figure 21, page 175, items 3, 4, 6)

6.4 Principles for the development of professional understanding

1. Seek to understand and accommodate different professional beliefs and gain broader perspectives by closer working.
2. Work clearly together to achieve outcomes, develop trust to encourage risk taking and innovation in practice. Implement this carefully.

3. Understand respect and show commitment to individual work styles. (3/14/1).
4. Support voluntary staff to play a significant role. (3/14/16).
5. Ensure professionals work close by and, where possible, in schools (3/14/2c).
6. Seek to co locate to enable updating, learning, information sharing and the growth of understanding, teamwork, joint operating and trust (21/123/2).
7. People provide time and support to each other (21/123/2).

(Figure 21, page 175, items 2, 3, 7)

6.5 Principles to ensure the development of management and performance.

1. Willingness to agree to drive forward and seek to build capacity (Percy-Smith, 2005).
2. Develop strong leadership and management that are aware of the emotional aspects associated with change and employ emotional intelligence (Smith and Bryan, 2005).
3. Ensure effective, visible multi level leadership that can manage complex inter disciplinary relationships, accountability and supervision (UEA, 2006).
4. Celebrate the value of shared partnership especially voluntary services and user involvement (21/123/2).
5. Good tolerant understanding of MAW operation encouraging the building of trust (21/123/2).
6. A strategic process that is well informed by those above and below, that filters down for area development by agencies including community groups (21/126/11).
7. Develop room for discussion, ownership, challenge and shared vision (21/125/7).
8. Leadership to show similar values, inclusivity, openness, respect and help all to work together and develop a culture of organised, shared understanding and purpose (21/124/). (Figure 21, page 175, items 1, 3, 7)

6.6 Conclusions

Arising from analysis of research areas 1-4 above the most worrying and possibly most urgent discovery of this research programme is that:

Increased reductions within the provision of MAW may be causing significant shortcomings and gaps in the safety network of child protection systems and local safeguarding actions that surround and protect children.

School and Agency officer interaction through the medium of MAW helps provide significant intelligence and input, assists safeguarding, cares and supports what might be highly vulnerable children. As budget cuts and reorganisation reduce provision of MAW sufficient awareness does not seem to exist of either the possible linkages to child safety and safeguarding procedures or to the gaps that reductions of MAW provision may now be making to the network of safety that exists around all children.

This study indicates that for children to be secure MAW should be guarded and monitored to enable those involved in Children's services to fully interact, support and protect as they go about their business and provide their net of protection for our children, their parents and carers. MAW remains an effective way of enabling children's services to function. Shortcomings and structural needs have been identified in this complex way of working but those involved in MAW have shown that there is currently much good practice as well as the will, understanding and ability to improve. It is recognised that future structures and arrangements might well develop differently to existing structures as they adjust to need.

Evaluation of research design

First, evaluation of this research programme, its aims, design and contribution to the knowledge and understanding of MAW and second the effectiveness of my research design will be examined. I will reflect on how well my research design has enabled the gathering and providing of data for research questions and did it enable challenge to occur or support emergent understanding and findings and that which emerged from the literature review.

My original aim at the start of this programme was to gain insight and understanding of the dynamics occurring within the delivery of MAW. I feel this aim has been achieved. By studying elements identified by both the literature and respondents as critical to multi agency working within my research area, I gained both insight and confirmation as to what was occurring and why. I was especially pleased that I chose a bottom up perspective, If research is about discovering the truth then this approach has I feel been

highly effective in identifying, releasing and capturing first hand experiences and observations key to better understanding of MAW. My existing knowledge of the research area and work force and experience as a manager was very helpful when contextualising and interpreting data streams.

Understanding of the complexity and many problems currently faced within MAW has been given added clarity by the findings of this research both in understanding of the causation of problems and the nature of their inter relationship.

The selection of a qualitative approach contributed significantly to the process of data gathering and reflection that enabled a clearer understanding of the whole and inter related system of MAW to be made. My very open and sometimes expressive interviews helped highlight the size and nature of problems and the often loose developmental environment within which MAW often has to operate.

Selection of a qualitative approach further enabled respondent's often strong feelings and perceptions to be captured and explored. Interviews were large in number for my study but were I feel successful in providing a rich data base from which to draw.

While many users of MAW praise the approach and national and regional government promotes its use, I feel my use of structured interviews enabled me to get below the superficial gloss and facade of MAW to probe and challenge. By interviewing a wide range of respondents typical of the research community, I was able to compare and contrast and triangulate my data and gain reliability as to how, why and where issues were occurring and their possible causation. Use of a qualitative approach not only greatly aided capture of evidence of both high and low levels of practice but importantly the interpersonal dynamics so important to agency interaction.

While respondents all valued MAW they reported many areas of concern. Clarity from national and regional documentation was found to be varied regarding the organisation and management of MAW especially that of strategic responsibility.

Research literature reported lack of clear definition and knowledge of the multi agency way of working - differences that exist between agencies and potential difficulties that this highlights, especially within communication. Also noted are existence of very few outcome studies and little available evidence of quality control of effectiveness of MAW. Many research studies of MAW were descriptive rather than analytical. Research studies highlighted high levels of concern related to child protection and the steps taken to improve child safety. This study, while agreeing with continued lack of progress in addressing earlier concerns, has challenged some findings of the research literature on MAW i.e. the ability of agencies to effectively work together despite their many

differences. Both this research and that of the literature of MAW do however agree that wide variation in the quality of MAW still exists.

Recommendations and contributions to new knowledge

Because of possible links to safeguarding, the first recommendation of this research is that information regarding research findings related to shortcomings in Child Protection be passed to the local LSCB.

Of concern, MAW has become an element in this County's child protection and safe guarding procedures. With short comings of MAW identified within research findings, the quality of safeguarding support provided from MAW may be increasingly variable.

In areas of high deprivation and challenge, research discussions and respondent comment suggest turnover of staff to often be at its highest. Lacking access to stable experienced staff and quality training, it is potentially difficult to maintain staff knowledge and understanding as well as safe levels of support. Such a shortcoming may be passing unnoticed and greatly concerned some respondents. Respondent comment and concern suggests that in areas of greatest need and vulnerability children may have been left at risk and the child protection and safeguarding procedures failed or not been as effective as elsewhere. This is a serious outcome of this research.

As financial cuts are made and with MAW now playing a key role in helping to provide such a necessary ring of protection around children, the reality is that children are every bit as vulnerable as they have been for the last ten years. Within the last ten years great strides in progress have been made to both the development and improvement of MAW but the disruption of support structures under the guise of re structuring and budget saving has seriously eroded recent MAW effectiveness.

For MAW to be an element of Safeguarding, it is important that before further key jobs are lost and structures redrawn that a body be identified to keep a general oversight of MAW and ensure it remains fit for purpose.

I have, throughout this research programme, intended that outcomes provide insight, information and recommendation of help and assistance to schools, agencies, clusters and LAs seeking to improve provision of MAW and - most importantly – the support and protection of children. From my research findings I now have arrived at a number of new ideas and perceptions - some requiring further research and development.

