

**A local authority initiative to foster a collaborative
culture between organisations working with children
and young persons**

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ABSTRACT

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Title: A local authority initiative to foster a collaborative culture between organisations working with children and young persons

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This thesis is a case study of how senior managers in one local authority interpreted and enacted national policy to improve collaborative working in children's services through the Stockborough Challenge, a campaign of cultural change. The purpose is to research the Challenge to document what did and did not work, to make recommendations to improve collaboration in children's services.

The research was conducted during the author's time as an 'embedded' researcher within the Stockborough Challenge. It involved a three-stage process: exploratory, research, and replication and verification. The research methods used were interviews and participant observations, complemented by an action research project and a design experiment project to test and develop the findings in relation to the practice of collaborative working.

The research identifies two phases of the initiative, Challenge One and Two, which are presented as different approaches to improving collaboration in children's services. Challenge One began when senior managers in Stockborough strategically engaged with New Labour's collaborative re-organisation of children's services through the Every Child Matters agenda. Challenge One adopted a more open and exploratory approach, seeking to understand more about collaboration and then develop appropriate models, structures and capacities to facilitate it. The initiative was disrupted by a range of factors and re-orientated in line with government policy for leadership and cultural change as part of the development of the Children's Trust. Challenge Two identified targets as the principal barrier to collaboration and advised professionals to focus not on targets but on the 'real' needs of the children and young people with whom they worked. It was thought that 'real' or common and shared needs would enable professionals from different professions, organisations and sectors to collaborate.

A significant focus of this research is why collaboration came to be approached in terms of leadership and cultural change, instead of the initial idea of figuring out collaboration and helping professionals with the practical tasks of working collaboratively. I explain this with reference to New Labour's reforms of children's services and the influence of the discourses of leadership and collaboration.

The study concludes that an alternative approach to collaboration is required, one that contextualises collaboration and engages with the specificity of different forms of collaboration whilst also attending to the interrelationships with public sector reform. A 'purposive' definition of collaboration – collaboration as innovation in public service design and delivery – is presented along with recommendations for managers to improve collaborative working in children's services.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Research is a strange thing: not listening to someone as they talk is impolite; listening to someone intently and responding appropriately is polite; listening to someone intently and then spending three or more years talking to many of their colleagues to ‘fact’ check what they said and reading extensively to critically engage what they were saying seems to me a particular form of malice. So thanks to all those working at ‘Stockborough Children’s Services’ for taking time out from their earnest attempts to improve the lives of the children and young people they work with every day.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DCS	Director of Children's Services
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DPMG	Dalewood Pilot Management Group
ECM	Every Child Matters
NPM	New Public Management
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
Post-NPM	Post-New Public Management
PMSU	Prime Minister's Strategy Unit
PSRM	Public Sector Reform Model
SSAT	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust

PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE

CHAPTER 1: THE PARADOX OF COLLABORATION

There is within the literature on collaboration in the public sector an explicit or implicit paradox of collaboration. The paradox reads that collaboration makes such intuitive sense, the rationale so clear and convincing, and the aims so laudable that it appears contrary to logic when experiences of collaborative working prove to be so problematic, and yet they do (e.g., Miller and Ahmad 2000; Tett et al 2003; Sloper 2004; Stead et al 2004; Connelly et al 2008; Canavan et al 2009). Collaboration, like world peace, seems to be a good idea if only we could figure out how to do it.

In response to the more optimistic writings on the potential for collaborative working (e.g., Payne 1998), a series of counter claims have emerged that question the practicability of collaboration (Peters 1998; Hayward and Wright 2000; Mulgan 2005; O'Flynn 2009) or label it too difficult, time-consuming and problematic to be worth the effort (Hall 1999). Huxham and Vangen (2005), for example, who coined the term 'collaborative advantage' have since said of collaboration 'don't do it unless you have to' (p.13). A reality check in discussions of collaboration is arguably welcome but the fact that attempts are so hit-and-miss is a significant concern. The United Kingdom faces an uncertain future in a world with more people, fewer resources and increasing levels of inequality and social discord: getting better at collaborative working represents an urgent challenge.

Against this rather grandiose backdrop, in this thesis I describe an earnest attempt by senior managers in Stockborough Children's Services to institutionalise collaborative working to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families through an initiative called the 'Stockborough Challenge'. My purpose in this thesis is to research the Stockborough Challenge in order to document what did and did not work in order to make recommendations to improve future attempts to foster collaboration in children's services.

Children's services under New Labour presents an excellent site to investigate collaborative working. New Labour set out to achieve wide-ranging structural re-organisation of children's services and promoted complementary

cultural change driven by leaders at the local level. Senior managers in Stockborough began the Challenge in response to New Labour's drive to increase collaboration in children's services through the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. In the development of the initiative however we can observe the influence of policy on how the managers interpreted and enacted the Challenge in response to New Labour's directions. Specifically, following instructions in national policy, the managers re-focused the Challenge as a campaign of cultural change to improve collaborative working amongst those working with children and young people. Therefore this research describes how senior managers in one local authority sought to interpret national policy and develop an initiative to improve collaboration between professionals and organisations.

There has been a great deal of research on collaborative working and yet, as stated above, the paradox of collaboration remains. The paradox itself should not cause us too much concern. Collaboration is a social process in which individuals from different professions, organisations and sectors come together in a complex and open process, developing new relationships and working in novel ways to engage with complex social problems. Collaboration is, therefore, bound to be difficult. The focus here is on the way in which collaboration was represented in policy and enacted in practice, especially in terms of New Labour's emphasis on leadership in engaging with collaboration.

A central part of this thesis is my argument that to understand how to improve collaboration in public services it is of fundamental importance to attend to the interrelationships between attempts to do collaboration at the local level and the macro- and micro-contexts in which the policies and initiatives to improve collaboration and the practice of collaboration are situated. It is therefore imperative to attend to the historical and ideological context of reform in the English public sector.

There have been waves of public service reform in the UK since the initial bout of New Public Management (NPM) influenced reforms in the 1980's (Bovaird and Downe 2006; Pollitt 2007). On coming to power New Labour maintained particular NPM-informed reforms begun under the previous Conservative

administrations (e.g., the Education Reform Act 1988). However, New Labour also came to emphasise greater collaboration in public and children's services and sought to bring professionals and organisations together to collaborate to achieve holistic outcomes for children, as part of the ECM agenda.

The growing prominence of collaboration created the potential for a contradiction or set of tensions between the collaboration and the continuation of NPM measures, such as the target and market incentives of New Labour's performance-accountability regime. NPM reforms were associated with a range of factors that constrained collaboration (Harris 2003; Milbourne et al 2003). New Labour engaged with this contradiction through the Public Sector Reform Model (PSRM) that promoted leadership to reconcile the apparent tensions between collaboration in a competitive system (PMSU 2006).

It is not surprising that New Labour selected leadership as the means to address the issues between collaborative and competitive dynamics but this shift is significant because it was part of a global trend in public management. Leadership was an integral part of New Labour's policy in a range of different sectors and settings (O'Reilly and Reed 2010; Gunter 2012) and so it is logical that leadership would be employed. The UK was not however alone in applying leadership to the problem of collaboration. There was a global trend of national initiatives in NPM-adopter countries in which governments developed leadership and cultural change around common values in public services to remediate the tensions between NPM reforms and collaboration, which is labelled post-NPM (Christensen 2007; Christensen and Lægreid 2008, 2011). From this perspective we can infer that there is something important and not incidental in New Labour's leadership approach to collaboration, in terms of how public services were being re-organised, and how these developments may have created tensions in how collaboration was represented by policy and interpreted and enacted by senior managers at the local level.

RESEARCHING THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE

The Challenge was a complex initiative and so a significant task was determining which theories, concepts and tools would be appropriate. I did not begin from a particular theoretical standpoint nor did I wish for the research to be subsumed within one perspective, such as 'knotworking' (Engestrom et al. 1999), which may have obscured the idiosyncrasies of the case study and collaboration in context.

A central focus for the research were the interpretations and actions of the senior managers in Stockborough who responded to both national policy and what they understood to be the barriers to collaboration by developing the Challenge initiative. To frame the complex processes, flows and relationships between policy and the local level, managers and practitioners, I selected policy enactment as a key analytical concept (Ball et al 2012). Policy enactment illuminates the various ways in which policy is interpreted and translated by managers and practitioners in context. Within this frame I make use of Bacchi's (2009) 'what's the problem represented to be approach' that identifies the way in which policy makers represent problems through policies in guidance in particular ways that may obscure and bias the engagement with an issue such as collaborative working.

Policy enactment was complemented by the concepts of articulation and assemblage, which were used to identify a tension in New Labour's transformation of education and children's services. Articulation describes how political projects are constructed through political and discursive practices (Newman and Clarke 2009). Assemblage describes the institutionalisation of a series of diverse components (e.g., 'policies, personnel, places, practices, technologies, images, architectures of governance and resources') to achieve a political project (Newman and Clarke 2009). Together articulation and assemblage illuminated how collaborative working was constructed in policy and the tensions, absences and contradictions within New Labour's approach to collaboration and children's services in relation to the processes of assembling the components at the local level. It is by considering the relationship between the articulation and assemblage of collaboration I explore the consequences of New Labour's promotion of leadership as an effective approach to

improving collaborative working but also the alternative foci of policy and the implications for how the 'problem' (Bacchi 2009) of collaboration came to be represented.

This thesis is based on research I conducted whilst 'embedded' within, or nominally working for, the Stockborough Challenge. In 2008, the Centre for Equity in Education at the University of Manchester partnered Stockborough Council's Children's Services in a 'development and research' project that was part funded by an Economic and Social Research Council Case Studentship. The research reported here was conducted while I was both a PhD student at the University of Manchester and a researcher with the Stockborough Challenge. My role as an embedded researcher was to gather evidence to inform the development of the Stockborough Challenge.

Working for the Stockborough Challenge was hugely beneficial in exploring the relationships between policy, collaborative practice and context. I was afforded extensive access to professionals and organisations across Stockborough Children's Services. However, although the initiative secured my access to collaborative working, the agenda of my research was really defined when after a string of unfortunate circumstances the Challenge was abandoned.

My research started out like many studies on collaboration by researching or evaluating a particular project, initiative, organisation or pattern of collaborative working: my focus was the Challenge. When it was discontinued however rather than concentrate on the initiative and why it ceased I sought to treat the Stockborough Challenge as a lens on the representation and interpretation of collaborative working, considering the assumptions and processes in policy, the initiative and practice. The concepts of articulation and assemblage counselled maintaining a distinction between the socially constructed and temporarily fixed policy articulation and assemblages of the Children's Trust and the Stockborough Challenge on one hand and the organisational challenges facing professionals in the practice of collaborative working on the other.

The representation of the problem of collaboration in national and local policy contrasted with the barriers professionals faced when attempting to work

collaboratively became a central focus of this research. Working as an embedded researcher I was able to explore in depth how representations and understandings of leadership, cultural change and collaboration in policy and research influence how collaboration was interpreted and enacted at the local level, in terms of developing the conditions to facilitate collaboration between professionals and organisations at the local level. Then I was able to explore whether or not these were the problems that professionals faced while working collaboratively.

As an embedded researcher I was both a researcher and effectively an employee of Stockborough Council. I attended numerous meetings, arranged meetings, and turned up at the wrong place and the wrong time for meetings on more than one occasion. I struggled to find a professional's contact details or inspire his or her interest in something I wanted to promote. I developed a collaborative project, applying for and securing £107,490 funding. I established an online social network for professionals, and discovered how hard it is to get people to do new things and work in different ways. I witnessed professionals struggling to work together to help the children and young people they worked with.

At all times I kept asking myself whether the way in which policy and research understood and engaged with leadership and collaboration constrained, obscured, explained or facilitated what professionals at the front-line did or tried to do when seeking to collaborate?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to address one overall research question:

How can a local authority facilitate processes of collaboration?

In addition, four sub-questions served as more specific guides for my investigation:

1. How did the Stockborough Challenge seek to improve collaboration?
2. How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge's approach to improving collaboration?

3. How did national-to-local contextual factors influence the Stockborough Challenge?
4. What lessons can be learned from the Stockborough Challenge to inform initiatives to improve collaborative working?

THE ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is organised in three parts.

PART ONE: SETTING THE SCENE

Part one includes the introduction (*The Paradox of Collaboration*), the policy context (*Leadership and the Contradiction*) and the literature review (*Specifying and Contextualising the Concepts*), all of which provide the context and agenda for the research.

Leadership and the Contradiction depicts how policies in children's services engendered a contradiction or series of tensions between competitive dynamics, such as target and market imperatives, and the conditions perceived to be required for collaboration. The chapter then explains how New Labour maintained and sought to reconcile the contradiction across the public sector and specifically in children's services through leadership and cultural change, leading in Stockborough to the Challenge.

Specifying and Contextualising the Concepts explores the research on leadership for collaboration in children's services. Then I outline a four-point critique of the literature on leadership for collaboration relating to the lack of specificity and context in conceptualisations of collaboration, a lack of engagement with the ideological context of leadership, the need to unpack and attend to different meanings of 'culture', and the use of self-report methods in research. Finally, I position this research in relation to the policy context and the research literature.

PART TWO: RESEARCHING THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE

Part two describes the methodology (*Researching the Challenge*) and presents the findings in three chapters (*The Stockborough Challenge – A Call to Action, Answering the Call* and *Collaboration in Context*).

Researching the Challenge explains the methodological choices I made to engage with the research questions, which were approached in three phases – exploration, research, and replication and verification – that adopted a progressively active and engaged role to further explore collaboration in practice.

A Call to Action describes how the senior managers developed the Stockborough Challenge. The chapter identifies two phases of the initiative, Challenge One and Challenge Two, where it became a campaign of cultural change. The development of the initiative was constrained by a lack of specificity as to what was collaboration and so what processes and strategies the Challenge would develop to support collaboration.

Answering the Call assesses the interpretation and engagement with the Stockborough Challenge by professionals and managers in the Stockborough Children's Trust.

Collaboration in Context focuses on the practice of collaboration in the context of Dalewood High School and the relationships formed with partner organisations as part of the Stockborough Challenge, with the aim of comparing how the Challenge framed collaboration and how professionals engaged in collaborative working.

This part distinguishes between two phases of the initiative. Challenge One presented a vision and aimed to develop a model of collaborative working that might include new structures and capacities. Challenge Two, influenced by national policy for leadership and cultural change, identified targets as the primary barrier to collaboration and the initiative proposed a cultural response in which professionals partly ignore targets and work collaboratively to meet the 'real' need of the children they work for. Understanding the reasons for and implications of this shift is the focus of the next part.

PART THREE: CONTEXTUALISING AND INTERPRETING THE CHALLENGE

The third part contains two discussion chapters (*The Challenge in Context* and *Interpreting the Contradictions*), my recommendations (*Assembling Collaboration*), and conclusions (*Conclusion*).

The Contradiction and the Challenge explores the differences between Challenge One and Two, specifically the shift from One's focus on the practical tasks of organising for collaboration to Two's focus on targets and the motivation of professionals to collaborate. This is achieved by locating the initiative within the national-to-local context. I draw attention to how the Challenge came to be influenced by the senior managers alternative needs of securing the commitment of schools to the collaborative agenda and to reconcile the contradiction between competitive and collaborative dynamics in children's services, in line with the Public Sector Reform Model.

Following on from this, *Interpreting the Contradictions* adopts a more interpretive approach to understand the consequences of the identification of leadership as the approach to improve collaboration. I argue that the leadership approach engendered a particular representation of collaboration and that methods for improving collaboration reflected leadership and managerialist biases, emphasises, and assumptions. The consequence was that the leadership approach emphasised a professional's motivation to collaborate, which in addition to the influence of the discourse of collaboration, led to an under-engagement with collaboration and the practical tasks professional faced when attempting to work collaboratively.

Assembling Collaboration presents two broad recommendations for improving collaboration in children's services, by specifying and contextualising collaboration while also being realistic and focused about it. In this chapter I outline a purposive definition of collaboration and identify certain structures that would facilitate collaboration.

Finally, *Conclusions* presents my response to each of the research questions that informed this research, defines my contribution to knowledge, describes certain limitations of this research, and how the quality of the findings could be improved through further research.

This chapter has introduced and outlined the rationale for the research. The next chapter describes the policy context surrounding the emergence and development of the Stockborough Challenge.

CHAPTER 2: LEADERSHIP AND THE CONTRADICTION

A central part of this research is that to understand the Stockborough Challenge it is crucial to situate the initiative in the discursive and ideological context of New Labour's transformation of the public sector. Thus this chapter examines some of the key factors that informed the enactment of the Challenge: The shift from New Public Management (NPM) to post-NPM; which manifested in England as the Public Sector Reform Model; and the mediation of the forces of divergence in relation to the structures and policies that aimed to increase collaboration; through an emphasis on leadership and cultural change; and finally the contradiction in the assemblages of children's services between schools and children's services, and competition and collaboration.

POST-NPM – AN INTERNATIONAL TREND

The reform of the English public sector is a key focus of my argument, which prompts a discussion about the occurrence and transitions from New Public Management (NPM).

From the 1980's onwards the United Kingdom public sector underwent a period of extensive reform informed by a New Right critique of the existing welfare settlement and organisation, within the grammar of NPM (Clarke and Newman 1997; Clarke et al 2000; Exworthy and Halford 2002; Pollitt 2007). It is important to recognise that managerialism and NPM was diffuse, diverse and contextually defined with a series of different strands and emphases (Ferlie et al 1996; Clarke et al 2000; Thrupp and Wilmott 2003). Common features of NPM were, however, focusing on outputs not inputs, understanding organisations as 'chains of low-trust relationships', entrenching the service purchaser-provider divide, disaggregating larger organisations, and decentralising financing and authority to managers (Clarke et al 2000).

Dunleavy et al (2005) differentiate between higher-order and second-tier components of NPM reforms. The higher-order concerns are the disaggregation of the public sector, the introduction of competition and market relationships, and the incentivisation of public sector employers. These themes were complemented by a

second-tier of interventions, policy technologies and tools drawn from economics and business that offered practical solutions for policy makers and managers in reforming and operating in the public sector.

The focus here is not so much on NPM itself but rather its apparent failings and the shift from or revision of NPM. NPM was found to fail to meet the ostensible benefits of, for example, increasing efficiency (Christensen and Laegreid 2011) and shrinking or rolling back the state (Clarke 2000 et al). A further limitation, and one germane to this study, was that NPM-influenced reforms were found to fragment the public sector (Clarke 2004; Talbot and Johnson 2007) and were unsuitable for responding to complex social problems (Dunleavy et al 2005) or 'wicked issues' (Clarke and Stewart 1997). The fragmentation of government and service delivery was particularly problematic as collaboration between government agencies and service providers was increasingly prioritised in public policy.

The view emerged, and gained popularity, that NPM was no longer the preeminent paradigm for public management with some going so far as to certify NPM 'dead' (Dunleavy et al 2005). Numerous alternatives to NPM have emerged such as digital era governance (Dunleavy et al 2005), public value (Moore 1995), public value management (Stoker 2006), and public value pragmatism (Alford and Hughes 2007). Alford and Hughes (2007: 1) identify an interesting feature of this trend as 'the cooperation theme' with 'network governance, collaborative government, public-private partnerships, and... joined-up government'. Thus management approaches have been reformulated around the priority to collaborate in public services and resolving the associated challenges.

Rather than engage with the emerging forms of public management approaches I wish to focus on the observed international trend of post-NPM, characterised by an increased emphasis on leadership and cultural change in public management (Christensen and Lægheid 2008, 2011). Christensen (2007) identified the initiation of cultural change processes in Australia and New Zealand public sectors, which were NPM-adopter countries. He found that governments were promoting cultural change through the fostering of a common culture based on a strong and shared values and normative framework to unite departments and

agencies around a single agenda, in response to the fragmentation of previous NPM reforms.

The extensity and intensity of the wave of post-NPM has been critiqued (e.g., Lodge and Gill 2011). Furthermore, I do not propose that post-NPM should replace NPM as a theory of public management. My interest is simply in the trend of national policy makers attempting to promote culture and common values as a response to the fragmentation associated with previous and on-going NPM reforms.

Post-NPM is an international trend but one that is best viewed as idiosyncratic developments in particular formations in the public sector of individual countries. The next section explores the emergence of post-NPM type developments in the English public sector.

NEW LABOUR AND COLLABORATION

On coming to power in 1997, New Labour faced an increasingly prosperous but more unequal society. In response, New Labour made ambitious claims that, for example, child poverty would be abolished in 20 years (Blair 1999) and that Britain would be the best place in the world for children to grow up (DCSF 2007). The government would achieve these aims by, in part, extra investment in public services but this would be contingent upon improved results and modernisation, which meant working in new ways (Steer and Coffield 2007). Part of the process of modernisation and new ways of working was the increased emphasis on collaboration.

New Labour engaged with various complex social issues through a range of broadly collaborative approaches, including joined-up government, partnership, networks and collaboration (Clarence and Painter 1998; Kirkpatrick 1999; Huxham 2000; Ling 2000; Balloch and Taylor 2001; Powell and Exworthy 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Complex social problems are understood here to be social phenomena such as poverty, ill health and inequality. There is nothing new in governments seeking to coordinate or join-up to engage with complex social issues (Peters 1998; Hayward and Wright 2000; 6 et al 2004; Mulgan 2005) and, indeed, the previous Conservative administrations had begun to employ partnership approaches

(6 et al 2004). However in collaborative approaches, understood in its broadest sense, New Labour found a self-defining logic for governing and governance.

Collaboration and partnership was a significant part of New Labour yet there were issues with how the terms were used, which I describe as indicative of a discourse of collaboration where there was an extensive rationale for collaboration but little specificity as to what it was.

New Labour could lay claim to substantial evidence supporting collaboration in government and public services, which was complemented by claims of policy and administration benefits of joined-up government and partnership (e.g., SEU 1998). Pollitt (2003) outlines the four goals of joined-up government: increase coherence to improve policies, reduce waste, share good practice to foster synergy, and develop 'seamless services' around the citizens using them. These four goals were highly salient to Labour's modernising project (Pollitt 2003) but they also demonstrate some of the different rationales and purposes of collaboration and suggest different organisational responses.

Despite the apparently persuasive case for collaboration it is important to attend to the way in which New Labour articulated collaboration, and the political, ideological or rhetorical functions this served. Partnerships as a mode of welfare delivery offered a 'Third Way' between traditional state or market dichotomies (Clarke and Glendinning 2002). It was in this sense that partnerships epitomised New Labour's ostensible post-ideological approach to delivering services (Bogdanor 2005) and image as pragmatic modernizers (Pollitt 2003).

New Labour's case for collaboration was arguably more theoretical than empirical in that there was limited evidence of how specific organisational outputs would result in particular improvements in outcomes. Indeed, claims were frequently asserted without sufficient evidence (Clarke and Glendinning 2002) or were 'taken for granted' (Davies 2009: 84).

Clarke and Glendinning (2002) note that Labour's use of 'partnership' and 'collaboration' were often vague but this was beneficial as it made it hard for anyone to disagree with or challenge them. There is therefore the sense that the 'slippery'

(Audit Commission 1998: 16) nature of terms such as partnership partly constituted the appeal to policy makers and politicians.

In policy documents, approaches such as joined-up government, collaboration and partnership were often vague and muddled. For example, Ling (2002) notes that the term 'joined-up government' related to a range of different functions and activities in policy and government. Civil servants reportedly named disparate activities as 'joined-up government' to fit with the trend. However, as Exworthy and Powell (2004) observe, there are different and complex scales (problem, policy and politics) and dimensions (vertical, horizontal and local-local) along which government can be joined-up.

Authors have found that in policy documents collaborative or joined-up approaches were expressed as 'policy condensates' where the practice and facilitative conditions of joining-up took second place to the repetition of collaborative approaches in different policy contexts to cement the general impression of the wide-ranging utility and applicability of collaboration (Clarke et al, 2006; Clarke et al 2008; Ball 2008).

Thus, collaboration provided a resource for New Labour in allowing them to present joining-up policy and delivery as a cost-effective means of engaging with a broad range of social problems. There were however substantive issues with the discourse of collaboration as it was formulated into policy, in the form of a lack of specificity about what collaboration was and the requisite organisational forms.

