

Learning in and for Interagency Working: Introduction to project findings

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Formative and summative findings

- Between each DWR workshops the videotapes and transcripts and interviews were analysed and tentative proposals were offered as mirror data. These were provisional, interim formative findings.
- This presentation focuses upon the summative findings.

Two of the Research Questions

- What are professionals learning when they do interagency work?
- What forms of interpersonal and organisational practice are associated with this learning?

Summary: what are professionals learning?

- To know how to know who (can work with them)
- To be pedagogic and developmental with other professionals
- To make their professional values explicit
- To focus on the whole child in the wider context
- To be clear about their own focus and expertise and recognising the expertise distributed in the system
- To be able to develop the strategies they need to take their work forward with other professionals

To know how to know who (can)

- Example:
 - Team learning how to identify the range of expertise in the team, especially when ‘education-based’ team incorporated social care staff
- Contradiction:
 - In ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘where to’ tool
- Resolution:
 - A better understanding of range and limits of expertise while learning about shared focus on children’s wellbeing

Pedagogic and developmental stance at work

- Example:
 - Taking responsibility for vertical communication with strategists
- Contradiction:
 - Organisational rules not responsive enough to new practices being generated in the MPT
- Resolution:
 - To try to create new tools for vertical communication e.g. inviting strategists to MPT meetings (but some reticence to act)

Work on understanding oneself and professional values

- Example:
 - Distinction between ‘having sympathy for’ other professionals and developing a ‘clear appreciation’ emerged during workshops
- Contradiction:
 - Tension between involvement in specific case and other competing professional activities
- Resolution:
 - Ensure ECM targets were the focus and allow professionals to contribute to cases in different ways (e.g. electronic planning tool)

Focus on the whole child in a wider context

- Example:
 - School's priorities were behaviour and attendance, hence talked of passing on 'bits of the (difficult) child' to other agencies
- Contradiction:
 - Between different professionals' conceptualisations of the objects of their activities in relation to the child, versus a appreciation of the whole child
- Resolution:
 - Recognising the need to work on conflicting accountability regimes and the social practices of the school

Creation and development of better tools

- Example:
 - Key social care staff unable to attend important meetings due to competing demands e.g. court appearances
- Contradiction:
 - Multi-voiced reading and interpretation of each case lacking
- Resolution:
 - Creation of the electronic case-planning document

Summary: what are the implications for interpersonal and organisational practices?

- Organising to be able to be responsive to other professionals and families
- Recognising the necessity of rule bending and risk taking for responsive work
- Developing processes for knowledge sharing
- Recognising different assessment and accountability regimes
- It is not enough to rely on heroic individuals being able to negotiate their own organisations, systemic responses are needed

Rule bending and risk taking

- Example:
 - Education Welfare Officer and Educational Psychologist having discussion about placement of child who was being bullied in school; a practice which was outside agreed referral processes
- Contradiction:
 - Between old rules and new division of labour (MPT)
- Resolution:
 - Justification of bending the old rules (expanding the moral-ideological object) and leading to questioning the existing system

Developing processes for knowledge sharing

- Example:
 - Review meeting was used to collect views of all professionals and child about progress and plans, but key professionals did not attend
- Contradiction:
 - All views should have been valued, but some were prioritised because they were able to be present at meetings (rule-tool-object contradiction)
- Resolution:
 - Methods to ensure parallel collaboration rather than only sequential collaboration needed to be developed e.g. the e-PEP

Recognising different assessment regimes and practices within different services and agencies

- Example:
 - School undertaking early assessment and then involving support professionals at moments of crisis, rather than a multi-agency assessment and preventative work from the start
- Contradiction:
 - Between current process tools/rules and the expanded object and division of labour
- Resolution:
 - Some recognition of the need for common assessment (whole child perspective) and preventative work – but work on historically embedded school practices still needed

Broader themes emerging from research

- Professional identity: practitioners can feel vulnerable outside their organisations - while practices call for an enhanced version of professionalism
- Specialist expertise can be seen as distributed across local systems
- 'Knotworking' - and relational agency as a response to vulnerability
- The need for vertical and horizontal learning across local systems
- Challenges of co-configuration and personalisation

Learning beyond DWR workshops

- The ideas generated by the practitioners in the workshops as they discussed their practices have been shared with other practitioners in a national workshops. Analyses of the workshops suggest that the concepts discussed today resonate beyond the case studies.
- Also, in follow-up sessions with professionals unfamiliar with CHAT terminology, it has been possible to introduce new terms and concepts from CHAT and relate them to professional learning and the systemic changes needed.