This research indicates that absence of effective two way communication between senior and strategic officers and frontline workers knowledge and understanding has

caused many problems. Vital information has not travelled from frontline staff restricting the assimilation of knowledge. In the absence of knowledge and understanding senior officers have failed to make quality decisions therefore losing the confidence of the main body of professionals. Within schools teachers similarly are noted as sometimes unaware of their own lack of understanding of MAW, passing on to parents and children unchecked data.

With MAW evolving at speed, it has become poorly defined and as a result there has been little analysis. It is difficult for researchers to know how to best frame relevant research. With lack of a framework of understanding and little monitoring, evaluation or review and more recently limited application of effective outcome measures, the result has been the development of inconsistency in both understanding and the quality of delivery of MAW.

This study indicates that where shortcomings have been discovered, it has proved difficult to locate suitable training opportunities to remedy the situation.

Finally and most importantly, if the overall functioning and effectiveness of MAW is to be so significant a major outcome of this research has been the discovery that key areas of concern about MAW are interlinked. In addressing needs of MAW it must be recognised that a whole system input would be more effective and outcomes improved.

As cuts in Council services and greater public hardship increase and the funds flowing to charities and key support agencies decrease, reductions have had to be made to services which are impacting on MAW. Still lacking in data, knowledge and understanding of MAW, much damage is being done as key structures are dismantled, key officers dismissed and successful strategies and services of support undermined or lost.

Plans for dissemination

Finally I will indicate how I intend to disseminate the findings of this research. I plan to follow the guidance of the British Educational Research Associations (BERA) guidelines (2011). In line with this guidance I have planned for the dissemination of this research as follows:

1. Primary audience: Cluster/Partnership staff within Children's Services involved in MAW. Dissemination of dissertation in its complete form or in parts will be targeted at:

- those with strategic planning and management responsibilities within Children's services,
 - the research community to seek researcher critique and contribute to the body of research concerning the development of MAW and its related topics.
2. This dissertation will be made available to the research community in full. Publication in its present form would be on a relevant professional website and through links to Canterbury Christchurch University. An approach will be made to the internet site of an online journal.
 3. Academic papers arising from the full dissertation and focussing on specific aspects of the research, such as the impact and influence of strategic management, will be considered for submission to referred journals for peer scrutiny
 4. Online dissemination will be considered, this making the research available in the public domain.

Suggestions and considerations for further research in this area

- To examine other methods used for delivery of multi agency support.
- The true impacts for MAW of recent cuts to LA budgets and charitable giving.
- Creative ideas to address the current cuts facing children's services and MAW.
- Are current developments in MAW helping or hindering the security of vulnerable children?
- Impact and efficiency of systemic approach to problem solving within MAW.

Reflection on this research, outcomes and recommendations made

While I am very pleased and energised by my research findings I fear that those outside of MAW may undervalue their significance. I am very happy with the support I have received especially from my many respondents and research settings who gave so generously of their time. I feel steps taken to ensure full cooperation and support from respondents was particularly successful. It would have been preferable to set my observation sessions after respondent interviews had taken place so that issues arising could be checked and explored.

It is now with completion in sight that I better understand and appreciate the full EdD process and how much my understanding of a field of study can change during a research period. My research programme withstood disruptions including last minute loss of respondents and research location, major reorganisation and cuts to LA support for MAW, retirement and ill health.

At all times ability to refer to my tutor and their careful guidance was greatly appreciated. To you all – a hearty thank you.

Summary of recommendations arising from this research

From an initial interest and concern for strategic issues especially management and planning, research findings have given rise to three further key areas of interest and concern. These are:

1. the importance of viewing MAW and its application and management systemically,
2. new capabilities possible with cooperation in the provision of MAW,
3. the central role of knowledge and understanding and control, its acquisition and use in the effective running of MAW and similar new initiatives.

Points one and three are, I think, new findings and areas of conceptual interest arising from this research. An important additional outcome from this research has been insight into how current problems within the provision of MAW may be undermining safeguarding procedures. That more effective oversight may need to be in place to assist current monitoring and to ensure that where service cuts and reorganisations are considered by the bodies and agencies of Children's services, the work of support constructed around children especially the vulnerable remains a priority and that the network remains intact ensuring children's safety is not significantly breached.

To underscore the importance and relevance of this research programme, each day of the past week my daily news paper has contained much detail of child abuse by men in various positions of trust and public responsibility. As I complete this page the following news item is being broadcast:

On 13 January 2013, BBC News reports Barnardo's concern that within this country child abuse cases known to them, especially sex trafficking, continues to rise at 22% per year. Andrew Walters, Chief Executive of Unseen (a charity focussed on helping trafficked children), said Social Services, the Police, Children and Young People's services need to be able to spot the signs of when someone is being trafficked. We need to put really robust measures in place to protect those children.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Questions

- a. Issues to explore
- b. Officers
- c. Head Teachers: version 1
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Sound Recording of all Interviews

Interview Summaries (Running records)

Interview Transcripts

Appendix I: Interview Questions

a. Issues to explore

Working in partnership strategies for good practice

Trust in multi agency working (MAW)

Importance of communication, cross discipline

Information / knowledge giving and sharing

Integrated inspections of Children's Services

Professional hierarchy

Work cultures

Effective inter disc team work

Strategies for team development

Stages of team development

Leading the team

Building the team

Strategies for success

Communication and interpersonal skills for leading the inter disc team

Self awareness

Organising and managing multi professional teams

Turning aspirations into practical reality

Capacity

Developing workforce to meet growing challenges of MAW / MPW

Integrating different agency model for understanding childhood

(systems, medical, needs based and social)

Changing roles and identities in multi-agency teams

Sharing and developing learning

Consensus and conflict for learning

Identifying and sharing funding streams

Learning to listen

Local v central

Strategic management friend or foe

Keeping the policy makers informed

Monitoring evaluation and review

Relationship with members, councils and local bodies

b. Questions: Agency Officers

Concerns to explore

Safety of children, provision of care and support.

Issues arising from school interviews.

Understanding re legislative and policy development.

Understanding re dev of multi agency working.

Partnership working, trust, communication, work practices

Continued prof. Development, knowledge/ info. Sharing.

Hierarchies, work cultures, team development.

Budgets, training and support.

Strategic management, relationship to Trust, Local community.

1. As this research is all about agencies working together I wonder if I could first ask you about what the term multi agency working means to you? Tell me more....
2. Since 2004 what changes have you noticed in how you work together to provide MAW? What are the positives that need guarding?

What are the negatives that need addressing? Anything else re these?