The increased emphasis on collaboration in policy was potentially problematic due to the previous and continued reforms of the English public sector, to which we now turn.

PUBLIC SECTOR WIDE – THE PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM MODEL

New Labour's modernisation project led to successive waves of reforms in public services from which potentially contradictory dynamics emerged. Early reforms focused on target and market dynamics as part of the standards and choice agendas in the public sector (e.g., National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies 1998, 1999). Around 2001, Labour shifted emphasis to focus on delivery, which varied and

developed from 'deliverology' (Barber 2008) to the Public Sector Reform Model (PSRM) (PMSU 2006).

The fixity of the PSRM should not be overstated. It was not a standardised and formulaic approach to policy making but a post-hoc rationalisation (Ball 2008) of the iterative process of how New Labour attempted to bring together different types of reforms. My interest is in how New Labour used the PSRM when attempting to reconcile the contradiction between competitive and collaborative dynamics.

New Labour sought to promote collaboration but faced a dilemma, in that there was mounting evidence that the increased use of market logics and targets was creating powerful divergent forces between public sector organisations that constrained collaboration and thus prevented, for example, preventative engagement with complex social problems (Harris 2003; Milbourne et al 2003). A simple way to respond to this issue, if collaborative service delivery were the only priority, would have been to remove targets and markets from the public sector and develop purely collaborative assemblages. Rather than undo the previous reforms of the public sector, New Labour aimed to harness and cohere top-down, bottom-up and horizontal pressures to create 'a self-improving system' (PMSU 2006: 4) to continuously improve public services through the PSRM. It was composed of four 'pressures' (PMSU 2006: 5) (see figure 1):

- **Top-down performance management**
 - Top-down performance management was a mainstay of New Labour's approach to public services. The mechanisms involved were increased powers of direct intervention for 'failing' services, performance assessment and inspection, regulation and standard setting, and stretching outcome targets.
- **Market incentives to increase efficiency and quality of service**
 - Market incentives built in competition and contestability into public services where services would be delivered by 'a range of providers [who] continually compete with each other for the individual custom of users' (PMSU 2006: 48).

- **Users shaping the service from below**
 - Services were to be shaped from below by harnessing individual and collective user voice, increased personalisation and the co-production of services by users, and most significantly with funding following users' choices of which service provider they prefer.
- **Capability and capacity**
 - Leadership, workforce reform, and organisational development and collaboration were considered 'vital' for building the capability and capacity to deliver improved services and outcomes (PMSU 2006: 9).

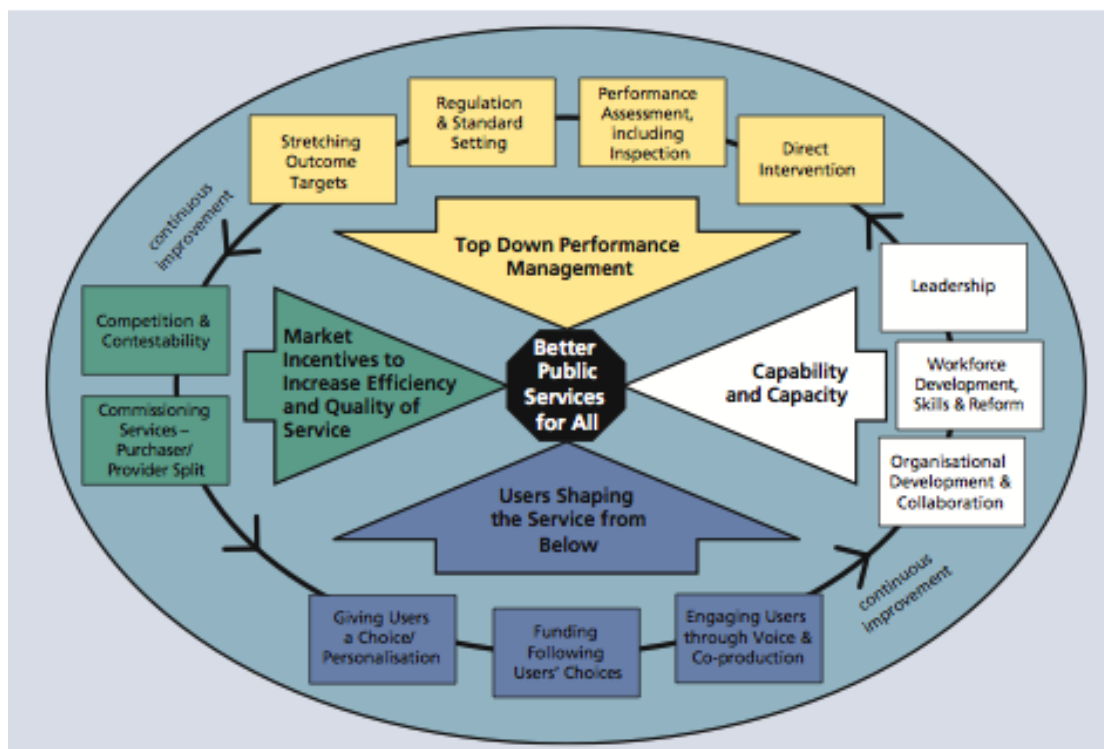


FIGURE 1: The Public Sector Reform Model (PMSU 2006: 6)

The model is an appropriate lens for understanding children's services as the re-organisation of education and children's services was within the remit of New Labour's PSRM (Ball 2008) and so the next section explores children's services.

THE CHANGING ASSEMBLAGES OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Indicative of the reforms characterised by the PSRM, New Labour initiated two broad and broadly contradictory trends around the relationship of the local authority in relation to schools and children's services leading to divergent and convergent dynamics. The trend for divergence at the local level emerged through

the use of markets and managerialist approaches whereas the requirement for convergence was based on the prioritisation of collaboration between services, both will be discussed in turn.

DIVERGENCE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

New Labour maintained and continued the revision of local – central-government relationships that began under the Conservatives. The Education Reform Act 1988, amongst other measures, introduced the Local Management of Schools, Grant Maintained Status and the emphasised the role of pupil ‘choice’ and a market place of schools with league tables. Gunter (2008) describes the effect as the strengthening of the relationship between schools and central government, devolving resources and powers from local authorities to schools, centralising the coordination of policy making and delivery, with the consequential weakening of local ties between schools and the local authority.

There are numerous examples of how New Labour policy centralised or devolved power and responsibilities away from local authorities. The ‘Fair Funding’ arrangements (DfEE 1999) reduced the Local Authority’s position by devolving money to schools. Trust, foundation schools, federations, and academies all had autonomy from local authorities, replaced by a stronger relationship with central government. Furthermore, a number of policies sought to separate local authorities from direct service delivery, especially in relation to schools, and reposition them as commissioners of services and monitors of the quality of those services (e.g., DfES 2005a; Education Act 2005; 2005 Schools White Paper; Education and Inspections Act 2006).

The apparent marginalisation of the local authority is also evident in the growing role of private and Non-Departmental Public Bodies in education and children’s services and network initiatives at the local level. For example, New Labour founded a number of organisations with a remit of working with schools and sectors of children’s services, such as the National College for School Leadership, Children's Workforce Development Council, and the Training and Development Agency for Schools. Mongon and Chapman (2009: 115) note of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) that it could ‘inhibit local strategic collaboration’

by re-orienting schools' focus beyond the local authority, especially as the SSAT did not have to challenge as well as support schools.

It is important to recognise that although New Labour centralised, devolved and so marginalised the local authority the intention was not to remove it, rather it was maintained to perform a range of functions. Local authorities were, for example, allocated the job of supporting the process of school improvement through the coordination of School Improvement Partners. Another role for local authorities was to advise on, coordinate and monitor various plans at the local level (Hannon 2001), such as Local Area Agreements, Children and Young Person Plans and Local Strategic Partnerships. Thus the local authority was positioned in the role of a local broker. The various brokerage functions of the local authority would be achieved through leadership, a role that New Labour repeatedly associated with local authorities (e.g., Blair 1998; DfES 2004).

It is debatable whether local authorities had the power or capacity to perform the leadership role and broker the relationships between stakeholders at the local level, as was envisioned by government policy. Thus there were clear but ignored tensions between New Labour's top-down approach to education and the apparent role for local authorities in brokering and bringing together local actors (Hannon 2001). The context in which local authority managers and professionals were working was characterised by an aggressive performance-accountability regime (Ball 2008), which has been associated with constraining inter-organisational cooperative relationship (Harris 2005; Milbourne 2005; Milbourne 2009). In this context, local authority officers could employ rhetoric of 'value for all' and develop honest and trusting relationships (Howes and Frankham 2009: 121). It is also significant that the local authority context was increasingly complex and 'congested' (Skelcher 2000: 12), which created the need for increased coordination at the local level but also made it harder to achieve. There is therefore reason to question whether the local authority, or as it became the children's service authority, was capable of performing the local leadership and brokerage role it was assigned by policy makers.

The next section explores in more detail how New Labour sought to improve collaborative working in children's services.

CONVERGING CHILDREN'S SERVICES: WHOLE SYSTEM CHANGE

The publication of the ECM Green Paper (DfES 2003) and the Children's Act 2004 signalled and consolidated New Labour's emphasis on collaboration in children's services. The ECM Green Paper began as a response to the Laming Inquiry (2003) into the death of Victoria Climbié. However, the document went much further than Laming's recommendations and outlined a broad ranging, re-focusing and re-organisation of children's services (Frost and Parton 2009).

New Labour re-focused children's services by broadening its scope from just 'children in need' and their families to ostensibly all children, first in the 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review (Frost and Parton 2009) and then again in the ECM agenda.

A second feature of the re-focusing was that services shifted from engaging with 'outputs' – what the organisation did – to 'outcomes' – or the improvement in the service user's life. The focus on outcomes is arguably part of the wider trend of NPM (e.g., Peters and Pierre 1998) in public services in the UK. In children's services this shift was manifest in the ECM agenda.

The ECM agenda asserted five broad, interdependent outcomes that children's services were meant to improve for every child. The outcomes developed in consultation with children and young people were: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic wellbeing (DfES 2003). Central to the ECM outcomes was the asserted interdependence between a child being healthy and feeling safe and the child achieving in school. Thus the ECM outcomes promoted a shift from service-specific targets to shared, interdependent and holistic outcomes that required bringing together education and wider children's services to meet the holistic needs of all children and young people through inter-agency collaboration.

It is important to note that there were contradictions between the interdependent relationship between the outcomes and the children to which they

relate. Churchill (2007) asserts that the 'every' in Every Child Matters is 'misleading' because some, such as asylum seeking children, are excluded and 'problem families' are clearly prioritised. Furthermore, although the outcomes were presented as being holistic in practice they were interpreted according to existing organisational targets (Frost and Parton 2009). For example, 'enjoy and achieve' was measured by traditional metrics such as the percentage of '11 years old children achieving Level 4+ in English and Maths including floor targets' (DfES 2004a: 40).

New Labour re-organised children's services by converging the safeguarding and wellbeing policy streams with a corresponding location of targeted and specialised services within the context of universal services, bringing together education, health and social care; and, linking children's services with all public services through the Local Strategic Partnerships. Integration took place in central government with the formation of the Department for Schools, Children and Families.

These changes represented a significant and ambitious re-orientation of children's services and left a great deal to be 'figured out' at the local level in 150 local authorities (DfES 2004a), which in part led to the emergence of the Children's Trusts.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

The Children's Trust became the key locus in children's services for managerial oversight for improving outcomes, accountability for safeguarding, driving change across the children's workforce, and for 'figuring out' the bringing together of education and children's services.

Frost and Parton (2009) identify that Children's Trusts were first proposed in the 2001 Comprehensive Spending Review (HM Treasury 2002). New Labour had increased investment into children's services but the assessment was that the extra spending was having insufficient impact. The document advised increasing strategic coordination and structural integration at the local level, and proposed the pilot of the Children's Trust initiative (2002).

An additional antecedent of the Children's Trust initiatives can be found in the Laming Inquiry (2003). The Laming Inquiry investigated the tragic death of Victoria Climbié and the failure of professionals to identify and prevent the abuse and eventual murder of the child. One of Lord Laming's 108 recommendations was that,

the single most important change in the future must be the drawing of a clear line of accountability, from top to bottom, without doubt or ambiguity about who is responsible at every level for the well-being of vulnerable children. (Laming, 2003: §1.27)

In these two origins the roles of the Children's Trusts are evident, promoting impact and also identifying specific relationships for accountability.

The development of the Children's Trust was an iterative process supported by policies (DCSF 2008a), guidance (e.g., Audit Commission 2008; DCSF 2008b; DCSF 2010), an evaluation process (e.g., DfES 2004b; Bachmann 2008), and various support organisations (e.g., the National College, and Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services, C4EO). The development of '150 change programmes' was seen as a huge administrative challenge for policy makers requiring an appropriate process for implementation.

The key components of the Children's Trust assemblage were the 'duty to cooperate' shared by the members, the Children and Young People's Plan, the leadership of Director of Children's Services (DCS) and a Lead Member for Children, the five essential features of the Children's Trusts, and the outlined development process.

The purpose and function of Children's Trust was delineated and communicated to professionals as 'whole-system change, the Children's Trust in action' (DfES 2004b) through the 'onion model' (see figure 2).

The Onion Model

- Outcomes for children, young people, parents, families and communities focused
- Integrated Front-line delivery
- Integrated processes
- Inter-agency Governance

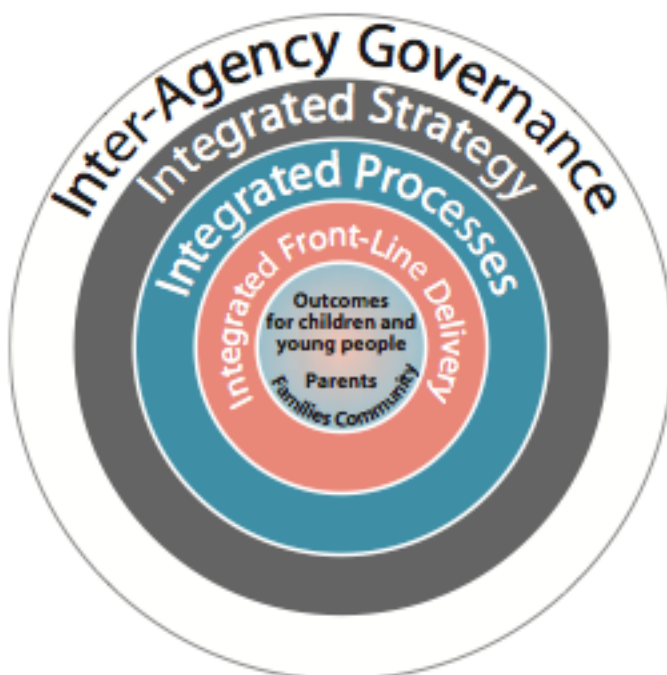


FIGURE 2: The 'onion' model (DfES 2004b)

To develop the Children's Trust, local authorities would appoint a DCS and a Lead Member for Children. Chapter 7 of the Children's Plan neatly captures the difficult position the Children's Trusts and more accurately DCSs were placed in. The Children's Trust and the DCS and Lead Member for Children were identified as central to driving collaboration at the local level. The Plan states that,

Children's Trusts [will] champion and take responsibility for achieving measurable improvements in the lives of children across all five Every Child Matters outcomes. (DCSF 2007: §7.20)

The Children’s Trust was however ‘a broad coalition of all those interested locally in the wellbeing of children’ (DCSF 2007: §7.15). The consequences for failure were clear: ‘Where performance falls short we will intervene quickly and work to identify areas for improvement’ (DCSF 2007: §7.20).

The DCS and members of the Children’s Trust were to be supported in implementing the assemblage through the National Framework For Change (see figure 3) and within this the improvement cycle (see figure 4). Part of the framework for change is formulated around public management processes of identifying outcomes, setting targets and indicators, and a performance-accountability regime. The public management techniques were enabled by ‘supporting change’ measures that included advice, leadership development and sharing practice, resources and communication (DCSF 2007).

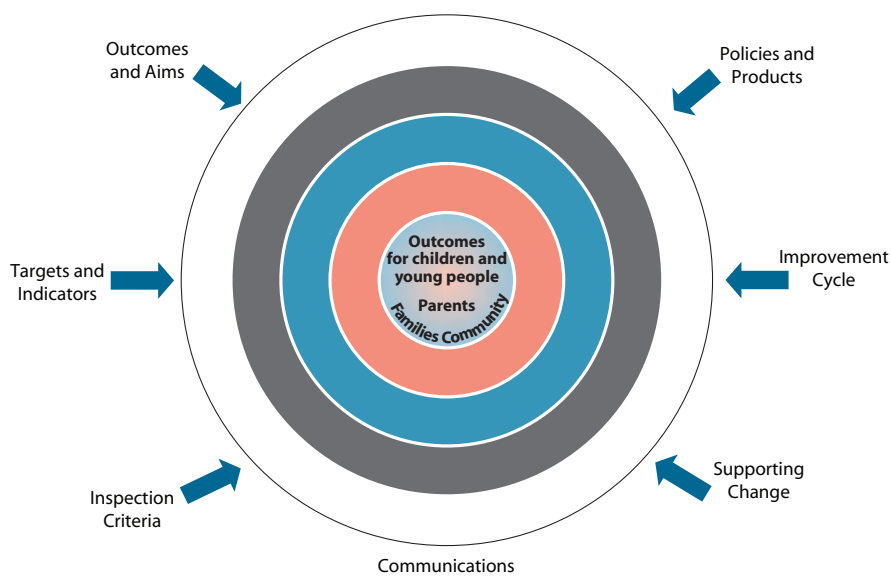


FIGURE 3: The National Framework For Change (DfES 2004b: 6)

One of the challenging aspects of implementing the Children’s Trust was there was no way of ensuring collaboration at the local level. A foundational component of the Trust was the legislated Section 10 ‘duty to cooperate’ that brought together all the appropriate stakeholders with a ‘shared commitment to improving children’s lives’ (DCSF 2007: §2). The constitution of a Children’s Trust board was to be determined at the local level but the number of organisations subject to the ‘duty to cooperate’ increased over time. At first schools, sixth forms

and FE colleges, Job Centre Plus and General Practitioners were excluded with all but GPs being included in later legislation (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009). Thus there could be representatives from organisations, sectors and professions represented on the board. These members were subject to the ‘duty to cooperate’.

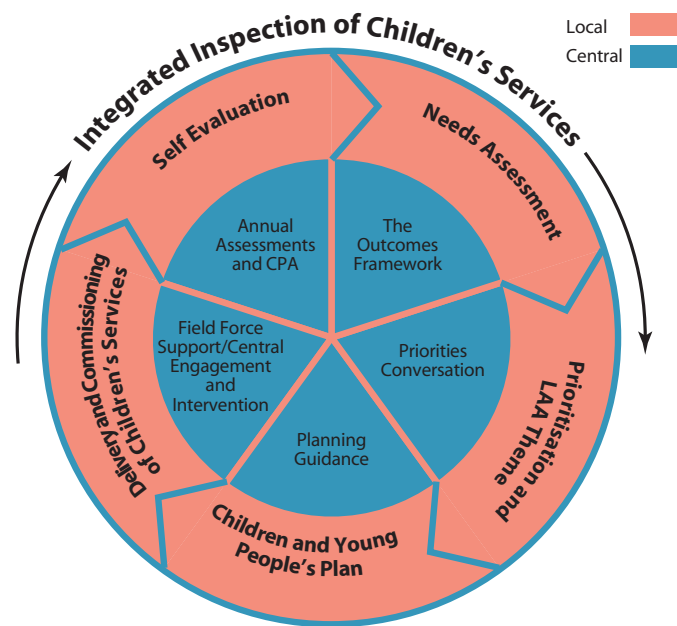


FIGURE 4: The improvement cycle (DfES 2004b)

The limitations of the duty implicated locally-driven leadership to both develop the conditions and commitment for collaboration to take place. Leadership was required because of what the duty to cooperate actually obliged members to do,

Each children's services authority in England must make arrangements to promote co-operation. (DfES 2004a: §10.1)

Thus the duty refers not to individual *acts* of collaboration or cooperation but rather the requirement to promote cooperation by developing the conditions or organisational relationships for collaboration to take place, primarily by implementing the Children's Trust arrangements.

The duty to cooperate was not the only legislative measure for compelling collaboration, and the arrangements described in national policy were minimal conditions to be developed upon. The duty was supplemented by the statutory

requirements for, for example, appointing a DCS, producing a Children and Young People's Plan (DfES 2005), putting the Children's Trust on a statutory footing for achieving the Plan (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009: Part 9 17, 17A), and pooling budgets and aligning resources to provide funding for integrated working (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009). However, many of these provisions such as pooling budgets were slow to be developed and under-used (Audit Commission 2008).

To remedy the apparent gap between the duty to set up the organisational conditions for collaboration and to actively collaborate to improve outcomes for children and young people, New Labour focused on leadership in the Children's Trust.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND CULTURAL CHANGE

The legislation, policy, guidance and research all identified the importance of local leadership and instructed senior managers to lead local change, and in particular drive cultural change.

Guidance for local leaders repeatedly asserted the need for leaders to drive cultural change to support collaboration. Cultural change was presented as part of the 'onion model' to develop integrated front-line delivery, where as part of the re-skilling the workforce would require a,

Significant culture change for staff used to working within narrower professional and service-based boundaries. (DfES 2004a: §3.18)

Similarly guidance for DCS and Lead Members (DCSF 2009a), Lord Laming's Inquiry (2009: 20), the 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy (DCSF 2008c) and the Children's Plan (DCSF 2007) all identify the importance of leadership. Leaders were the key factor in engendering the cultural change for integrated working to improve the quality of relationships to develop an effective Children's Trust,

Senior managers must lead on workforce reform and drive culture change to embed integrated working and common processes, communicating to their staff and to external stakeholders a clear vision of integrated working and how to achieve it... (DCSF 2007: §7.45)

One reason for the need for leadership was the local variation between Children's Trust arrangements, meaning local direction was important to tailor national policy to local context. The Children's Plan (DCSF 2007) guidance notes that local variation in the constitution of the Trust is unimportant. What was considered important was the quality of the relationships between partners, which was identified as important in the emergence of successful Trusts,

Going forward in the light of the Children's Plan, we expect greater consistency in the involvement of all relevant statutory agencies, the full involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the commissioning function and as providers, stronger mutual relationships between Children's Trusts and all schools and the fuller engagement of the wider community, including parents. (DCSF 2007: §7.18)

A second interpretation is that although the government stated that the 'structures to support joined-up working are in place' (DCSF 2007: §7.20) there were elements within the assemblage which required active resolution at the local level. For example, Churchill (2007) notes that despite the centrality of health and education to the ECM agenda headteachers and GPs were ambivalently related to the Children's Trust. Indeed headteachers were not subject to the 'duty to cooperate' until the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. Thus the DCS and Children's Trust faced a broad responsibility for improving outcomes but were restricted in terms of direct, hierarchical authority to influence all of those organisations working within the ambit of the Children's Trust arrangements.

An issue with the fundamental role allocated to it, leadership was inadequately conceptualised and operationalised (Frost 2009; Close 2012) and insufficiently analysed (Booker 2011) in policy. Thus leaders would be crucial but what they would do was not entirely clarified – although there were, for example, various courses available through the National College.

A range of strategies for fostering cultural change was identified for leaders to implement and adopt. Leaders were advised that in developing effective procedures for sharing information and negotiating commissioning agreements between partners they would also be driving cultural change (DCSF 2007). Other

advice identified the role of the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge (DfES 2005b) in bringing professionals together,

around a common purpose, language and identity, while keeping the strong and distinctive professional ethos of different practitioners... (DCSF 2007: §7.37)

Other approaches to cultural change were co-locating managers and multi-agency working (DfES 2004a). A central role for the DCS was outlining a shared vision for integrated working at the local level (DCSF 2007).

The focus on 'common' and 'shared' in the discourse surrounding leadership and cultural change in the Trusts and children's services was a significant development. Garrett (2009) identifies how the word common is associated with a number of features of the ECM Change for Children agenda, with 'common vision', 'common core' (of skills), and the 'common assessment framework' (DfES 2006).

