

Integrated Local Authority Children's Services: A Critical Review

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**Dedicated to the
Sunshine in my life**

Abstract

Many Local Authorities are exploring the practicalities of Integrated Children's Services. These practicalities will affect a wide range of partner organisations and users of services. As a significant modernisation policy area, involving partnership and inter-agency working, requiring significant understanding and skills in the management of organisational change and having significant implications for professional practice, the topic area is ideal for research.

One key aspect of such change is that personnel from different agencies will work more closely with each other and the delivery of services will be more closely integrated.

This research looks at the experiences, success factors and barriers in effective multi-disciplinary teamwork, providing an insight into the benefits, opportunities and threats presented by Integrated Children's Services. The main theoretical underpinnings of this research focus on teamwork, group processes as well as partnerships, psychodynamic and complexity theory.

The research design takes constructionism as an epistemological stance and the research question lends itself to an inductive explanation of the phenomenon. An overarching research approach of stakeholder analysis is used. The specific data collection technique of semi-structured interviews is employed as well as participant observation.

'Triangulation' of data was used to assess validity and, in addition, a characteristic of the study was reflexivity involving the continual monitoring of the researcher's actions and interpretations.

The research findings suggest that there are many pragmatic aspects of multi-disciplinary working that need to be addressed if such a programme is to be successful. However, Managers also need to be aware of the intense and sometimes irrational emotions that are exposed and be prepared to 'hold' team members in a period of complexity.

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The door

Go and open the door.
Maybe outside there's
a tree, or a wood,
a garden,
or a magic city.

Go and open the door.
Maybe a dog's rummaging.
Maybe you'll see a face,
Or an eye,
or the picture
of a picture.

Go and open the door.
If there's a fog
it will clear.

Go and open the door.
Even if there's only
the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if
nothing
is there,
go and open the door.

At least
there'll be
a draught.

By Miroslav Holub

(Translated from the Czech by Ian Milner)

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This research study provided an opportunity to explore and learn about the features, practices, benefits and pitfalls of multi-disciplinary teamwork, within the Children's Services of a Local Authority, at a time of change instigated by Government policy. It offered an opportunity to examine theory, research and current practice, within a vision of future desired practice, and to unravel some the complexities of teamworking across disciplines, allowing a glimpse of the ways in which Integrated Children's Services might develop in the future. In exposing the issues, complexities, preferences and fears of those involved in integrated service delivery, it is hoped to add to the understanding of how multi-disciplinary teamwork can be developed to provide efficient and effective services and outcomes to children, young people and their families.

The data for this research has been gathered, in the main, from a small number of practitioners, 'at the frontline', within various Local Authority Children's Service disciplines. This has been complemented by participant observation of a sub-system at a point in the process of transformation. My experience as the researcher carrying out the study has also generated data, both in the fieldwork, and in the writing up of the research. My experience of the process involved me trying to untangle and make reflexive sense of my own presence and role in the research and what this may say about multi-disciplinary teamwork. The process of undertaking the study raised many of the issues that were considered in the context of the research.

The following account of this research is from a number of perspectives. The first perspective is that of the participants in the study who willingly shared their

experiences of teamwork and the meanings they made of those experiences. Secondly, there is also the perspective of the researcher who, not only witnessed part of the process of change, but also influenced and shaped the research in the way it was undertaken, in what sense is made of the data, and in how it is presented. As Moch (1999) conveys;

“I want to talk about the researcher experience openly, to share the researcher experience in conference papers and publications. I would like researchers to struggle together with questions and concerns related to the researcher experience”
(pp7).

Indeed, the data collected and interpreted here is really my own construction of other people’s constructions, of what they and others in the ‘theatre’ are seeing, thinking and doing.

Thirdly, there is the perspective of the participant observer, i.e. myself, as researcher, being involved to some extent in the change process; shaping, observing and trying to make sense of what is happening. Inevitably, carrying out research in, ‘an ever changing environment’, is not, ‘clean’. By this, I mean that the research did not look at a phenomenon that had a distinct beginning, middle and end. The process of change had started well before the research started and was evolving, shifting and moving throughout the research period and will no doubt continue now this particular study is over. The study could usefully be seen as a ‘snapshot’ of the change process, as one Local Authority attempts to merge it’s Children’s Services.

Background to the study

The original motivation for me to undertake this research came from being a Senior Manager within a Local Authority that structurally integrated its Education and Children's Social Care Services, (Miller et al (2003)). My own experience of that particular integration was generally negative. It seemed that a great deal of emphasis was placed on structures and not enough on practice issues, 'at the frontline', i.e. those workers who had direct contact with children and families. I was concerned that there were expectations being placed on frontline staff to work together for the benefit of vulnerable children, young people and families but, despite being willing, they were left struggling as to how they might go about doing so. This left me, as a Manager, with a desire to explore how I might understand and facilitate more joined-up working at the frontline, regardless of the structures, as it seemed that this would be where the biggest impact on the lives of children and families would take place. It also left me 'annoyed' as the structural changes provided jobs for Senior Managers without, what I believed was enough credence being given to the impact on the lives of children and families. The secondary motivation to undertake this study comes from a sense that the emotional malaise involved in such changes seems to often be forgotten in writings on the change process. However, the emotional aspects associated with change are vital in understanding the forces for and against change and are touched on in this thesis.

In attempting to understand how I might make better sense of and facilitate joined-up working, the notion of team development and maintenance through a shared understanding of each partner's role, skills and knowledge, was raised. It

also raised issues of shared or, 'core' skills, and how training and/or team and individual development might be approached in a multi-agency way. Such core skills may also include how to work as a team e.g. Johnson and Johnson (1987) suggest that...

“Groups cannot function effectively if members do not have and use the needed collaborative skills...telling them to collaborate does not guarantee that they are able to do so effectively” (pp 401).

The Government is also (July 2005), consulting on workforce reform for those working in Children's Services and undertaking a full review and revision of all occupational standards and qualifications. (DfES 2005a).

From this position I became increasingly aware of, and curious about, the nature of teamwork, its development and maintenance within a future-focused integrated way of working. I recognised that how individuals and teams interact and work together would have a major influence on the effectiveness of any joined-up work and would be a factor in the success or otherwise of Integrated Children's Services as envisioned by the Government. The research project thus, was an exploration to make some sense of what joined-up working or teamwork looked like, or might look like in the future, and to provide some pointers to the organisation as it faces these challenges. At the very least, by opening the door there would be a draught.

Aims of the study.

The main aim of the study was to find out what effective multi-disciplinary teamwork, in its broadest sense, might look like from the perspective of those already doing it, 'sometimes', at the frontline. I was interested in knowing what factors made it effective, and what was thought to be the barriers, as well as how, as a Manager, I could support and facilitate it's development? Immediately, this gives an insight into my value system regarding teamwork. If I am interested to know how I can support and develop teamwork, then it is implicit that I already have exposed a bias that teamworking is a positive development or, at the very least, I believe that it is inevitable in the future.

My intention was to explore with frontline professionals how they work with the challenges presented by multi-disciplinary teamwork. The aim was to create learning about developing multi-disciplinary teams that will support the development of the new ways of working, and generate an impact on outcomes for children, young people and their families. My intention was also to explore the different models (and 'personal' theories in use), of teamwork currently in use, and through critical reflection about these models to offer suggestions as to how to bring about individual and organisational development in relation to developing teamwork.

I hoped that the study would have insights to offer in each of these areas and that any theory generated from the research would be useful and transferable to other organisational settings. My commitment to the study came from a belief that it would be helpful and useful to the participants, to enable reflection and

learning to take place. Thus the process of the research study itself was intended to have an impact.

I felt it important that issues and themes that were significant to the participants were able to emerge, so that the research questions were deliberately broad at the outset of the research. As the themes began to emerge from the early interviews, they informed the later interviews and were further developed.

The study started with the intention of restricting the collection of data to semi-structured interviews. However, as the study progressed, unplanned changes occurred in the organisation. A move to co-locate Education Personnel in one geographical area of the Authority quickly gathered pace. I saw this as an opportunity to collect some rich data on the move towards integrated multi-disciplinary working. This was opportunistic, but I believed it to be an opportunity too good to miss.

The research focused on current practices and experiences of teamworking within Education and Social Services Children's Services. Within centrally employed Education Services there are a number of teams from different disciplines such as Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers and Teachers. Within Social Services, the main teams comprise of Fieldwork Social Workers, Family Support Workers and Disabled Children's Team Social Workers. More and more they are being asked to work together, often informally, in a 'team' and their experiences of doing so, will provide insights into the issues that may arise in the management and delivery of multi-disciplinary teamworking.

The investigation looked at three main areas:

1. What are the experiences of teamworking for people working in the various disciplines, and what made it successful or otherwise?
2. What examples of teamwork, (including multi-agency/professional/disciplinary teamwork), are available, (including outside Children's Services), and what factors made it successful or otherwise?
3. What are the views of interviewees on the systems, structures etc. that might help develop and support multi-disciplinary or multi-agency teamwork?

Data was also gathered from observation and participation in a change programme. The events observed were noted in a journal and, during the analysis, I tried to reflect and make sense of what was happening and how, what I was observing, might have an impact on the change process and how multi-disciplinary working might be facilitated in the future.

A positivist vision of research is that data is collected until the research is finished and then the writing up begins. In reality, given the difficulties of engaging participants, the writing up began before the interviews were finished, and continued afterwards. This in itself influenced, in a progressive focusing way, the emphasis of the questioning in later interviews. As the research developed it was clear that my questioning technique became less self-conscious and more focused on 'digging deeper'.

Reflection on the experience of carrying out the research added to the 'rich picture', (terminology from soft systems analysis), and helped make sense of the data and the whole experience.

Research in ones own organisation

My work role is Inclusion Manager for Special Educational Needs Support Services within a unitary Authority. As such, I manage some of the teams of Education Professionals (i.e. Educational Psychologists, Behaviour Support Teachers etc) that will be increasingly asked to work in a more joined-up way with other professional groups, not under my management. This raised a number of issues for the study, which included exposing the bias that I have a vested interest in the outcome of the research. This required balancing the dual managerial and researcher roles, (particularly relevant when interviewing staff one manages), and working with the politics of the research environment. Researcher reflexivity was crucial and I actively sought to surface and challenge assumptions and interpretations.

Overview of the report

Chapter 1 looks at the motivation and rationale behind undertaking the study. The notion of multi-disciplinary teamworking is introduced alongside some of the complexities encountered. The researcher, as part of the organisation being researched, is also placed in context.

Chapter 2 establishes the conceptual framework. Various aspects related to multi-disciplinary teamwork are examined and, in part, the complexity of the

research is exposed. It was considered important in the study to gain a broad overview of the literature and to place the study in context. The particular theoretical underpinnings that influenced the research study are explored. Reference is made to such concepts as leadership, organisational learning and policy and change, but with a 'golden thread' of transformational change and complexity theory running through it.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research study including the rationale for carrying out qualitative research in a stakeholder analysis paradigm. The chapter describes how research participants were selected, and outlines the research methods and reasons for why this particular approach was used. The research strategy had several stages, and the description of the methods includes details of the interviews, the preliminary analysis, participant observation and the final analysis and writing up. Reference is made to the use of my personal experience of the research process as an additional source of data.

Chapter 4 sets out the findings from the interviews. The chapter is organised into sections relating to the key themes that emerged from this stage of the research, presenting data from the interviews. In addition to presenting the findings, the chapter offers some analysis and interpretation, making links with theory.

The intention was to present the broad findings from the interviews, as described in Chapter 4, to participants at a group session. This, it was hoped, would provide a way to validate the findings, but also to further develop the

ideas. However, due to time constraints, the group session did not happen. This 'non-event' in itself is an interesting aspect of the research and is reflected upon in this chapter.

Chapter 5 is an account of the participant observation of a part of the change process. Inevitably, unless the research is over a considerable length of time, the whole of a change process cannot be observed. Never the less, observation of a part of the process can provide useful insights into the complexities associated with the transformation of systems. In addition, this chapter describes my personal experience of the research, giving an additional source of data.

Chapter 6 draws the research together by developing a model of multi-disciplinary teamwork in a period of change and uncertainty, arising from the findings of the research.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, draws conclusions about the learning and the implications for the organisation, for the researcher and for theory about transformational change. In addition, this chapter reviews the study and considers how far the original aims and objectives of the study have been met.