3. Your views of effectiveness:
 - a. Children Act 04, ECM,
 - b. Children's plans. CAF
 - c. LCSPs Children's Trusts.
4. Explore good practice re dev. of partnership working.
5. How are you/ fellow professionals/schools kept well informed/updated?
6. Explore hierarchies, work cultures and team development.(different perspectives of child development).
7. How do you feel people from different agencies would respond to your ideas, needs and practices?
8. Explore school based support. and issues already raised.
9. Care and well being of children, how have things changed in the:
 - a. last twelve months, b. two years, c. five years, d. ten years?
10. How have your actions and perceptions changed?
11. What would be your dream scenario re children's services and local multi agency provision?
12. Explore turning aspirations and needs into practical reality.
13. If you were to be in charge of local children's services for one year, what would you do?
14. Is there anything you would like to say or add?

c. Questions: Head Teachers (version 1)

1. Children's services and multi agency support. Since 2004 what changes have you noticed? Any experiences positive, negative or otherwise?
2. Are you fully aware of what is planned to improve Children's services locally and nationally? Do you agree with these changes?
 - a. Children Act 04, ECM,
 - b. Children's plans, co-ordinated services.
 - c. School, LCSP, Children's Trust.
3. Do you notice multi agency working starting to occur and do you think this is helping development of Children's services in this area? Please give examples of positive or negative impact.
4. Are you aware of multi agency working description / guidance contained within Kent Trust Web and government's Every Child Matters site? What would help development of this way of working? Is this the best way of bringing coordination to Children's services?
5. Where do you see schools fitting into local Children's services? How do you feel people from different agencies respond to your concerns? Is confidence/ consistency improving?
6. In your experience is strategic guidance from Central Government or Kent Trust supporting development of your local LCSP?
7. What would be your dream scenario re local provision of children's services and local multi agency provision?
8. If you were to lead Children's Services for one year, what changes would you make?
9. Do you understand the Kent CAF system and procedures and do you think our most vulnerable children are being identified? Your views on this initiative, introduction, training and use.
10. How do the Kent Trust/ LCSP/ local agencies seek your views or seek to involve you or your staff in their work? Have you been involved in evaluation of their services and support? What do you think might inhibit / enhance the local / county development of multi agency working?
11. Are all communications clear and easily understood? Do you fully understand all terminology and acronyms used? Do you think communication is an issue? Is communication two way?
12. Should parents and CYP have a greater say/ involvement in the work of children's services?
13. Care and well being of children, what do you feel have been the main changes you have noticed in recent years?
14. Is there anything you would like to add or say?

d. Questions: School Head Teachers (version 3)

Concerns to explore

Current safety of children. Care / support school and home.

Support for schools, positive/ negative experiences multi agency working.

Understanding of recent legislation re Children Act 2004 and ECM

Understanding re dev of LCSP / 'K' Trust, multi agency working (MAW), training.

MAW. Ideas, hopes, fears and experiences re dev of services

Involvement of schools in development of MAW, LCSP and Trust

Quality of multi agency support, training and strategies

Discuss research area and information sheet.

1. As this research is all about agencies working together I wonder if I could first ask you about what the term multi agency working means to you? Tell me more.....

Who are the agency professionals that you have dealings with and what agency involvement is the school involved? LCSP partnership, review ...other MAW activities. Measure MAWness.

- 2 If we think about children's services and the provision they provide:

Since 2004 what changes have you noticed in how they work together to provide MAW?

What are the positives that need guarding?

What are the negatives that need addressing?

Anything else about these developments that you would like to say

- 3 Do you think fellow head teachers are kept fully aware/briefed on planned improvements to Children's services locally and nationally? What are your views re the following changes?

- a. Children Act 04, ECM,
- b. Children's plans, Co-ordination of services.
- c. LCSPs, Children's Trusts.

- 4 In your school have you noticed multi agency working starting to occur and do you think this is helping development of Children's services in this area? Can you think of examples of how it is having a positive or negative impact on your school?

- 5 I want to get a feeling for how helpful online guidance and support may be. Are you aware of multi agency working descriptions / guidance contained within 'K' Trust Web and government's Every Child Matters site? eg. show examples .

What would aid the development of MAW and is this the best way of bringing greater coordination to Children's services?

- 6 How do you see schools fitting into local Children's services? How do you feel people from different agencies respond to your concerns? Do you see consistency in the response you receive?

- 7 Can we now talk about strategic management at different levels and how it impacts on agency provision? Strategic guidance from Central Government or 'K' Trust supporting and how it helps development of your local LCSP/ services?
- 8 What would be your dream scenario re local provision of children's services and local multi agency provision? Would budget and affordability limit your dream?
- 9 If you were to lead Children's Services for one year, what changes would you make? Strategic management, front line services....
- 10 If we now look in more detail at the care we provide for vulnerable children. Do you feel you understand the 'K' CAF system and procedures? Do you think our most vulnerable children are being identified and protected by the use of this system? I would welcome your views on this initiative, its introduction, staff training and use.
- 11 Can we now look at how the 'K' Trust/ LCSP/ local agencies seek your views or seek to involve you or your staff in their work?
 Have you been involved in evaluation of their services and support?
 What do you think might inhibit / enhance the local / county development of multi agency working?
- 12 Each agency has over years developed its own vocabulary, acronyms and ways of working. Are the agency communications that you receive clear and easily understood?
 Do you fully understand all terminology and acronyms used?
 Do you think communication is an issue and is communication two way?
- 13 Lets now look at the voice of the child and parental involvement. Should parents and CYP have a greater say in the work of children's services?
 Should parents be more involved in the work of children's services?
- 14 Care and well being of children, what do you feel have been the main changes in the past:
 - a. twelve months, b. two years, c. five years, d. ten years?
- 15 Is there anything else that we have left out or you would like to add or say?

e. Questions: School based staff

Concerns to explore

Safety of children, care and support inside/ outside of school.

Impact re changes to provision especially multi agency working. Positive/negative experiences.

Understanding: Children Act 2004 and ECM. Training prov.

Understanding re dev of LCSP and multi agency working.

Experience and impact of multi agency working

Ideas and involvement for development of local services

Share and discuss research area and information sheet.

1. As this research is about agencies working together I wonder if I could first ask you about what the term multi agency working means to you and what you might know about its development? Tell me more....
Who are the agency professionals that you work with and what agency involvement is the school involved in?

Partnership reviews etc.
2. Do you think fellow staff fully understand what is being done in this area to improve services for children?
Do you agree with these changes?
 - a. Children Act 04, ECM, LCSP, 'K' Trust
 - b. Co-ordinated local services, multi agency working.
 - c. Planned change in School and LCSP.
3. If we now focus on vulnerable children, what concerns you most about your pupil's safety? Do you think the development of agency co-ordination and multi agency working will help?
4. Do you think current CAF training and implementation has been satisfactory? Does this system effectively pick up and identify children at risk?
5. Can I now turn to communications; each agency over the years has developed its own ways of working and communicating. Does the Trust/ LCSP/ agencies keep you well informed of developments?
Would you like communications to increase or decrease? Do you fully understand the language, concepts and acronyms used?
6. I also want to get a feel for how helpful and effective online guidance may be. Have you used the 'K' Trust Web or government Every Child Matters web sites? Are you aware of the guidance they provide re multi agency working? (hard copy)

7. Can I now turn to the support you receive and your involvement. How do you feel people from different agencies respond to your concerns? Is their response co-ordinated and is the development of multi agency working helping in any way?
8. How does your role link to the multi agency working that you see and has such working helped improve local support, and support to your school?
9. Do you feel that school based staff such as yourself are sufficiently involved in the development and management of local children's services and multi agency working? Is it imposed from a distance?
10. Is there a particular agency whose work you most value?
Are all agencies equally represented in local multi agency work?

Is there anything that might inhibit / enhance the development of multi agency working?

Is your voice equal to budget?