Garrett (2009) describes Hogan and Murphey's (2002) book 'Outcomes' as illustrative of the application of managerialism and 'common' in the public sector. The book valorises the business and corporate sector, refers to the public sector in generally negative ways, and advocates making the public sector more like the private sector. Hogan and Murphey (2002) promote the notion of re-fashioning public services around what is 'common'. For Hogan and Murphey (2002) the reason why businesses are so successful is the practice of working together towards common goals, as they say,

The spirit of working together toward common ends is at the centre of business success and this spirit should be emulated by public sector professionals. (2002: 33)

They advise that clear and simple messages provide the foundation for collaboration, for example,

Clarity of message and purpose can set the foundation for new relationships with the business community. Government gobbledygook and bureaucratic complexity have ruined many well-meaning efforts at collaboration. A new simplicity of language could change that. (Hogan and Murphey 2002: 33)

Thus public services should identify common goals in simple, declarative language in order to create common ground on which professionals will be free to collaborate. Hogan and Murphey (2002) link the orientation of public services around commonality with cultural change.

The focus on what is 'common' in children's services has however been critiqued. Lumby (2009: 326) states that focusing on common objectives such as,

'learners' has a comforting, righteous ring, but this article suggests that the term learners is far too vague. Which learners must leadership support? Where are the boundaries to be drawn?

Garrett (2009) advises that focusing on 'common' language or perceptions can be a way to exclude *uncommon* language and obscure dimensions such as class, power and exploitation.

Thus leadership and cultural change was a central feature of the development of the Children's Trusts even though leadership was not clearly outlined and defined, and the culture promoted was of a kind similar to types of culture in business and management thinking.

CONCLUSION: THE CONTRADICTION

This chapter has drawn attention to a coherent strand of policy developments relating the international trend of post-NPM, the Public Sector Reform Model (PSRM), the divergent pressures in the local authority in contrast to the need for convergence to collaborate, and finally the emergence of the Children's Trust and the government policy for senior managers to lead cultural change (see table 1).

The concept of assemblage, described in the introduction, is employed to understand how these levels fit together. New Labour initiated extensive and substantive change of children's services by bringing together a range of components to form a novel assemblage. An assemblage describes the bringing together of a range of distinctive components to achieve or not a particular project (Newman and Clarke 2009). Within New Labour's assemblages of children's services that included the discourses of leadership and collaboration, the Children's Trust,

market and targets *etc* there were a series of tensions and potential contradictions that could prevent the stated aims of increased collaboration to meet the holistic and interdependent needs of children and young people.

Level	Activity	'Problem' (WPR¹)	Policy Response
International/ national	Post-NPM	Contradiction between NPM reforms and collaboration	Leadership, cultural change and 'common'
National/ public sector	PSRM	Contradiction between targets, markets and collaboration	Capacity and capability strand, 'four pressures for a self-improving system'
Local authority	Reforms in context	Managing divergence and convergence	Children's Trusts and leadership
Children's services	Children's Trusts	Stalled development of the Children's Trust	Senior managers to lead cultural change

TABLE 1: Leadership and cultural change in the policy context

The primary focus here is on two contradictory components in the assemblage: the ambivalent relationship between schools and children's services, and the target and market dynamics of the performance-accountability regime and the prioritisation of more collaboration.

The first contradiction was that the DCS was tasked with leading a broad coalition of those interested in the wellbeing of children and young people yet schools were not compelled by legislation to cooperate until the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, and even then the requirement on schools was to help develop the Children's Trust arrangements. Schools were significant institutions for improving the wellbeing of children and so gaining the commitment of headteachers was a considerable responsibility on the DCS, who would have to use leadership and softer forms of influence in the absence of the power to command schools to collaborate.

The second contradiction was the tensions between the managerialist and marketised logics on one hand and the shift towards system-wide, local-level

¹ The 'Problem' here refers to Carol Bacchi's (2009) 'what's the problem represented to be' approach, this will be explained on page 89.

collaboration, as found in the ECM agenda, on the other (e.g., Fullan 2002; Chitty 2009; Higham et al 2009). There is a case that within and between New Labour's reforms there were policies that strove to bring professionals and organisations together to achieve shared outcomes but there were also a loose configuration of incentives and managerial logics – league tables, Ofsted inspections, Fischer Family Trust 'floor targets' – that tended to promote insularity and fragmentation and thus constrain collaboration. Furthermore, there was the fragmentation and weakening of relationships between schools and the local authority associated with (quasi-) market relationships and the associated autonomy of schools.

The central focus of the PSRM was to reconcile the seemingly contradictory forces of competition and collaboration. The model was based on the assumption that the 'market and target' incentives of the performance-accountability regime did not necessarily prevent collaboration between professionals or organisations. According to the PSRM there was scope for a professional or leader to interpret her targets in such a way that did not preclude working collaboratively with other organisations to meet them.

The answer promoted through the PSRM was to incorporate the capacity and capability strand, which included leadership. Policy makers were therefore aware of the contradiction between the divergent and fragmentary dynamics between schools and the wider children's services in relation to the requirement for convergence for inter-organisational collaboration to realise the holistic and interdependent outcomes. The assumption inherent in the PSRM that leadership could reconcile the contradiction between competition and collaboration in a managerial context will be further engaged with in chapter eight. At this point it is enough to point out that this belief was untested and primarily ideological rather than evidence-based (Coffield and Steer 2007; Ball 2008). Nevertheless, the contingent response to this contradiction was the identification of senior managers and local authority leaders as responsible for bridging the gap at the local level through processes of cultural change.

In the instance of policy for children's services, government policy makers identified leadership and cultural change as instrumental in improving collaboration

through Children's Trusts at the local level. It has also been found that there was a lack of specificity in policy as to what were collaboration, leadership and cultural change. The next chapter therefore reviews the literatures relating to collaboration, leadership and cultural change to provide the theoretical and practical background to the findings on the Stockborough Challenge.

CHAPTER 3 – SPECIFYING AND CONTEXTUALISING THE CONCEPTS

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to the Stockborough Challenge in order to clarify the concepts but also to identify the gaps in the literature in response to which this thesis will make a contribution to knowledge.

It is important to note that the focus of this research is collaboration, leadership, culture and cultural change, all of which are complex, contested, over-used and underspecified in policy, as outlined in the previous chapter, and, as will be explained in this chapter, in research also. Thus a central focus of this chapter is to specify the concepts but also to explore the implications of, for example, particular approaches to defining, categorising and researching collaboration, leadership and culture. In addition, I want to contextualise the concepts by examining the political, ideological, and discursive processes through which collaboration, leadership and cultural change have been articulated as part of the transformation of the English public sector.

In terms of identifying the sources to be reviewed, there are a number of extensive literatures that are relevant to the Stockborough Challenge and collaboration in children's and public services. To make this chapter manageable the focus is placed on leadership for collaboration in children's services and then on a critique of the literature reviewed.

This chapter proceeds in three sections. One, focuses on research and evaluation that engages with leadership and cultural change in children's services and the Children's Trust in particular. Two, presents a four-point critique of the literature on leadership, collaboration and cultural change in children's services. Three, positions the research in relation to the reviewed literature and the policy context.

LEADERSHIP FOR COLLABORATION IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

There is evidence that collaboration poses distinct challenges to professionals and research identifies leadership as a significant factor that facilitates collaboration in children's services (e.g., Harris 2003; Harker et al 2004; Sloper 2004; Atkinson et al 2005; Willumsen 2006; Billet et al 2007; Frost and Robinson 2007; Banks et al 2008; Axelsson and Axelsson 2009; Ødegård and Strype 2009; Straker and Foster 2009; Coleman 2012).

At this point it is worth noting some of the boundaries of this review, as the breadth of focus necessitates ignoring some literatures. There are multiple fields of research describing the role of leadership in collaboration including, as this PhD is in a School of Education, school-to-school collaboration (e.g., Fielding et al 2005; Jackson and Temperley 2005; Ainscow et al. 2006; Muijs 2007; Sebba et al 2010). The research discussed below was selected to provide a coherent and focused discussion of the limitations in current research to conceptualising collaboration as a root concept, rather than explore derivations and applications in a number of different fields of enquiry such as school-to-school collaboration. The limitations of conceptualising collaboration will be explained in the critique of the literature below.

Inter-professional collaboration in multi-agency settings may require professionals to balance the demands of divergent incentives and goals. Thus bringing professionals together requires leaders to establish shared goals, develop commitment, negotiate partnership relationships, ensure there is sufficient organisational capacity, and develop appropriate governance (Harker et al 2004; Billet 2007). To bring professionals together leaders provide 'strategic drive' and 'strategic vision' to engender the required dynamism, motivation and authority to provide the focus and cohesion (Atkinson et al 2005). As professionals may have different incentives, leadership has been identified as 'the driving force behind promoting a shared sense of purpose over professional self-interest' (Straker and Foster 2009). Once professionals are working together the leader's role focuses on developing common language and shared ideas about service users and delivery (Frost and Robinson 2007: 197), and fostering trust between professionals to facilitate collaboration (Billet 2007; Coleman 2012).

This brief review of leadership for collaboration demonstrates that leadership is a key variable and interrelated with other key variables in supporting effective collaboration. The research described above is however from a range of different collaborative contexts, for example looked-after children (Harker et al 2004) and co-locational settings (Frost and Robinson 2007). This study is on leadership for collaboration in-and-around the Children's Trust initiative, a multi-policy, multi-sector, multi-organisational and multi-professional context. There is considerably less research that deals with the Children's Trust or similar contexts, but it is to this literature we now turn.

Frost's (2009) article focuses on the changing policy context of the Children's Trust and children's services, offering a potentially effective model for leaders to cope with the challenges they face in collaborative contexts. He asserts that the complexity of children's services implicates Ancona's et al (2007) concept of 'incomplete' leadership, as no one individual has all of the requisite skills and knowledge in multi-professional and inter-organisational working. Thus leaders should perform four functions: sensemaking, relating, visioning and inventing. The leader therefore helps professionals make sense of their professional identity within a multi-professional context, and relate to broader agendas and an outcome-focused approach, through the production of a vision, and the creation of new forms of service delivery (Frost 2009).

Purcell et al (2012) present the findings from a literature review (Purcell 2009), funded as part of the development of a training programme for Directors of Children's Services. The study draws from the literature to develop a model of leadership appropriate for children's services (2012). The model organises five styles of leadership – charismatic, directive, participative, supportive and networking – with a series of characteristics and roles for each style. Thus for 'supportive leadership' a leader should be 'empowering, respectful and entrepreneurial' while 'championing and challenging service delivery' and 'building capacity' (2012: 93). In addition the paper identifies seven categories of skills for leaders to possess,

Policy and political context, leadership, communication, strategy development, developing/supporting staff, knowledge management/performance management, and partnership working. (2012: 94)

Close (2012) engages with 'multi-agency leadership in children and young people's services' (p.123). He identifies five perspectives within the literature germane to leadership in a collaborative context. The perspectives are: complexity (Glenny and Roaf 2008), cultural (Close and Wainwright 2010), multi-agency working (Anning et al 2006), inter-organisational partnerships (Armistead et al 2007), and 'field skills' (Jones and Pound 2008). Close then presents a framework for unifying these perspectives. In doing so, he presents six functions for multi-agency leadership in children's services formed around two underlying concepts, two operating levels, and two field skills. The underlying concepts are complexity and culture with the corresponding challenges for leaders of 'minding' the system to bring professionals together and then surfacing and resolving tensions between professional cultures. The operational levels are the multi-professional group and the inter-organisational partnership whereby the leader resolves the inter-personal and inter-organisational dilemmas implicated in collaborative working. The field skills are organisational consultancy and professional supervision whereby the leader works as a broker to manage expectations between organisations whilst also working to support staff working in a challenging environment.

So from the work of Frost (2009), Purcell et al (2012) and Close (2012) we know something about what leaders should do in collaborative contexts yet it is, as I will argue, important to adopt a more critical view of leadership for collaboration.

Lumby (2009) provides a useful analysis of the challenges posed by leadership that spans multiple organisations in a 14-19 partnership, in three local authority systems. She identifies the problematic nature of terms such as 'partnership' and 'leadership' in addition to observing that the majority of the research on this topic is self-report, presenting evidence of practitioners' descriptions of diverse forms of partnership. To counter this she distinguishes between three forms of partnership: complement, synergy and trust (p.313).

An important contribution of this paper is that Lumby highlights the tensions between leadership and managerial contexts. She explores the case that moral leadership could facilitate a partnership based on trust leading to concertive or collaborative action, where,

Leading within a partnership would impel a moral commitment to the well-being of a wider community than the school's own pupils. (p.321)

Lumby describes that a popular way of aligning the values in a partnership is to focus on the needs of the learners with whom the professionals work. However, the strategy of focusing on the 'needs' of 'children and young people' to unify the partnership is found to be 'a posture rather than a reality' both in Lumby's research (2009: 322) and elsewhere (Schagen et al. 1996; Ball et al. 2000; Lumby and Morrison 2006). Focusing on the 'needs' of the learners in the abstract does not, she argues, specify which learners, at which point and in relation to other learners – all of which relates to moral choices. Due to the organisational incentives imposed by policy for institutions to compete and succeed rather than fail and be closed, 'leadership was bounded by the school gates.' (p.321)

Thus despite arguing for emphasising the moral dimensions of leadership in partnerships Lumby is doubtful whether moral leadership and the alignment of values are viable approaches, in a managerial context, for developing a partnership that concert action and provides a more coherent and harmonious response, rather than one that aggregates activity in a more haphazard way. Instead, she raises the possibility that research and practice should focus on more efficient methods of aggregating or bringing together collaborative activity and not seeking to align values and culture.

An additional source of evidence for the exploring the significance, roles and forms of leadership is the government-funded evaluation study of the Children's Trust initiative.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health commissioned researchers at the University of East Anglia and the National Children's Bureau to conduct a three-year multi-site evaluation of the Children's

Trust initiative. The evaluation covered 35 trusts and included interviews, questionnaires and observations. The evaluation found that leadership was significant component in the development of the Children's Trusts by aligning stakeholders through, 'visible, committed leadership' (DfES 2007: 35).

Beyond the literature on children's services, there are a number of broader literatures that relate to leadership for collaboration in general, which are germane to this study. For example, there are considerations of leadership for collaboration from the fields of public management such as O'Leary et al's (2006) collaborative public management and Brookes and Grint's (2010) new public leadership, and those which review and engage with leadership for collaboration in public services (e.g., Peck and Dickinson 2008; Sullivan et al 2012).

Sullivan et al (2012) review the literature on leadership for collaboration and present an empirical study using Q-methodology of perceptions of public service managers on leadership for collaboration. Summarising this literature, the authors state that leaders working in a complex and fragmented public sector should be orientated by values of 'accountability, equality, probity and representation', when they facilitate the,

building and sustaining high quality inter-personal relationships between diverse stakeholders by fostering trust, managing power relationships and generating consensus; creating a common collaborative culture based on an appreciation of connectivity and common purpose, and generating shared meaning from multiple constituencies... (p.46)

There is therefore in the literature a number of indications as to what leaders should do, such as develop common language and shared ideas (Frost and Robinson 2007), a 'common collaborative culture' (Sullivan et al 2012: 46), and a shared purpose (Straker and Foster 2009). Although the role of leaders as a means of aligning values, purpose, language and culture is arguably common sense for collaborative working, Lumby (2009) identifies the tensions with such a view within a managerial context defined by powerful intra-organisational incentives. She believes that managers should seek to align activity not values.

At this point I shift to focus on a more substantive critique of the literature and concepts. The reason for this is that there is a recognised shortfall of quality research on leadership for collaboration in education, children's and public services (D'Amour et al 2005; Lumby 2009; Close 2012). The literature is lacking in 'specificity and nuance in theory and empirical research' (Sullivan et al 2012: 41), and is,

complex, contradictory in places, under-theorised in some areas and theoretically dense in others... limited in terms of scope, focus and consistency (Peck and Dickinson 2008: 3, 35).

Indeed, as will be explored below, the absence of specificity or the profusion of terms can be similarly levelled at the concepts of leadership, collaboration and culture individually.

LIMITATIONS OF THE LITERATURE

This section presents a four-point critique of the literature on leadership for collaboration in children's services, to identify the gap in the literature with which this research will engage. The points are: One, definitions of collaboration lack specificity and are de-contextualised. Two, research on leadership for collaboration does not critically engage with the political and ideological context of public service reform. Three, the different approaches to culture and the relationships to managerialism are under-acknowledged. Four, in light of these issues, the use of self-report methods is a methodological weakness. The argument presented is not that there are no studies that contradict each of the four points individually but that taken together there are no studies that maintain specificity of collaboration, engage with the ideological dimensions of leadership and culture, and provide an appropriate methodological approach.

CRITIQUE ONE: SPECIFYING AND CONTEXTUALISING COLLABORATION

There is in policy, as was described in the previous chapter, and in research, as will be explained below, an acknowledged lack of specificity as to what is collaboration, in relation to different forms and purposes. In addition research tends to de-contextualise collaboration in terms of generic terms for collaboration, such as

'partnership', which is linked to the trend of research to inform collaborative practice through lists of 'goldilocks' factors. In response, a number of approaches to contextualising collaboration are discussed.

A Lack of Specificity

The theoretical, conceptual and definitional confusion within the literature on collaboration presents one point of consensus within the literature. There is an absence of conceptual and definitional clarity as to what constitutes collaboration or associated terms (Ivey et al., 1987; Satin, 1994; Audit Commission 1998; Schofield and Amodeo, 1999; Easen et al 2004; D'Amour 2004; Warmington et al. 2004; Salmon and Faris 2006; Robinson et al 2008; Canavan et al 2009). There are different types and forms of collaboration (Leathard 2003a) however research tends to conflate different patterns of collaborative activity (Leathard 2003b; Salmon 2004). Words and concepts for describing collaboration are used inter-changeably, without precision, or with some authors after noting the diversity of types of collaboration go on to apply an inclusive definition, for example,

The term "collaboration"... [is used] from here on to cover all aspects and styles of joint working practice. (Salmon 2004: 157).

There are examples of attempts to adequately define collaboration. Academics have provided what we might call well-defined definitions of collaboration or partnership. For example, for Hardy collaboration is,

Co-operative, inter-organisational action that produces innovative, synergistic solutions and balances divergent stakeholder concerns. (Hardy et al. 2005: 68)

Hardy's definition sounds persuasive enough and identifies dimensions of collaboration such as 'organisations', describes the relationships between them as 'co-operative' and states that the outcomes are 'innovative, synergistic solutions'. One issue with this definition is that it defers the definition of collaboration to a further set of arguably equally problematic terms 'co-operation', 'innovation' and 'synergy' that arguably require subsequent definitions. Furthermore, it is not clear if, for example, collaboration must necessarily result in innovation or whether it is possible to collaborate but not innovate?

The point I wish to make is that it is not a matter of developing and using clearer definitions, although that is required, but there is a need to use different types of definition, ones that contextualise collaboration.

Contextualising Collaboration

The lack of specificity in definitions of collaboration is compounded by the de-contextualisation of collaboration, which refers to the application of generic concepts, such as 'partnership', to research diverse and really existing forms of collaboration.

There are in the literature on collaboration in the public sector many different approaches to research collaboration, which are organised around constructs such as 'partnerships' (e.g., Clarke and Glendinning 2002; Tett et al 2003), different analytical foci such as professions or professionalism (e.g., Harker et al 2004; Easen et al 2004; D'Amour et al 2005), or organisations (e.g., Clegg and McNulty 2002), theoretical approaches such as Cultural Historical Activity Theory (e.g., Daniels et al 2007; Leadbetter et al 2007), sites of collaboration in the form of Sure Start Children's Centres (e.g., Malin and Morrow 2007), modes of collaboration in terms of integrated (e.g., Hall 1999; Canavan et al 2009) or multi-agency working (e.g., Sloper 2004; Dyson et al 2009). So there are many approaches but it is not clear how each of the approaches relate to one another, and so how the different forms of collaboration that are researched are related to one another?

There is an emerging critique of approaches to defining collaboration in terms of labels like 'partnership'. The argument is that de-contextualised definitions exclude crucial information required to understand, categorise, and evaluate the patterns of collaborative activity the researchers observed. Most of the research on collaboration follows a case-study research design or is based in an evaluation of a specific instance of collaboration. These multiple incidents of collaboration are then aggregated into various parts of the literature on collaboration or partnership working. There are therefore examples of 'collaboration' or 'partnership' in many sectors and settings. The question is whether these heterogeneous incidents of collaborative working are inappropriately related into homogeneous categories such as 'partnership' or 'collaboration'.

Powell and Dowling (2006: 306) critique the 'one size fits all' approach to defining collaboration in research and practice. They argue that under the disaggregated label 'partnership' there are in practice different organisational forms orientated towards achieving different objectives. It is these differences in organisation and purpose that are important in understanding what is happening in a particular context. Thus they assert that 'context matters' when it comes to researching collaboration (p.312). They argue for a specific approach to identifying and implementing the appropriate governance, structures, organisational forms, roles and working practices to achieve stated aims.

This issue of contextualising collaboration can also be found in Glendinning's et al (2005) paper on partnership working. They (2005) recognise that,

the diversity of collaborative arrangements between health and social care that has been encouraged and supported through these [New Labour's] policies begins to raise questions about the definition and characteristics of 'partnership' (p. 369).

They observe,

the absence of clear and consistent definitions and pointed to the contextually specific rationales for, and morphology of, New Labour partnerships... (p. 370).

In response, these authors provide a clear, well-defined and relatively generic definition of partnership,

as involving two or more organisations, groups or agencies that together identify, acknowledge and act to secure one or more common objective, interest or area of inter-dependence; but where the autonomy and separate accountability arrangements of the partner organisations are in principle retained... (Glendinning et al 2005: 370)

This definition is specific but it is arguably similar to that proposed by Hardy (2005) above. The authors then state,

Significantly, however, these definitions do not prescribe the scope of areas of joint activity, the structures that may be set up to pursue them, or the rationales that may underpin them (p.370).

Glendinning et al (2005) list a series of rationales for partnerships, which range from the abstract and process-based, such as generating synergy and transforming culture, and administrative concerns like increasing resource, to engaging with wicked issues and coordinating public services to overcome the perverse consequences of targets. The paper avers,

Questions of rationale are not simply semantic; rather, they begin to suggest some of the dimensions along which Labour's active encouragement of partnerships might be evaluated (p.371).

The authors are aware that under the label 'partnership' there are differences in rationale that inform how the various forms and patterns of collaborative working function and what professionals do. It is significant that terms such as 'partnership' are used in academic research but that the organisational forms research is based on are framed and defined by New Labour's policy. New Labour's policy labelled particular organisational relationships 'partnerships' but there were different rationales and morphologies. The question is what does utilising words such as 'partnership' illuminate or obscure in relation to the organisational forms that are being researched, especially from a critical perspective that seeks to understand what is and is not working?

The de-contextualisation of the varying forms of collaboration into generic labels such as 'partnership' arguably makes it more difficult to research and recommend the supporting conditions for particular forms of collaboration orientated to achieving particular purposes. Nylén (2007) notes that research on collaboration largely fails to account for the multiple potential patterns of organising collaborative working and the implications for the transfer of inputs into outputs and outcomes. Thus to understand which is a more appropriate form of organising – say partnership, network, co-locating staff or multi-agency working – it is necessary to determine which end is sought innovation in service delivery, safeguarding, cultural change or reducing costs?

Another limitation of the research and a reason that compounds the de-contextualisation of collaboration is that due to the challenges of researching outcomes in collaboration most research focuses on the processes and outputs of

partnerships. Focusing on the outputs, the changes in organisation, rather than outcomes and what is achieved, makes partnership working the dependent variable of research. When 'partnership' or 'collaboration' becomes the dependent variable the findings reflect professionals' perceptions of a particular variable such as culture in relation to her perceptions of the effectiveness of the partnership working (Cameron and Lart 2003; Sloper 2004). Thus research focuses on practitioners' perceptions of what works in relation to generic descriptions of different patterns of organisational relationships, losing information relating to the purpose and rationale of why professionals were working together in the first place.

By not analysing partnership in relation to achieving a particular objective, purpose or outcome there is a tendency to maintain an adequately defined but nevertheless generic and thus de-contextualised concept of partnership. The generic definition of collaboration in research provides the context to understand the next part of the critique of the literature on collaboration, the production of lists of 'goldilocks' factors.