Chapter 2. The conceptual framework - a review of the literature

In approaching this study, consideration was given to the various conceptual frameworks that could be employed to help better understand what is happening in this area and facilitate the interpretation of the participants' views. Without doubt, the concept of multi-disciplinary working is multi-dimensional. This chapter describes some of the main conceptual frameworks that influenced the study. Reflecting my journey to explore a wide range of literature and conceptual frameworks, the chapter starts with an attempt to explore terminology. This is followed by an exploration of the research and literature on teamwork, in the context of multi-disciplinary operational delivery of services. Whilst teamwork is the primary conceptual framework for the study, any conceptual framework must take account of interpersonal and organisational issues such as leadership and management, policy and change, organisational learning, inter-group processes, culture as well as psychosocial and psychoanalytical dimensions. Theories and literature in these areas abound and no one paradigm is capable of offering an explanation of all the phenomenon presented. The approach must be pluralistic and eclectic, taking into account that the topic under research is complex and the intended outcome is an insight into how effective multi-disciplinary teamwork might be facilitated.

The phenomenon could be interpreted using various conceptual models, many of which are explored here. This exemplifies the complexity of research in this area. The concept of teamwork and the participant's experiences and views on teamwork provided the main conceptual framework for the study and helped to frame the questions for the interviews. It helped to make sense of what was

heard in the interviews, and in the 'parallel' part of the research study, participant observation. It provided a starting point for the analysis of data into categories and themes. The literature was revisited several times to help to make sense of the themes that had emerged and, indeed, new conceptual frameworks were sought to help explain phenomena that could not be explained easily by the literature already examined. Some models and ideas from the literature were shared with participants during interview, and discussed with them. Thus consideration of the theory on teamwork and complexity illuminated the inquiry. The research aimed to have a 'dialogue' between theory about teamwork and the practice experience of participants in the research.

As a matter of social policy, (e.g. the Green Paper: Every Child Matters (DfES 2003), and The Children Act (2004)), many Local Authorities are exploring the concept of Integrated Children's Services. There is no one, absolute, model of integrated services and, no doubt, the perception and meaning of integrated services will differ from organisation to organisation and from person to person. The concept and practicalities of integrated services affects a wide range of partner organisations and users of services. Given that this is a significant modernisation policy area, involves partnership and inter-agency working, requires significant understanding and skills in the management of organisational change and has significant implications for professional practice, the topic area is ideal for research.

Management changes within the public sector have been apparent for a number of years and are broadly described as 'new public management'. The central features of these changes can be summarised as lessening or removing

differences between public and the private sector and shifting the emphasis from process accountability towards a greater element of accountability in terms of results. This is clearly seen in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' (DfES 2003), and the Children Act (2004), in the focus on performance indicators relating to 'outcomes for children', rather than the activities of professionals.

In carrying out research there is often an 'implicit requirement' to define terms. However, in reviewing the literature and discussing the topic with interviewees, it became apparent that there is a plethora of terminology to describe collaborative approaches. Several terms tend to be used interchangeably i.e. multi-agency, multi-professional, multi-disciplinary, partnership, inter-agency working and joined-up working are often used to describe people and organisations working together, at various levels (Lloyd et al (2001)). This could be at an individual casework level or at the more strategic organisational level. Indeed, even at the casework level, one could argue that a strategic element, in terms of planning, is essential. As Mintzberg (2000) points out, there seems to be an interdependence between the terms 'strategic' and 'planning', which suggests that planning is strategic and strategy is planning! Indeed, such interdependence of terms is apparent in clearly defining multi-disciplinary working, Mintzberg seems to expose a problem in clearly defining the terms strategy, planning and strategic planning. Terms which are often used interchangeably...

"What is the relationship between planning and strategy? Is strategy making simply a process of planning, as the proponents of planning have so vigorously insisted? Or, at the

other extreme, is strategic planning another oxymoron, like progressive conservatism or jumbo shrimp (or civil engineer?). In other words should strategy always be planned, or sometimes be planned? Or should it relate to planning in some other way” (Pp 5).

Finding clear, well-defined terminology, around multi-disciplinary working, within this research, is problematic and may be worthy of a research study of it's own. The alternative would be, to be prescriptive about terms, with the inherent danger of dismissing much rich data. This issue in itself presented me with a dilemma, which I resolved by deciding to accept and include terminology that implicitly referred to, 'ways of working together', at 'frontline' level, whilst using the term multi-disciplinary as a generic term for the purposes of writing this dissertation. The term multi-disciplinary is also used in the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper (DfES 2003)...

“...integrating professionals through *multi-disciplinary* teams responsible for identifying children at risk, and working with the child and family to ensure services are tailored to their needs” (Pp 51).

The rationale behind the use of the term multi-disciplinary is that both within and between, agencies there are professionals who work in different disciplines. For instance within Social Work there are distinctions between Residential Social Work and Field Social Work. Similarly, within centrally employed Education Teams there is a distinction between Advisory Teachers,

Educational Welfare Officers and Educational Psychologists. Often the professionals working in these disciplines work independently. Multi-agency often refers to 'joined-up working', at an organisational level, e.g. Managers making strategic decisions. However, this is not exclusively the case and multi-agency working can refer to a casework approach. The focus of this research therefore is on frontline operational teamwork, which could be classed as multi-disciplinary, multi-professional or multi-agency.

“Teamwork is one of the most common prescriptions for coping with such [organisational transformation] change. Advocates of business re-design, total quality management, cycle-time reduction, product innovation and service improvement, all trumpet the virtues of cross-functional teams and collaborative work ventures” (Drew and Coulson-Thomas (1996 pp7).

Teamwork or 'working together', is often perceived to be, (as very little research is available), more efficient in terms of maximising professional expertise and it is often believed that it will lead to improved outcomes for service users. Regardless of the resultant structures, one key aspect of the Children Act (2004) is that personnel from many different agencies will need to work more closely with each other. Integration may, in the final analysis, fall short of structural or 'physical' integration such as co-location, but what seems clear is that the delivery of certain services will need to become more integrated. Operational staff and Managers will be expected to work as part of a team, even if they are not co-located. Team, for the purpose of this research is defined as...

“...a group of people working together to achieve common objectives and willing to forgo individual autonomy to the extent necessary to achieve those objectives” Nolan (1990 pp227).

This further suggests that team members will develop a common style of working that is constructive and co-operative and enables them readily and naturally to form temporary, at least, teams whenever they need to interact with each other.

The concept of team and teamworking is not straightforward. Atkinson et al (2002), in a report on multi-agency working, suggest that agencies come together for different reasons and engage at different levels under a number of different models of activity.

“ A continuum may be described from decision-making groups, where professionals from different agencies maintained their distinct role, to operational teams, where professionals worked in close proximity and therefore the merging of roles was more likely” (pp ii).

Ingram and Desombre (1999), suggest that improved teamwork can help the aims of improved quality outputs and the judicious use of resources. Furthermore, it is suggested that working in teams can benefit not only the organisation but also the individual, but only if teams work together i.e. there are inter-team communications and working with each other and those outside.

Atkinson et al (2001), suggests a variety of reasons for the development of multi-agency working including:

- The needs of the target group (e.g. Looked after Children, Disaffected Pupils. Pupils with Special Educational Needs, Children in Need or At Risk and Early Years).
- Responding to Government agendas or directives.
- The desire to provide a comprehensive and effective service where target groups overlapped.
- The influence of Local Authority characteristics, i.e. a history of a close relationship between agencies and the experiences, interests and commitment of staff.

Focusing on operational-team delivery Atkinson et al (2002), noted the scarcity of initiatives in this area and suggests that this may be due to difficulties in maintaining agency boundaries. They further suggest that there are a number of key challenges to multi-agency working, notably:

1. Fiscal resources and a perceived lack of funding.
2. Roles and responsibilities i.e. understanding the roles of others, conflicts over areas of responsibility and the need to move beyond existing roles.
3. Competing priorities between individual and agency priorities. This was the most cited by those engaged in operational-team delivery.
4. Non-fiscal resources i.e. time, staffing shortages and accommodation.
5. Communication, specifically a lack of communication between agencies.

6. Professional and agency cultures i.e. the values, customs and accomplishments that underpin both single agency and multi-agency practices.
7. Management often linked to conflict of interests within interagency management teams.

The work of Atkinson et al (2002), demonstrates that multi-agency (or multi-disciplinary), operational-team working has complex psycho-social-political dimensions. These findings are generally supported by Anning et al (2005), who suggest that multi-disciplinary working produced dilemmas which could be resolved by:

- Respecting specialist expertise and celebrating professional diversity.
- Maintaining good personal relationships with team members.
- Actively exploring diverse perspectives of team members regardless of status.
- Working towards a shared language in team activities and service delivery.

The Audit Commission (1998) examined a number of partnership models and inter-group processes and much of the literature in this area examines different types of partnership working. These highlight many of the strengths and weaknesses of partnership working such as conflict between partners, (which is seen as a strength when it produces creativity), poor communication, (hindering shared understanding), and poor information sharing. These aspects were particularly apparent at an operational (fieldwork) level. The Children Act (2004) makes provision for Children's Trust arrangements as well as a Director and Lead Elected Member for Children's Services in each Local Authority,

alongside Integrated Services. This could be viewed as an admission to the past failure of co-operation between organisations, and raises the possibility of a different type of arrangement, where agencies come together to form a new type of organisation within which there will be multi-disciplinary operational – teamworking.

Increased multi-disciplinary working, whether carried out on an individual case basis or through integrated organisational structures requires cultural, ('the way things are done around here'), and organisational change. As Iles and Sutherland (2001), point out...

“ ...the literature is dominated by descriptions of the various models and approaches, prescriptive advice and anecdotal accounts of organisational change. A major problem in this field has been the dominance of gurus who prescribe courses of action without any basis in evidence” (Pp13).

Indeed, there are arguably different types of change, all relevant to the changes that are possible in working in a multi-disciplinary way. Weick and Quinn (1999), suggest a distinction between episodic, (infrequent, discontinuous and intentional), and continuous, (ongoing, evolving and cumulative), change. Ackerman (1997), distinguishes between three types of change; (1) developmental, (focusing on the improvement of an aspect of an organisation), (2) transitional, (moving from one state to a new known desired state, and, (3) transformational, (the creation of an organisation that continuously learns, adapts and improves). This gives rise to the notion of a new organisation (either

transitional or transformational), formed by the 'merger' of two or more organisations. This may bring about the existence of a hybrid profession and professional, possibly eliminating, or limiting, the need for multi-disciplinary working, as that professional would be able to perform a multi-functional role (e.g. Social Worker-Teacher), with regard to a particular target group, (e.g. Looked After Children). This is implied in the DfES Children's Workforce Strategy (NAEIAC/AEP conference report (2005)).

As Applebaum et al (2000), point out, merging organisations is a complex and risky business often involving changing well-established cultures and addressing psychoanalytic needs.

“ The psychoanalytic view [...] may be applied to what employees feel, when the organisation they work for, undergoes a major change and decides to merge with another. Action must be taken to prevent employees from feeling the sense of helplessness that now pervades these situations. An employee who feels helpless is one who will not be productive, and, in a time of change, Managers need their employees to be optimally productive, in order to ensure a more successful merger” (Pp654).

Furthermore, Illes and Southerland (2001), point out that...

“Change in public sector organisations, and particularly in those populated by influential professional groups, is beset by complexity of a different order from that in more hierarchical

organisations. Success is likely to depend as much on the quality of implementation, on the sensitivity to different points of view and on the degree of support from influential organisation members, as on the soundness of the principles of the change approach adopted” (Pp18).

Maughan et al (1996), suggest that groups that were asked to co-operate in a Red-Blue exercise, adopted strategies based on the ‘least worst’ outcome. This was underpinned by a belief that others would themselves not adopt a strategy of co-operation. They suggest that the implications were that, in asking people or teams to co-operate, (or when undertaking any training), there is a need to address underlying issues relevant to each of the groups, i.e. suspicions that members of the other group will not co-operate. This has implications for working with a multi-disciplinary team or building a homogenous team of like-minded individuals with the range of skills to carry out the work.

Some may argue that the move towards increased multi-disciplinary working provides opportunities for ‘organisational learning’. This term encompasses the notion that, ‘deep learning’ (Fullan (2004)), is necessary for transformational change to take place. Senge (1990), describes a learning organisation as...

“...one where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to learn together” (Pp3-The Fifth Discipline).

It would seem implicit that if multi-disciplinary working is to be successful, then those currently working in different disciplines, should be encouraged to think and learn in such a way as to promote joined-up working rather than think in 'parallel' ways from the single discipline perspective. Durmaine (1994), suggests that to encourage a 'new culture' and 'new processes' regarding increased joined-up working, Managers have to set aside their old ways of thinking. They must then learn to be open with others, understand how their organisation really works, form a plan that everyone can agree on and then work together to achieve that vision. On that basis, a learning organisation can be seen to evolve as a result of the learning and behaviour of its people.