Is there an agency that is further ahead that we may learn from?

11. Thinking more generally about the care and well being of children, how do you feel things have changed in the:
 - a. last twelve months, b. two years, c. five years, d. ten years?
12. What would be your dream scenario re children's service support and local multi agency provision? Bearing in mind budgets and affordability.
13. If you were to be in charge of local children's services and multi agency working for one year, what would you do/ change?
14. Is there anything else that we have left out or that you would like to add and say?

f. Questions: Parents and Carers

Concerns to explore

Safety of children, care and support outside/ inside of home.

Changes to provision positive and negative experiences.

Understanding of Children Act 2004 and ECM

Understanding re development of multi agency working.

Ideas and fears related to development of local services.

Introduction

My role as researcher and what I am studying.

Multi agency working

1. As this research is all about agencies working together, I wonder if I could ask you about what the term multi agency working means to you and what examples you seen or experienced?
2. Do you know what is being done to improve services for children and do you agree with these changes?
 - a. Children Act 04, ECM,
 - b. Children's plans, co-ordinated services.
 - c. School, LCSP Trust developments.
3. What are your main concerns re your child's safety?
e.g. discipline, health, safety, bullying.
4. Who keeps you informed of what is being done to support your children? Do you understand the communications you receive (acronyms, terminology) and would you like to be more or less informed and involved?
5. To improve Children's services co-ordination between agencies is to be improved. Agency staff are now increasingly working together (multi agency working). Do you think this is the way to improve services for children and young people?
6. How do people from different agencies respond to your concerns? Do you feel the existing Children's services need to be better co-ordinated?
7. Care and well being of children, what changes have you noticed in the:
 - a. last twelve months, b. two years, c. five years, d. ten years?
8. How have your actions and perceptions changed?
9. What would be your dream scenario re children's services and local multi agency provision?
10. Should parents and CYP have a greater say in their support?
11. If you were to be in charge of local children's services for one year, what changes would you make?
12. Is there anything you would like to say or add?

g. Questions: Children and Young People

Concerns to explore

Safety of children, care and support outside/ inside of home.

Changes to provision positive and negative experiences.

Understanding of Children Act 2004 and ECM

Understanding re dev of multi agency working.

Ideas and fears related to dev of local services.

Introduction

Research: Who am I and what do I do?

What am I researching?

To ensure that CYP get the very best conditions and support for living, that you are able to live a safe and healthy like, people around you have jobs to help and protect you.

Who helps you and protects?

1. Do you think young people these days feel safe and secure/ happy at home and at school?
2. Do you know what is being done to improve services for children and young people? Have you heard of any of these? Do you think these are the right changes?
 - a. Children Act 04, ECM,
 - b. Children's plans, co-ordinated services.
 - c. School and LCSP changes.
3. What are your main concerns of your friends re safety? (discipline, health, safety, bullying?)
4. Does school keep you well informed re safety, would you like to be more or less involved in what happens?
5. What is your greatest fear re your own and friends safety and whom would you talk to re your worries?
6. How do you feel people from different agencies would respond to your concerns?
7. What would be your dream scenario for services for children and young people and local multi agency provision working?
8. Should parents and YP have a much greater say in how you are supported?
9. If young people were in charge of local children's services for one year, what do you think they might want to do?
10. Is there anything you would like to say or add?

Appendix II: Information for Schools

Letter to Head Teacher

[Head Teacher]

[School]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in research examining the development and coordination of Children's Services. Through this research, I hope to examine the impact of change, the agency response and the effectiveness of multi agency working.

I will be interviewing both staff and agency officers, partnership and trust members. The names and location of all those involved and all data provided will be confidential. I would like, if possible, to interview both yourself as Head Teacher and one other member of staff who may have the closest links with agency support, e.g.SENCO, CP Coordinator, FLO, etc.

Each interview will last about 45 minutes to 1 hour and consist of no more than fifteen straightforward questions related to implementation of Every Child Matters , current experiences and ideas and hopes for the future. My aim is to identify strengths and areas for development to help improve practice and support for the children, young people and staff.

As mentioned on [day], I would also like to interview a small group of Year 6 children, if possible, as well as a parent or two. This is not something I am doing in all schools but I am very interested in their perceptions and involvement. Any ideas are gratefully accepted!

This research forms part of a Doctoral programme and will be overseen by Professor Carl Parsons of Canterbury Christ Church University.

Again, many thanks for your support.

Regards,

Laurie Thomas

Background information given to interviewees

Doctoral research: Laurie Thomas

Area of study: Implementation of Children Act 2004 / improving the coordination of Children's Services

Topic: An examination of multi agency working in a single area

This research will examine a number of aspects of multi agency working - a style of agency working widely proposed to help bring about improved interagency working and coordination. Despite being recommended nationally, multi agency working has not been widely researched. This study hopes to identify people's understanding of the area and their readiness for change, to understand how strategic management is helping and supporting and explore the forces that may be inhibiting development of this way of working. It is hoped that good practice will be identified and principles for good practice drawn up.

Questions will be asked of officers working in Children's Services including children and their parents. Special areas of focus on multi agency working will be:

1. Role of strategic management in supporting the process
2. What are the inhibiting factors
3. How are these factors being overcome at operational level
4. What aspects are now seen as good practice
5. What are the principles derived from good practice.

The names and locations of those interviewed along with the data they provide will be confidential. All recordings / records of interviews will be confidential and destroyed upon completion of this doctoral study. All outcomes and subsequent reports will be fully available to those taking part.

This research forms part of the Ed D Doctorate in Education programme of Christ Church University Canterbury and will be overseen by Prof. Carl Parsons.

Laurie Thomas

Southwood Cottage

Toys Hill

Permission form used by schools

20 March 2009

Dear Parents

As part of efforts to improve Children's Services, Laurie Thomas (our former Local Education Officer) will be visiting school on _____.

Mr Thomas will be talking with small groups of Year 6 pupils as part of his research. He hopes to listen to their views, ideas and experience about the services they receive. All the information gathered will be anonymous and confidential,

If you are happy for your child to take part then please sign and return this slip to school.

Thank you for your help.

To Class Teacher

I am / not* willing for my child to be

interviewed by Mr Thomas at school on

Signed

Parent / carer

**please delete as appropriate*

Appendix III: Sample Interview Summaries (Running record)

Running Record

Interview summary number 3 page 14

School 4 trial Head Teacher

1 a. Agencies same aims and objectives, work closely together achieving outcomes.

Closer working now under single agenda. Different commitment, different professionals

Gone about it too quickly without understanding needs / culture of different agencies and how they address needs.

Need to understand how each works and not full commitment to how each works.

1b. Very broad : Ed, Health, Soc Services. Vol. Services, Counselling

Broad through voluntary agency. Voluntary a significant role.

1c. Health and Social Services.

2 . ECM taken off and fully implemented. Most profs. committed especially child protection embedded. Works well for Education.

2a. Profs expectations have not loosen with change, stopped isolation of agencies, require profs to work together. Now multi profs in schools especially for vulnerable. Profs now work more close by.

2c. Profs feel under valued voice not listened to, not fully consulted. Lack of understanding of each others prof language Helps schools share load re responsibility.