'Goldilocks' factors

Sloper (2004) notes that the literature on collaboration in public services focuses on the presence or absence of the same factors, a point echoed by others (Lumby 2009; Close 2012). Sloper's observation may be re-phrased by saying that the literature on collaboration is largely organised around lists of 'goldilocks' factors where the conditions are 'not too hot, not too cold, but just right' for collaboration.

Collaboration is associated with various 'goldilocks' factors. Cameron and Lart (2003) organise the facilitating and constraining factors in three categories: organisational issues (e.g., clear aims and objectives, good communication, and co-location), cultural and professional issues (e.g., professional stereotyping and trust and respect), and contextual issues (e.g., the constant re-organisation of public services). Atkinson's et al. (2005) review of the literature produced a list of factors that facilitated or constrained collaboration. The factors were: funding and resources, clarity of roles and responsibilities, conflicting individual and agency agendas, bringing together the 'right' staff, effective communication, and adequate training for professionals to meet the challenges of collaborative working.

Reflecting on this feature of the literature, Axelson and Bihari-Axelson (2009) state that there is a need to develop beyond the listing of constraining and facilitating factors and develop positive alternatives that help in the planning and implementation of collaborative working. How this could be achieved is open to debate but contextualising definitions of collaboration is one option.

Contextualising collaboration

The claim that most research de-contextualises collaboration by removing much of the significant contextual detail through the use of generic categories is best understood with reference to the few examples that do not de-contextualise collaboration.

For example, Easen et al (2004) usefully define collaboration in terms of dimensions of 'boundedness' – the specificity of 'outcomes, timescales and procedures' – and context – focusing on individual users' needs or projects with broader goals. Alternatively, Lumby (2009) differentiates between different forms of partnership as working towards building complement, synergy or trust.

A much more developed approach is found in the application of Culture Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) to engage with collaborative working. There has been a great deal of research on collaboration from a CHAT perspective (Vygotsky 1978). Within the tradition of CHAT, 'knotworking' has emerged as a popular and high-utility concept for analysing collaborative working. Knotworks are metaphorical constructs that describe,

A rapidly changing, distributed and partially improvised orchestration of collaborative performance which takes place between otherwise loosely connected actors and their work systems. (Engestrom et al. 1999: 346)

Knotworks have been used to analyse a range of phenomena, including post-office staff (Engestrom 2007), multi-agency or collaborative social work and education (e.g., Anning et al 2006), physicians and healthcare providers (Engestrom 2001).

To knotwork professionals are challenged with negotiating the, 'movement of tying, untying and retying together seemingly separate threads of activity

(Engestrom 2005: 316). The utility of knotworks in this instance is the potential to analyse and identify the rules, training, tools and infrastructure required to help professionals to knotwork or collaborate (Engestrom and Ahonen 2001; Puonti 2004; Warmington et al 2004).

CHAT offers the potential to contextualise collaborative working within comprehensive theories of work (Warmington et al 2004) and learning; and provide a framework for understanding how different rules, training, tools and infrastructure facilitate or constrain collaboration.

Sullivan et al (2012), in their paper on leadership for collaboration, identify five configurations that function to contextualise collaboration. The configurations are: 'co-governing through inclusive relationships' between service providers and users, 'negotiating dynamic complexity' as leaders seek to traverse the fragmentation of local government, 'judicious influence by elites' through seeking to increase organisational power, 'the achievement of key outcomes' through collaboratively achieving goals that are beyond the reach of individual stakeholders, and 'co-governing through expert facilitation' wherein the process is valued as important as the outcomes. Each configuration provides a specific frame of reference for leadership and leaders in determining what individuals should value, attend to, and seek to support. It is interesting that Sullivan et al developed these configurations when they aimed to engage with leadership for collaboration, 'through the lenses of practising leaders in collaborative contexts' (p.58).

Finally, Hansen's (2010: 16) 'disciplined collaboration' is a simple and clear approach to contextualising collaboration. For Hansen it is important to understand that, 'the goal of collaboration is not collaboration but better results' (p.44). This involves determining when to collaborate and when not to collaborate, identifying an appropriate case or form of collaboration, and then initiating appropriate processes to overcome the 'traps' to collaborating. The three cases for collaboration are:

1. Better innovation by recombining existing resources,
2. Better sales by cross-selling (selling existing customers new products), and

3. Better operations through more efficient practices and sharing good practice (pp. 26-31).

Hansen identifies a series of traps to collaboration and then proposes an approach that tailors appropriate measures to support the different cases of collaboration. The traps to collaboration are:

hostile territory, over-collaborating, overshooting the potential values, underestimating the costs, mis-diagnosing the problem, implementing the wrong solution (p.11).

Hansen goes on to identify four barriers to collaboration, in relation to the three cases of collaboration, they are: not invented here, hoarding barrier, search barrier, and transfer barrier. Significantly each of these barriers require tailored solutions. The first two (not invented here and hoarding) should be engaged with by motivational responses whereas the second two (search and transfer) require 'nimble networks' (p. 63).

Thus Hansen's approach contextualises collaboration in terms of different cases or purposes of collaboration – innovation, cross-selling and improving practice – and outlines how these require appropriate solutions to support them.

Reflecting on Lumby (2009), CHAT (Anning et al 2006), Sullivan's et al (2012), and Hansen's (2010) approaches to defining collaboration it is apparent that they differentiate the concept in terms of drivers or aims, and that these lead to different forms of partnership or collaboration and respective organisational challenges. Collaboration can be therefore contextualised by specifying a purpose or end that the collaborative activity and organisation is seeking to achieve and from this focus determine what are the supporting conditions and processes.

This section has identified some of the limitations and implications of approaches policy and research that do not specify or contextualise collaboration. Specific definitions provide clarity to what is being researched or attempted but by focusing on generic definitions such as 'partnership' both research and policy can obscure the aims, goals and purposes that professionals are seeking to engage with. This means that policy, research and practice may have trouble developing and

evaluating particular forms of collaboration to achieve specific ends. The next section explores the importance of critically engaging with the ideological context of policy, practice and research relating to leadership for collaboration.

CRITIQUE TWO: THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF LEADERSHIP

The research on leadership for collaboration infrequently attends to the influence of the ideological context in which leadership was articulated and implemented in the public sector – although there are exceptions (e.g., Peck and Dickinson 2008; Lumby 2009; Frost 2009). In research and policy there are many new words and approaches to leadership, and although differences between the definitions of leadership are important I follow others in arguing that it is more important to understand the relationships between leadership, the managerial context of the English public sector and managerialism more generally. It is therefore useful to explore some of the literature that critically engages with leadership.

Leadership

There are numerous definitions of leadership and so providing a brief overview of leadership and New Labour's utilisation of leadership is problematic (Day et al 2000). There have been various attempts to organise definitions of leadership (e.g., Leithwood et al 1999; Bush and Glover 2003; Coleman 2005; Bush 2008), which I will briefly review.

Bush and Glover (2003) and Bush (2008) identify influence, vision and values as central concepts in the literature on leadership. Both Yukl (2002) and Leithwood et al (1999) find that influence is central to leadership, for example,

Most of the variation in leadership concepts, types or models can be accounted for by differences in who exerts influence, the nature of that influence, the purpose for the exercise of influence and its outcomes. (Leithwood et al 1999: 6)

Thus influence, rather than authority (Bush 2008) is central to leadership and one of the primary means of leaders influencing the led is through a vision.

The leader as a visionary or possessing and communicating a vision is found in a number of characterisations of leadership, especially transformational

leadership (e.g., Leithwood 1994). Transformational leadership involves the leader inspiring the led in order to unite their aims 'in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose' (Burns 1978: 20). Despite the central function of the vision to leadership there are numerous accounts that in practice visions lack clarity and distinctiveness (e.g., Bolam et al 1993) or that the policy context in the UK proscribes a leader defining and advancing her vision in a meaningful sense (Bush 2008), and that researchers fail to maintain sufficient analytical specificity between vision, mission and goals (Hallinger and Heck 1996).

The leader's influence and vision are based in both his personal values and changing the values of those within the organisation. For some theorists values are the central focus and purpose of leaders (e.g., Day et al 2001), who state,

Good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school. (p. 53)

There is in the literature on leadership a gamut of different styles, processes, focuses of what leaders should do, including the focus on influence, values and vision. The intention here however is not to comprehensively review the literature on leadership, due to the limited space available here. Rather I want to focus on how New Labour adopted and promoted new articulations of leadership and the consequential issues when these types of leadership were applied in the managerial context of education and children's services.

New Labour and New Leaderships

New Labour valorised and advocated leadership in the reform of education and children's services, with the promotion a series of new terms and approaches for leadership. Tensions were observed however between leadership and the managerial dynamics fostered by reforms, as can be evidenced from a discussion on distributed and systems leadership in schools.

New Labour's period in office has been described as 'a period of rampant adjectival leadership' where terms and foci of leadership proliferated (Leithwood et al 2006: 7). One-way to understand how New Labour developed, employed and promoted leadership is by using the lens of a 'discourse of leadership'.

For New Labour leaders and leadership were a central focus and driver of reform for improving standards in public sector organisations, including in children's services and schools (Cabinet Office 1999; PIU 2001; DfES 2003; Cabinet Office 2008). In education this agenda involved positioning headteachers as the key locus for implementing national reforms and driving change to improve. As Gunter and Forrester (2008: 145) note, New Labour maintained the Conservative's standards and school failure agendas and extended the,

site-based management, quasi-market, regulatory regime of national curriculum, league tables and inspection...

Thus a headteacher was identified as being responsible for her performance and the performance of her school (Chapman and Gunter 2009). However, the managerialisation of schools tended to constrain the different forms of leadership that were possible, as will be described below with reference to distributed and systems leadership.

Notions of distributed leadership (Gronn 2002; Spillane 2006) and systems leadership (Fullan 2004; Hopkins and Higham 2007) were two forms of leadership that gained traction in New Labour's discourse of leadership. There is not space here for a full exploration of either term. Yukl (2002: 432) defined distributed leadership as,

An alternative perspective [to the heroic single leader], that is slowly gaining more adherents, is to define leadership as a shared process of enhancing the individual and collective capacity of people to accomplish their work effectively ... Instead of a heroic leader who can perform all essential leadership functions, the functions are distributed among different members of the team or organization.

The characteristic feature of a systems leader was,

Where a headteacher or principal is willing and able to shoulder wider system roles and in so doing is almost as concerned with the success and attainment of students in other schools as he/she is with his/her own. (Hopkins and Higham 2007: 148)

Both forms of leadership seemed to offer analytical, theoretical and normative approaches for understanding how leaders and teachers could work collaboratively both within schools and across organisational boundaries. Despite receiving high-level support (e.g., DfES 2005; NCSL 2005), both distributed and systems leadership were critiqued as impracticable within the managerial context of the English education system.

With regards to distributed leadership, Gunter and Ribbins (2003) doubt whether leadership can be meaningfully distributed within a context in which managerialist forms of power and accountability are prominent. Hatcher (2005: 255) perceives a 'fundamental contradiction... between distributed leadership and government-driven headteacher managerialism'.

Lumby (2009), in her study on distributed leadership within a local school system, found that distributed leadership offered insights into the, 'mechanics of leadership, but not on its purpose, its moral dimensions' (p. 325). She found that 'Moral leadership was bounded by the school gates' (p. 325). Furthermore, the alignment of values and the fostering of a common culture that is implicated in distributed leadership (e.g., Elmore 2000; Harris 2005) have been found to be constrained and unlikely to emerge due to the competitive relationships between schools within the local school system (Lumby 2009).

Similar issues are found in relation to system leadership, a later addition to New Labour's approach to leadership in education, where leadership was promoted as a potential route for alleviating the distorting effects of targets. Fullan (2004: 10), a leading proponent of system leadership, identifies the tension between the standards agenda and networked learning communities and states that going,

beyond the plateau [in school improvement] will involve reconciling these two strategies towards greater connectivity and cohesion.

Higham et al (2009) propose leadership as the appropriate mechanism for reconciling competitive and collaborative logics in education, with a specific focus on overcoming the 'restrictive institutional boundaries and cultures' (p.7).

Reflecting on the systems leadership literature it is apparent that there was a lack of sound evidence and critical empirical engagement, as acknowledged by leading authors (e.g., Higham and Hopkins 2007). Higham and Hopkins (2007) identify six limitations of the evidence base, which significantly includes the absence of evidence that systems leadership can be meaningful within the context of high-stakes accountability or systems leadership can 'consistently provide solutions to complex systemic problems' (p.164).

To summarise, New Labour and various academics articulated and promoted distributed and systems leadership as a way to overcome the contradictions between competitive and collaborative dynamics. For both forms of leadership however there were clear concerns that these shared forms of leadership were heavily constrained within an educational context characterised by targets and other forms of high-stakes accountability.

The contrast between leadership and the managerial context brings to light the relationship between leadership and managerialism, which is highly pertinent to this discussion, and to which I turn.

Leadership, management and managerialism

There is a debate that draws attention to the differences between leadership and management but it is important to acknowledge the similarities and lineage between the two, with the tradition of managerial transformation of the public sector.

The distinction between leadership and management represents a longstanding academic debate, originating in the business literature. Bennis and Nanus (1985) offered a number of binary distinctions, including, 'managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing' (p. 21).

Kotter (1990), developed the influential position that, 'Management is about coping with complexity... Leadership is about coping with change' (p.90). Cuban (1988: xx), shares this view, stating that,

By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others.

Frequently they initiate change to reach existing new goals... Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance than change.

Thus management indicates engaging with implementation or technical issues but leadership focuses on values and purpose to direct change (Bush 1998).

Some authors caution against divorcing leadership from management or prioritising one over the other (Cuban 1988; Leithwood et al 1999; Bush 1998). Glatter (1997: 189) cautions that,

Methods [are] as important as knowledge, understanding and value orientations. Erecting this kind of dichotomy between something 'pure' called leadership and something 'dirty' called 'management', or between values and purposes on the one hand and methods and skills on the other, would be disastrous.

Indeed, Glatter (2006) has since advised that educational researchers end the obsession with leadership and management and treat them as variables within a broader focus on organisation.

Rather than focusing on the differences, it is crucial to acknowledge the lineage between management and leadership within the context of the managerial transformation of the English public sector, and continued by New Labour (Earley and Weindling 2004; Simkins 2005). The growing popularity of management and then leadership in the public sector has occurred during significant ideological shifts in understandings around appropriate roles, practices, relationships and processes for coordinating organisations through the managerialisation of the public sector.

Managerialism is an ideological project associated with management thinking, especially in relation to the application of management practices to the public sector. Aligned with the rhetoric and grammar of New Public Management (NPM), managerialism is defined by Newman and Clarke (2009: 109) as,

an assemblage of practices, strategies, techniques and knowledges [with the] capacity to colonise other forms of power, reassembling alternative rationalities within its own logics.

Through a process of managerialisation public sector organisations have become more 'business-like' and managerial identities, subjectivities, ways of thinking, expectations, and forms of authority have become more prominent and dominant (Clarke and Newman 1997; Clarke et al 2000).

It is important however to understand that management is not a, 'neutral instrument' capable for delivering any set of objectives, unalloyed by its inherent propensities to favour what can be measured, monitored and encapsulated in pithy expressions of mission and priority. (Fergusson 2000: 207)

Indeed the notion that management thinking, modes of organising and rationalities are value neutral and universally applicable is part of managerialism as ideology (Flynn 1999; Clarke et al 2000).

New Labour increased the processes of managerialisation of the public sector (Thrupp and Wilmott 2003) but this engagement led to a new articulation of managerialism in line with the modernisation agenda.

Newman (2000) observed that New Labour's modernisation created the conditions for a shift to 'modern management'. Newman wrote that the move to prioritise long-term effectiveness, the change in emphasis from competition to collaboration, the prominence of partnership and leadership, and the discourse of joined-up government require, 'new styles of leadership and management which sit uneasily with existing models' (Newman 2000: 59).

Writing at the same time, Fergusson (2000) offered a nuanced account of the constraints and possibilities for change in the association of modernisation and managerialism. He noted there was a potential tension between the object of modernisation in, for example, joining-up services and the managerial methods employed to achieve them. So although it may be possible to shift the focus from marketization to modernisation, the management practices aligned with managerialism originated in an ideological context and inhere particular values and assumptions and thus implications for how management tools frame problems and suggest solutions.

Later accounts describe that New Labour's modernisation project did indeed lead to new articulations of leadership and management. In the role of implementing reforms, leaders were tasked with reconciling incoherent or contradictory policies (Fairclough, 2000, Newman 2001; Currie et al 2005, Lewis and Surrender, 2005, Currie et al 2008; O'Reilly and Reed 2010). From this viewpoint, leadership was recast as a technology for reconciling contradictions in New Labour's policy. Hargreaves (2009: 19), for example, describes New Labour's approach to reform as that of setting top-down targets and encouraging the 'lateral effervescence' of leaders to facilitate the transition.

O'Reilly and Reed (2010) develop this theme positing 'leaderism' as a new discursive construction related to managerialism, NPM and new public governance. In this discourse,

Leaders are construed as animating their environments via espousing visions, embodying values and modelling appropriate behaviours. (O'Reilly and Reed 2010: 968)

Thus, leadership is a 'social and organizational technology' that, potentially alleviates and absorbs the endemic tensions between politicians, managers, professionals and the public inherent in NPM systems by drawing them together into a unifying discourse of a leading vision for their services in which they, collectively, play a major role. (O'Reilly and Reed 2010: 961)

Inherent in this discourse is the assumption that social activity must be coordinated and directed by leaders (O'Reilly and Reed 2010).

This section has focused on leadership and the different approaches to understanding what leadership is but also how it relates to the context of children's services in England. So, definitions of leadership tend to focus on influence, vision and values. However, the focus of this study is New Labour's promotion of leadership to bring professionals and services together to collaborate. In light of this aim I explored distributed and systems leadership, which New Labour identified as ways of distributing, sharing or using leadership in innovative ways that were useful to the changing role of leadership in education and children's services. Evidence suggests that in practice these new forms of leadership were constrained by the

managerial context and the performance-accountability regime in education. Locating leadership in relation to the changing context of managerial reform of the public sector highlights the continuities between management and leadership suggested that in addition to inspiring the professionals they lead, leaders also had a function and responsibility for reconciling tensions and contradictions in New Labour's policies.

The next section explores the potential implications of the understandings of culture in New Labour's children's services policy.

CRITIQUE THREE: UNPACKING AND MAKING SENSE OF CULTURE

The third point of the critique unpacks and explores the implications of different meanings to culture in policy and research. In New Labour's policy, culture was associated with an integrative function that resolves the issues of fragmentation and contradiction in children's services (e.g., DfES 2004b; DCSF 2007). Similarly, in research there are a number of instances where leadership is associated with aligning professionals around various commonalities, focusing on factors relating to culture such as language and ideas (Frost and Robinson 2007), purpose (Straker and Foster 2009) or that directly describe a common culture (Elmore 2000; Harris 2005; Sullivan et al 2012). In light of these usages of culture, the chapter explores the different types of culture – professional and organisational – and the alternative conceptualisations of organisational culture with a view to demonstrate that the integrative approach to culture found in policy and some research is a particular and contested understanding.

Professional culture

Before discussing professional culture it is necessary to define 'profession'. Professions are understood here in both taxonomic terms (Johnson 1972) of traits (e.g., status, power, autonomy, specialised knowledge and training, a code of ethics, and group membership) and in the relationship between the profession and society, including with clients and between professions (Randall and Kandiak 2008). 'Professional' is a fluid and contested concept, one that may be determined by the power of one group to extract the status from society (Rueschemeyer 1983). In applying 'profession' as a lens, collaborative activity is contextualised in terms of the

institutional structures, incentives, practices and expertise that influence inter-professional interaction.

'Professional culture' as a concept emphasises the process through which a professional is inducted or socialised into his profession, which shapes how they understand and conduct his work, and so relate to others from other professional cultures. Extensive periods of education and training are usually required to gain entry to a profession. During this process individuals are socialised and become competent in the nomenclature, theories, tools, roles, responsibilities and values through 'professionalisation' (Loseke and Cahill 1986). Once qualified or partly-qualified a new professional is further inducted within her professional culture in practice or the workplace (Leicht and Fennell 2001). This process results in distinctive and enduring cognitive, normative and behavioural characteristics that are shared by members of their professional culture. Professions, agencies, organisations and sectors have their own history, value system, beliefs, assumptions, nomenclature and rituals; which can be interpreted as professional culture.

The majority of papers that include professional culture in relation to collaboration do not explicitly define the term. Professional culture is often used as one of a number of explanatory variables (e.g., Biggs 1997; Freeth 2001; Harker et al 2004; Sloper 2004; Axelsson and Bihari-Axelsson 2006; Gannon-Leary et al 2006; Canavan et al 2009) or in terms of constitutive features of culture such as discourses and values (Warin 2007), values and protocols (Atkinson et al 2005), social or medical models of professional practice (Johnson et al 2003), and 'values, priorities and ways of working' (Vulliamy and Webb 2001).

There are however more substantive treatments of professional culture in the literature (e.g., Hall 2005; Richardson and Asthana 2006). Hall (2005: 188), drawing on Parkes et al (1997), defines culture,

as the social heritage of a community... the sum total of the possessions, ways of thinking and behaviour which distinguishes one group of people from another and which tend to be passed down from generation to generation.

Hall (2005: 188) also states that each profession ‘has a different culture, including values, beliefs, attitudes, customs and behaviours.’ It is this focus on the constitutive features that distinguish one group from another that characterises professional culture.

Although studies tend not to substantively define inter-professional collaboration the research provides quite a sophisticated lens to understand how differences in professions emerge, are sustained and what the consequences are when professionals from different cultures seek to work collaboratively. Overall professional culture suggests quite an entrenched and complex set of relationships in the production and re-production of culture and yet culture is dynamic and there are opportunities for change.

The focus now switches to a more substantive focus on organisational culture to foreground the engagement with the Stockborough Challenge.

Organisational culture

This section explores organisational culture with the intention of illuminating the contested and varying interpretations. Following on from the discussion on leadership and the influence of managerialism the emphasis is placed on the limitations of the critical variable or integrative approach to culture, which is indicative of the type employed by New Labour’s policy.

‘Organisational culture’ is less a coherent concept and more a series of contested claims about how culture can be conceptualised and understood to function in organisations. The multiple definitions and interpretations of the term suggest looking past the minor differences to focus on commonalities.

Langan-Fox and Tan (1997) found organisational culture was typically identified as being stable and resistant to change, taken-for-granted by organisational members, and emerging from and being reproduced by the shared meanings and understandings of members.

Harris and Ogbonna (2002: 32) discovered that culture was theorised as,

pervasive, eclectic, layered and socially constructed phenomenon, which is generated through values, beliefs and assumptions but expressed through artefacts, structures and behaviours.

Rather than focus on these commonalities, the focus now shifts to the critical variable approach, which has been both particularly influential and controversial in defining organisational culture.

Critical Variable Approach

The critical variable approach to culture asserts culture as one of many variables defining an organisation such as strategy or structure (Alvesson 2002). Approaches that conceptualise culture as a critical variable are fundamentally managerial tools that seek to provide managers with strategies to improve organisational performance (Smircich 1983).

The 'excellence studies' emerged in the 1980's, instructing managers and business leaders to develop strong and unifying cultures within their organisations around core values and beliefs (e.g., Ouchi 1981; Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982). Culture was conceptualised as, for example, 'the way we do things round here' (Deal and Kennedy 1982: 4). A strong culture was meant to improve organisational performance, and the strength of a culture reflected the agreement of employees with the core values of the culture (Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982).

Edgar Schein (1985) presented one of the most sophisticated critical variable approaches. He defined culture as,

The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and there, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceived, think and feel in relation to these problems. (Schein 1985: 6)

Schein (1985) separates organisational culture into three levels. The core of an organisation's culture is the taken-for-granted assumptions that are invisible, pre-conscious and pervasive in the organisation. Values and norms are the next level of culture, and these reflect what is prioritised and considered appropriate. The most

visible element of an organisation's culture is the artefacts, which are the visible and audible structures and processes of an organisation in the form of office layouts, logos and slogans. Organisational culture fills an organisation's requirements for external adaptation and internal integration in the form of inducting new members and helping employees behave appropriately (Schein 1985). It is the role of the researcher to move between the levels of culture from the more external and visible values and artefacts to identify the common shared assumptions, which are the bedrock of an organisation's culture (Schein 1985).