O'Keeffe and Harington (2001), suggest that while a considerable amount has been written on 'evolving a learning culture', much less attention has been given to the practicalities of how organisations can improve their learning systems. This demonstrates again the point that structural change does not always result in changed working practices at the 'frontline'.

While there must be a commitment to change at all levels, an obvious and important aspect of change, and the move towards more joined-up working, is that of leadership and management. Almost by definition, leadership and management in a multi-disciplinary/agency relationship is complex at all levels of the organisation. Atkinson et al (2002), point out issues of conflict of interest within inter-agency teams. My own experience of working on a multi-agency project to pool funding for vulnerable children and young people between Health, Education and Social Services, has highlighted this factor. Not only

were there issues such as different fiscal regulations between agencies, but also issues relating to values and cultures and hence, 'vested interests' in doing things in certain ways. Psychosocial issues were also raised by the experience, such as suspicion of motives, (Maughan et al (1996)), and trust. This also highlights differences linked to agency and role.

Similarly, Atkinson et al (2002), suggest that the absence of management challenge at a multi-agency practice [multi-disciplinary] level, also had the potential for conflict. They suggest that within multi-disciplinary teams, at a fieldwork level, members often deferred to the 'leader', (not necessarily the official leader), and that some disciplines were viewed as more 'senior' to others, and opinions tended to hold greater weight.

“ There was evidence that multi-agency initiatives had to be seen as strongly supported and promoted at the strategic management level in order to remain credible at the operational level, yet that this strategic drive had in itself to be very carefully managed in order to carry along all the various participants. This was considered a difficult task for a single agency, and the multi-agency dimension simply made it more so” (pp135).

The integration of Children's Services in Local Government has parallels in industry and commerce in terms of mergers and acquisitions. Appelbaum et al (2000), highlights factors associated with successful mergers. These include management and leadership approaches which emphasises:

- Good communication throughout the merger process.
- Encouraging increased productivity during the change process, which will aid sustainability and synergy.
- Paying attention to changing the corporate culture.
- Developing empathy with those who have to work at the frontline to implement changes.

Hackett (1996) suggests that there may be alternatives to mergers and highlights teamwork factors that contribute to success. These factors include:

- Real shared contributions between partners, which reflect each other's core competencies, and capabilities.
- The setting of clear, specific and feasible objectives for an alliance, including framework for decision making, role definition, co-ordination and conflict resolution, and;
- The maintenance of high levels of collaborative working and commitment by partners.

This view is reinforced by Atkinson et al (2002), with the addition of another significant factor, the 'personal qualities of the professionals involved, such as their commitment and drive' (pp160).

Working together in multi-disciplinary teams raises issues of contemporary professional practice and potentially calls into question the traditional role of the professional. As Gray and Jenkins, (in Baldock et al (2003)), point out...

“...Governments over the past couple of decades have increasingly imposed more non-professional criteria onto the decisions about who receives what care, when and how” (pp 234).

They further suggest that there has been a fundamental shift from the traditional public professions, as a service based on professional groups, (such as Social Workers, Educational Psychologists), associated with departments, (such as Social Services and Education), towards the replacement of public administration with resource management. This has resulted in increased line management and changing lines of accountability for professionals. This further has produced a more decentralised, result driven, form of management.

The move towards increased multi-disciplinary working is seen, in part, as a means of righting some of the wrongs in child protection cases such as Victoria Climbié. The actual benefits of increased joined-up working are varied and successes and failures can be attributed to a complex array of factors (Atkinson et al (2001)). However, the current pressure to change could be seen as a further attack on traditional professional autonomy (Farrell and Morris (2003)).

“...many of the public-sector organisational reforms can be interpreted as a strategy of asserting managerial control over powerful provider groups. To put it crudely, professionals would be ‘losers’ and ‘managers’ winners” (Pp137).

Whilst the main theoretical underpinning of this research focuses on teamwork, groups and group processes as well as partnerships and organisational learning it is without doubt, that the move towards integrated services is complex. In order to understand better what is happening in this area of multi-disciplinary working, there is a clear need to examine how complexity theory can help us understand this phenomenon.

Complexity theory is a relatively 'new science' that builds on chaos theory. Chaos theory has led to the understanding that complex systems are, by their very nature, incapable of being predicted. Complexity is defined as...

“...that zone beyond stability and predictability, on the one side, and chaos and unpredictability on the other” (Lewis (1994)).

Complexity theory is based on the premise that in a non-linear, dynamic world, everything exists only in relationship to everything else, and the interaction between agents in the system leads to complex, unpredictable outcomes. The interactions, or relationships, is the organising principle. Smith (2003) looks at the implications of complexity and chaos theories for organisations that learn. He suggests that, whilst complexity theory is all-embracing, it is important not to underestimate the impact of non-rational people factors such as emotion, trust, openness and spirituality and the management mindsets that strongly oppose the adoption of ideas derived from complexity theory.

The implications for teamwork include awareness that multi-disciplinary teams may be impossible to 'control', only open to 'influence'. The emphasis on teamwork, arising from complexity science, is an emphasis on relationships and on creating an environment that enables self-organisation. Bryans and Smith (2000), suggest...

“ In the knowledge economy items of knowledge do not sit in discrete boxes but connect to one another and hold implications for each other in ways that are difficult to pre-determine. The need to share ideas and work together from different disciplinary backgrounds becomes paramount. The model of knowledge becomes perhaps the 'rich landscape' rather than the list of separate and sequential points. [...] The landscape lends itself to 'dwelling in' rather than 'mastery'” (Pp229).

From these theoretical perspectives, it would seem that a move towards effective multi-disciplinary working, which is creative and flexible within a complex environment, requires a shift in the mindset of both Managers and field workers. Indeed, for truly transformational change to take place, there is seemingly a need to look at change, not in a linear form i.e. unfreeze-move-refreeze, but to look at it as a complex and unpredictable process. This requires careful monitoring and adjustments to ensure that the change does not tip over into chaos or move into stability.

For writers and researchers on complexity theory the place between stability and chaos is the place of learning and creativity – “of maximum potential for

growth” (Lewis 1994 p1). It is somewhere where new perspectives can be found and where ‘old thinking’ can be left behind. However, the ‘zone of complexity’ can also be a place of anxiety, confusion and discomfort. This leads into psychodynamic explanations of such phenomena where feelings and emotions affect individuals and relationships within and between groups. Individuals who are moved out of their ‘comfort zone’ may become anxious. There may be distrust of the motives behind any changes. Energy may be put into resisting change. Individuals may be overwhelmed and enter into fight or flight behaviours. Individuals, through an urge to ensure stability and avoid chaos, may avoid the zone of complexity.

Dryden (1995) suggests that anxiety is an unhealthy, irrational emotion brought about when a person perceives threat or danger. The individual can overestimate the negative features of the threat and underestimate their ability to cope with it. This in turn can create an even more negative threat in one’s mind. The individual tends to have more task-irrelevant thoughts. A reaction is to withdraw physically, or mentally, from the threat or to seek reassurance.

How the zone of complexity is managed seems to be crucial for effective teamwork. For example, Lewis (1994) argues that the role of the leaders is to keep the organisation in, ‘the complexity zone’, and if it is becoming too stable or too chaotic, “then the system must be pushed back to complexity” (p1). By implication, it is an essential competence for Leaders and Managers working with people in the process of change, to have the ability to effectively manage anxiety in order to utilise the creative impetuses towards learning. Within this, there is an implicit need for Managers to ‘hold’, or contain, individuals and

groups in the complexity zone, to ensure they feel 'safe' yet at the same time able to be creative and flexible, to take calculated risks. This has significant implications for Managers and Leaders at a time of transformational change. The skills and ability of the Manager to both encourage individuals and the group to work and learn within the zone of complexity and, at the same time, ensuring they are 'held' and feel safe in working in that place, is surely a highly developed skill. This is a skill that must also raise issues of uncertainty, complexity, anxiety and fear within the Manager or Leader.

The theory arising from complexity science, particularly the concept of 'holding' an organisation in a creative space 'on the edge of chaos', came to me late in the study. The observation of people going through change made me question what was happening and seek a 'deeper' explanation than that which was provided by theories on groups and group processes.

The conceptual frameworks outlined in this chapter informed the questions for the interviews and guided the analysis of the data. Having said that, the process of interviewing, reading and analysis, developed my thinking and no doubt influenced my approach to the research. As I looked at the process of change taking place around me, I became curious to explore phenomena further, and seek ways of explaining what was happening. Through my reading, I became more aware of the connection between theory, personal experiences and what I was observing. In particular, the notion of unpredictability and my own practice as a Leader and Manager became a significant part of my thoughts and no doubt influenced the way the study was approached, analysed and interpreted. The notions about allowing 'order' to emerge and about trying

to find a balance between confusion and safe predictability influenced the planning of the research process. The process involved in this research was not 'set' from the beginning. It was a dynamic process of research, of finding out, and making sense of what was happening.

The data presented in the following chapters has a close relationship with theory. I continue to refer to theory in this section and in doing so hope to build on the review of literature, in order to illuminate my findings.

Chapter 3. Methodology and methods

Methodology

Kilduff and Mehra (1997), suggest that...

“Instead of trying to erase all personal traces of the researcher from the work so as to provide the reader with an illusion of unmediated access to the subject, postmodernists seek to demystify the technology of mediation by explicitly detailing the involvement of the researcher” (Pp 464).

If this is the case, then it is important that the researcher position themselves in relation to the research at an early stage, through identifying biases and articulating the ideology of the study. The researcher's ideological position will impact on the research setting and how he sees and interacts with it. "There is no value-free or bias-free design" (Janesick 1994 p212). Qualitative research provided the broad framework for the study and the paradigm for the research was stakeholder analysis, which encompasses methods of data collection

through various means, such as interviews and observation of behaviour. In this section, I will describe the justification for this approach.

One aim of the study was to create learning that will be helpful in understanding the issues involved in creating, managing and developing multi-disciplinary teams. The motivation to carry out the study arose primarily from my experience of being involved in, and dissatisfaction with, a previous attempt at integrating teams within another Local Authority. In addition, there was a desire for personal learning about teamwork issues, after all, if I was to manage the process it would be helpful if I could find out something about what might help or hinder the process. Finally, I hoped that the study would generate learning to inform theory about teamwork within a new pedagogy of multi-disciplinary teams. The aspiration for the study was to achieve outcomes in each of these areas.

The research design takes constructionism as an epistemological stance. As Crotty (1998), points out...

“...all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Pp 42).

This approach is in contrast to an objectivist epistemology, which holds that meaningful reality exists, regardless of whether anyone is conscious of it, (e.g. a thing can exist even if no-one is aware of it's existence) and subjectivism,

which holds that meaning does **not** come from the interacting relationship between subject and object, but comes from some other source, such as dreams or religious beliefs.

The rationale for this approach is that the topic and context being researched is one where different team members are likely to have different experiences and perspectives, (constructions of reality), and therefore, associate different meanings to the concepts of teamwork or multi-disciplinary working. Indeed, the juxtaposition was made earlier in this thesis, in that the terms multi-professional, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary were often used interchangeably, demonstrating that the same (or similar meanings) can also be associated with potentially different concepts. This leads to the theoretical perspective of social constructionism. In looking at teamwork within Children's Services, there is also a need to look at the people who inhabit them, and their 'culture', which embodies symbols, rituals, rites, habits, traditions, customs etc. Such cultures come from a historical and social perspective, which enable people to view the world in a meaningful way.

The research question lends itself to an inductive explanation of the phenomenon, i.e. inductive explanations involve observations, which could lead to empirical generalisations and eventually, perhaps, into theory. In contrast deductive explanations tend to proceed from general theory to more specific hypotheses by observation of the phenomenon (See Figure 1 below). In addition the social constructionist paradigm suggests a qualitative methodological approach and specifically one that can be applied in organisational research.

Cassell and Symon (1994), sum up the relationship between inductive procedures and qualitative methodologies.

“Qualitative research is less likely to impose restrictive a priori classifications on the collection of data. As a result of the underlying epistemology, research is less driven by very specific hypotheses and categorical frameworks, and more concerned with emergent themes and ideographic descriptions” (Pp4).