3 . Depends on HT and their commitment. Lot of variety

Interview summary number 3 page 15

3. All moved on a lot

a/ ok outcomes positive re ECM not universal.

b/ -

c/ Yes Trusts- not sure how engaged in not yet developed.

4 . Collaborative working, supporting one another. Commissioning of services eg. Counselling.

Enables commissioning, too costly for individual schools.
HTs working together and sharing expertise. Time taken.

5 . No I don't use Trust web, cumbersome. Improving, needs to be more user friendly, time consuming. Not up to date.

5b . people need to experience other agencies. Work shadowing. Work with them to develop strategies. Each own perspective. Culture.

6 . Schools are the key all all time, feel marginalised. Hinderence to way work.
Not on board Health, GPs, not fully engaged. Soc Services and Ed good.
Health not so successful in some areas. Healthy schools (initiative) good. Inconsistent.

7 . funding initiatives good . lack of money.deprivation, cultural deprivation.
'K' trust more important.Tension local and central data driven picture at Central level.

Interview summary number 3 page 16

Needs local interpretations. Contentious

8 . one agency, cost so much duplication currently. Agencies not willing to fund
What needs doing: Budgets problem recession. Using what got effectively. Change aspirations

9 .Find out why people not working together
Eg legal red tape, funding, how allocate and spend top heavy, too many managers, lack of provision for front line services. Can't afford, Embargo.

10a . Intro of CAF a disaster from start. Why do 'K' have their own?
I'll conceived training and support. Hasn't moved on
Different areas intro in different ways. HT confused.
Agencies have different approaches.

10b. Yes if a good structure, documentation could put off. Schools not sure when.
Using time effectively. Develop differently because people develop to own local needs.
Led by partnership try to educate schools Group monitors and evaluates outcomes.

12 . improved, getting better. Communication key factor.

Interview summary number 3 page 17

2 way conversation, more at local level.

13 Yes, develop parent forums and work of children's centres. Good example of multi agency work.

a. In infancy, develop aspirations.

b. Pupils need to be involved in that which covers them. Pupil forums, councils etc.
Yes now consulting re development of provision.

14 . 10yrs much better at cp and being aware.

5yrs wk other agencies more closely. Partnership working

12 months partnership working good, addressing key re cyp

15 . role of govs. how on board. radical change.

Concern re how work. Is different model now required due to accountability.

Where drawn from. Should it be multi agency. Should we be looking at a multi agency gov. Rep. on the governing body?

Appendix IV: Sample Interview Transcripts

Sample Transcript Ed D

File: Research interview, Agency Officer 1, Education, Strategic Management.

Duration: 37 minutes

Date : 23 /03 /09 .

Context: Structured interview. Education officer.

Interviewer has fully explained background to research, confidentiality and procedures and that respondent can stop interview at any time. Respondent has a printed copy of questions to be asked. Respondent is an experienced Head Teacher/ Adviser/Schools officer/ manager of many years standing well known to Head Teachers and Agency Officers.

Interviewer: Agency Officer number one. The first thing is if I could ask you what the terminology Multi Agency Working means to you because I'm just trying to get a feel for what people perceive as this rather vague term . How when somebody comes up with that or you see it in government guidance what comes to mind?

Respondent: I think it's my understanding of multi agency is where you have a group of professionals who are linked in some way to vulnerable children. So it could be any agency and it may be different agencies for a particular child, according to the needs of that particular child. But the core ones are obviously CFE, Children's Social Services (CSS), Health, Borough Council if it is housing and there for at that point I will stop. And depending on needs of that individual will then define who is sitting around the table, but it is multi agency , are lead professionals from individual stakeholders to do with the vulnerable child and they have an interest to solve that particular child or families needs.

Interviewer: Do you see it involving parents?

Respondent: It would have to involve parents but then there is a conflict , sorry there may be a conflict. If the parents are with you , you have a problem but if the parents are not, do not see it as intrusion then it would either be CFE , Children's Social Services, or CFE themselves or the school would actually break those barriers down.

Interviewer: Since 2004 and the Children Act, Laming Review and everything coming through, what are the main changes that you have noticed as far as agencies working together? Multi Agency Working.

Respondent: I think we are still in very early days. There is a willingness for local practitioners to work together but as yet that framework has not been defined. And what hasn't been confirmed are for example the language barrier in other words are we talking about the same issues, are we talking about what all the stake holders understanding the same understanding of words in that sense and in the locality now through the partnerships we have working relationships with our colleagues which is excellent but it's still nothing concrete from either the politicians or the most senior officers, between each of the stake holders or or the officers who are line managed there doesn't still seem to be the cohesion needed to effect change for the children. So there are still blockages. Yes i think fundamentally it comes back to the parameters under which each of the agencies are working. Ours obviously focuses on **alf** outcomes, Police obviously focus on statistics and raw crimes etc, CFE focus

on outcomes for schools. Children's Social Services focuses on number of referrals and really urgent issues.

Interviewer: really what is driving each agency? Is this to do with?

Respondent: Yes it is.

Interviewer: There isn't a common driver?

Respondent: Yes there is not a common understanding of how working together will benefit all the agencies. I think until a group of agencies identify a grant of core moneys to be able to see how we can work together in an effective way for vulnerable children we are not going to move forward very quickly. If I could go on both partnerships i work with the D..... and G..... Partnerships, people around the table know each other well now and the trust between the agencies is very strong, the frustration.

Interviewer: So would you say the Partnership is working well?

Respondent: Yes I would. The relationship of the partnership are working well but how we get the outcomes for young children although we have it written on paper and although we have agreed targets I'm not sure if those agreed outcomes of the targets are going to effect our young children as effectively as we think they might.

Interviewer: What have been some of the positives and the things that you have observed developing over the past four or five years as far as multi agency working goes?.

Respondent: If I'm honest with you this has only happened since July 08 that was at the time that the partnerships were going to be coming, they were on the local agenda very high on the agenda and all the stake holders were being forced together to sit on a partnership board and as you know you and J, N, K +S were very proactive in building common ground and relationships so that is why they are working so well. why the relationship between the individuals are working so well. So it really is only the last nine months I'd say.

Interviewer: what are some of the things that have made for success you said about early strategies to build common ground?

Respondent: I think it is the willingness of the partnership managers to work along side colleagues who may be reticent to join the partnerships because they see why are there so many partnerships for example ,one of the members of D.....and G.....also attends S.....S.....so they attend more partnership boards than there are meetings in the day. i think that's an issue pivotally it is the partnership managers that are strategically working the partnerships without the other partners knowing it is happening and i don't mean that in a devious way.. They are working very closely co-ordinating , co-operating, cajoling and empowering individuals to ensure they are all brought on side.

I think it was the D.....partnerships particular master stroke to appoint PJ as the Chair. Her background knowledge in working as deputy director of G..... Borough Council, prior to that she is somebody i would suggest obviously you talk to, does that help? That people should be wary of.

Interviewer: any particular negatives that stand out? Things that people should be wary of.

Respondent: I think it is relevant we must keep the partnership board meetings relevant so that people can see how the board works to influence outcomes for vulnerable children. I think that is the hardest of all the hardest point to make.