Challenges to the Critical View

Despite its popularity and influence the critical variable approach has been extensively critiqued.

One criticism of the critical variable approach is that it is ontologically incorrect to assert that an organisation *has* a culture, as the alternative root metaphor approach contends that an organisation *is* a culture (Smircich 1983, Alvesson 2002). Where the critical variable approach understands culture as a one of a number of dimensions of an organisation, the root metaphor approach propounds culture as an interpretive or epistemological tool for researching and understanding organisations (Smircich 1983). Although Alvesson (2002) notes that in the root metaphor approach all is culture and so nothing is not culture, making it problematic to relate culture to other factors. The '*has* and *is*' dyad has also been critiqued as researchers can profitably draw from both understandings (Jung et al 2010: 1088).

The methodology of the critical variable approach has been persuasively critiqued. The 'excellence studies' writers' methodology has been roundly disputed for poor methodology such as inappropriate sampling (Silver 1987). Significantly, Schein's (1985) methodology and analytical approach have also been negatively assessed. Bate (1994) states that Schein (1985) conflates culture with organisation and fails to recognise the dynamic interdependence of culture and structures. Lewis (1998) identifies problems in Schein's (1985) approach to identifying the assumptions that are the bedrock of a particular culture by inference from more explicit cultural forms such as values and beliefs. Lewis notes that,

people's behaviour may not be an expression of their feelings, beliefs and values at all, but may be a contingency measure that they adopt to cope with situations as they arise. (p.256)

An additional focus of concern is the critical variable belief that organisational culture performs an integrative function, a point questioned by the differentiation and fragmentation perspectives.

Driscoll and Morris (2001) draw attention to the association between the critical variable approach to culture and the emergence unitarism in industrial relations, through the vector of human resource management (Noon 1992, Provis 1996). Unitarist approaches conceptualise organisations as 'an integrated and harmonious whole existing for a common purpose' (Farnham and Pimlott 1990: 4). The focus of unitarism goes beyond the harmonisation of interests by seeking to achieve the management and control of values (Provis 1996). Although, for example, Schein (1985) acknowledges variation in an organisation between managers, technicians and engineers and in individual variation from the shared basic assumptions of the culture the emphasis is on that which is shared across the organisation.

The differentiation perspective questions the critical variable perspective's unitary, organisation-wide view of culture and argues instead for consistency and coherence within organisational sub-cultures, formed along functional or hierarchical lines, around personalities or identity-based characteristics (Martin 1992).

The fragmentation perspective engages with the ambiguity, inconsistency, uncertainty, paradoxes and irony in the research of contemporary organisations (Martin 1992). Fragmentation studies typically engage with the point-of-view of professionals at the 'frontline' and the challenges they face. Culture is both the context and outcome of the dynamic negotiation and renegotiation as individuals interact within that culture (Meyerson and Martin 1987). However individuals do not always agree or share the same perceptions of incidents, symbols or meanings. As Meyerson (1991: 132) states,

Members share a common orientation – they work in organisations dominated by the medical profession – and they share a common purpose – to ‘help’ people. Yet, in different contexts, to different audiences, or at different times, social workers vary in their beliefs about their medical orientation, how to ‘help’, and even what it means to ‘help’.

Despite the obvious tensions, there is a case for synthesising the perspectives to afford a richer analysis. Martin (1992, 2002) argues for a subjective, multi-perspective approach to culture. However as Martin (1992: 186) notes each perspective partly ‘denies’ or critiques the others. For example, the integration and differentiation perspectives refute the claim that fragmentation studies research culture. Alvesson (2002) avers that the dissension and confusion that fragmentation studies find is evidence of too great a focus on individuals and an insufficient focus on what is collective and shared. Disputes notwithstanding, a number of studies have employed the three perspectives in researching organisational culture (e.g., Peck et al 2001). By using the three perspectives in the same analysis the research is able to attend to different elements of an organisation, an organisational culture, and processes of organisational culture change.

There is therefore a persuasive critique of the critical variable or integrative approach to culture, on which policy and some research on collaboration is based, so the question is what to make of the term? The term organisational culture provides a useful lens to conceptualise how individuals relate to one another and an organisation but this relationship might less be one of straightforward integration as involving fragmentation and differentiation. In the case of a collaborative culture this might mean that there are subcultures of un-collaborative individuals or that professionals will have different understandings of what collaboration actually means.

Alvesson (2002) and Osborne and Brown (2005) present a point of compromise between the different understandings of organisational culture that however it is conceptualised it seems sensible to consider the ‘fit’ between the an organisation’s culture and the processes or purposes of activity. The question of ‘fit’ shifts the focus from the organisational culture to collaboration. The focus on

collaboration is problematic because of, as was outlined above, the lack of specificity and de-contextualisation in definitions of collaboration. If, as both Powell and Dowling (2006) and Glendinning et al (2005) identify, there are different purposes of partnerships or perhaps even different purposes within a partnership would this mean that there would or should be different characteristics of the culture?

This section explored different understandings of culture, which is significant because New Labour's notion of culture as common and integrative is indicative of a particular view of organisational culture that has been critiqued. When discussing culture it is crucial to understand there are different perspectives both between professional and organisational culture, and also within organisational culture such as the emphasis on differentiation and fragmentation in culture and cultural change. Whether or not it is possible to change culture, it is argued that the best approach is to attempt to make the (organisational) culture 'fit' the accompanying activity or process.

CRITIQUE FOUR: SELF-REPORT METHODS

Thus far this critique has identified a number of limitations in the literature, which is of particular concern due to self-report methodologies used in most research. As I have explained, there is a lack of specificity as to what is collaboration and when collaboration is researched there is a tendency to de-contextualise potentially different organisational patterns of activity into generic definitions of, for example, 'partnership'. There is also a tendency to ignore the ideological influence on leadership in its role of transforming the public sector yet as we have seen there are contradictions between forms of leadership and the managerial context.

Culture and leadership are contemporary buzzwords and so it is important to acknowledge cultural explanations for the prominence of, for example, leadership in perceptions and explanations of how activity is and should be organised. Authors have argued that leadership is used as a convenient and popular explanation for more complex or misunderstood phenomena (Gemmill & Oakely, 1992; Beyer, 1999; Peck and Dickinson 2008). The rise of leadership is associated within the growth of individualisation in western societies (Lawler 2008) and the stigmatisation of following behaviour (Kellerman (2008).

There is therefore a question whether leadership is a high-value factor in collaborative working? Or, whether leadership is useful or is believed to be useful – by policy makers, practitioners and researchers – and so promoted and used as an explanation? The import of these questions is that it is prudent to not presume leadership and to adopt a critical perspective that does not unreflectively engage with the relationship between leadership and collaboration.

The issue of the potential for the over-emphasis on leadership for collaboration is that the majority of the research adopts a form of self-report methodology. For example, leadership for collaboration has been researched using interviews (Harker et al 2004; Atkinson et al 2005; Willumsen 2006; Billet et al 2007; Harris and Allen 2009; Straker and Foster 2009), interviews and observation (Harris 2003) interviews and questionnaire (Coleman 2012), interviews and focus groups (Frost and Robinson 2007), focus groups (Armistead et al 2007), Q-methodology (Sullivan et al 2012) or engaged with through theoretically-informed literature reviews (Sloper 2004; Frost 2009; Booker 2011; Close 2012; Purcell et al 2012).

Lumby (2009) identifies the methodological weakness of research that uses self-report methods as this limits the research to respondents' perceptions of partnership within their discrete contexts, raising the issue of whether self-reports can be interpreted as representative of similar phenomena. Despite making this point she uses interviews to explore the leadership in a collaborative context, and so maintains this methodological weakness with regards to leadership in multi-organisational collaboration.

The point is not to argue that self-report studies are necessarily not rigorous or uncritical, as Harris (2003) and Lumby (2009) are both critical and reflective, but that there is a need as Lumby (2009: 326) points out to observe and, 'unpick values in action, rather than values as discerned by self-report.' Of the research on leadership for collaboration (Frost 2009; Lumby 2009; Close 2012) and evaluation (DfES 2007), discussed above, all were self-report. There is therefore an absence of research that focuses on the challenges posed to leaders within the new context of leadership in and around the Children's Trust.

The implications of the difficulties of self-report methods can also be found in the evaluation of the Children's Trust initiative (DfES 2007). Due to resource constraints the evaluation sample focused on local enthusiasts for the Children's Trust initiative, which was recognised by the evaluation team as a methodological weakness (Bachmann et al 2008). There is a likelihood that the evaluation reflected what the policy makers thought should work and what local enthusiasts – who it can be assumed agreed with the policy – thought would work.

The potential that enthusiastic manager and practitioners were echoing government policy is problematic because there are reasons to doubt the 'evidence-based' process of the development and evaluation of the Children's Trusts.

The Audit Commission reviewed the development of the Children's Trust initiative and found that,

The structural change originally proposed was not based on evidence that it was either necessary or effective. (Audit Commission 2008: §155)

Furthermore, when the Trusts were refocused with the emphasis on cultural change the Audit Commission found that there was insufficient evidence to make this decision,

While it is too early to say whether Children's Trusts have made much of a difference to the lives of children and young people, it is also too early to say that the current arrangements need to be changed. (Audit Commission 2008: §157)

Thus the development of the Children's Trust was based on what policy makers thought would work rather than what the evidence suggested they should do.

There is a need to go beyond self-report methods. Lumby (2009) argues for ethnographic research and this represents an appropriate response to the issues in the literature this review has identified. The lack of specificity about what are collaboration, culture and leadership questions what it is researchers have been researching and professionals practising, could be explored through ethnographic

research. Similarly, Newman (2007) advocates employing ethnographic research to understand what policy entails in context, how it is interpreted and implemented.

In relation to this study's context, there is a case for conducting empirical research that problematises leadership and cultural change in collaborative working while engaging with the broad remit of the Every Child Matters agenda and the more diffuse patterns of collaborative activity engaged with by the Stockborough Challenge. It is important to engage with collaborative working in the wider context and analyse how senior managers and professionals are attempting to initiate and respond to opportunities for collaborative activity, while balancing these with alternative agendas, statutory responsibilities, and institutional incentives within the context of children's services. Furthermore, going beyond self-report to gain a deep insight into collaborative work and perhaps even engaging in collaboration would provide a significant contribution to the knowledge base.

This chapter outlined four conceptual or methodological limitations of the literature on collaboration in children's services, which inform how this research was approached. There are few if any studies that maintain adequate specificity of contextualised forms of collaboration, engage with the discursive and ideological dimensions to leadership and cultural change, and also the constraints of self-report methods. How these issues will be engaged with is outlined in the next section.

POSITIONING THE RESEARCH

This section positions the current research in relation to the literature on leadership for collaboration to identify the contribution this research will make, through the study of the Stockborough Challenge.

Reflecting on this chapter, it is evident with leadership, cultural change and collaboration there are significant issues around meanings, definitions and the influence of discourses and ideologies both within and between policy and research, with implications for how managers and practitioners understand what they are doing. These issues present substantive challenges for the current research.

This research will therefore seek to conceptualise and research collaboration with sufficient specificity and without de-contextualising it. Leadership will be

understood both as a pattern of inter-personal behaviour but also as part of an influential discourse within an ideological context in terms of the relationships between leadership, managerialism and the reform of the English public sector. Culture is seen as a complex and contested set of terms and claims that seems to conflict with the rather simplistic, integrative approach to culture that is found in policy and some research. Furthermore, the research will seek to progress beyond self-report methods and adopt a critical focus on what professionals and managers do in practice in context.

Beyond these four focuses the research presents a series of conceptual and methodological challenges in understanding the relationship between policy, practice and research. Considering the policy context and literature review chapters together there appear to be potential tensions between the policy context and the research on leadership for collaboration in children's services.

Chapter two emphasised the Public Sector Reform Model's (PSRM) focus on reconciling the contradiction between market and target dynamics in relation to working collaboratively. The PSRM was linked to government policy and guidance that promoted leadership and cultural change to provide a cohesive and directive force to reconcile the contradiction between competitive and collaborative pressures in children's services (e.g., DCSF 2007). There were issues with the lack of specificity in definitions of collaboration (e.g., Audit Commission 1998; Ling 2002; Clarke et al 2008; Ball 2008) and leadership (Frost 2009; Close 2012) in policy.

The research on leadership for collaboration focused on some the practical functions of leadership such as developing ownership (e.g., Harker 2004) or managing meaning and identity in inter-professional contexts (e.g., Frost 2009). Of course there is nothing necessarily contradictory with leadership and leaders performing different functions and purposes. Indeed, there is a logic that at the policy level what is described as leadership balancing pressures in the PSRM would manifest at the frontline in terms of leaders managing issues around ownership, identity and meaning.

What is potentially problematic are the lack of specificity and multiple meanings as to what are collaboration, leadership and cultural change in both policy

and research. The multiple meanings of each term raise the question of which meanings are communicated through policy and how and which of the meanings are interpreted and enacted by senior managers as they developed the Stockborough Challenge. The multiple meanings of what are leadership and cultural change are not insignificant as different interpretations imply consequences for, for example, the viability of purposeful cultural change. Furthermore, this process needs to be understood within the political and ideological context of New Labour's transformation of public services. In chapter two Labour's approach to culture and cultural change centred around an integrative or common culture (e.g., DCSF 2007) however as was described in the section on organisational culture in this chapter the notion of culture and cultural change as a solely integrative has been subject to critique (Smircich 1983; Martin 1992).

The relationship between policy and how the senior managers interpret and engage with that policy and translate the policy into the Stockborough Challenge is a crucial aspect of this research, which requires a suitably focused and sophisticated set of analytical tools. Policy enactment (Ball et al 2012), and associated concepts such as articulation (Fairclough 2003; Clarke and Newman 2009) and assemblage (DeLanda 2006), provide a useful lens for engaging with these issues identified in the research of leadership for collaboration within the context of New Labour's reform of children's services.

The literature on policy enactment scrutinises policy, unpicks how policy defines and shapes how problems are represented and the consequences for social and organisational challenges are approached, and the relationships between policy makers and texts and the managers, professionals and context. Policy is not presented as something exclusively performed by policy makers at the national level but rather policy is understood in a 'dynamic, non-linear aspect of the whole complex that makes up the policy process' (Rizvi and Lingard 2009: 6).

The focus of policy enactment is directly relevant to the site, process and activities that this research engages with, the ways in which senior managers interpret and de-code, translate and re-code government policy for leadership, cultural change and collaboration (Ball et al 2012). There is an acknowledgement of

the interaction between intended courses of action and the happenstance, messiness and complex social processes that characterises work in local authorities. Furthermore, as has been explained there was a lack of clarity in policy relating to what were leadership and collaboration, which is an accepted focus of research in policy enactment. As Ball (1994: 19) writes,

Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set.

The emphasis is then placed on understanding how managers or professionals interpret and translate policy into local practices, influenced by policy technologies such as managerialism (Ball 2003). Policy enactment therefore provides a series of sophisticated conceptual tools to illuminate and explore how policy informs, defines and denies the action of managers and practitioners in developing an initiative such as the Stockborough Challenge.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the literature on collaboration, leadership and cultural change in children's services. Leadership was found to be a significant factor in facilitating collaboration but there was limited evidence on the specific context of leadership in the Children's Trust initiative. A four-point critique was presented relating to the lack of specificity and the de-contextualisation of definitions of collaboration, the under-engagement with the relationships between leadership and managerialism, the contested nature of a particular and managerial-influenced perspective of culture, and the use of self-report methods and the lack of critical research that directly engages with collaborative working in practice.

The research I report in subsequent chapters engages with the theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues raised through the use of a policy enactment approach that attends to how collaboration, leadership and cultural change are specified and contextualised in the Stockborough Challenge. I will use the concepts of policy enactment, articulation and assemblage to understand the way in which policy represents the 'problem' (Bacchi 2009) of collaboration, and the influences for

how senior managers interpreted and enacted the Challenge. I argue that when researching collaboration it is imperative to attend to the ways in which policy, policy technologies and discourses emphasise, bias or obscure particular understandings of what collaboration is and how to improve it.

The next chapter describes the methodology used to engage with the research questions.

PART 2: RESEARCHING THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCHING THE CHALLENGE

The purpose of this chapter is to outline, interrelate and justify the methodology employed to investigate the following research questions, which are organised according to one overall question and four subordinate questions:

How can a local authority facilitate processes of collaborative working?

1. How did the Stockborough Challenge seek to improve collaboration?
2. How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge's approach to improving collaboration?
3. How did national-to-local contextual factors influence the Stockborough Challenge?
4. What can be learned from the Stockborough Challenge to inform initiatives to improve collaboration?

This chapter is organised in six sections, which discuss the methodological framework, the approach to data collection, the data analysis, issues relating to the quality and presentation of the data, and ethics. The methodology and research was relatively complex, for a schematic representation refer to figure 5, on page 84, which describes the development of the research design in relation to the phases of the research and the processes and focuses in the research of the Stockborough Challenge.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Before outlining and justifying the methodology and methods of my research it is necessary to describe the approach half-imposed and half-chosen in researching the Stockborough Challenge.

EMBEDDED RESEARCH

The research was conducted as part of an ESRC Case Studentship and a co-sponsored collaborative relationship between the University of Manchester and Stockborough Children's Services and so I found myself in an 'embedded research' position (McGinity and Salokangas 2012). The purpose of my role for Stockborough local authority was to generate evidence on the Challenge, as part of the initiative's

commitment to evidence-based practice. I was therefore embedded as an active participant in the context I was researching. As an embedded researcher I was granted substantial access to various settings in Stockborough Children's services, from the Children's Trust to the local schools, and received a high level of commitment and engagement with my research.

The field of embedded research remains under-theorised and so it is useful to draw from discussions on insider/outsider research. The insider-outsider dilemma was first raised by Merton (1972) and has become an area of contention in qualitative research since (e.g., Sikes and Potts 2008; Drake 2010). The literature can broadly be divided into three points of discussion. One, the ontological validity of the concept of 'insider' or 'outsider', whether they are mutually exclusive (Olson, 1977), a continuum (Christensen and Dahl 1997) or contingent (Deutsch, 1981)? Two, the benefits and constraints of insider research (e.g., Labaree 2002), in particular in terms of epistemological consequences of the insiders' improved knowledge and understanding for the research (e.g., Merton 1972; Kanuha, 2000). Three, how insiderness might affect the interpretation and report of findings (de Andrade 2000)?

In relating my individual case to the literature, there are questions whether I was an 'insider', and if so by how much and what were the implications? As Griffith (1998) notes, an insider is someone with prior knowledge and membership of the group being researched. I was not previously employed in the council nor had I worked in any of the professions prior to the research. I did not have any pre-existing technical or knowledge. Any *insiderness* I came to possess was through spending time researching the Challenge. As a nominal employee I was afforded considerable access and sufficient status to spend substantive periods of time conducting research. My position could perhaps therefore be thought of as becoming a nominal insider, with an emphasis on the opportunities for access rather than a preceding expertise of the subject being researched.

Understanding that my position and relation to the context was shifting and may have tended to insider at times I took care to constantly reflect on the

implications and influences of insidership throughout my research, and I return to this issue when assessing the quality of my research (see pages 251-252).

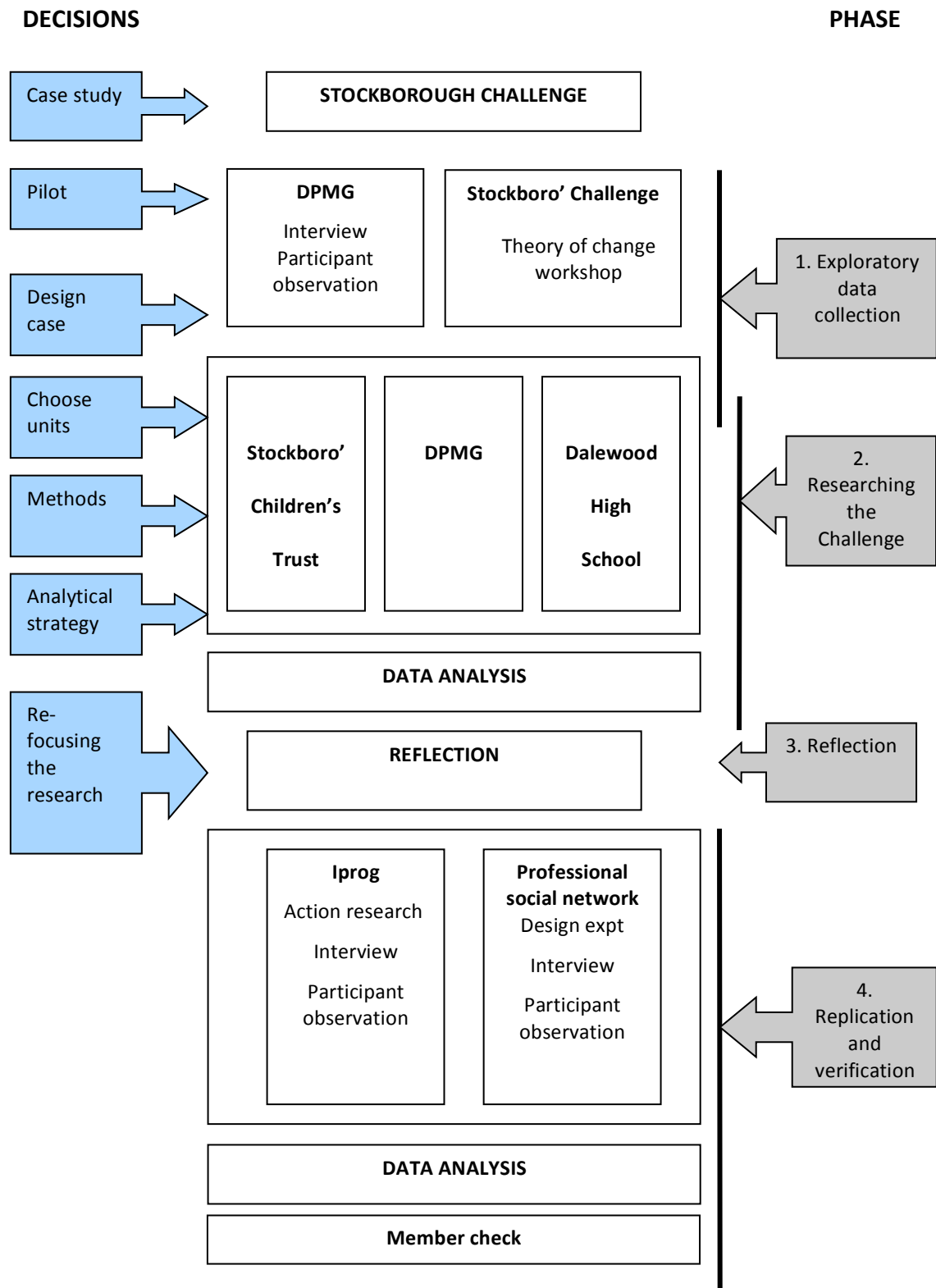


FIGURE 5: A schematic overview of the research design

Regardless of whether embedded or inside, for a doctoral researcher being associated with a local authority project raises significant challenges and anxieties. The English public sector was a highly complex and dynamic context (Pollitt 2007). The Challenge was beset by a series of disruptions and displacements until it was defunct three months into my fieldwork phase in the second year of my PhD. I was concerned that the initiative was too insubstantial to be researched, and so I spent a fair amount of time looking for alternative foci, such as a collaborative further education initiative in Stockborough or a children's centre. During this time I became interested in how collaboration was understood and enacted from various perspectives in children's services and this suggested the utility of a social constructionist epistemology.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

This research seeks to explore and understand how senior managers and professionals understood collaboration in a local authority and how they sought to facilitate collaborative working, which is an appropriate subject for a social constructionist epistemology. Crotty (1998: 42) portrays social constructionism as the belief that,

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.