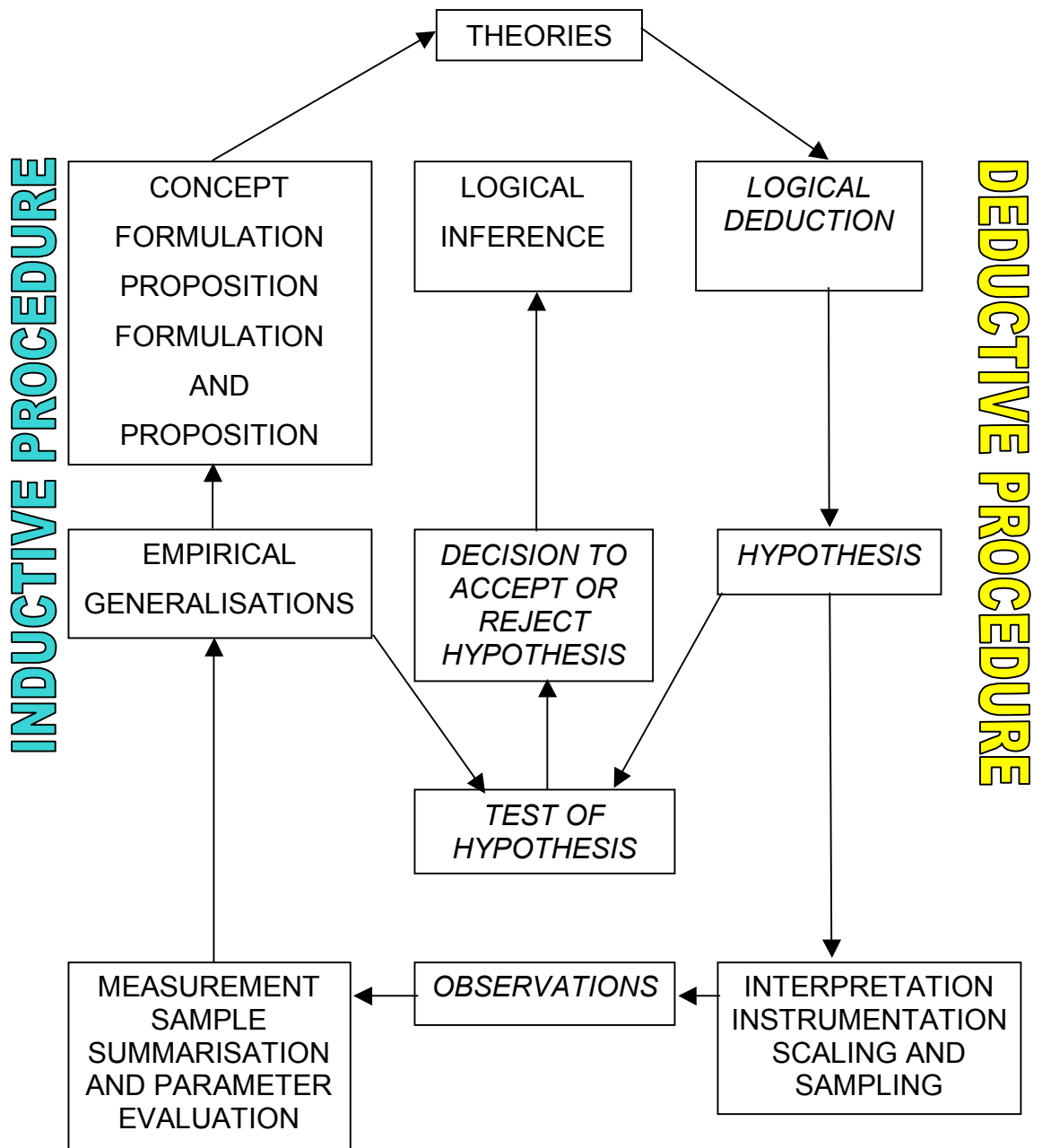


Figure 1. The Inductive/Deductive Process. Based on Wallace (1971).

The topic being researched invited me to investigate the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of teamwork. There were several 'traditional' qualitative methods of eliciting this data available e.g. the analysis of documentation, question asking and verbal protocol techniques. Having examined a number of different techniques, it was clear that no one technique was able to address all the requirements of the study. Stakeholder analysis was adopted as an overarching research approach based on the fact that all interviewees are, (or would be), stakeholders in any Integrated Children's Service. As Burgoyne (1994), states...

“ Stakeholder analysis proceeds by identifying some, many or all of these stakeholders, or interested parties, and collects data about their actions, perceptions, behaviours, experiences and thoughts in relation to the phenomenon. This can be done at a point in time or over time, and generates a multi-dimensional data matrix as material for analysis in a variety of inductive, deductive or comparative ways” (Pp187).

In many ways, this is an idealistic view of the research methodology. In reality, the number of stakeholders was extensive, if I included everyone who could have a stake holding, in new or developing ways of team working. Furthermore, those stakeholders identified as primary stakeholders, (i.e. judged by me as having the biggest stake holding), were not always willing or able to engage with the research. Colleagues from Social Services, at the time the original interviews were planned, were undergoing an external inspection and their Managers were unwilling to release them to take part. This slowed down the process of interviewing considerably. However, after the inspection Social

Workers were again approached and were keen and willing to take part in the interviews. The delay in gathering data resulted in a planned group session, where I would have presented my initial findings and checked my assessment with the participants as a group, not taking place. The delay resulted in a longer period of data gathering and, during that time, a decision was made to co-locate Education Teams, with an Occupational Therapist and a Speech Therapist, in one geographical area of the Authority. This gave me an opportunity to observe what was happening and provided a rich source of data. It also raised ethical and methodological issues, which are discussed fully on page 54.

The stakeholder approach can be seen as a general research approach that can accommodate qualitative and objective or highly inter-subjective agreed data. However, as Burgoyne (1994), points out...

“If stakeholder analysis has a disadvantage, it is perhaps that there is an array of judgmental choices to be made by the researcher at each stage of implementation - the issue, the stakeholders that matter, the data to collect, the interpretations to make” (Pp 97).

Methods

The main, and originally the only intended part, of the research was carried out through semi-structured interviews, followed by preliminary analysis. A secondary strand to the research was through participant observation. The data

was analysed as described above, interpreted and then written up in this report. I will discuss each of these aspects in turn.

Interviews with primary stakeholders took place over a period of two months, via the data collection technique, of semi-structured interviews. The data collected was tape recorded with the participants' permission, transcribed and analysed using content analysis based on the themes identified in the research questions, as well as searching for 'unexpected' themes. A copy of the transcript was provided to each participant with an invitation to let me know if there was anything erroneous in the transcript, or, if they wished to tell me anything else. None of the participants contacted me again. The process of transcription was described as 'torturous' by the typist, as some interviewees spoke quietly at times and it was difficult to ensure accuracy of transcription. At other times, the background noise distorted the recordings. Whilst every effort was made to ensure accurate transcription this could not be guaranteed 100%.

The research population included stakeholders in Education and Social Services Children's Services within one Local Unitary Authority. Members of these various disciplines were invited to take part in the research via their Line Manager. Specific groups included representatives from:

- Educational Psychology.
- Behaviour Support Teachers.
- Field Social Workers.
- Educational Welfare Officers.
- Resource Base Social Workers.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, as I wanted the degree of structure to the questions to be relatively low with a preponderance of open questions providing an invitation to the participants to shape the interview. It is well accepted that within the constructionist and qualitative paradigms, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee form part of the interview (King 1987). The interviewee is seen as a participant in the research even to the extent of shaping the interview. This approach facilitates 'progressive focusing', where the researcher can focus in greater depth on certain aspects emerging from the data.

An opportunity arose to observe a segment of a change process relating to the phenomenon under investigation, i.e. the move towards multi-disciplinary working. This was not originally planned for but, as it was happening anyway, seemed too good an opportunity to miss. Nason and Golding (1998), suggest that there are three advantages to observation. Firstly, it is less obtrusive, secondly, it can lead to greater depth of data collection and finally, they are suitable for examining changes taking place in the host culture or sub-culture (Pp 234).

The 'participant observation' method of research arose, as I was involved, in a management capacity, in facilitating the move to co-locate some Education Staff to the pilot area. This meant that I was able to observe behaviours of the 'actors' whilst being a participant in the 'action'. My role was essentially one of reassurance and problem solving to ensure these changes happened on schedule. Again, as researcher, this role exposes the bias and questions

objectivity. Never the less, this was the reality within which I was working, both as a Manager and a Researcher.

The observation 'period' was not a planned or set period. Observations were made as and when the opportunity arose. At times this would be a short 'passing' comment or moment. Other times would be more formal e.g. a formal meeting with personnel. This was the reality of the situation. In considering observational methods, one could argue that participant observation is unavoidable in all social research. Such research takes place in a 'social world' and therefore any data collected and subsequent analysis is open to influence and to the biases of the researcher, who is observing, and trying to make sense of the actions and interactions of others.

The data collection relied on finding opportunities when actions or discussions on the topic of multi-disciplinary working took place. In many ways this was ad hoc, however, it felt impossible to observe every interaction between Team Members, Managers, and so on. Where possible, contemporaneous notes were taken in a 'journal', so that a record of not only what was being said and done was noted, but also my 'out thinking'. By that, I mean the thoughts that came into my head about the process, multi-disciplinary working, and so on. This was done by drawing a line down the side of the page during any meetings and writing the 'content' on the left-hand side, and thoughts about the process (out thinking), on the right. This enabled me to relate the two sides of the page in later analysis. Where it was not possible to make notes immediately, I found the earliest opportunity to do so.

The data collected through interview was allocated to categories relating to the general area being investigated (see appendix A semi-structured interview schedule). These categories were:

- Concept of teamwork.
- Attitudes towards teamwork.
- Features of effective teamwork.
- Barriers to teamwork, and;
- Implications for developing teamwork.

The journal notes made as part of the observation were also categorised as above, but I started to observe 'something more' at the beginning of the observation period which, after a period of 'puzzlement' about what was going on, developed into another category of:

- Emotional aspects of change and teamwork and its consequences.

The interview data was then re-examined to see if there was evidence to support, or otherwise, what I was seeing during the observation. The examination revealed aspects of emotions, which will be detailed below, however, the depth or strength of feeling did not come through so strongly in the interviews as it did in the observation. It would seem that what might have been said in the interviews was, for some participants, less charged with emotion than what was observed in the change process.

Assessing validity.

In order to assess validity, the data gathered was 'triangulated' by reference to different sources of information i.e. stakeholders, observation and my own

experiences. Triangulation, as the term might suggest, was originally proposed as a means of converging on a single 'true' version of events, with the aim of helping to deepen and enrich understanding. Another characteristic of the study has been my reflexive approach. Reflexivity involves the continual monitoring of the researcher actions and interpretations, as well as making available to the audience a reflexive account of the process, and the researcher role within that process. Rather than providing an absolute basis for determining validity, the procedure of triangulation and reflexivity is intended to expose validity threats. The engagement of a critical friend was also an aid to reflexivity.

Broussine and Fox (2003), discuss the role of reflexivity (in relation to carrying out research with women), and suggest that reflexivity may help ground data in the participants' experiences and that...

“ Being open about the political properties of the study has given us the confidence to assert the validity of our inferences and analyses, but also their limitations” (pp 35).

The semi-structured interview approach was an attempt to give participants an opportunity to shape the issues and the meanings within the research. Part of the reason for this approach was the awareness of the time pressures on participants and myself. Inevitably, time was to be limited therefore, I felt that the time would be best focused on the content of the study, rather than on the design. I was also anxious about completing the research and balancing expediency with thoroughness.

At an early stage in the process of designing the research, I began to surface issues. How do people in teams perceive their role in multi-disciplinary teams? What factors will affect effective multi-disciplinary teamwork? To what extent will Managers, who make many of the decisions on changes, hear the voices of those at the frontline, and to what extent will they enable them to shape the future? How could I enable 'deeper' participation in the interviews and yet maintain a sense of rigour and control?

As the research progressed, and started to be analysed, various themes emerged. However, there were also some contradictions. How was I to manage this fact? In addition, other events were occurring simultaneously i.e. the moving towards a real situation of multi-disciplinary working. Should I ignore what was potentially a rich source of data? Was it ethical to gather this information? Was it possible to ignore the information, as I was involved in the change and couldn't close my eyes and ears?

At the beginning of the research, my research questions were quite firmly developed. I knew that I was interested in how the development of teamwork would have an impact on multi-disciplinary working, and wanted to explore how, as a Manager I could make it work at the frontline. However, I was not sure if there were phenomena that I didn't know about or couldn't speculate on, that would emerge from the study. The approach was, therefore, both inductive and deductive. As Holliday comments,

“...you cannot decide exactly what sort of data you are going to collect before you begin” (Holliday 2000 p74).

Having located the research study within a broad, stakeholder analysis, research paradigm, I will go on to discuss how participants were selected and describe the methods that were used.