Interviewer: as far as the big statutory changes that have been coming through and some of the bigger moves what are your views of their effectiveness, if we take first the Children Act obviously it is high profile at the moment with baby P, Doncaster etc.

Respondent: with the Children Act i think it has been incredibly effective, it has made the Local Authorities stand up and take notice and once the, in our case the Managing Directors, or Directors of Children's Social Services, however they are put together in different authorities they have to recognise that they are ultimately responsible for the well being of all the young children within their authority

within their care, and i think that above all has forced change, positive change in structural organisation and management terms for the authority. They can't ignore it and they haven't and those that have you've had the issues.

Interviewer: the development of ECM and the five outcomes?

Respondent: I think that's. I think a lot of focus has been made on ECM and obviously ECM has come out of the Children Act. I think the focus is a bit more for schools. ECM I'm not sure that any agencies apart from CFE have necessarily seen the relevance. they might be wondering how does this effect us? The Children's Plans are there, I personally wish the Children's Plans were much more concise. and relevant again to 30% of population and to be honest the Children's Plans are a document which we have to have but am not sure of the effectiveness of it . so I know the relevance of it because it is laid down and we have to have one and i am not sure on the effectiveness.

Interviewer: do you think it might come into its own time as things evolve?

Respondent: I think it will within the partnership, i 'm not sure of the County Plan.

Interviewer: What about the Common Assessment Framework?

Respondent: to be quite honest I don't have any experience of that . i understand what it is but i have no experience of that so many , i think the CAF is in its early days.

Interviewer: what about local partnerships?

Respondent: again very early but the only experience I've got is with the three local partnerships (Clusters) G.....and the two D.....

And I don't think many more are further forward than we are. Early days. Very positive

Interviewer: Children's Trusts?

Respondent: You've got the K... Children's Trust?

Interviewer: The whole concept of the Trust. (how it interacts and where it comes in the hierarchy)

Respondent: I think the 'K' Children's Trust which is the statutory body which we have to have, has been slow to work - that strategic body has been slow to motivate the people that work to ,the individuals who are on the 'K' Children's Trust. So you've got very heavy Director issues. What I mean by that is the body is so strategic that the relevance to the worker on the ground there doesn't appear to be any linkage. What we've got to do is to ensure that using the Children's Plan and using the local Partnership the 'K' Trust becomes meaningful for all and there is an understanding for all of how one relates to the Children Act. The 'K' Trust, the Partnership and down to the practitioner so it's linked. I don't think that's been really made clear. Its been dictated to, to us the feel of how important it is has not been done. (side comment)

Interviewer: The Trust and Central Government and links through to Central Government?

Respondent: It is interesting how the G.....Trust have one of Ed Ball's advisors present because he happens to be a governor in one of the G.....schools. and here he showed us some guidance on what was coming next for Children's Trusts and linking through to partnerships, and what was very interesting was that K... was already way ahead of where they think they are.) Already we are ahead of where they think they are and i was trying to get the adviser to move forwards faster with either regulation or registration n to ensure all the agencies must put % of their own revenue funding forward and feed into the partnerships as a minimum and that would all be linked in to statistics within either the county or the Borough or the unitary authority.

Interviewer: So where do Voluntary Agencies come?

Respondent: I think the voluntary sector is really important in the partnership because they have the realism into the decision making and progressing to reach the heart of the decision making and

progress to reach the heart of the , A.M. is a guy I suggest you talk to, he's very very interesting (officer interview 5) he is voluntary sector but also disabled. (details)

Interviewer: Question four, what makes a good working within your partnership, the officers. Is there anything coming through that makes for a really effective team and local.

Respondent: yes i think the one thing that the partnership managers do is to financially have an away day so that we all knew exactly why we were there and to get to understand each other as individuals before we started putting our professional hats on. Knowing about the person rather than about the professionals for example the new Manager for G..... (T...) we just clicked just , we had so much professionally in common but actually we.....really well. Now if either of us wants an answer about something we can automatically ring without going through a protocol. She comes along to my area team meeting now for example she was very concerned of why with a sixty six million pound roll forward schools weren't spending it , she couldn't understand why i was not dictating to schools how they should be spending their money and then when I explained it's the governors responsibility and not the LA every things began to fall in place as to who was responsible for schools spending and school decisions.

Interviewer: Would you say also as well as getting to know each other, you need to have a certain understanding of each others working and as part of that ground work.

Respondent : I think it will be helpful i would think formally with colleagues that want to would actually be to shadow each other i would say that way absolutely vital but of course you can't force people to do what they don't want to do . I'm shadowing the Chief Inspector of Police at the moment and he has to come back and shadow me . we had a fantastic time. It really opened my eyes in terms of the pressure the Police ate under in terms of stats. It was only stats that drive them. (comment).

Interviewer: is there anything else that you think makes for good work relationships?

Respondent: well no it just depends on the flexibility of the individual

Interviewer: number five. Are fellow professionals and schools kept well informed and up dated? (clarification and explanation).

Respondent: I don't know the answer there are shortages and we can't afford to let people go. I think all we will have to do is put on high quality training. It will be down to the LA to find the money for this. I don't think its the other agencies. we are leading on this we have the statutory responsibility for Children's Services and there we should provide effective training for our own officers which we have not and there for as a consequence all the other partnerships are one.

Interviewer: so you would have a working body to advise the LA and make recommendations.

Respondent : i would have a training and development role in CFE focussing singularly on partnerships.

Interviewer: at the back of my head is the wealthiest agency is saying we design what happens the poorer agency saying you don't understand.

Respondent: no, no, no, that's not what I'm saying. if the terms of reference and objections for this training are described and understood by the agencies its more effective if one agency co-ordinates the training for the effectiveness of the officers, so that there is common understanding that's the way forward. And it comes back to the relationship with the officers what's understood and because we have had this training because we have had this away day relationships are there, there may be tensions but, we can get them out to the table now there's no barriers . in terms of schools i still don't think schools understand. (comment from interviewer)

Interviewer: number six hierarchies work cultures and team developments.

Respondent: team development and work cultures. In any group broken down or developed or however you want to phrase it , if there is a willingness from Chief Executives of various stake holders and political will to be very positive about the way forward and it comes back down to allowing a

funding base for trialling so once people realise that if you put £50,000 into a pot and it delivers x, y, and z for a small proportion of the population and it then saves £500,000 later on when children are 15/16 without causing havoc etc, etc. That's a good one.

Interviewer: baby P , agencies with tradition. Hierarchies and different power bases. Certain protocols and so on I don't know how you see having a strategy where they relationship locally.

Respondent: yes i think that in itself will cause problems , where we've good work relations. I know for a fact that is not consistent across the country.

Interviewer: so how do your K... problem saying we want consistency.

Respondent: how do you do it? If there is a blockage/ resistance from an individual on the partnership board, how do you move forward. i'm not sure how you do it actually. Don't know but then i think that comes down to the training issue understanding the parameters within which each of us works and then its looking to see how collectively we can move things forward. if there is a willingness to move forward moving things forward it will go forward.

Interviewer: how do you feel people from different agencies will respond to your ideas , needs and practices.