Hacking (1999) provides guidance for determining whether or not a particular subject is appropriate for social construction analysis. If a phenomenon or institution is obviously perceived to be a social construction, such as the Bank of England, then it is not appropriate as the output would be 'silly' – in Hacking's words but perhaps 'banal' is more appropriate. Subjects such as gender or race or the economy are more appropriate subjects for a social constructionist approach as they are widely perceived to be inevitable and pervasive and thus the identification of them as social constructs is enlightening. It is argued that collaboration is a social construct. Thus, rephrasing Hacking, this study engages with the question, why are we so unquestioning about the very ideas of 'collaboration' and 'leadership'?

Social constructionism has been criticised for the conceptualisation of the self as both constrained by history and inexplicably free to act in new ways (Bishop 2007). Another criticism is that although negating the possibility of 'objectivity', social constructionists still claim to possess a 'truer perspective' while maintaining particular normative values, without accounting for the validity or superiority of a social constructionist account in relation to alternatives (Bishop 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2011: 564) find in the quasi-foundationalism of social constructionism, no means for assessing findings without a,

set of external of foundational criteria... their meanings are arrived at through consensus and discussion in the scientific community... There is no satisfactory method for resolving this issue of how to evaluate an empirical claim.

In response Hammersley (2008: 48) asks, 'Why should a belief only be treated as knowledge when its validity is absolutely certain?' Hammersley (2008) points to 'fallibilism' (Haack 2003), a 'critical common-sensist' position which acknowledges the social nature of inquiry and the interdependence of observation and theory but still maintains that rigorous inquiry with attention to evidence can produce knowledge with particular and desirable epistemic qualities. Thus this research adopts a social constructionist and fallibilist epistemology.

Although interested in collaboration I still had the opportunity to study the Stockborough Challenge. My supervisor said on a number of occasions that,

Local authorities across the country are trying to think through the Every Child Matters agenda. What's interesting about Stockborough is they've started this thing called the Stockborough Challenge and it would be interesting to tell that story.

A case study was chosen as the most appropriate research strategy for telling the 'story' of the Stockborough Challenge. I would approach the Challenge as it was described by, for example, the Director of the Challenge Henry Jacobson, as a local authority initiative to improve collaborative working through a campaign of cultural change.

CASE STUDY

This section provides the rationale for selecting a case study as the methodological framework. The discussion will proceed by a description of and justification for a case study and then specification of the unit of analysis, case design, selection of units, qualitative methods, and theoretical framework.

Yin (2009) proposes a two-fold definition of a case study that outlines the scope and data collection and analysis:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (p.13)
2. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p.13)

A case study approach was judged to be the most appropriate framework. Yin (2009: 9) asserts the applicability of case study design when,

a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little control.

This scenario seemed to fit my role as an embedded researcher with the Challenge.

It is important to acknowledge that there are limitations of case studies, in relation to the aims of this study of providing guidance for policy and practice. Thus, the focus on a single case is thought to produce findings with insufficient external validity to produce generalisable findings. Flyvberg (2004) argues that the low external validity of case studies is a misunderstanding and something that can be addressed through appropriate research design, a view that informs this research.

IDENTIFYING THE CASE

In conducting a case study it is imperative to ascertain the unit of analysis, which defines the object being studied. The unit of analysis can be an individual, a

place, an organisation, an event, a decision or a time period (de Vaus 2001). In casing the Stockborough Challenge there remained some uncertainty as to what was the case a case of and how to design and identify the relationships between the Stockborough Challenge and the individuals, places and organisations within the Challenge's remit.

Patton (2002) advises to select the unit of analysis as the phenomena, 'you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study' (p229). Here Stake's (2005: 445) distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case studies is informative. Intrinsic case studies are 'undertaken because, first and last, one wants better understanding of this particular case.' Instrumental case studies on the other hand are orientated towards reflecting on broader issues or theoretical debates. My research fell somewhere between the poles of intrinsic or instrumental research. In the beginning my position as a collaborative researcher emphasised the significance of the Challenge. However in time I came to perceive the Challenge as illustrative of wider processes of and approaches to re-organising children's services and the public sector as part of the collaborative agenda. The Challenge was increasingly beset by problems but it was an earnest attempt by managers to engage with policy exhortations that were influenced by various policy and practice debates on, for example, the efficacy of leadership and cultural change. The decision was made to perceive the substantive problems as illustrative of wider issues but which issues required further thought, and thus adopt an instrumental approach.

There were two potential emphasises for the research. The first looked at the relationship between the national and local levels, focusing on the policy exhortation for cultural change in children's services. This would mean the analysis accepted cultural change as a variable and would explore the processes undertaken to achieve cultural change and the positive and negative consequences. This would position the research in an evaluative or a policy implementation frame, of which there are many examples. Instead, I decided to focus on the relationship between the Challenge, collaborative working and leadership within the context of public sector reform.

Thus the case is the Stockborough Challenge, as a process of local authority change to improve collaborative working. The Challenge was however a process of change in existing organisations and networks and so it was necessary to locate particular sites in which the effects of the Challenge would be observed. This brings us onto the design of the case and the selection of the sub-units.

DESIGN AND SELECTION OF SUB-UNITS

In case studies the design and selection of the case and units determines the external validity of the findings (de Vaus 2001). The design and selection of the sub-units followed the four-phase structure of the research. The first two phases – exploratory and research – were single case, embedded cases informed by theoretical sampling. Then after the refocusing of the research in phase three, the replication and verification logics were utilised in the fourth phase to progressively focus the research to respond to the research questions (Mabry 2008).

When planning the research a crucial task was to develop a clearly bounded case with defined relationships between the case and the components considered part of the case. The case study design was informed by Yin's (2009) two-by-two matrix typology. A design can either be single-case or multiple-case design with holistic or embedded sub-units. As the Challenge initiative was complex and diffuse, in not being located in a single organisation, it was unsuitable for a single, holistic case and so a single-case, embedded units design was selected.

The initial plan was to research the Challenge through three embedded units (Yin 2009), selected at strategic levels to match the three arenas of change implicated in the Challenge's design, and to strategically illuminate the wider processes of change. The embedded units were the Stockborough Children's Trust, the Stockborough Challenge 'champions' and the Dalewood High School. They were chosen on the basis that they represented the best potential or actual examples of effective or innovative collaborative activity. This of course introduced bias in skewing units to explicitly positive examples of the Challenge at work however the pre-selection of the cases placed the sampling beyond the control of the researcher once the selection has been made, reducing the possibility of researcher bias.

During the fieldwork I began to doubt that the selected sub-units represented logical and interrelated components of the Challenge and so did not meet the criterion for an embedded design (Yin 2009). The 'champion' network did not emerge and there seemed only to be nominal relationships between the Challenge and the Children's Trust and the Children's Trust and Dalewood High School. However I decided to maintain a single case, embedded unit design by focusing on the Challenge as the case and identifying a series of sub-units that were logically related to the Challenge. The Director of the Challenge made the decision as to which sub-units were related to the Challenge, on the basis of which projects were illustrative of the initiative. Thus from these sub-units I could make valid interpretations of the Challenge. The eventual embedded units were the Children's Trust and Dalewood High School.

Once the units were selected decisions about what to attend to and engage with were made according to theoretical sampling and the process of testing and refining emerging theory (Strauss 1987; Eisenhardt 1989). If done correctly, theoretical sampling 'pays very high dividends because it moves the theory along quickly and efficiently' (Strauss 1987: 39). Theoretical sampling involves the researcher making decisions during the fieldwork about what to research and thus there is the threat of biases orientating the research to confirming the researcher's findings (Flyvbjerg 2004). Flyvbjerg (2004) opines selecting the units according to which ones will generate the richest and most appropriate dataset for answering the research questions. It was decided to find the most illustrative data to build a rich data set incorporating various strategies to build validity, such as testing rival theories.

Once the first two phases of the research were completed (the exploratory phase and the embedded cases), the data were analysed and a period of reflection led to the refocusing of the research and the replication and verification phase. The refocusing of the research is explained in more detail below. What is significant here is the rationale for the verification phase and the selection of the units.

The replication and verification phase began once the case theory was sufficiently developed and so replication logic was employed to test and refine the

theory in purposefully developed units (Yin 2009). The preliminary theories and ideas emerging from the first phases of the research were tested using replication logic, which involves developing a rich theoretical framework and assessing its explanatory powers over a series of discrete cases to develop 'literal replication' of the same results or 'theoretical replication' of supporting the theory (Yin 2009). The units for the replication and verification were Iprog and the professional social network.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

Yin (2009) notes that case studies are mistakenly equated with qualitative research methods when quantitative methods are equally valid and used, and so it is necessary to make the case for the qualitative approach in this instance.

Qualitative methods were chosen to engage with the contextual complexity of the English public sector, which has been subject to frequent bouts of change and reform. Pollitt (2007) states that the frequency, breadth and depth of change in the UK public sector since Margaret Thatcher and continuing under 'New Labour's re-organisation' means that,

It is difficult enough to evaluate the effects of public management reforms... but to try to do so under conditions of 'permanent revolution' is fruitless... the totality of change quite obscures the underlying patterns of causation. (p. 538)

The significance of Pollitt's insights are all too clear for the present case. It is important to acknowledge that the Challenge was intended to be a campaign that reconciled the various change processes within children's services in Stockborough.

Yin (2009) cautions the use of case studies in researching implementation and organisational change as the case has to deal with, for example, differing interpretations of what is the process and the influence of conditions that precede the process. Despite cautioning against using case studies in organisational change processes, Yin (1993) also asserts the utility of case studies when there are significant interrelationships and fuzziness between the object of study and its context. Arguably, where there are differences in opinion about the nature of the object and the complex relationships between the process and context an in-depth,

long-term analysis through qualitative research is the most appropriate research strategy to identify understand and explain such complexities.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

I did not approach the research with a singular theoretical approach in mind. There were numerous fleeting theoretical influences during the research (e.g., social network theory and cultural historical activity theory). Influenced by my embedded research position I searched for conceptual lenses that would guide and illuminate the analysis of the Challenge without getting too caught up in theoretical debates with the risk I would impose a theory rather than research an initiative, as I found I had a predisposition to do so. Eventually I selected policy enactment as a broad approach to the research complemented by the concepts of articulation and assemblage.

Policy enactment is an increasingly popular approach for understanding the complex processes through which policy is interpreted and translated into practice in context (Braun et al 2011; Ball et al 2012). There is a focus on diverse and interrelated sources, forms and media of policy that cohere and are communicated in policy ensembles (Ball 2006). Managers respond to policy through interpretation and translation through which a policy is literally enacted or brought to life (Ball et al 2012). Policy enactment keenly focuses on these processes and the various causal and consequential processes and activities, such as the influence of policy technologies that routinely organise and inform social relations (Ball 2003).

Within the array of conceptual tools that complement the analysis of policy enactment I found Carol Bacchi's (2009) 'what's the problem represented to be' approach (WPR) particularly useful. WPR critiques the notion that through policy governments respond to problems in society. Rather policy is understood to construct and represent 'problems' and that these representations are partial, inhere assumptions, and that the biases and silences in policy should be critically engaged with.

Articulation describes how political projects are strategically constructed by combining new and old components of discourses to develop and close

opportunities for political action (Fairclough 2003, Clarke and Newman 2009).

Dryzek defines a discourse as,

a framework for apprehending the world embedded in language, enabling its adherents to put together diverse bits of sensory information into coherent wholes. These adherents therefore share assumptions and capabilities, which they will typically take for granted, often unaware even of the possibility of alternatives to them. (Dryzek 1996: 103)

Articulation highlights that ‘collaboration’ was promoted as part of a particular political project according to a range of factors, other than for instance the practicability and utility of collaborative working in children’s services. Thus articulation incorporates into the analysis what policy says and the wider discursive context from which policy drew, shaped and was influenced the Stockborough Challenge.

Assemblages are ‘wholes characterised by relations of exteriority’ (DeLanda 2006: 10). Rather than describing a totality, such as an organisation or government, which is formed through ‘relations of interiority’ (DeLanda 2006: 9), an assemblage describes the institutionalisation of a series of diverse components (e.g., ‘policies, personnel, places, practices, technologies, images, architectures of governance and resources’) to achieve a political project (Newman and Clarke 2009: 2). Here I equate political project with organisational project. The organisational project I am researching is the bringing together of a range of components to assemble the Children’s Trust. There is therefore an acknowledgement that political projects are built out of diverse and available or appropriate components, and between which there are forces of convergence or divergence and coherence or incoherence that contribute to constraining or realising the political or organisational project.

FIELDWORK

Researching the Stockborough Challenge represented a difficult undertaking. The Challenge was engaging with the Every Child Matters agenda and the development of the Children’s Trust both of which interact with numerous sectors, professions and organisations in various settings and sites. Furthermore, from its initial inception the Challenge underwent a series of changes and disruptions. From

the start of the research the second version of the initiative was starting to become clearer but as the research design and activities were being planned, from March 2009 onwards, there were signs that the Challenge would be discontinued and indeed by the start of the fieldwork phase the director had resigned and the future of the initiative was uncertain. The tentative nature of the Challenge and my role as an embedded researcher, with responsibility for helping the director to define the initiative, heavily influenced how the research was conducted.

This research's epistemology, case-study design and theoretical sampling all suggested that a large amount of dissimilar data would be collected using different methods and posing the challenge of organising and analysing the data and so an explicit fieldwork strategy was devised, developed and followed.

In case studies there is a danger of 'data overload' (Miles and Huberman 1994: 17) and in collecting and relating different types of data and so clear and methodical procedures were followed, including maintaining field notes and a chain of evidence. Field notes were organised in a research diary that was kept throughout the investigation. Where possible comprehensive notes were taken (e.g., Spradley 1980) otherwise the notes were used to record episodes, reflections and ideas. Eisenhardt (2002) posits that maintaining field notes assists in comparing and contrasting diverse cases, which was a concern in this study. Furthermore, the field notes aided in collecting the contextual factors that are believed to be important to adequately analysing collaborative culture. In addition the research followed the 'chain of evidence' approach (Yin 2009) to produce a concrete and explicit link between specific instances of field research and the final presentation of evidence.

Due to the potential for data overload in case studies and the importance of a theoretical dimension research propositions are useful for orientating the research at macro and micro levels (Yin 1994). A proposition focuses the research on what needs to be researched and where to look to find it to build the case's theory and answer the research questions (Yin 2003). The first propositions were developed for the pilot study, revised afterwards and then continually throughout the fieldwork.

DATA COLLECTION

There were four phases of data collection – exploratory research, research, reflection, and replication and verification – that enabled the analysis to establish and progressively narrow the focus of the study through processes of reflection, further research and verification. Phase one was the pilot study. Phase two focused on the Stockborough Challenge and answering research questions 1.a., 1.b., and 1.c. The methods used were theories of change evaluation, participant observation and interviews. Then followed a hiatus where I came to question my approach to researching collaboration, which was resolved by re-operationalising ‘collaboration’. The hiatus led to the third phase where I initiated two research projects to test by replication logic and verify the research propositions developed up to that point. The third phase sought to develop a response to research question 1.d.

PHASE ONE: EXPLORATORY (MAY 2010 – DECEMBER 2010)

The exploratory phase was intended to orient the research and establish the propositions to be developed during the subsequent research. The methods used in the exploratory phase were a pilot study and theory of change workshop (see table 2), which will now be discussed in turn.

Method	Number	Participants
Interviews	24	24
Participant observations	2	12
Theory of change workshop	1	6

TABLE 2: Methods used in Phase One

A decision was made to conduct a pilot study to orientate and ground the development of the research plan. The pilot study focused on the Dalewood Pilot Management Group (DPMG), which was set up by the head teacher of Dalewood High School and the director of the Stockborough Challenge ‘to get plates spinning with regards to collaborative working in Dalewood.’ The DPMG was therefore identified as a promising example of collaboration at the desired stage of development, and an example of what the Challenge was attempting to do. The pilot study consisted of a participant observation of one of the DPMG meetings and eight semi-structured interviews with group members. The interviewees were

drawn in a self-selective sample that was managed to represent the diverse professions within the group. I approached the interviewees by email, providing them with a description of the research (see appendix 1), to give them the opportunity to not participate in the research. The interviews focused on effective approaches and barriers to collaboration and perceptions of the DPMG.

The pilot study was useful for testing and developing various techniques for the later research and also for identifying interesting research foci. The pilot study was used to develop and test the approach to interview scripts and the initial analytical codes. The most significant outcome of the pilot study was the development of the initial series of tentative propositions (Yin 2009), drawn from the literature and pilot research. These propositions were used to focus the research in day-to-day activities, to guide the investigation and analysis, and engage with the research questions.

Theory of change

The exploratory phase established that the Challenge's aims and processes were unclear and so a Theory of Change analysis was conducted to elucidate them.

Theory of change is a form of theory-driven evaluation (Chen 1990). Connell and Kubisch (1998: 16) describe theory of change as the 'systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts.' The purpose of the method is to make explicit the implicit assumptions and links within an envisioned change process (Sullivan and Stewart 2006). Theories of change are often used in making sense of and evaluating processes of complex change in the public sector and so were judged to be appropriate.

A workshop and paper-based theory of change analysis was conducted. Professor Alan Dyson facilitated a theory of change workshop with seven professionals from Stockborough to help establish and communicate the Challenge's theory of change. Participants were provided with an outline explaining the method and the questions that would be engaged with. I took notes during the workshop and produced a written report. The workshop was supplemented with a paper-based theory of change review of the four Challenge policy documents to plot and understand the development and change in the initiative's theory of change. The

theory of change processes produced two important insights, one analytical and one related to the subsequent design of the research.

The Challenge was found to have a relatively coherent theory of change however it under-theorised how collaboration would contribute to improved outcomes for children and young people. Where the theory was clearest was on how outputs would be changed, through techniques drawn from generic change processes (e.g., champions and visions) and organisational development (e.g., learning organisations). Thus the focus of the activities was either making change happen or creating a learning organisation with characteristics that were thought to serve various positive functions. There was however no theory of collaboration, no rationale for engaging in specific change processes that would improve collaboration, which would improve outcomes. The Challenge it seemed had a theory of change but not a theory of that which was to be changed, collaboration.

One limitation of the workshop, with significance for the subsequent research design, was that it was unclear how widely the Challenge's theory of change was understood and shared. The workshop was under-attended, with only seven participants – a reflection on the difficulty of getting professionals to 'step away from the day job' to participate in developmental activity to build collaborative capacity. One of the participants was the director of the Challenge with the most detailed and respected viewpoint on the initiative and thus his view it can be assumed carried most weight. The director's input was insightful but the lack of broader participation in the workshop raised an issue to how broadly the view was shared and also 'owned' (Barnes et al 2003: 193-194). The implication for the research from the theory of change component was to ensure that the participant observations and interviews engaged with a variety of different contexts and perspectives.

After the exploratory phase, I planned and then began the second phase of the research.

PHASE TWO: RESEARCHING THE CHALLENGE (NOVEMBER 2010 – SEPTEMBER 2011)

The second phase of the research engaged more directly with the Stockborough Challenge using participant observations of key meetings and

interviews with key personnel. The methods employed are described below (see table 3).

Method		Number	Participants
Interviews		18	18
Participant observations	DHS	2	15
	SCT	7	25
	Milltown	2	9
	SCAB	2	6
	Conference	2	140+

TABLE 3: Methods used in Phase Two

Participant observations

As a researcher on the Stockborough Challenge I was effectively a participant observer throughout all of the research activities but functioned with varying degrees of participation in different contexts. I was allowed to attend a variety of meetings and events of different types, which provided different vantage points from which to observe either collaborative working or the Stockborough Challenge. To investigate collaborative working I observed seven Children’s Trust meetings and various inter-professional meetings, the 0-19 Extended Services Network (n=five), and the Milltown High School inter-professional network group (n=two). To study the Challenge I attended two meetings of the Stockborough Challenge Advisory Board and the two Challenge conferences.

My approach to participant observation was to conduct myself according to what I felt was appropriate to the context. I felt that tape recording participant observation sessions would be unduly intrusive and constrain the phenomena I hoped to observe and so written notes were taken. Most of the observations were of meetings that followed a familiar pattern and so I developed and used an informal structure for observation. Initially I used a tool to specify the dimensions of the collaboration being observed however I stopped using the tool when it became clear that most observations were professional network meetings or the Children’s Trust meetings. As soon after the observation sessions as possible I wrote up the notes and reflected on what I had seen, beginning the analysis process.

Interviews

Interviews with professionals were a key method of data collection. Maykut and Morehouse (1994: 79) state that 'an interview is a conversation with a purpose'. The purpose of the interviews and so the form varied to meet the needs of the research at particular points. Initially, interviews were more exploratory and open with the intention to develop a data set that included a diverse range of opinions and viewpoints on the Challenge. An interview schedule was developed and prepared as an 'aide memoire' (Holloway 1997) to inform and direct the conversation (see appendix 4). The sequence of items was structured so the interview starts with 'small talk' to build rapport and then the aims of the research were described and the participant was asked to read and sign the ethics form (see appendix 6). The next stage was the substantive part of the interview, which was structured around the interview schedule and the participant's responses.

The script was primarily used to facilitate organisation and coherence in the analysis phase. The purpose of the interview was to generate data and if the conversation moved beyond the focus of the prompts I preferred to allow the participant to provide her interpretation or follow her interests, if the talk was relevant to answering the research questions or met the aims of the interview.

A second purpose for interviews was to complement participant observations or 'fact check' from reported events. During a participant observation session, a researcher may observe something she finds meaningful but does not understand or would like a clarified or explained by the actor or witnesses through an interview. Furthermore as culture was a focus of the study and the elements of culture are contextual, complex, contested, diffuse and potentially sub-conscious they present significant challenges to research. In the interviews I asked about the descriptive elements of collaborative work (e.g., chronology and division of tasks and responsibilities) to develop a realistic and fair portrayal of events. Then, to access the cultural data, I employed an adapted version of Knight and Saunders (1999) technique of dialogic interviewing. The technique involves the interviewer following a semi-structured protocol, engaging in 'challenge, clarification and counter-argument...' with the interviewee to co-construct an explicit account of the

organisation's culture. The intention is not to bully the participant into giving a particular answer but rather to encourage them to reflect and develop his perceptions.

The interviews were mostly conducted face-to-face, one-to-one in order to develop rapport however when it was more convenient for the participant telephone interviews were used. The use of the phone for interviews was limited due to the possibility for misinterpretations due to a lack of verbal cues (Robson, 2002).

Participants were selected for interview based on his or her relationship to the Stockborough Challenge, related or illustrative processes or indeed sometimes to reflect on different conditions and processes from which comparisons could be made with the Challenge. I asked participants to recommend others whom I should interview in a snowballing sampling approach. Overall I conducted 62 interviews (for a list of those interview see appendix 8).

The theory of change activities, participant observations and interviews in the second phase of the research provided a clear understanding of the Challenge's form, functions and aims at various points of its development. This interpretation of *the* Challenge was balanced by observations from different vantage points by professionals seeking to engage with or avoid the initiative. I felt as though I had enough data to respond to research questions 1.a. and 1.b however as I began to contextualise the Challenge in relation to the local and national context, in order to answer research question 1.c, I became concerned with a gap in my analysis, to which we now turn.

PHASE THREE: REFLECTION (JUNE 2011 – SEPTEMBER 2011)

My approach to the study was characterised by reflexivity and recursive analysis and this led to the identification of limitations in the research design and the subsequent re-focusing of the enquiry.

The primary research question for the research was: 1. How can a local authority facilitate processes of inter-professional collaboration? There was a risk that my research had focused on the Stockborough Challenge as a local authority

change process rather than the Stockborough Challenge as a change process to facilitate collaborative working. I was concerned that my access to the practice of collaborative working was limited and therefore I had insufficient experience and knowledge to interpret the Challenge in relation to the 'black box' of collaborative working.

If accessing 'collaboration' was increasingly important to my research I realised that my operationalisation of the term needed to be specific and appropriate, something I found cause to question. Initially I used Hardy's definition of collaboration (see page 50) but in practice and with reflection on the research I found it to be unsuitable. During this time I read Hansen's (2010) 'Collaboration' and his approach to 'disciplined collaboration' in the business sector. Re-interpreting Hansen's definition for the public sector, I adopted a purposive definition of collaboration that engaged with collaboration by asserting different patterns of collaboration defined by sets of purposive action.