Research participants

The changes beginning to take place in Children's Services could be argued are the most wide-ranging since the Second World War. The Government aims to 'join-up' all Children's Services, Education, Health and Social Services in order to provide a more coherent approach to meeting the needs of all children and especially those who are most vulnerable. However, given the time and resource constraints on the research, I decided to focus the research on the small group of practitioners, at the frontline i.e. those stakeholders who work directly with children and families. These practitioners were selected from Education Teams and Children's Social Services Teams. There were practical reasons for doing so. Firstly, centrally employed Education Teams were easy to access as the majority of them worked in the same building as me. Secondly, Social Services Teams were accessible through their Managers who, again, worked in the same building. Thirdly, both these teams were made up of people from different disciplines who, I considered, would have been likely to have had experiences of joined-up multi-disciplinary working, albeit informally.

This was a group of nine people, all of who agreed to participate in the study. They included two Education Welfare Officers, two Educational Psychologists, two Behaviour Support Teachers, two Fieldwork Social Workers and a Resource Base, Therapeutic Social Worker. Four of the participants were men, and five were women. Some of the participants had worked for the Local

Authority for several years, whereas one had worked for just over a year. No participant had worked for less than a year. The Educational Psychologists were also previously Teachers (as it is part of the requirement to be an Educational Psychologist). One of the Educational Welfare Officers was also a Teacher before taking her current position.

The research sample, although relatively small, was differentiated in terms of professional background, gender, and experience within the particular culture of the two main 'departments' of the Local Authority.

Interviews

The first phase of data collection took place through a series of semi-structured interviews with participants in the study. The interviews were between thirty minutes and one hour in length, and all the interviews took place within an eight-week period. As previously stated the interviews with Education Staff took place first. This was not intended, but pragmatic. The Social Services Staff were under inspection at the time of the original interviews and these were then arranged once the inspection was concluded. The interviews were tape-recorded, with the written permission of the participants. All participants were provided with a transcript of the tape and asked if they would like the tape back or whether they would agree to me wiping the tape once the transcription was complete.

Fontana and Frey (1994), have outlined the differences between structured and unstructured interviews. The former aims at capturing precise data of a 'codeable' nature in order to explain behaviour within pre-established

categories, whereas the latter is used in an attempt to understand complex human behaviour without imposing any prior categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry. The intention in the study was to gather information within the scope of the research, whilst giving plenty of latitude for participants to talk about the issues and themes that were important for them. The format used was, therefore, the middle ground of semi-structured interviewing.

Each interview began with an explanation of the research study and its aims. Ethical issues relating to confidentiality and participation, and issues about the role of the researcher were then discussed, (see below for discussion of these issues), followed by a description of the interview process. Each interview covered the same broad areas, but the structure and process, almost inevitably, shifted in each interview. My intention was to be as 'natural' as possible, asking broad questions based on the research questions and engaging the participant in conversation. In this way, I hoped that I would elicit more meaningful responses rather than superficial responses. Thus to some extent each interview was different in form, although the ground covered was similar. In practice, the taping of the interviews tended to make the initial questions seem 'contrived' however, as the interviews proceeded the existence of the tape recorder seemed to be forgotten by both the researcher and participant. This was particularly apparent in the initial interviews where I was not so familiar with the line of questioning, and no doubt was anxious to get it right. I attempted to manage the interviews so the participants could explore with me their concepts, experiences, ideas and ideals. Each interview was preceded with a short period of orientation and reassurances about confidentiality and a request to relax and

enjoy the conversation. This approach was an attempt to enable the participant to feel relaxed and secure.

An interview schedule is contained in Appendix 1.

During the interview, I asked supplementary questions in order to explore particular avenues of thought, not always related to the interview question. The rationale for doing so was to see if I could discover other meanings and experiences, which would add to the richness of data I was collecting. In this way, it was hoped to capture both 'espoused' theories of teamwork and joined-up working in multi-disciplinary teams and the practical experience of working in a joined-up way.

Themes emerged from the early interviews, which in turn, informed later interviews. For example, an emerging theme was the place of 'emotions' in the change process. As I became alert to this theme, partly from the participant observation aspect, I began to listen for it, and to ensure that I asked about emotional aspects in later interviews. I also made reference to some theory, for example, about teamwork, and enabled the interviewee to explore their experiences in light of this theory. Thus the interviews developed as the research study progressed.

At the end of each interview, participants were asked a 'catch all' question that enabled them to tell me anything that they felt they wanted me to know, but had not emerged during the interview. Some participants took advantage of this to either re-emphasise previous points or introduce a point they felt they needed to

say. Some participants did not take advantage of this question to raise any further points. The interviewees were also asked if the interview itself had made them think about things differently. Many of the interviewees stated that the interview itself had made them think about what they had been doing in terms of joined-up working, but had not recognised that was what was happening, and the factors that had made it a success or otherwise. In such circumstances the process of research began to have an impact on the participants thinking '....there was a draught...'

Following each interview, a professional audio-typist, employed specifically to do this work, transcribed the tape recording. The transcripts were coded so that only I knew the identity of the participant. The tapes were kept in a locked cabinet prior to and following transcription. The written notes were then analysed, by colour coding remarks, thoughts and experiences according to the original categories. Other themes were also looked for within the transcripts. It was important not to confine the analysis to the 'questions being asked' but to look for answers to 'questions not being asked'! One additional theme that stood out, and was not in the original list of areas to explore, was that of emotions in the process of change and teamwork.

A key principle in the process of analysing the data was the need to be alert to my own biases and assumptions. As stated previously, the analysis was my interpretation of others interpretations of what was happening. My own knowledge, experiences and history would inevitably influence my interpretation. Exposing these biases and assumptions in the analysis and interpretation grounded the research for me in my own reality. If I am using a

research design of social constructionism then it is only right to suggest that my interpretation of data in this study is constructed.

The original intention for this study was to carry out interviews with a range of people who may or may not have experiences of teamwork. Then to present them with a preliminary analysis of their comments and to analyse those comments further and draw some conclusions. However, due to the inspection of Social Services, the gathering of evidence through interviews was delayed. During the period a decision was made to co-locate Education Teams within a geographical part of the Local Authority alongside professionals from other Services. This action was intended to provide 'an opportunity' for multi-disciplinary working. Having been delayed in gathering data, I decided to take the opportunity to observe this particular change process. The hope was that it would provide me with rich data and help validate the information I was gathering from the interviews, especially as the planned group session was to be abandoned due to time constraints. This had the potential to impact on the validation of the analysis of the interviews. However, I considered that by building in participant observation it would aid the validation of the data. Furthermore, during the literature search, several other research studies were producing similar results from interviews. In extending the study by introducing participant observation, I was clear that I needed to be self-aware and self-critical in doing so, and ensure that I surfaced my own influence in this process and added to the validity through grounding theory.

Participant observation

The background to the participant observation is that an opportunity arose where the Local Authority and a cluster of schools agreed to 'pilot' a multi-disciplinary, locally based, team of Education Professionals. The cluster already had a good reputation for undertaking such initiatives. Schools in the area had pooled funds to employ a part-time Occupational Therapist and Speech Therapist as well as provide a full-time Teacher who acted as a cluster Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. The Head of Service asked for volunteers to work in a pilot team. I was involved in the initial planning for the pilot as a Manager of some of the teams involved. The driver behind the decision for the Local Education Authority was that this was a chance to start to develop co-located teams in line with the Children Act. It was a chance to learn lessons from the process. The driver for the schools was generally dissatisfaction with the services that they received from the Local Education Authority. These two different drivers are of significant political importance.

The move to create multi-disciplinary teams, mostly made up of Education Personnel, but with some Health and School Staff included, in one area of the LEA, presented me with a dilemma. Should I try to ignore what was happening, even though it was directly related to my research question, or should I take advantage of this opportunity? It seemed inevitable that I would be unable to pretend that something was happening and even more unlikely that it would not influence my thinking and interpretation of the data I was collecting. I therefore decided to gather data from this event via participant observation, on the basis that it was better to be open about this, than hide it away.

In the role of participant observer I was mindful of the themes I originally intended to explore i.e. the concept of teamwork, attitudes towards teamwork, features of effective teamwork, barriers to teamwork and implications for developing teamwork. In addition a new theme was emerging from the preliminary analysis of the initial interviews that of emotions. The process of exploring and developing themes and categories from the data gathered from the interviews and observation led back to further exploration of theory in these particular areas. This also involved going back through the interview tape transcripts, and the participant observer journal, to identify any further data that was relevant to these themes.

Analysis and writing-up

Following the interviews, and before all the interviews were complete and transcribed, a start was made on analysing the data. Generally the data was categorised according to the original research questions. In addition, the data collected via the observation journal was also analysed according to the original research questions, and other potential themes were also examined. It was clear that a theme of 'emotions' or 'psychosocial aspects' was emerging, not only from the interviews but also from the observations.

The study was written up, as data became available and modified as more data became available. Holliday (2002), comments that writing is itself part of the process of qualitative investigation. Richardson states that it is "a *method of inquiry*, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic" (Richardson 1994 p516 her emphasis). This process was part of the journey of making sense of

the data, and of achieving reflexivity about my role within the study, and thus generated further data.

Personal experience and the role of the researcher

As will be evident, the primary source of data for the research study was the interviews, supplemented by the participant observation. However, data arising from my own experience of carrying out the study also began to have relevance as it mirrored issues arising in the content of the study. The centrality of the researcher's own experience within a qualitative research paradigm, must be recognised as an influence, which is not only unavoidable, but is also a resource. It can provide a further data and provides a way of 'triangulating' the primary source of the data, alongside the use of theory.

Undoubtedly, my presence as the researcher had an impact on the study. One could argue that it is not possible for social researchers to be detached from what they are observing. My own values and biases influenced the construction of the research question, the methodology, the methods and the analysis of the data. My presence impacted on the setting, on the procedures and how these were managed, and how the data was made sense of. It was therefore important for me to be both reflective and reflexive in carrying out the study. This was achieved, I would hope, by trying to interpret my own interpretations of the phenomenon, and by becoming self-critical about ones own authority in interpreting the data.

This meant that I had to allow myself to be open to criticism about any assumptions or prejudices that I might have as both a researcher and author. At the beginning of this thesis, I exposed my motivation for undertaking this study. Such a motivation can also expose a 'narrowness of thought'; a potential desire to 'prove' that there is a right or a wrong way of doing things. While it is difficult to identify ones own assumptions and prejudices, it was important to seek self-awareness and "open all channels of perception" (Holliday 2002 p146). Assumptions and interpretations needed to be surfaced and checked. By keeping a research journal, I found this was an opportunity to reflect on and surface my own presence, as well as contributing to my learning about the phenomenon through capturing my experience of carrying out the study.

Reflexivity was particularly important, given that I was undertaking research within my own organisation. There is a need to balance the dual organisational and researcher roles; working with the politics of the research; and moving beyond some 'superficial' understanding of the organisation. This was particularly important in the participant observer role as this moved me into an 'actor' role where I had potential to influence outcomes either by intervening, by not to intervening, or by merely being indifferent or oblivious to the fact that in some way I had an influence.

My perception was that Education Colleagues were more willing to engage in the research than Social Care Colleagues. This seems to be due to the fact that most knew me personally. During the interviews the Education Staff appeared to be more at ease and 'sensing' where the interviews were leading than the Social Care Staff. This in part, may have been due to the 'language' I used in

asking the questions, in that I would be more familiar with the 'language' used by Education Staff than by Social Care Staff. For some participants, there may have been a desire to be helpful to me (as a 'higher level' Manager) and for others; it provided an opportunity to reflect with a colleague on some of their thoughts about 'joined-up' working. For some, it may have been an opportunity to influence the future shape of Children's Services. During the interviews, and following transcription, I was aware that what was being said might have been different if I had been an independent researcher. My prior knowledge of the organisation was helpful as I had some knowledge and understanding of the culture, language and meaning, but I was aware that the inherent danger was that this probably led to my being too accepting of what was said, rather than probing further. This meant trying to distance myself from assuming that I understood what was being said and drawing easy conclusions. It also meant that I needed to surface my own views about teamwork and the multi-disciplinary working, so that I was aware of my biases.

The politics of the research was also apparent. The research interviews took place at a time when the Children's Social Care Service was being inspected. This made it difficult to gain access to participants in Social Care. It was also a time when the impact of the Children Act (2004), was beginning to be felt in terms of co-location of Children's Services and speculation about who would become the Director of Children's Services in the Authority, i.e. would it be someone with an Education or Social Care background? This provided the potential for other agendas to be present in the research. The politics of the research carried some element of risk, for myself, for participants and for the research.