Respondent: I think within we've had so much experience, i mean a little experience of this where, for example the G..... board where we were in trouble cause we went away for an Away Day and Away Night. It actually gelled that board so quickly because of the adversity of the press. that we were able to say exactly what we felt amongst the Partnership Board between us and actually challenge individual members on it in a way that we couldn't have for example if they were the Borough Councillors. The Committee they were all for lets brush it under the carpet and that's not come out. My view was lets come out positively and actually say yes this was a day out and we are very happy with this. In the long term if we can get intervention for one child , 6 months ,a year, eighteen months earlier than we would have done if we had had not been working together th en that's an outcome. What does the spending of £2,000 mean? That's what it means and we save the Council £15,000. I would not have been able to challenge the guy from the Borough Council in quite the way i did if i did not know him because he then came back and challenged me. When the barriers are down we get on well.

Interviewer: do you see this bonding taking place between the Partnerships and the Trust?

Respondent:: cor - that's a good question isn't it. I would like to give the answer of course I can see that happening but in reality I'm not sure how it can because there is no direct link. The Partnership manages home no access to the K... Trust Board.

Interviewer: how are the policy makers and the people at high strategic level going to be informed if they have not got that close relationship with the Partnership? The Partnership will scream you have not taken into account x, y, z. And they will say you never told us.

Respondent: yes that I think and I'm looking positively here, we will re organise as a CFE possibly post January 2010 and I very sincerely having met the new director her focus is on partnerships and that is absolutely the right way forward. And i think she will ensure that her drivers will be the partnership managers and their bureaucracy will have gone in terms of senior management team and she will get exactly the understanding that our previous Managing Director never had because people were concerned about telling him how things actually were. . so she really will come in hands on , you know i applaud that.

Interviewer: I know years ago when i used to have a subject responsibility with the curriculum I used to go to National meetings and junior ministers always used to sit and talk.

Respondent: and I think her appointment will be pivotal to the next phase.

Interviewer: how do people respond – irrelevant no i can't really answer that one.

Interviewer: number eight school based reports, outline issue of how do you keep yourself informed. (explanation)

Respondent: I don't know have you seen our paper N... wrote on Partnerships? One side of A4 absolutely perfect. I understand what you and heads are saying in same way we need to break that down.

Interviewer: practical reality and issues of communication for HTs

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: CAF issues, nearly there care and wellbeing of children. What has happened over last ten years and how have your perceptions changed.

Respondent : how have they changed , because they have had to because of legislation and because of the legislation and because of the legislation we have in terms of CFE needed to be able to think through clearly how the legislation and regulations are to be practically interpreted in a way that they can be achieved for all.. that has been the most difficult thing because if there is any way philosophy is always K.I.S.S. keep it simple and if you keep it simple it is something people can follow and understand and and i think that's

Interviewer: dream scenario re children's services and local multi agency working.

Respondent: my dream scenario would be if any of the agencies found there were issues with any of the families or child or any vulnerable young person. Within six weeks they the problem would have been identified , meeting of relevant stake holders, work commissioned outcomes and that family group who ever it is will feel supported and the problem beginning to dissipate so that would be it.

Interviewer: number twelve. Good practice.

Respondent: I can only talk from sitting on the board. N and K would be better.

Interviewer: Again if you were in charge of local Children's Services for one year, what would you do?

Respondent: yes I would if I were the director for K... I would seek to influence the leader of the Council the Chief Executive and of the Council, all the Chief Executives of the outside agencies. I would seek to convince them to pilot six partnerships (£250,000) over a range of needs which vulnerable children have different needs not the same need to see how we can focus on these needs commission and solve it. Rather than for these children and families under pressure rather than for us to spend two or three times that amount in trying to prevent and not succeeding.

Interviewer: is there anything else you would like to add?

Respondent: you know I have really enjoyed this, I have really enjoyed this because you have focussed my mind on what it is that we are actually doing because most of the time I do not get the opportunity and time to talk in the strategic or sense of, found it really important.

Appendix V: Examples of Coding and Analysis

File: Research interview, Agency Officer 1, Education,

Duration: minutes Date: 23/03/09

Context: Structured interview. Agency officer.

+ positives
- negatives
in literature
surprising, explore
or issue, further

Interviewer has fully explained background to research, confidentiality and procedures and that respondent can stop interview at any time. Respondent has a printed copy of questions to be asked. Respondent is an experienced Head Teacher/ Adviser/Schools officer/ manager of many years standing well known to Head Teachers and Agency Officers.

Interviewer: Agency Officer number one. The first thing is if I could ask you what the terminology Multi Agency Working means to you because I'm just trying to get a feel for what people perceive as this rather vague term. How when somebody comes up with that or you see it in government guidance what comes to mind?

Respondent: I think it's my understanding of multi agency is where you have a group of professionals who are linked in some way to vulnerable children. So it could be any agency and it may be different agencies for a particular child, according to the needs of that particular child. But the core ones are obviously CFE, Children's Social Services (CSS), Health, Borough Council if it is housing and there for at that point I will stop. And depending on needs of that individual will then define who is sitting around the table, but it is multi agency, are lead professionals from individual stakeholders to do with the vulnerable child and they have an interest to solve that particular child or families needs.

Interviewer: Do you see it involving parents?

Respondent: It would have to involve parents but then there is a conflict, sorry there may be a conflict. If the parents are with you, you have a problem but if the parents are not, do not see it as intrusion then it would either be CFE, Children's Social Services, or CFE themselves or the school would actually break those barriers down.

Interviewer: Since 2004 and the Children Act, Laming Review and everything coming through, what are the main changes that you have noticed as far as agencies working together? Multi Agency Working.

Respondent: I think we are still in very early days. There is a willingness for local practitioners to work together but as yet that framework has not been defined. And what hasn't been confirmed are for example the language barrier in other words are we talking about the same issues, are we talking about what all the stake holders understanding the same understanding of words in that sense and in the locality now through the partnerships we have working relationships with our colleagues which is excellent but it's still nothing concrete from either the politicians or the most senior officers, between each of the stake holders or or the officers who are line managed there doesn't still seem to be the cohesion needed to effect change for the children. So there are still blockages. Yes i think fundamentally it comes back to the parameters under which each of the agencies are working. Ours obviously focuses on all outcomes, Police obviously focus on statistics and raw crimes etc, CFE focus on outcomes for schools. Children's Social services focuses on number of referrals and really urgent issues.

Interviewer: really what is driving each agency? Is this to do with?

Respondent: Yes it is.

Interviewer: There isn't a common driver?

Respondent: Yes there is not a common understanding of how working together will benefit all the agencies. I think until a group of agencies identify a grant of core moneys to be able to see how we can work together in an effective way for vulnerable children we are not going to move forward very quickly. If we could go on both partnerships i work with the D..... and G..... Partnerships, people around the table now each other well now and the trust between the agencies is very strong, the frustration.