The value of a purposive definition was that I could begin to specify a relationship between the Challenge and collaborative working by defining collaborative working, something the Challenge had not done. In line with the broad aims of the Challenge and the pattern of collaborative working I had been researching, I chose to focus on collaboration as activity that crosses professional or organisational boundaries with the specific purpose of innovating in service delivery to improve outcomes.

The changed operationalisation of collaboration meant I had to revise the guiding propositions of the research and the design of appropriate research methods to engage with them, which moved the research onto phase four.

PHASE FOUR: REPLICATION AND VERIFICATION (JULY 2011 – MARCH 2012)

The refocusing of the research meant that I had a lot of data but I was unsure how it could be interpreted and related both to the Stockborough Challenge and collaboration more broadly. I developed two projects that would enable me to experience collaborative working in order to be able to better interpret my existing data and also explore and verify my findings. The projects I developed were influenced by action research and design experiments. In addition, 10 member

check interviews were used to present the findings back to particular individuals from the original sample to see if they recognised and agreed with what had been found. The methods employed are described below (see table 4).

Method	Number	Participants
Interviews	11	11
Participant observations	16	25
Action research project	1	11
Design experiment project	1	11

TABLE 4: Methods used in Phase Four

Project one – develop an ‘app’

The first project was influenced by action research and took the form of a project to apply for funding to develop a computer and mobile application or ‘app’ for children and young people. Action research is,

a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview... It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (Reason and Bradbury 2007: 1).

The focus of the research was the development of two applications for funding.

The project emerged out of the stalled development of the Challenge ‘champion’ network. I was asked by the director of the Challenge to identify ways to re-energise the ‘champion’ network. One idea was a professional social network and I wrote an application to the Department for Communities and Local Government’s Customer-led transformation programme to secure funding to develop the project. The application was put together at the last minute, largely by me with the help of four other professionals in the council. The bid was unsuccessful but it was decided to submit another proposal to the second call.

The second application was to develop an online tool to identify what services young people want and create an effective communication system to

signpost individual users to appropriate social, vocational and academic opportunities. The second application was successful and the project was funded for £107,490. This time the project involved more stakeholders (11 professionals from four directorates), five meetings and a series of email and telephone exchanges to prepare the application. The preparation phase of the application provided a rich insight into the informational, communicational and organisational challenges faced by professionals in seeking to bring together the appropriate resources, professionals and organisations to collaborate to innovate in service delivery. Once the funding was secured the research took an unexpected turn as it became apparent that there was insufficient capacity for the project within the council and that due to other situational constraints in the form of spending cuts and a notice to improve from Ofsted the project was cancelled and the money returned to DCLG.

It is important to acknowledge that the project did not end well. I must declare that I became committed to the success of the project and at one point was going to suspend my PhD and manage the project, with a significant pay rise and potentially improved career prospects. Towards the end of the project there was a meeting to decide what would be done with the money and project. From my perspective the meeting was stressful and was dominated by a professional who said that the project was potentially a huge embarrassment to the council and that if the funding was not returned he would use the money on one of his projects. In the end the money was returned to the funding body.

The research activity consisted of an on-going action research project where I developed the project through emails, phone calls, writing applications and convening four meetings to discuss the project. In addition I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine individuals who were involved in the development of the project to gain their insights into how the project was developing, what the challenges were.

Project two: social network

The second project was a professional social network, influenced by design experiments (The Design-Based Research Collective 2003). The network project

emerged from the organisation of the DPMG and the 0-19 extended services network, and the unsuccessful first application to DCLG.

Design experiments create conditions to develop and test 'proto-theories' in context through a continuous cycle of design, enactment, analysis and redesign (Cobb, 2001). The design experiment should be contextualised as a response by researchers in the United States to the perceptions of a 'credibility gap' in educational research (Levin and O'Donnell, 1999) and the claimed superiority of positivist research. The word 'experiment' implicates the positivist paradigm with particular claims about truth, objectivity, reliability and validity that are not subscribed to in this research.

A design experiment was used for three reasons. One, design experiments are not intended to perfect a particular intervention but to develop 'proto-theories' that are subject to an iterative cycle of development that refine the theory to increased levels of sophistication. Two, design experiments provide professionals with embedded and practical tools and techniques that they can utilise and improve in their professional practice. My role as a collaborative researcher on the Challenge meant that the social network could be a way of maintaining activity in relation to the Challenge. Three, they function as a method to enable the practitioners to reflect on the design experiment and his or her wider practice that can be used for analysis.

The purpose of the project was to use the social network and project management tools to test the proposition on system opacity as a constraint to collaboration. System opacity was defined as the aggregation of the communicational, professional, organisational and sectorial boundaries preventing access to requisite information to collaborate. The social network was intended to reduce system opacity by providing professionals with access to appropriate information on opportunities to collaborate with other professionals on the network. As stated above, the design experiment, afforded a professional with an opportunity to reflect on her practice prior to or excluding the social network and then to consider the additional factors that constrain or facilitate collaboration.

The social network was created to support the professional network that had formed through the joining-up of the DPMG network and the 0-19 extended services network. The deputy head teacher of Dalewood High School informally led the networks. The network was intended in the first instance to support a 'narrowing the gap' project but was available for professionals to post other projects as well.

The research activity included participant observations of six training sessions and five meetings, eight interviews with members of the network, email correspondence and observation of the network.

Member check interviews

Member check interviews were conducted with eight participants who had been interviewed during the previous research activity. There are obviously issues with sampling participants for the member check interviews, as there is a risk that the researcher will seek to talk to participants who agreed with him and participants are more likely to agree to meet again if they had developed more rapport and due to similarities of view with the researcher. In an attempt to reduce the influence of homophily – the 'love of the same' – further reinforcing biases in the data I sent an email to all participants I had interviewed in the earlier parts of the study. I received ten initial positive responses, with eight participants finally being interviewed. The individual was given the 'member check prompt' sheet and asked to read the provocations (see appendix 7). I informed the participant that these were issues around which I wished them to discuss and that they were free to disagree with them, indeed that some were contentious and meant to provoke a discussion. The interviews followed the format of a semi-structured interview with the participant discussing whichever propositions they wished to discuss.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analytic strategy was based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) process of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction is the first phase, beginning as the data is collected in the field and continuing throughout the analysis. Data reduction is,

the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data... [by] writing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions, writing memos. (Miles and Huberman 1994: 10)

Data was reduced in the following process. Field notes and memos were written during and after all research activities. As soon as possible, after each research activity a full account was created. In the case of interviews this involved transcribing the audio recording and cross-referencing with the field notes. Participant observations were written up into an event summary. Then the data was coded.

A coding framework was developed in order to effectively sort the data according to the research questions. The research questions were devised to follow a logical format to explore the Challenge. Research questions 1 focuses on the senior managers who developed the Challenge and 2 focuses on the professionals who engaged with it. Thus the Challenge was compared according to the rationale for senior managers and interpretation of professionals, and then the engagement of the senior managers in the form of the change technology developed and how professionals engaged with this or not (see table 5).

Next code categories and codes were developed. The code categories were created to provide a thematic structure for the codes and used for both research questions to enable comparison, and are shown in table 6. The codes were developed through a cyclical process of reading and analysing the data, developing and refining codes, reflecting on the research literature, testing out propositions in subsequent interviews, and continually coding and recoding the data. The main criterion for codes was simply whether they organised and facilitated the bringing together of the data in meaningful ways that advanced the analysis. The full coding framework with code labels and descriptions is presented in appendix 4. An example of coded data is provided in appendix 5.

RQ 1 How did the Stockborough Challenge seek to improve collaboration?	
Rationale	
Implementation	
RQ 2 How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge?	
Interpretation	
Engagement	

TABLE 5: Initial code categories

RQ 1 How did the Stockborough Challenge seek to improve collaboration?	
Rationale	Policy
	Culture
	Leadership
	Collaboration
Implementation	Components
	Functions
RQ 2 How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge?	
Interpretation	Policy
	Optimist
	Sceptic
	Collaboration
	Leadership
Engagement	Components
	Functions

TABLE 6: Initial code categories and codes

Once the data was coded the analysis shifted to data display techniques. A data display is ‘an organised, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action’ (Miles and Huberman 1994: 11). This study generated a significant and diverse quantity of data and in order to be able to identify meaningful patterns and relationships it was necessary to organise and represent the data in interpretable ways. For example, a significant concern was constructing a chronology of the development of the Stockborough Challenge. Other display techniques employed were diagrams, mind maps and networks (Robson 2002).

Throughout the analysis phase the purpose was to develop, explore and verify propositions and develop these into conclusions. Propositions were used to relate different types of data from different contexts to one another (Yin 2009). Other techniques for generating meaning were drawn from Miles and Huberman (1994), especially building a chain of evidence and developing concepts and theories. The concept of 'system opacity' was particularly useful for focusing the research on the challenges that professionals faced in navigating the complex boundaries in children's services in Stockborough.

Constant attention was paid to issues that may impinge upon the quality of the data, which is discussed below.

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF THE DATA

A principal concern for a researcher is the quality of the research produced and the reduction of factors that impinge on the quality. Here the word 'quality' is used to discuss what others refer to as 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba 1985: Chp.11), 'rigour' (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 205) or 'validity' (Kirk and Miller 1986: 69). The significance of the quality of a research is that it reflects the knowledge claims a piece of research may make (Hammersley 2008). Guba and Lincoln (2005: 205) frame the researcher's concern for quality as,

are these findings sufficiently authentic... that I may trust myself in acting on their implications? More to the point, would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them?

There has been a proliferation in standards for judging the quality of research with the critique of traditional positivistic measures and the growing focus on the orientation and aims of research. The conventional paradigm for assessing quality is that of the positivist tradition where research is judged according to internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (e.g., Cook and Campbell 1979). Many now believe that positivistic metrics are not suitable or desirable goals for qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba 1985), something that is in part contested by other authors such as Hammersley (2008). In addition, there are numerous other approaches to defining measures of quality that are appropriate to, for example,

particular political (Furlong and Oancea 2005) or epistemological (e.g., Reason and Bradbury 2001: 5) orientations or purposes of research (e.g. Mertens 2005).

Guba and Lincoln (2005: 205) differentiate between methodological rigour, which is influenced by the positivist tradition where the focus is internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity on one hand and interpretive rigour on the other, which calls for 'a community consent and a form of rigour – defensible reasoning, plausible alongside some other reality that is known to the author and reader' (p.205). Thus Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria that are appropriate to naturalistic inquiry, matching the four positivist metrics, these are, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The importance of the criteria is for the researcher to provide a framework to reduce the error at various stages of the research. With reservation and in accord with the fallibilist approach, I decided to improve and justify the quality of my research in relation to Lincoln and Guba's criteria, which will now be discussed in relation to techniques that were used to reduce error and improve quality.

CREDIBILITY

Lincoln and Guba (1985) present credibility as the analogue of internal validity. Merriam (1998) states that credibility engages with the issue of 'How congruent are the findings with reality?' The research process was designed to ensure that interviews were audio-recorded, that detailed and careful notes were taken, and that contextual details about dimensions of collaboration were recorded and fed into the analysis. A chain of evidence was maintained to link findings with analysis and conclusion (Yin 2009). As demonstrated above, the research employed a range of contrasting and complementary research techniques, which helped reduce the methodological limitations or constraints of particular methods (Merriam 1998). The exploratory, focused and replication phases of the research enabled the research to develop tentative and more established propositions that were continually quizzed and tested in different contexts. Triangulation was used to relate data to one another in different contexts to develop more robust findings (Flick 2009). Finally, the member check interviews presented the findings back to

individuals within the research context and asked them if they recognised, agreed with and supported the findings.

TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability is the interpretive equivalent of external validity, which signifies,

the approximate validity with which we infer that the presumed causal relationships can be generalised to and across alternate measures of the cause and effect and across different types of causes, settings and times (Cook and Campbell 1979: 37).

It is worth noting that although Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316) 'match' transferability to external validity however external validity in quantitative methods is based on the belief in causal mechanisms that can be identified through research and that these laws are, due to the *ceteris paribus* assumptions, applicable across contexts. However causal mechanisms and *ceteris paribus* are not features of qualitative research. Rather, in the vein of interpretive rigour, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that naturalist researchers provide a sufficiently 'thick description' to provide sufficient contextual information to enable the reader to determine his or her mind about whether or not the findings would be applicable in another particular context. Furthermore, research question 1.c. situates the context-bound case of the Challenge within the national-to-local policy context to further explicate how the findings may relate to other contexts. Thus I make claims in good faith about how to improve collaborative working in the public sector and it is up to the reader to decide their transferability.

DEPENDABILITY

Dependability relates to the positivistic measure of reliability, which in positivist research describes the likelihood that if the same experiment were conducted, under the same conditions then the same results would be achieved. The dependability criterion poses significant challenges for this research as the research followed a fairly idiosyncratic process in following, adapting to and exceeding a locally contingent initiative. In addition, the research drew on a number of complex research activities and projects (e.g., interviews, participant observations,

action research and design experiments). Brevity precludes a forensic outline of each activity and all the research. Merriam (1998) has reinterpreted reliability for qualitative and interpretive research stating that dependability describes the consistency in terms of the collection of data, application of codes, interpretation of meaning and assigning of conclusions. In terms of interpretive rigour the researcher's responsibility is to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of how the data were collected and analysed and how meaning was developed, through chains of evidence and providing examples of coded data. Furthermore, this research sought to engage with and research collaborative working using various methodologies in different sites and sectors within the context researched in order to increase the within-context diversity and testing findings through different methods in different contexts to check results.

CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability is the naturalist research equivalent of objectivity in the positivist tradition. Although qualitative research is fundamentally subjective, the fallibilist approach of this research promotes the value of rigorous research conducted with integrity, honesty and openness in producing higher quality research. Thus confirmability is interpreted as reducing bias throughout the research. Being insufficiently reflexive or critical and introducing researcher effects or biases into the data (Miles and Huberman 1994). As in qualitative research the 'the researcher is the instrument' (Robson 2002: 317) of research, thus my own perceptions, beliefs, values and assumptions were an integral part of the process. Therefore I used Ahern's (1999) 'ten tips for reflexive bracketing' that was developed to raise a researcher's self-awareness of their potential biases. Furthermore, replication logic and member check were built into the research design to check findings in different contexts and most crucially that they made sense to the participants being researched. Findings were also discussed with colleagues and presented at conferences to assess whether the data reflected experiences elsewhere.

Overall the approach to the quality of the research was to minimise error and bias in order to produce high-quality research. However, as interpretive rigour

would suggest any assessment of the quality of the research must be determined by the reader.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN METHODS, DATA AND THE FINDINGS

I collected a great deal of data using various methods during the research and so care was required when selecting the evidence to be presented in the findings chapters. There were two main issues governing the relationship between data, methods and the findings:

One, the majority of those interviewed were not included in the thesis, requiring some explanation of the criteria for inclusion. The inclusion of individuals in the findings was determined by: their consent for me to use their data; the relationship between the individual, the research question and particular units of analysis as presented in the thesis (e.g., the directors involved in developing the Challenge and the focus of RQ 1.a presented in chapter 6); and, the individual reported something interesting or useful to the argument. To not confuse the reader I included only a manageable number of participants in the findings, which is why I return to quotes from the findings chapters in subsequent chapters – to interpret and contextualise them.

Two, I used some methods (e.g., theory of change and action research) that appear briefly but do not make visible contributions to the thesis. For example, I employed the theory of change method but this is not a theory of change analysis of the Stockborough Challenge. My decisions were informed by my social constructionist and fallibilist epistemology, the criteria for improving the quality of the data (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), and the focus of the research that the methods I used and the way in which I reported my findings helped me and the reader understand the ways in which collaboration was interpreted and enacted in the Challenge in terms of the constraints this posed for institutionalising collaboration at the frontline.

At all times, methods were used to improve my understanding and data was presented and interpreted in a way that made sense to the reader about what I did and what I found.

ETHICS

The research was conducted in accordance with the Bera (2004) ethical guidelines for educational research and under the oversight of the University of Manchester's ethical review. As this was co-funded research, Bera's (2004) three levels of responsibilities to participants, sponsors and research community are appropriate for explaining the ethical strategy that was employed.

The main ethical considerations for participants were voluntary informed consent and privacy. Participants were selected by their proximity to projects or initiatives associated with or utilised by the Stockborough Challenge. I took measures to ensure that participants knew what the objective of the research was about and felt they could withdraw at any point. I approached the majority of participants by email with Research Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Letter attached and the offer to discuss the research. The participants were aware that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Although I was not a senior person in the hierarchy of children's services I was aware that I was working with the perceived support of senior managers in the council and that professionals may feel my offer of participation was a *thoffer* (threat and offer) or a *proffer* (promise and offer), which would contravene the free and informed consent of the participant. To remedy this concern I approached professionals directly and did not, for example, ask a manager if I could speak to a professional on her team. The second concern was for the participant's privacy. There was a concern of data leakage during the research and subsequently with publication. Participants were given the right to review transcribed material and keep confidential anything they felt might embarrass themselves or others. All data was kept in password-protected files on one laptop computer and all paperwork was kept in a locked draw.

Bera's (2004) guidelines on the responsibilities to the organisation focus more on the relationship between the researcher and the organisation. Here it is necessary to explain my role and position as an ESRC Case Student, as part of a Development and Research project between the University of Manchester and Stockborough Council. The ESRC Case Studentship aims to build mutually beneficial relationships between academic institutions and private, public or third/ voluntary

sector organisations. While conducting my PhD research I was a researcher on the Challenge. Cheek (2005: 400) notes,

Accepting funding involves entering into a contractual and intellectual agreement with a funder that has consequences for the research... Taking money from a sponsor is not a neutral activity; it links the researcher and research inexorably with the values of that funder.

Relating to the integrity of this research it is essential that I acknowledge that the research relationship involved me receiving £2000 per year, a laptop, a council email address, and office space. However most beneficial was the generous access I was afforded by professionals working in Stockborough which was arguably greater than allowed to most PhD students. Although embedded research can lead to moral and ethical problems relating to what can be said my research did not suffer due to interference – as far as I was aware. Instead my research was treated with respect and no one tried to influence what I wrote about or said. Against the pressures of working in the public sector what my research said appeared not to be at the forefront of professional's minds. Nevertheless, my relationship with the council was part of my ethical strategy. I sought to contribute to the sponsors by communicating my research and findings to professionals in Stockborough.

In terms of my obligations to the research community there was a threat that being a nominal employee of Stockborough local authority would create a conflict of interest that may impinge upon the principle of the freedom of the academic (BERA 2004). I critically and reflectively engaged with this tension to ensure that it did not lead to bias or poor-academic practice.

The professional network meant conducting research online, which poses its own ethical problems (BPS 2007). To reduce the ethical issues with online research the participants were asked to sign the consent form that listed particular characteristics of the online space, such as what they would say on the network would be open to all members of the network unless they chose to use the confidentiality settings. The group agreed that no information that identified children and families would be placed on the network. The network was private and password protected. Most of the information on the network described projects

that professionals were developing, such as venue and a specification of to which outcomes the project would contribute.

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

This chapter has outlined and justified the methodology and methods employed to direct the research, engage with the research questions and the levels of certainty with which these questions are answered.

A principal concern of the research was to identify how the professionals and managers understood collaboration, the actions they took in developing the Stockborough Challenge and the ways in which professionals interpreted and engaged with the Challenge and with collaboratively working, both relatedly and independently. A case study of the Stockborough Challenge and the use of the concepts of policy enactment, articulation and assemblage were thought to be the best approach for gaining a deep insight into the local interpretation, enactment and engagement with collaboration. The intention was to approach the research open to the political and discursive processes by which the context in which collaboration was found was constructed in addition to the complex, social and granular ways in which professionals both interpreted national and local policy and engaged with collaboration.

The four-phases enabled the research to locate and refine the propositions that guided the research from exploration to research and then after refocusing the research to a more active engagement with collaborative working. The process of refocusing the research was hugely significant for the research in terms of the specified operationalisation of collaboration and the resultant questions about what I had been researching. After the hiatus I developed two projects, one action research and the other a design experiment, to gain greater experience of the everyday challenges facing professionals when they seek to work collaboratively, or as I was researching work collaboratively to innovate in public service design and delivery.

The next two chapters provide the findings of the research on the Stockborough Challenge, first from the point of view of the senior managers who

developed the Challenge and the second from the professionals who interpreted and engaged with it.

CHAPTER 5: THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE – A ‘CALL TO ACTION’

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the Stockborough Challenge from the perspective of the senior managers who developed the initiative, to engage with research question 1: How do the senior managers develop the Stockborough Challenge to improve collaborative working?

The chapter is organised in three sections. The first three sections follow the three broadly distinguishable phases of the Stockborough Challenge, marked by three policy documents. Section one details how Diane Shaw – the Director of Children’s Services – instigated the Challenge through the publication *Bringing Together and Joining Up*. Section two focuses on the second phase, which began when Diane retired and Nick Reynolds became the Acting Director of Children’s Services, and the Challenge was linked to cultural change, as outlined in *Good to Best: A Rationale*. Section three covers the final phase of the Challenge where it was further refined to become a campaign of cultural change and a ‘call to action’, as presented in the document *Developing the Detail*.

BRINGING TOGETHER AND JOINING UP: A RATIONALE, VISION AND CONVERSATION

The Stockborough Challenge began as a strategic response to the perceived threat of the Northshire Challenge. In 2003, the early success of the London Challenge in improving educational attainment in disadvantaged areas influenced the development of the Black Country Challenge and the Greater Manchester Challenge (Hutchings et al 2012). The big-city Challenges were understood to demonstrate how a resourced, concerted and collaborative effort at the local level could reduce the negative effects of disadvantage on educational outcomes.

In 2007 plans were being made for a Northshire Challenge. The Northshire region included Stockborough but also a number of authorities with considerably worse deprivation and educational achievement. Diane Shaw, the Director of Stockborough Children’s Services at the time, recalls why the Northshire Challenge motivated her to start the Stockborough Challenge,

One of the key original motivators was [the] discussions with the Northshire Government Office about the potential for developing some form of Challenge approach regionally. The key driver behind that was the London Challenge, and the Manchester and Black Country Challenges. As DCS's we were having discussions, saying here we are at a regional level [with] standards being the lowest in the country at every key stage... I became very concerned that there were a number of authorities [including Stockborough] that were fine, and from a Stockborough perspective... I was getting very nervous about this 'are fine' because I knew from within the authority we had considerable variation between schools, particularly at secondary level, we had very significant issues around narrowing the gap ... there was a danger that Stockborough could sort of get lost in terms of were there any [regional] Challenges that included Stockborough. That was my starting point. Stockborough needed a Stockborough Challenge to fit Stockborough and Stockborough's particular profile in the context of the regional profile where superficially Stockborough was a higher performing authority.

Thus the Challenge was a way of protecting Stockborough's interests by articulating the concerns and issues that required intervention so that when decisions were made about allocating the Northshire Challenge's resources Diane would be able to make a strong case for Stockborough not to be excluded because it was 'fine'. In the end, the Northshire Challenge did not develop on the anticipated scale – it became a 14-19 training and skills initiative. By this time however, Diane Shaw had already set in motion the Stockborough Challenge and the next task was to determine the initiative's rationale, focus and activities.

In September 2007, Diane Shaw wrote and disseminated *Bringing Together and Joining Up* (hereafter *Bringing Together*) a document outlining the Stockborough Challenge to provide a rationale and vision to stimulate a conversation for change in Stockborough's Children's Services.

The Challenge was presented as a significant development in Stockborough. The first paragraph stated,

The Stockborough Challenge will be a key strategy to implement our vision for children and young people's services for the next five years. (*Bringing Together* §1.1)

Bringing Together was intended to provide a rationale and vision that would stimulate a conversation on what the Challenge would do and in doing so provide a vision for children's services in Stockborough. Diane explains how she initiated the Challenge,

It was a very popular phrase at the time but I tried to start a conversation... So I put out the paper ['Bringing Together'] and then what I tried to do with those workshops... [I said] 'Here's my vision. Here's where I think we are at in Stockborough. One, do you agree with my rationale? Two, do you agree with the vision about what's important? Three, if you agree that that's important... and that's the point where I moved on but, if you agree why don't you put your money where your mouth is?'

In this quote Diane refers to her rationale and vision, which in addition to the conversation were the substantive features of *Bringing Together* and the early development of the Stockborough Challenge, both are considered below.