However, my perception and analysis was that political issues did not intrude upon the study in a way that would significantly impact on the findings. At the beginning of the interviews, I surfaced some of the ethical issues in the study. All participants appeared to be in favour of multi-disciplinary working and, appeared to speak freely and with apparent enthusiasm for the delivery of multi-disciplinary working. The fact that all appeared to be in favour of multi-disciplinary working may be a bias in the sample of people interviewed. The interviewees were 'self-selecting' in the sense that a general invitation went out to Team Leaders asking them to ask if people were interested in taking part in the interviews. It is quite possible that only those who felt positive about multi-disciplinary working volunteered, or only those that Team Leaders thought would be positive about the potential changes were asked! Some potential 'political' issues were present in the observation. However, my interpretation was that the participant's thoughts and behaviours were not intended as political but were outward manifestation of anxiety associated with change. This interpretation came about through reflexivity and a search for meaning behind certain behaviours. The use of a critical friend, with a background in psychology, helped with this reflection and helped me to settle on my interpretation of others behaviour.

Ethical considerations

My first obligation was to the participants, recognising their needs and potential anxieties, confusions and ownership of 'their' data. Throughout the study, I aimed to maintain the integrity of the research, whilst not damaging participants in any way. Issues relating to confidentiality were agreed with the participants at

the beginning of the interviews. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form. This was an agreement that they could withdraw at anytime without providing a reason. They would be provided with a transcript of the interview so that anything they were unhappy about could be removed (none did so). Every participant was asked what he or she would like to happen to the tape once it had been transcribed. The choice was that they could have the tape returned to them or it would be wiped clean. Each participant was assured that each transcript would be coded so that only I would know its origin and that any quotes would only be identified by the source code and anything that was likely to identify the participant would not be used in the write up of the study.

Chapter 4. Research findings from the interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the meaning and experience of multi-disciplinary teamwork within Children's Services at a point of, potentially, major change. The data that emerged from the interviews was analysed as described in Chapter 3, by allocating to various themes.

In this chapter the findings from the interviews for each of these themes will be discussed, including in relation to the theory underpinning the study.

A cautionary note.

What follows is a distillation of my interpretations of the respondents' interpretations of the thoughts and behaviours they observed both within themselves and within and between others. Such an approach does not do justice to the wealth of data provided by the participants in the study. However, such a distillation is necessary in order to provide a meaningful (perhaps mostly

to the author) and manageable account of the phenomenon. It is hoped that these interpretations will provide a hypothesis on which further 'research in practice' can be carried out, or at least... 'cause a draught'.

The concept of teamwork

A key theme in the Children Act (2004), is 'more joined-up working', implying increased levels of multi-disciplinary teamwork at the 'frontline'. It was therefore considered important to ascertain what the current perceptions and experiences of frontline operational staff are regarding teamwork. For the vast majority of the respondents' teamworking was described in terms **of sharing information and having a better understanding of the work of others....**

"...I think that working as a team means that we have to know what one another is doing... ..that we know what one another is doing..."

"...everyone having the same view of what they are trying to achieve..."

"Being aware of each others work..."

"...you know that there is some way of liasing and exchanging information and that's the way it's worked best for me..."

Seven of the nine interviewees mentioned that teamworking was related to a **common aim or goal.**

" ...it does feel like a football team, it is the idea of all doing something, all going in the same direction, working together to achieve the same goal."

“...working together for a common aim or a common purpose...you have a sort of unity of purpose...”

“...but you have a common goal in your team.”

Two respondents also mentioned that the common aim or goal was not always clear...

“...I’m not always sure what Managers want [] sometimes it seems as though it is not about what’s best for the kids, more about defending the budget.”

This suggests that there should be clarity and agreement about the common aim of multi-disciplinary working, which is agreed and signed up to by all concerned, including Managers.

One respondent mentioned that the common aim or purpose was focused on the needs of the child. This may be because this aim was implicit in the interview. Other respondents referred to teamwork as an opportunity for problem solving and, whilst generally advocating for multi-disciplinary teamwork, highlighted the difficulties inherent in the model, (which are explored below, in attitudes towards teamwork).

This concept of teamwork fits with Nolan’s notion that a team is, ‘a group of people working together to achieve common objectives’ (pp227). One respondent indicated that in achieving this common objective there was a need to ‘give up the expert role’ which could be viewed as forgoing ‘individual

autonomy to the extent necessary to achieve those objectives', as Nolan (1990) suggests.

For some respondents the practice of **teamwork was ephemeral**.

"...sometimes it is like people, some people, are involved in certain things and then you don't see them again for ages."

"...it depends on the age of the child or young person who is involved and what their problems are..."

There was the notion of forming a team, based on a particular issue or case, where individuals would come together for that particular purpose but could reform in a different configuration over a different issue or case. This was an interesting aspect and one I feel has merit in reality. Often casework around children will vary in the professional discipline involved. For instance a child who is experiencing behavioural difficulties in school may require the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer, Behaviour Support Teacher and/or Social Worker. On the other hand, a disabled child may require the involvement of a Social Worker, Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist and Paediatrician. In some cases, the team that may be 'assembled' will depend on the age of the child, as currently some single agency teams are organised to provide a service by age group.

Such teams will come together over a particular case, or issue within a case, and not meet as the same 'team' again. This fits with the concept of 'knotworking' as cited in Warmington et al (2004), in their review of literature around interagency collaboration.

“In interagency/co-configuration settings the emergent form of work is characterised by *knotworking*, which is an intensely collaborative activity, but relies upon constantly changing combinations of people coalescing to undertake tasks of relatively brief duration” (pp40).

Warmington et al. stress that ‘knots’ (so called as they resemble various strands that come together and intertwine) do not fit the conventional perceptions of ‘team’, which rests upon compact, stable centres of co-ordination and collaboration over an extended period of time. If knotworking is to be a feature of multi-disciplinary working, the implications are wide ranging from building relationships, management of quality, training and so on.

A number of respondents suggested that teamworking involved being **open to other members of the teams views and ideas** and, in general, that members of the team needed to have empathy with the views, and agency pressures of other team members.

“...trying to co-ordinate the varying thoughts of everybody and bring about some sort of solution to the situation”

“ ...it’s very much that you generate new ideas through hearing what other people are saying...”

“...working as a team means that you know obviously respect another’s point of view and ideas and give credence to it and thought to it and that...”

“Recognising and acknowledging the tensions, not hiding them away, but facing them.”

For one respondent this was taken a little further to a point where members of a team...

“...would take on jobs rather than just expecting X would do it, people would actually say, I can offer that and they'd all work together.”

Several respondents also mentioned that teamworking was **dependant on the individual** 'assigned' to the team....

“It depends on personalities...”

“...it's all about personalities...”

...and **the culture of their parent organisation**, for instance around information sharing...

“...some people won't share information because it is against the practice in their organisation.”

“...you are lucky or unlucky whether you work together or not, and that depends on who you get and which Service it is sometimes.”

There was a sense of professionals working in 'silos' and, if multi-disciplinary working was to be effective, then some 'perforations' would need to occur within those silos.

“...people are very set in their idea of what their role is and the actual people on the ground are very confused sometimes about what they can do and what they can't do...[]...unless you can do it on a personality basis...if you get to know people individually then people are quite flexible...”

This suggests that multi-disciplinary team working is subject to a significant number of factors that militate against success. As Atkinson et al (2002), suggest from their study there were conflicting views as to whether the roles [in multi-disciplinary working] were determined by the skills and expertise of the professionals involved, or whether this was secondary to the personal qualities of the individuals.

Attitudes towards teamwork.

The purpose of exploring attitudes towards teamwork was to determine whether respondents were in favour of multi-disciplinary working, indifferent or against. In general **the vast majority of respondents were in favour of** multi-disciplinary teamwork. There was a noticeable 'emotional' element to the majority of responses, suggesting that not only were people generally **in favour from an intellectual stance**, but also possibly also generally **willing to make an emotional commitment** to this style of working.

“...it feels very exciting when it is working well...”

“...it's a sort of buzz you get from it...”

“ I think it does make a difference.”

“Just within Education Services, it’s been brilliant working together.”

However, there was a measure of doubt about multi-disciplinary teamworking from some respondents.

“I think sometimes it works very well and sometimes it doesn’t. It depends on who you get from that Service really...I’m not sure whether that’s the kind of work [multi-disciplinary team work] I would want to do, but I can see the advantages in that...I don’t know whether I would particularly want to do that, but I think it is the way forward, I think it would work better.

It is evident from the responses of the majority of respondents that a **common way/style of working** between professionals was considered to be beneficial to teamworking.

[Joint-working] “...was a lot more successful as well, but I felt really informed about what was going on and I think that doesn’t happen very often here.”

“ Teamwork is great. I mean it can be very exciting and it would be nice if there was more of it.... I’m quite happy to work with a team of colleagues.”

There was also an aspect of teamworking being **dependent upon others ‘allowing’ the team to function** as such. It was evident that those respondents, who had experienced or thought about teamworking with schools, felt that schools expectations of them did not always encourage teamworking. There was an apparent conflict between wanting to be more involved in

multi-disciplinary work and being perceived, (or even enjoying being perceived), as an expert in a particular field. This view came predominantly from professionals in traditionally higher status disciplines such as Psychologists.

“I’m quite happy to work with the team with colleagues, but I don’t sufficiently think of the school and myself as part of that system as being a team, I’m still going in perhaps because I’m perceived as such and many times the school want to see me as the expert...it’s a nice feeling being thought of as the expert.”

The **tension between a single agency role of ‘expert’** and the giving up of some aspects of the single agency role to participate in a multi-disciplinary team is apparent. It may be that certain professional’s teamwork at different levels. This is exemplified in Atkinson et al (2002)...

“...children with special needs and complex problems need a range of professionals to help overcome them. Educational Psychology and Psychiatry ...seemed to rely much more on information sharing and liaison between agencies, rather than direct multi-agency work...” (pp 57).

Many of the respondents believed that successful multi-disciplinary working was **dependant on which individuals were part of the team**, again coming back to the personalities of those in the team.

“ Lots of people are approachable and that’s why it works so well. If you’re not approachable well then that’s a dead duck.”

“...you are lucky or unlucky whether you work together or not...”

In some instances issues of ‘trust’ and loyalty were raised in the responses of the interviewees, which suggested some cynicism about multi-disciplinary working in practice.

“...of course, one should be able to trust others in the team shouldn’t we?”

“...it depends if the others understand what I’m all about and we can trust each other...”

“...if they are still going to work as though they are part of [a single agency team] then it won’t work...”

Features of effective multi-disciplinary teamwork

For most of the respondents, their experiences of multi-disciplinary teamwork was limited to, ‘as and when’, i.e. it was not on a formal or structured basis. This tended to lead back to the theme that effective teamwork was often perceived to be dependant on the ‘who’ or personality one was working with. In exploring this further there were sub-themes evident which may provide an insight.

One such sub-theme was that of, ‘**willingness to share information.**’ For some agencies, notably Health, there seem to be significant restrictions on sharing information due to patient confidentiality. This appears at times to be ‘absolute’, meaning that no information is shared rather than a pragmatic view

that some selective information could be shared. This appears to be part of the 'regulatory framework' within Health.

"...they [Psychiatrists] won't even say if the family have not attended a session as they see this as a breach of confidentiality."

The sub-theme of information sharing was, to most respondents, an effective feature of teamwork.

"...sharing information about the family and the issues is really important [] otherwise why bother? You might as well carry on as you are."

In addition, the need to **work to a common goal** emerged again, as did issues of trust, loyalty and feeling comfortable with one another.

"..if you are going to be part of a good team then you need everyone to be supportive of each other...help each other sort things out..."

Being able **to be honest with each other and speak openly** about issues and tensions was also raised as a feature of effective teamwork.

...it's worked well when we've been able to talk openly and honestly about why we don't see things the same way [] it's helped me see where X is coming from and I can say "Oh! I see what you mean", and we can move on..."

As Anning et al (2005), suggests, in an analysis of the dominant collective beliefs/values of various professional teams, different professionals base their understanding of a phenomenon on different beliefs. For instance, those

working in Child Mental Health tend to base their views on family/systemic psychology, whereas those in Special Educational Needs tend to view things from a child development angle. Anning also points out...

“Particularly telling were their, [the various professional groups], attitudes towards the children and families using their Services, including attributions of blame for their need for treatment. [] Such differences in beliefs impacted on discussions about what interventions should be offered...”

For some respondents, working alongside people from other professions provided a measure of professional development for them and potentially provided a measure of creativity.

“ I know when I was working with, [another professional], he explained why he thought what he thought, and I thought, “Ah, I see”, and from that I decided to do what I did and it seemed to work...I would never have thought of doing that if he hadn’t said what he did.”