Question: One

Overview

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Interview #	Issue 1 Agencies Use Sm, Ed			Issue 2 Perception of MAW			Issue 3 Main Issues Wk Together		Issue 4 Management Strategic		Issue 5 Man. Non Strat		
	+	-	0	gd	av	neg	+	-	+	-	+	-	
01	2	6	4	6	8	0	6	0	2	0	3	0	T1
T2	1	1	7	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	T2
HT3	4	1	0	6	6		4	2	2	0	0	0	T3
HT4	4	8		1	5	0	4		4	0	0	0	RPS
HT5	5	3	4	3	5	5	2	2	2	0	3	0	RPS
6 HT	1	3	2	4	8	0	7	0	8	0	0	0	RPS
HT7	5	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	UPL
HT8	10	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	UPL
T9	5	4	0	0	4	0			1	0	0	0	UPL
HT10	1	4	7	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	UPL
HT11	5	6	1	0	5	1	4	1	2	0	1	0	UPL
HT12	5	5	3	0	5	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	USL
HT13	5	3	2	4	6	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	MUM
09-14	5	1	4	7	3	5	5	5	0	6	4	2	USL

1/ Comment

- 13 all agencies pe. ch. wk together
- 12 we attend CAHMs
- 12 Plan to review process around YP all agencies
Wk with person thro behav, learning, govt help.
- 4 Identify vul ch + share other agencies
in and across agencies
- Not easy as diff agencies diff thresholds
+ Wk best where front between agencies
About individuals; Wk will build trust + rel.
- 7 Wk's benefit of ch, wider if needs be
housin / faith

Appendix VI: Strategic Management of Multi Agency Working

Some key sources of strategic leadership, management and guidance impacting on Multi Agency Working and found within the geographical area of this research.

National

- **Children Act 2004**
- **Every Child Matters Green Paper 2003**
 - page 11: to encourage provision of a comprehensive work load survey to address bureaucracy and identify ways of freeing up time.
 - More flexible and attractive training routes.
 - Common occupational standards across children's practice.
 - a common core of training for those who work solely with Children and families and those with wider roles. Better understanding of professional roles.
 - a leadership and development programme to foster high calibre leadership.
 - Through development of a Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Children and Young People services to deliver key points of strategy.
- **OfSTED Inspection**

An inspection framework: for Children's services. Joint inspection teams to ensure services are judged on how well they work together. Creating an improvement and intervention function to drive up performance by sharing effective practice and intervening where services are failing (ECM,2003,p9).
- **Minister for Children, Young People and families.**

To co-ordinate policy across Government. (ECM,2003, p9)
- **Children's Commissioner**

To champion case of children particularly those suffering from disadvantage.
- **Workforce Reform**

National strategy: to improve the skills and effectiveness of the children's workforce development in partnership with local employers and staff.
Move towards a framework that fairly rewards skills and responsibility and ensures effective incentives for good practitioners to stay on the front line.
ECM 2003, p.10
- **DfE website**
- **ECM website.**

Regional/ County

- **Local Authority**
 - Key agency services integrated within a single organisational focus
ECM 2003, p.9
 - Including Education, Children's Social Services and some Children's Health.
- **Director of Children's Services**

One person in charge locally (LA) with responsibility for improving children's lives.

- **Children's Trust Board (CTB)**

- A Local Children's Trust brings together local authority education and Children's social services, some children's health services, Connexions, and can include other services such as Youth Offending Teams. Trusts are part of the LA and report to local elected members.
- Trusts require the LA to work closely with public private and voluntary organisations to improve outcomes for children. Flexibility is given in how this partnerships work is undertaken.
- The Trust covering this research area describes its responsibilities thus:
- Since 2006 this Children's Trust has provided a strategic and local mechanism for public and voluntary services to work together to secure more joined up services for children, young people and families across this local area. It has driven multi agency planning through two successive CYPP and has led the development of a more outcomes focussed approach across Children's services. The Trust has also developed a wide range of multi agency strategies.

- **Safeguarding Children's Board**

- **Trust Web**

Local

- **Local Education Officers** (extracts- LEO Job description)

- To be the Senior LEA officer responsible for a cluster, commissioning, managing and deploying fiscal, human and other resources on its behalf. Senior LA officer responsible for: leading and managing the Cluster Team. Senior LA officer responsible for: ensuring the overall quality of Education within the Cluster in line with OfSTED and other national standards. To provide advice and guidance to school(s), settings, Governors, parents/carers, young people and other partners as appropriate.
- Principal Accountabilities:
 - Agree and manage the strategic direction of the Cluster in line with local and national objectives.
 - Deliver the agreed objectives defined within the Cluster Action Plan.
 - Be research driven and operate at the cutting edge of practice for the benefit of all learners
- Scope of Role
 - Establish effective communication systems within and between Clusters.
 - Promote ownership of LEA and cluster targets to improve performance against ECM priorities
 - Manage Cluster staff to ensure effective multi-agency working

- **Cluster Web**

Agencies supporting Children's Services

Each agency will be guided by its own leadership and strategic management in line with its aims, objectives and philosophy. Dependant on size interaction and influence may occur at local, regional and or national level.

Job Description Ref: 02

JOB TITLE:	Local Advisory Officer (Previously Cluster Executive Officer)
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Cluster Board of Headteachers/Assistant Director Operations
LOCATION:	To be determined
GRADE:	K

1. Job Summary:

To be the prime mover in enabling the Cluster to deliver its core objectives as defined in its Action Plan.

- Provide the highest possible quality of Education in all partner schools.
- Be responsive to the needs of individual learners and offer wider choice.
- Act as agents for regeneration and renewal in the locality by raising the academic standards and vocational skills of the population.
- Raise the collective game, be research driven and operate at the cutting edge of practice for the benefit of the Learner.

2. Principal Accountabilities:

- 1 Secure the operation of the Cluster Board, including election of members, meetings and events and related action planning, ensuring effective communication streams are in place and that stated objectives are met and projects successfully concluded.
- 2 Lead and manage the Cluster within the parameters and priorities established by the Board of Headteachers.
- 3 Lead the Cluster Board in the strategic development of the Cluster. Agree targets, identify support requirements, develop plans and review and monitor performance to ensure the success of the Cluster model and to provide continuous improvement in the provision of teaching and learning.
- 4 Promote ownership of LEA and cluster targets to improve performance against Best Value and other national performance indicators.

- 5 Establish and lead the cluster delivery team, monitoring day to day operations and the effective deployment of team members, providing support and direction to ensure optimum performance and opportunities for professional development.
- 6 Manage the Cluster budget, related funds and identify and investigate new funding streams within strict protocols and policies.
- 7 Establish effective communication systems across the Cluster and 'inter-Cluster', with schools, parents, governor's etc., developing excellent collaborative working environments.
- 8 Identify and pursue additional sources of funding and to work effectively with existing funding agencies.
- 9 Identify, plan, introduce and sustain effective programmes and partnerships with other providers and interested groups which will contribute to high quality education and improve learning.
- 10 Provide an effective advisory facility to parents, governors and other interested parties on educational issues arising in the Cluster area.
- 11 Secure Cluster interests in county and national matters, representing the interests of the Cluster in order to influence and contribute to policy and decision making at all levels and promote the Clusters' achievements.

This job description is provided to assist the post holder to know their principal duties. It may be amended from time to time in consultation with you without change to the level of responsibility appropriate to the grading of the post

Signed (Job Holder) _____ Date _____

Signed (Line manager) _____ Date _____