Barriers to effective multi-disciplinary teamwork

As might have been anticipated, but wasn’t, many of the perceived barriers to effective multi-disciplinary teamwork, expressed by the participants were the juxtaposition of the features of effective teamwork. For instance, an unwillingness or inability to share information with the team; poor communication; allowing tensions or issues to ‘fester’ rather than address them openly and honestly. In addition, several respondents mentioned that the ‘dominance’ of one particular professional group, or individual (and the

particular profession varied between participants), had the potential to undermine effective teamwork.

“...and of course, if the [professional group] keep thinking they are the top dogs then that undermines or undervalues what I’ve got to offer and I don’t think it would help...”

“ There is always the danger that one person will take the lead [] that’s ok if we want them to do it or if we respect them, but some people think it’s their right just because they’re a [professional group].”

The role of emotions in moving towards multi-disciplinary teamwork

This theme is covered more fully in the section on participant observation. However, from the interviews there were a number of comments that indicated that **emotions**, such as anxiety or fear, **had a part to play** in understanding the move towards multi-disciplinary teamwork. In reflecting on these comments I believed that such feelings were associated with ‘change’, i.e. moving from a known way of working to a relatively unknown way of working. Complexity theory might suggest that such changes, to be effective, moved people from stability to complexity. However, some comments made by the participants appeared to suggest that any move might be perceived as resulting in chaos.

“...if that happens [teams being co-located and self-managing] then it will be disastrous...”

“Unless we have clear management from someone who understands our work then I can’t see it working...it would be very worrying...I think it would be awful...”

Given that such comments are unlikely to be based on actual experiences, it was clear that there was something happening that was a 'fantasy' in peoples belief systems. Whilst this was not the predominant view of the participants, it appeared to be a significant, powerful, feature of the interviews. In probing, the participants suggested that the belief they held was a resistance to change and a searching for stability. This was in contradiction to their positively expressed views about multi-disciplinary teamwork.

"...well, it's all well and good but what's wrong with what we do now? I think working with [other professionals] is a good thing but I don't want to lose what I do now."

My interpretation was that some of the professionals were facing some anxieties about 'new ways of working'. There has been little research in this area to date and therefore there was an element of the unknown in suggesting different ways of doing things. Some expressed views that what was being suggested might undermine their own professional knowledge or status...

"...I don't see how everyone can know everything. I trained for X years to be a [professional] and I don't think anyone could do it without the training I've had..."

Another felt that the change might be 'too sudden and too much' and needed to be approached with caution so that....

"...we don't throw the baby out with the bath water. After all what we are doing now is not wrong..."

Chapter 5. Research findings from the participant observation

During the period that the interviews were taking place, a 'pilot' multi-disciplinary team mainly composed of Education Teams, was being proposed. This provided an opportunity to observe part of the change process. As a Manager of some of the teams involved I was party to some of the decision-making events and therefore was actively involved in the design and development of the project. I was not in a position to be completely responsible, but sufficiently so to have an effect. This could be seen as 'action research', however as the 'action' was not a deliberate outcome of any analysis, or proposal for research, I decided that data would be best collected via participant observation, as a more accurate description. A journal was kept and events recorded contemporaneously where possible. It must be recognised that within a busy environment and where a participant collects data, it is almost impossible to record verbatim and final records are often 'filtered' through the observer. This is likely to result in 'an interpreted' view of what took place. Never the less, such data was thought to provide possible insights into the phenomenon.

As mentioned previously, this also produced ethical dilemmas. This was an unplanned aspect of the research and as such a decision needed to be made as to whether to ignore the data that might be produced or to incorporate it into the research. Several ethical dilemmas arose. Firstly, should the participants be made aware of my interest in the project and the data being produced? It seemed to me that the pilot would proceed irrespective of my informing the participants and that by doing so would be of little value. After all, the data being produced would be produced anyway. As I believed that it would be

impossible to ignore the data, I decided to use what became available. Secondly, very mindful that the participants were not being informed of my observations, there was a clear need to ensure that their welfare was protected in the writing up of the research. Given the small numbers involved it would be easy to identify individuals through, say specific comments. This gave me a dilemma, in that writing up the participant observation research it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to refer to specific events, comments, actions etc, without running the risk of exposing the identity of the participant. Would this invalidate this aspect of the research? Would I be able to use this material at all? Reporting the research, yet leaving out potentially rich data may 'skew' the research. Having observed the phenomenon, could I ignore it in reaching conclusions using the interview data?

In view of these dilemmas, in reporting and writing about the participant observation, I have made 'generalisations' from the data observed without providing the reader with exemplars, or specific data. This is done to protect the identity of the participants. The reader is asked to accept that the observations, analysis and reflections have been carried out, and that the following comments reflect my interpretation of events.

The politics of this move towards multi-disciplinary working are an important factor. The schools in the locality where the pilot was to take place had, some twelve months previously, expressed concerns about the quality of service they were receiving from the Education Teams and had again approached the LEA to explore whether Services (or funding) could be 'delegated' to the cluster. Senior officers in the LEA decided that, in light of the Children Act and as a

precursor to Children's Trust arrangements, they should enter into a partnership with the schools. As this was a 'pilot', members of the teams were asked to volunteer to take part. This would enable the LEA, to see if locally based, multi-disciplinary teams, were a helpful way forward in delivering services to schools, children and families. The setting up of this partnership venture, whilst almost unanimously welcomed in theory, presented some interesting issues for the 'team in waiting', which I observed, noted and reflected upon.

A number of issues for participants were pragmatic such as premises, telephones, administrative support and so on. There were also issues that were clearly procedural. How would referrals happen? How would the team work together (otherwise what was the point of becoming a multi-disciplinary team)? How would the team get access to files? How would the team be managed? And so on. For a great number of these issues, solutions were found through meetings and discussion. However, and I feel significantly, there were some issues that, seemingly small, and able to be overcome in simple practical ways, became huge issues for some staff in the process of change. In my observation, many of the views and issues about multi-disciplinary working that emerged from the interviews were mirrored, 'on the ground'. For instance, it was clear that thoughts and issues exposed during the interviews were apparent in the initial building of the team. Issues such as effective communication and sharing of information; finding the common goal and developing a 'modus operandi' for working as a team were evident. The dynamics of the group and how they attempted to solve problems was a noticeable factor. However, there was one qualitatively significant difference

noticed in the observation that was not so apparent in the interviews. It seemed that some of those professionals working 'in the field' showed markedly greater resistance and anxiety about the idea 'than expected'; even though they would clearly state that they supported multi-disciplinary working in theory. On reflection this was suggesting that there was a dynamic at work that was, at least at first glance, not logical or predictable in the sense that what was being said was not always congruent with some members of the teams behaviour.

Reporting exactly what was said and happened exposes the individuals and it would not be ethically right to do so. However, my interpretation of certain events is that some of the reactions of the participants appeared to be extreme, particularly as Managers had assumed that they were 'volunteers'. These reactions appeared out of character and out of proportion to what was being asked of the team. A reflective look at what was happening suggested that these reactions might be due to a measure of anxiety, resulting in 'flight or fight' behaviours.

The incongruence was puzzling and my interpretation of these events suggested that something deeper was affecting the situation. In searching for a way of explaining what was happening, Dryden (1995), suggests that it is not always events that can make people anxious, but the way in which they perceive, interpret and evaluate those events.

"The REBT [Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy] general principle of emotional responsibility states that events contribute to the way we feel and act, but do not cause these

reactions which, as I have said, are largely determined by our views of events” (Pp11).

In looking at the reactions of some of the participants, in the context of being volunteers for a pilot project, it was clear that there was some resistance to change taking place. This was puzzling at first, as the reasons being given seemed ‘superficial’ and open to negotiation and, I believed, relatively easily solved. The strength of feeling not only threatened the project but also raised questions about what was taking place, as the reactions seemed to be irrational. REBT offered a possible explanation for this phenomenon. REBT distinguishes between ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ beliefs.

In working with this construct, I attempted to understand better what was behind these beliefs. In discussion with some of the pilot team it became clear that, whilst there was unanimous support for multi-disciplinary teamwork, there was suspicion about the motives behind the move at that particular time, which was expressing itself as anxiety. There was a belief; more strongly held by some than others, that the approach by the schools for this move to take place was ‘ominous’. Although, to my knowledge, no Manager had said so, some members of the team had inferred that the move was intended to place them under the control of the schools, to remove them from their professional colleagues and therefore undermine or remove their ‘professional autonomy’. As one of those involved in supporting the changes, I was clear that this was not the intention. However, I could also see how this inference was being made. Members of the team were not being involved at every stage, on the basis that it was too time consuming, costly and certain aspects needed

decisions from Managers. Therefore there were gaps in knowledge and this may have given rise to suspicion about motives. Senior Managers involved in discussions with the schools were able to suggest logical structures and processes in a 'top down' fashion. However, it appears that the role of leadership and management in such circumstances may be best directed at facilitating 'bottom up' change and 'holding' the group in the hope of allaying anxieties. This 'holding' of the group relates, I believe, to holding them in the zone of complexity and attempting to avoid the return to stability or moving into chaos. Some of the 'anxiety' behaviour e.g. fight behaviours may be interpreted as a 'ploy' to prevent change and therefore enable the situation to revert to stability. Some behaviours e.g. flight behaviours may be a reaction to 'feeling' or believing that the situation is in chaos or possibly a fear that the situation will move into chaos unless stopped.

The point being made is that whilst one might think that the move to multi-disciplinary teams (or perhaps the management of change in general) can be managed through logic and rational approaches, there are dynamics that may surface that are not rational, but are none the less powerful and real influences on the processes. Managers need to be aware of these dynamics and able to address them and 'hold' people so that they remain in the zone of complexity and not fight for stability or feel they are in, or moving towards, a state of chaos.

Personal reflections

My own experience of carrying out the research was an additional source of data. I will briefly describe some of my reflections in relation to the themes that

emerged from the interviews and the participant observation, as they provide a source of 'triangulation' to validate the findings.

My initial passion for the project was high, as I had experienced what I thought to be a poor change process in another Authority. I wanted to explore what workers at the 'the frontline' thought about working in multi-disciplinary teams, what facilitated working in that way and what the barriers were. As a Manager, I wanted to learn from the research experience about research process itself but also, and in particular, help me as a Manager, support the inevitable move to multi-disciplinary teamwork. In developing the research proposal, I became more aware of the pitfall of such research; it would be time consuming, labour intensive, (e.g. transcribing the tapes) and difficult to find research already undertaken on the subject. My enthusiasm waned even more when ethical approval, through the University Ethics Committee, took three attempts! The rejections seemed to be around typographical matters rather than substance. To add to this, the interviews did not go to plan as Social Care colleagues underwent inspection as I started the interviews. This extended the time scales and eventually led to the abandonment of the planned group session. The extended timescales brought the research into a period where organisational change was taking place, relating to the research topic, and this presented yet another dilemma. However, as the interviews began to be transcribed and data emerged, I began to reflect and make sense of my experiences. I experienced anxiety to the point I wanted to 'fight' the ethics committee for delaying the research and also considered abandoning the research, a 'flight' response at several points where my plans had been frustrated. My experience therefore, has some parallels with the experience of the participants in the pilot project.

I struggled considerably with the ethical dilemma of observing part of the change process. In the end I made a decision and I believe extracted rich data whilst maintaining the integrity of the research and protecting the participants.

As I searched for research related to the subject, more appeared! It seems that this is a topic that is now being well researched. Some of the findings here have been found in other studies and, whilst at one level it is gratifying that ones research seems to be, 'on the right track', I also found it frustrating that an area that I thought was relatively, 'virgin', at the start is now being extensively researched. Where I had hoped that there might be a draught it seemed a hurricane was brewing!

In the next chapter the findings from the research will be drawn together and interpreted to develop a model of the features, barriers and ways to support multi-disciplinary teamwork in a period of change.

Chapter 6. A model of the features, barriers and ways to support multi-disciplinary teamwork in a period of change and uncertainty

The focus of the study was the development of Integrated Children's Services and multi-disciplinary teamwork. The outcome of the research would hopefully inform me, as a Leader and Manager, about how best I might support such an initiative during a period of change.

At the outset there appeared to be little research on the subject and no specific theoretical basis for the move to multi-disciplinary teamworking. Several

theories were explored as the topic lent itself to being viewed from many dimensions. Such theories included teamwork, change, complexity and the theory behind rational emotive behavioural therapy. As the research progressed and the data was analysed other theories were consulted to see if they could provide an explanation of the phenomena being exposed. As the research progressed, more research relevant to the topic was discovered and provided, in some cases, confirmation of previous research as well as offering new perspectives for interpretation of the data. No doubt even more research is taking place at this moment and could further inform this research, however the line had to be drawn somewhere. The data generated from the interviews, the participant observation and from reflections on my own experience provided learning.

The findings from the study suggest that, for the professionals working 'in the field', several factors are perceived to be important in making teamwork effective. The participants had a clear concept of teamwork, which generally had common features that included:

- Knowing the roles of the individual professionals helps multi-disciplinary teamworking.
- Multi-disciplinary working is likely to work best if it focuses around a common aim or objective. This common aim should be explicit and agreed by all involved, including Managers. For some respondents this meant giving up some of their roles e.g. being an expert and opening themselves up to the thoughts and views of others in order to achieve the common aim.
- Surfacing tensions and being able to address those tensions may be part of effective working as a multi-disciplinary team.

- In some instances the success of multi-agency teamworking depends on the individual qualities of the person and the culture of their 'parent' agency.
- Perhaps one of the most interesting features is that teams are not necessarily static and unchanging. They can be ephemeral and dynamic, and take the form of knotworking (Walmington et al (2004). This has significant implications for the organisation of such teams as well as processes and training issues.

At the outset of the research it was felt that the attitudes to multi-disciplinary teamworking held by the participants would be a key measure of whether such a venture would be successful or not. The attitudes of the respondents were generally intellectually and emotionally in favour of multi-disciplinary teamwork. However, in building a multi-disciplinary team there seemed to be a need to address emotional issues such as trust and loyalty. As an organisation it was felt that there was a need to support the development of multi-disciplinary teamwork so that a common style of working can be developed and issues or tensions can be aired and addressed. It was also felt that there was a need to promote the 'new ways of working' in multi-disciplinary teams with 'users', as they would need to be aware of how services might be delivered differently in the future. In addition, participants considered that a balance needed to be struck between the 'giving up' of expert roles and a multi-disciplinary teamwork approach, which may include the delivery of a service on a more generic basis.

Most of the participants had experienced multi-disciplinary teamwork in one form or another and therefore were able to express an opinion on what they

believed to be the features of effective multi-disciplinary teamwork. This included:

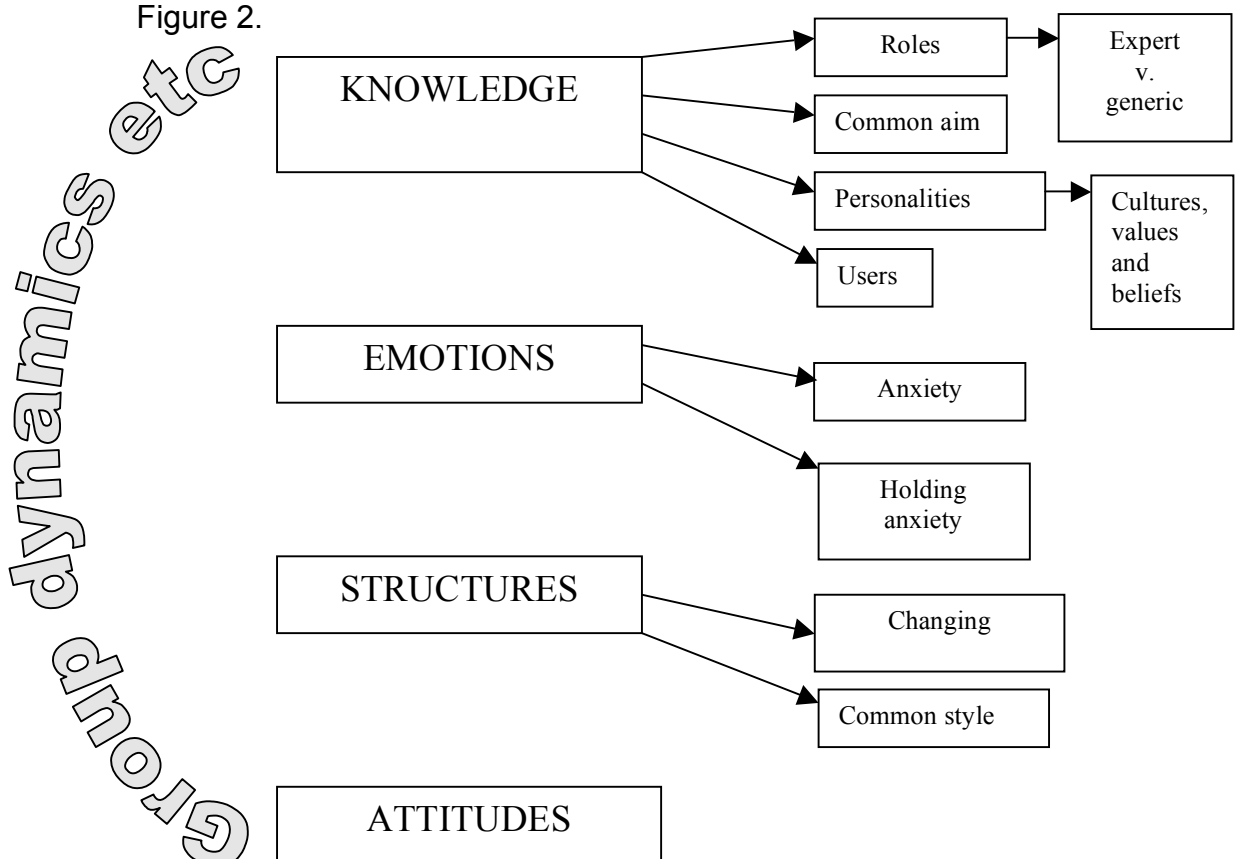
- The sharing of information between members of the team. This was seen as aiding working to a 'common goal'.
- Addressing issues and tensions openly. This helped team members understand the values and beliefs of other team members and provided a measure of creativity. From other research (Anning et al)), it is clear that the value base of the various disciplines is important to surface as this can lead to tensions, affect perceptions of other team members and influence interventions.

In looking at the barriers to effective multi-disciplinary teamwork, the juxtaposition of effective teamwork, poor group dynamics, particularly around leadership, are perceived to be important features of ineffectual teams. It was also evident that the move to multi-disciplinary teamwork is likely to raise some emotions within the participants that are not logical. These emotions need to be 'managed' so that they do not provide a source of resistance to the change. The role of emotions in moving towards effective teamwork became an increasing feature of the outcomes of the study and potentially a significant barrier to teamworking, if not understood and managed effectively. Understanding the management of change, and the potential for deeper, emotional disturbance to occur, is vital to supporting the move to multi-disciplinary teams. There is also a need to surface and address any suspicions that team members may have and to ensure that discussions are open and honest and involve all members of the team wherever possible, to ensure that they have as much access to

information as possible. There may be a role for Managers in ‘holding’ a team or individuals during the process of change. Figure 2 attempts to summarise the model and the interconnections between the various features.

This model has emerged from the data generated in the study, underpinned by the conceptual framework of the research discussed in Chapter 2, and in subsequent chapters. Many of the themes in the literature are present in the model. Some themes, generated from theory about transformational organisational change are also present, in particular the importance of working to a common goal.

Figure 2.



The ideas described in complexity theory are also themes running through the model. These stress the capacity of organisations and individuals to respond to change and disorder. There is an emphasis on moving an organisation, (and in a people centred organisation that generally means people), into the zone of complexity so that change and learning can take place. This has implications for recognising and managing the pressures to return to stability or fear of falling over into chaos. This has significant implications for Leaders and Managers who will be asked to lead their own organisation into complexity and to hold the anxiety in order to let the creativity and the changes to emerge.

In the next and final chapter, the implications of the model, for my personal learning, and theory will be discussed.

Chapter 7. Conclusions and implications

The aim of the study was to try to better understand the factors and features of multi-disciplinary teamwork, at a time of change so that organisational changes imminently taking place could be more effective. In addition, the intention was to create learning for myself as the researcher and, if possible, for theory about effective multi-disciplinary teamwork.

The data generated by the study came in the main, from the experience of 'Fieldwork' practitioners, who had experienced such work in usually informal ways. The data was primarily gathered in individual interviews. However, another source of data for the research was participant observation. This in itself presented dilemmas and learning about the research processes as much

as about the subject being researched. Importantly, my personal experience of undertaking and reflecting on the research provided further learning and a way of validating the data from participants.

The starting point for the research was to explore a possible conceptual framework from existing theory. The topic lent itself to interpretation from many angles such as, leadership and management, organisational change, group dynamics as well as complexity theory and psychodynamic theory. From the extensive array of theory, as I proceeded on my journey through the research, some theories became more intriguing than others. Again, this exposes the role of the researcher in the selection of frameworks and interpretation of data. Theory relating to complexity theory and rational emotive behavioural theory stood out as having particular interest and relevance.

On the surface, organisational change could be seen in a very 'pragmatic' way. One could draw up plans, charts etc, that would describe what needed to be done to make change happen. For instance, decide what the common goal is; find a common office; ensure regular team meetings and so on. However, complexity theory suggested that to create successful change the organisation, (people), should move into the zone of complexity and be 'held' there, avoiding the return to stability or the fear of chaos. As a Manager who wished to facilitate change this was important learning. Another significant learning point was the presence of perceived high anxiety in some members of the team. This was unexpected and again led to the view that there was some dynamic over and above the pragmatic that was at work in the change process. In searching for a

way of understanding and interpreting the phenomenon, theory behind rational emotive behavioural therapy, offered an explanation.

To a certain extent these two themes were also reflected in my experience of undertaking the research study.

The findings of the study suggested that whilst Managers and Leaders of change could construct opportunities for teams to, say, communicate through regular team meetings, they also needed to be aware of the 'hidden' yet potentially extremely powerful aspects of change. This dynamic is likely to be even more powerful as we move into new ways of working as the potential for threat and anxiety are heightened as people become suspicious of motives and their professional role is perceived to be under threat. Leaders need to play an active role in understanding and managing 'planned change' and 'emergent change'.

A significant implication of 'holding' people in complexity and managing anxiety is the personal skills and abilities of Leaders and Managers to recognise and undertake that 'holding'. Yet, in my opinion, this is a vital role if change is to be managed well, by this I mean with the least anxiety, so that it does not distract from the transformation that is taking place.

This is of course a simplified model of the transformation towards multi-disciplinary teamwork. Leaders and Managers need to take into account all the other interconnecting and interrelated factors that will undoubtedly affect the development and effectiveness of such work. The different theoretical,

cultural, and value bases, of the different professionals and their 'parent' organisations. The different regulations, roles and responsibilities, the different terms and conditions of employment, and so on. All these things will impact on the move towards more joined-up working. However, again in my opinion, the practicalities may be overcome eventually, but without 'holding' the anxiety, the job is likely to be a long and painful one.

My personal learning from the research is that I have exposed a dynamic that, whilst I was aware of, at a 'superficial' level, is likely to be a significant phenomenon in the forthcoming transformational change process. I have developed a 'theory in use' and a model that will guide my future practice as a Leader and Manager regarding the importance of the need to 'hold' anxiety. This had relevance to the research process itself.

I have learned a great deal about the role of the researcher in the research process and how I have influenced the outcomes of the research from the beginning to the end. Despite attempts to impose some rigour to the research, my initial experiences and motivation for undertaking the research, my preferences for certain methodology, the theories explored and my interpretations, have influenced it. Never the less the research project has enabled me to surface clear themes and provide me with a model to understand and make sense of my experience.

It is my contention that the aims of the research study were met to a large extent. The outcomes of the study, I hope, offer learning for the organisation, for myself, and makes a contribution to theory. The model presented, provides not

only a framework for practical change management, but also exposes the complexity and inter-relatedness of the various dynamics.

One of the strengths of the research, I believe, was that it was 'eclectic' in searching for theory to make sense of the topic. This in itself demonstrated the complexity of the topic. In addition, the process of the study involved me in reflection and enabled learning to take place during the study.

The limitations of the study included interviews being focussed on a small group of people, who may not have been representative of their disciplines. The time scale of the study was such that events moved on. Decisions had to be made that were not planned for. This, I believe reflects reality.

In looking at future possibilities for research, it seems that the area of psycho dynamics is one worth exploring further.

If nothing else was gained from the research...at least there was a draft....

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Annex 1-Semi-structured interview schedule

Introduction about the focus of the research and the process of the interview e.g. confidentiality, no coercion to take part etc. Check interviewee is happy to continue.

- What experiences do you have of teamwork or working in a team? (Either within one discipline or inter-disciplinary). What did it look like? How did it work? (Examples). **If none...**
- Are you aware of others who have been involved in teamwork? What did it look like? How did it work? Etc. (Examples).
- What benefits did it provide?
- What were the problems if any?
- Given that the move towards greater integration (forget co-location etc, for now) what would you consider to be the main ingredients for successful teamwork?
- Would you consider teamwork to be important to integrated service delivery and if so how would you advise any partnership to improve services through teamwork?
- Are there any other points regarding teamwork that you would like to tell me about?

Thank you for taking part.