RATIONALE

The rationale was the most prominent and developed feature of the early Challenge. *Bringing Together* presents a fairly extensive case for change in children's services and the Stockborough Challenge in particular, with justification at national, regional and local levels.

In *Bringing Together* Diane Shaw situated the Challenge within the national policy context making the initiative a focal point for engaging with national policy in Stockborough,

The proposal to develop and launch the Stockborough Challenge needs to be set in the context of current and proposed national developments. Until recently, the national focus has been on raising standards in the teaching of core subjects in primary and secondary schools through the National Strategies... However, in the past year, national government has acknowledged that the standards agenda must be developed holistically in terms ensuring the parallel and linked development of the standards agenda with the wider Every Child Matters agenda. (*Bringing Together* §3.1)

Throughout *Bringing Together* the Challenge is associated with influential and emerging policies such as the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda and the Building Schools for the Future programme (DCSF 2009b). As a generalisation these policies broadly promoted integrated and collaborative working that engages with a child's and family's holistic needs and it is towards this wide-ranging agenda that the Stockborough Challenge was orientated,

The Stockborough Challenge project is therefore about bringing about change in the way we provide both universal and targeted services for children, young people and families, including school provision in Stockborough but it is change for a purpose and that purpose is to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and young people, to raise standards and improve pupil performance and to enable all Stockborough's children and young people, whatever their needs, to achieve. (*Bringing Together* §2.6)

Throughout the rationale it is apparent that Diane Shaw is making sense of a fairly fast-moving national policy context and what the government intends to do next, both for herself and those in Stockborough Children's Services. The rationale for change in children's services is framed by change and the imperative to change. In several instances Diane discusses the government's policy direction and there is a certain amount of uncertainty. It is apparent that the role of those in the local authority was to make sense of and implement policy at the local level, for example,

The national aspiration for joined up leadership and management is now becoming clear. However, it will be for local partners to put this into practice taking account of the local context. (*Bringing Together* §3.36)

At national, regional and local levels *Bringing Together* offered a convincing case for why there should be a Challenge in Stockborough. How this rationale would be engaged with was through the vision.

VISION

Bringing Together was explicitly presented as a document to outline the Stockborough Challenge vision, through the identification of seven challenges facing Stockborough Children's Services.

The first challenge identified inequitable outcomes as a significant social issue and proposed responding with appropriate collaborative services,

Narrowing the gap: we need to understand more about the different needs and challenges for children, young people and families in localities and communities throughout Stockborough and develop community based multi-agency integrated services that respond effectively to this range of needs, recognising that all Stockborough's children and young people are different and we need to be able to meet the full diversity of their needs if they really do matter. In particular, we need to focus on narrowing the gap in key outcomes for children and young people between localities and groups who currently are not achieving across all five ECM outcomes as well as their peers. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.1)

There are two statements in the above excerpt. The first asserts that children, young people and families have different needs and that 'community based multi-agency integrated services' are the appropriate way for engaging appropriately with these needs. The second statement associates, by the phrase 'in particular', the gap in outcomes as a particular type of need that can be engaged with through collaborative working. Collaborative working is therefore presented as the way to engage both diversity and inequality alike.

The next three challenges pertain to reducing the number of children in care through preventative action, providing appropriate care for children who require it, and reducing the impact of family's crisis on their children, and when crisis occurs the response should be collaborative, for example,

Focus on families: we need to focus more on families, in particular those of the most vulnerable children and young people. We need to understand more about how family crises and challenges can impact on children's safety, well-being and learning and improve the way in which we work across the full range of children's and adult's services to overcome barriers to well-being, safety and achievement. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.4)

In the fifth and sixth items the Challenge identified schools as the most important locus of activity for engaging with the ECM agenda in Stockborough,

Central role of schools: ... We need to bring schools to the centre stage of our Every Child Matters agenda. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.5)

The Challenge as a process to develop a local vision is then linked to the Building Schools for the Future programme,

Building schools for the future: we need to prepare for 2011 when Stockborough is scheduled to embark on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and develop a clear vision and rationale for our proposals to rebuild and refurbish both primary and secondary schools. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.6)

Asserting the 'central role of schools' was part of a determined strategy to secure the buy-in of head teachers and schools in recognition of the dominant position of schools in relation to the local authority. Nick Reynolds explains the reasoning,

There was a phase of it where it was a marketing campaign that's what it was because there were schools that didn't know what the Children's Trusts were. So in a way it was marketing the new world, the broader children's services agenda and raising the issue to work across different services and with schools being in the driving seat – schools are a receiver of services or a demander of services.

Finally the Challenge vision included and would be driven by a new type of leadership,

Sustainable leadership: ... if we are to achieve our vision, service and school leaders and managers will need a different skill set from what was required before we embarked on this change programme. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.7)

Beyond the presentation of the seven elements of the Challenge vision there were a number of other visions mentioned and other components of the Challenge vision alluded to. Indeed, the word 'vision' appears 22 times in *Bringing Together*. There were a number of visions of which the Challenge was one and to which the Challenge was related,

The purpose of this report is to explain the vision and rationale for the proposed Stockborough Challenge project... The Stockborough Challenge will be a key

strategy to implement our vision for children and young people's services for the next five years. (*Bringing Together* §1.1)

Furthermore, the planned breadth of the Challenge vision is significant as it claimed to engage with all schools and sectors in children's services,

The further development of schools is a key objective of the Stockborough Challenge but this cannot be achieved in isolation from our wider Every Child Matters agenda. By working on the seven challenges of the Stockborough Challenge, we will bring together and join up the strands of activity that already inform our Children and Young People's Plan and Local Area Agreement. This vision for the next five years is for all schools and all children and young people's services. It is for all partners and agencies represented on our Children's Trust and it is for all Stockborough's children and young people. (*Bringing Together* §2.15)

The Challenge engaged with the ECM agenda and in doing so the initiative was implicated in a diverse range of organisational settings and collaborative relationships. In *Bringing Together* collaboration is considered synonymous with a range of different terms such as 'multi-agency service provision' and 'community based integrated service provision'; 'collaborative working' and 'collaborative governance'; 'community based multi-agency integrated services' and 'Partnership and multi-agency working'; partnership, and joined-up or joining-up. Collaboration is also implicit in terms such as services (e.g., 'children and young people's services' and 'universal and targeted services for children and young people'), strategies (e.g., 'children's workforce development strategy' and 'local authority's wider social and economic regeneration strategy') and community approaches (e.g., 'community regeneration' and 'Schools... community leadership role'). These various patterns and purposes of collaboration in different sites were aimed at improving the five outcomes of the ECM agenda.

Reviewing *Bringing Together* it is evident that the emphasis is more on laying the foundations on which the vision will be founded, as would be expected in relation to Diane Shaw's 'conversation' approach, rather than defining what the Challenge would do. It is noticeable that the seven challenges are prefaced by 'we

need to...' as would be expected from a visioning document but the imperative describes developing plans rather than implementing developed plans. The items relate to principles of the vision such as prevention and family-focused, locations of activity such as schools, and drivers of the vision such as sustainable leadership. Nevertheless there was clearly still much to be worked out in terms of developing appropriate structures and approaches to collaborative working.

In the rest of the document the vision is further developed through a number of indications of areas, sectors and processes with which the Challenge would engage or utilise, specifically bringing together and joining-up children's services around schools.

Fundamental to understanding the Challenge vision's relationship to Stockborough Children's Services is that rather than being a discrete, stand-alone initiative the Challenge would converge other reforms,

We do not intend this to be a separate new initiative, rather to bring together a range of developments and planning to continue to develop a co-ordinated response to all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes. The Stockborough Challenge will be about bringing together and joining up a range of key initiatives in which schools and learning settings will be key players, together with those agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors who provide both universal and targeted services for children and young people. (*Bringing Together* §1.3)

How the various reforms and initiatives would be brought together through the Challenge is revealed in a list of activities presented in *Bringing Together* detailing what the Challenge would do to improve outcomes. The section is a list of fourteen activities that details the contributions of specific services to the Challenge. Of the fourteen activities: six related to strategic responses to particular reports (e.g., the Northshire Challenge or the Leitch Review of Skills in England) or the plans to develop strategies (e.g., a Parenting Strategy and Stockborough Children's Services Workforce Strategy), and six stated how services would support schools, by for example,

Learning Services to support schools as the key universal provider to espouse the full ECM agenda as support for the current standards agenda. (*Bringing Together* §6.2.10)

The list of activities reaffirms the central roles of schools to the Challenge by listing the functions or support the respective services would be expected to perform for or offer schools as part of the changing policy context and the broader shift in line with the ECM agenda. It is in relation to the bringing together of services around schools for the ECM agenda that *Bringing Together* is clearest about what the Challenge would do to converge the distinct and sometimes divergent reforms and policies in children's services. Specifically, Diane Shaw identified a key fissure or dilemma in the ECM agenda that the Challenge would help bridge,

One of the key challenges has been to reconcile what, at times, have been perceived both nationally and locally as tensions between the standards and ECM agendas. There have been times when national policy development and pronouncements have given the impression that these are two separate and, potentially, conflicting agendas. (*Bringing Together* §3.28)

The document continues,

Fortunately, in the past year, there are signs that this is changing... the mantra that there is *no ECM without standards and no standards without ECM* [italics in original] which is now being affirmed at the most senior level in the DCSF [Department for Children, Schools and Families] is helping to strengthen the message of bringing together and joining up. (*Bringing Together* §3.29)

The bringing together of the standards and 'wider' ECM agendas would take place first and foremost around schools,

Fundamentally, the key objective of the Stockborough Challenge will be to support schools to bring together the standards and the wider ECM agenda... In particular, in recognition that the root cause of many of these barriers lies in the family or the community outside school, the Challenge project will help schools work with the wider range of children and young people's services to address these issues both in and outside school. (*Bringing Together* §5.17)

The Challenge would,

... provide the opportunity for individual and/or groups of schools to work with the [Local] Authority to explore the feasibility and desirability of the development of collaborative governance arrangements and of new forms of school organisation. The additional resource the Authority will commit to the Challenge will be used to support schools to develop proposals and, where necessary, to make application to the appropriate bodies [and] underpin our BSF primary and secondary programmes. (*Bringing Together* §5.16)

Furthermore, the Challenge would, support individual and groups of schools to develop and implement proposals for collaborative and/or new governance arrangements that have clear potential to raise standards and support all children and young people to make the best possible progress. (*Bringing Together* §7.1.3)

There was therefore an understanding that there needed to be new arrangements in children's services to support collaborative working.

In summary, the Challenge vision engaged with all professionals and organisations across children's services and laid the foundations on which the future development of the Stockborough Challenge and children's services could be based, and emphasised the importance of schools and the possibility of bringing together joined-up working around schools. The next step was the 'conversation'.

THE 'CONVERSATION'

Diane Shaw disseminated *Bringing Together* to stimulate a conversation in Stockborough Children's Services. This conversation began with Diane Shaw speaking to the directorate leadership team and then proceeding to include all professionals working with children and young people in Stockborough. During the conversation Diane realised the Challenge needed to be re-framed, explained more clearly and that it must lead to action however as the conversation progressed the political and economic context changed dramatically.

It was during the discussions with the directorate leadership team that the Challenge was first reframed. The director of Learning Services Nick Reynolds explains that,

So Diane came to us with the Challenge and it was about making improvements in KS4 [Key Stage 4] and all of us on the DLT [directorship leadership team] wanted it to be about the entire child not a top-down, narrow, centralised remit.

Diane's reflection on the early stages of the conversation were,

I first went through the directorship team and that was pretty straightforward, we refashioned it a bit. That was at the start of last year they'd agreed what it was they were putting forward. But when that went to the extended leadership team, that was a year ago, they completely pulled those notions apart. They felt for example that it was still too school oriented, for example, and we addressed that...

Thus the Challenge was re-focused to engage with all children's services rather than just schools.

The second issue was that *Bringing Together* was a long document at 9,874 words, 21 pages long and some in children's services found it confusing. One professional described the reaction in her team,

Have you read it? Have you? There's a guy in my team with a degree and he couldn't make head nor tail of it.

The response from those initiating the Challenge was to publish a second document to clarify the initiative. 'From Good to Best' was written and distributed in December 2007. Together the two documents presented *the* vision for the Stockborough Challenge to those working with children and young people in Stockborough. In terms of this analysis 'From Good to Best' is judged not to be substantially different to *Bringing Together*, as any changes are perceived to have improved clarity and readability but not changed the substantive content of the Challenge.

The third outcome of the consultation period was that Diane's 'conversation' was increasingly questioned and she realised that the Challenge would have to lead to concrete action,

For me it was an opportunity to have a discussion with my management team, with the wider team across services, across partners including schools. I think in some ways in those early days... I had no idea where it might go. I was less

concerned with what a Challenge might look like and more concerned with using it as a means to an end to get people to come together in common cause. That's where it started. Now in the course of that year as we started to refine the message... I began to think and my team began to say to me 'look Diane it's all very good talking about this stuff but when are we actually going to do it?' At that point I approached Henry Jacobson with a discussion of might he be interested in the short-term in picking up the idea of being the Challenge co-ordinator.

Thus Henry Jacobson was appointed director of the Stockborough Challenge. Henry was a well-respected and successful headteacher, suggesting Diane sought through Henry to develop closer relationships between the Challenge and headteachers in Stockborough. Henry recalls that he was not the obvious choice for director of the Challenge,

My initial challenge was, you know, I've been recruited as a secondary school teacher to lead something that is isn't very clear but, you know, if you were creating a job description it appeared to become you wouldn't choose a secondary headteacher to lead it. So I had to figure it out and that took time.

Part of Henry's figuring out of the Challenge was to set up the Dalewood Pilot Management Group (DPMG) with Paul Lawler, an enthusiastic headteacher from Dalewood High School. The DPMG brought together professionals from different sections of children's services in Dalewood, to, as Paul Lawler explained, 'get plates spinning' with regards to collaborative working in the town. The DPMG is the focus on chapter 7 and so I will not go into detail here. What I would like to emphasise is that the DPMG was indicative of the types of new arrangements that the Challenge would develop in order to improve collaborative working in Stockborough.

Initially Henry was appointed with a full-time, roving brief to develop the Challenge but the changing financial situation meant his role was reduced in scope and resources, as is explained by Diane Shaw,

I know at the time I was trying to think outside the box, maybe it was my own subliminal rebellion against having to pitch at so many targets, at so many structures and being in so many straight jackets that I wanted my own opportunity for a bit of free and loose thinking... Times change though James,

we were then in a time of efficiencies and economies. Everyone was being made to fit and he [Henry] was made to fit... the role never became as he and I envisaged it might.

The economic and political context in which the Challenge had first been conceived and developed had changed considerably during the 'conversation', just as the initiative had become increasingly ambitious. During the 'conversation' phase the leaders entered into discussions with partners outside the council, as explained by Nick Reynolds,

In 2008 Diane Shaw left, there was the debacle in Haringey with Baby Peter, and a real focus on children's safeguarding. There was the downturn with the economy... So very, very rapidly the economic climate, the political climate and the whole environment changed in a rapid series of events and that wasn't a death knell for the Challenge because we could've sorted that out but things had changed.

The changing financial and political context impinged on the development of the Challenge. The Challenge was started to stimulate a conversation in children's services but this became subject to increasing scepticism,

On my very last day, Ray Shostack [Prime Minister's Delivery Unit] came across with Mel [Ainscow] and his challenge was, he said, "look, this is all lots of fine words, but what's it going to look like, what's it going to do?" I tried to argue with Mel and Ray and it goes back to "does it matter? It's a way of working, a thought process." And I think the thinking was that it was far too self-indulgent and it needed to be located more and schools were the obvious place to locate it, what are you aiming for, which are the particular outcomes you're pitching for? How are you going to do it? My initial concept of the Challenge as a conversation for people to explore creative and innovative opportunities for them to come together, there were going to be localised Challenges across Stockborough, never really happened.

To that point the emphasis had been on rationalising and visioning the Stockborough Challenge but despite the utility of this dialogue in provoking a conversation the initiative was still undefined, as Henry Jacobson points out,

For me the biggest challenge was in defining it because when I took on the post nobody was capable of saying what the Challenge was at that point. They could say it was these six themes, which had been honed during that envisioning year. But nobody could say in a sentence what it was. They'd decided what it wasn't. They'd come up with some themes but certainly by the time I came to the job I had no clear sense of what it was at all.

At the end of the first phase the Challenge had asserted an extensive rationale for why there should be a Challenge but as Henry Jacobson stated the initiative was still undefined. The Challenge was a strategic response to the fast-paced national policy context and the challenges posed by facilitating new ways of working towards broader and more holistic outcomes. It was still unclear how the Stockborough Challenge would help Stockborough adapt to the changing policy context and during the 'conversation' the context changed and the Challenge was displaced and reduced in scope.

CULTURING THE CHALLENGE

When Diane Shaw retired, Nick Reynolds became Acting Director of Children's Services and he re-focused the Challenge to an explicit focus on culture. 'From Good to Best: Rationale, Approach and Timeframe' (hereafter *Rationale*), the third Challenge policy document, was circulated in October 2008. At 2,652 words *Rationale* was more concise than *Bringing Together*. It was at this point the Challenge was fixed as,

The Stockborough Challenge is a campaign to develop the culture which will enable Stockborough's ambitions for 2013 to be delivered (*Rationale* §1.1)

It is a moot point when the Challenge was focused on culture yet it is evident that culture became an explicit or more prominent feature of the initiative. The word 'culture' is not mentioned once in the 9,785 words in *Bringing Together* but Diane Shaw explains that,

In my mind culture was implicit and always would have become an element of the Challenge, but no it was not explicit at that point...

It is important to recognise that much within the Challenge was potential and latent to be clarified and defined through the envisioning process and Diane Shaw retired during this process.

However, when Nick Reynolds was appointed Acting Director of Children Services he maintains that the Challenge was not about culture and he re-orientated the initiative,

Did it start out as a cultural change programme?

No, it was me that shifted it, because it was at a point in time that it moved from Diane to me and we wanted to put a big sign up in Stockborough saying 'under new management' like in a hair dressers, and so it was a big sign saying that... There was a big meeting with the Chief Executive, elected members, and including Henry and we said that things are going to have to be different, the culture is going to be different, the way we tackle things is going to be different.

There is a significant difference between the understandings of culture held by the Diane Shaw and Nick Reynolds. Diane explained her rationale for the implicit inclusion of culture in the Challenge,

As a DCS... because of the bringing together and coming together of a range of people and services that hitherto had worked in the same organisation had very, very different cultures to achieve that cultural change within children's services, if the Challenge did nothing else if it developed I wouldn't say a one culture but if it brought about more understanding and stopped the 'them and us' that would've been a very positive outcome... the big debate back then was are you from education or are you from social services or are you one of the odd balls from health... the coming together of all those different services caused massive cultural crises so from the point of view of the Challenge, and this was my starting point to an extent, I wanted to ally those services.

Nick Reynolds expresses an alternative view of culture,

There were several issues, I think, we knew that some of the problems were there with children's and social care and they couldn't be resolved. We also knew that...

What problems?

We'd become very siloed in 'I'm responsible for this bit and I'll get that bit right' without taking responsibility for the whole thing. To give you a crass example back from my world. I found out that when I was a teacher working in a failing school that when the school was failing individual teachers would manage their own classroom but not go out onto the corridor or the playground because they knew that they could control their classroom but in a good school the teachers are on the corridor and patrolling wider. I'm using that as a metaphor for what happened in Stockborough in individual services. They were managing what went on in their individual services but it didn't help in the holistic picture.

Comparing the two perspectives it seems that Diane Shaw's concern is inter-professional culture whereas Nick Reynolds implicates organisational culture. For Diane the significance of culture is at the interface between different professional groups working in different sectors and having to work together for the first time due to the integration of the children's workforce. She mentions a 'them and us' situation between education and others in children's services. Here cultural change is a way to overcome the 'cultural crises' occurring due to professionals having to work together with colleagues from different professions. For Nick, there is no inter-professional dimension but rather a focus on employee responses to organisational incentives reflecting a concern with organisational culture. In his metaphor there is one profession – a teacher – and the issue surrounds the appropriate role of the teacher, whether it is narrowly about the 'classroom' or more broadly to meet the holistic needs of the pupil or wider responsibilities to the school. Unfortunately it is not always clear which form of culture the Challenge was proposing to engage with. Indeed this obfuscation of the two forms of culture was an issue in the development of the Challenge.

The clearest specification of how the culture the Challenge would engender would improve outcomes was presented in relation to the Building Schools for the Future programme. The document explained,

There are aspects of the national educational agenda which find their place within the Stockborough Challenge. For example, the government's Building School for the Future (BSF) programme is prominent within one of the themes. However, the Challenge will ensure that such developments take place within

the context of the collaborative culture we are developing and that proposals reflect the needs of local communities. (*Rationale* §3.4)

Thus, it is the collaborative culture that will ensure that the BSF proposals will reflect the apparent ‘real’ needs of a community rather than them being obscured. From this paragraph there is no indisputable view of culture, whether professional or organisational. It is not obvious or explained how a collaborative culture will orientate the BSF bid to meet the ‘needs of local communities’. Instead, culture represents a way that barriers are overcome. To understand how culture is being thought about it was illustrative to explore why the Challenge focused on the target regime.

‘PITCHING AT TARGETS’

The most prominent development of *Rationale* was the emerging emphasis on the perverse and negative consequences of targets. As stated above, Diane Shaw’s intention for the Challenge was that it would be a,

... subliminal rebellion against having to pitch at so many targets.

In *Rationale* this subliminal and implicit feature became explicit. Targets were identified as a substantial constraint to collaborative working and improving outcomes for children and young people. How the Challenge would engage with the target regime to improve outcomes was outlined twice in *Rationale*.

The first example of the Challenge’s engagement with targets is found in section four of *Rationale*, titled ‘Away from a narrow focus on targets, towards a broad focus on young people’ (*Rationale* §4). In the excerpts below the document identifies targets as a spent force for improving outcomes and the need for developing new approaches within the context of the target regime.

The first paragraph notes the limits of the target regime have been reached,

There is a growing consensus that the narrow, prescriptive focus on target setting has achieved much of the progress that it is fit to produce. This is reflected as far as schools are concerned, for example, in the “system leadership” work of David Hopkins which argues that the centralised target-setting agenda took schools nationally to a new level, but then levelled off, requiring a

subsequent stage of improvement led by the schools themselves... the Stockborough Challenge will therefore take the lead in encouraging an impetus to development work which moves beyond the target obsessed culture. (*Rationale §4.1*)

It is significant that the evidence for the limitations of the target regime is drawn from David Hopkins' work in the education sector. The concern with the negative effects of targets is grounded in the educational sector. The excerpt concludes that the consequence of the target regime has been a 'target obsessed culture' and that the Challenge would work to 'encourage' professionals to move beyond the obsession. The notion that the Challenge and the local authority leaders should resist and have the 'courage' to work in new ways beyond the constraints of the target regime is developed in the next paragraph,

The Stockborough Challenge campaign recognises that, a level of improvement having been reached, the role of central (including LA [local authority]) intervention must be supplemented by a stage of improvement work which genuinely comes from the professionals themselves. The LA should thus have the courage to accept a reduced focus on high stakes "standards" as far as the Challenge is concerned. It should be prepared to step back and believe that standards will further improve only if additional creativity is released in the system. (*Rationale §4.2*)

'Creativity' is identified as a primary driver for improving standards and how this will be achieved is through leadership,

This additional creativity will come through both system leadership approaches, in which leaders move beyond their own team or institution and, with the credibility their success gives them, influence others, and through wider collaboration. (*Rationale §4.3*)

The organisational view of culture is evident in the above excerpt as a leader moves beyond her remit to engage with the broader education and children's services system. It is also apparent that it is assumed that moving beyond a focus on targets and working collaboratively will necessarily improve outcomes and produce success, which will enable collaborative leaders to influence others to follow them and work collaboratively.

Finally, the document states that the target regime will remain but by not being obsessed with the targets and instead developing appropriate facilitating factors for collaborative working this will improve the targets and thus meet the targets,

Stockborough Council will continue to have its high stakes targets; the Stockborough Challenge, if successful in creating the leadership, culture and environments to enable the Council's vision to be fulfilled, will impact in any case on those targets. (*Rationale* §4.7)

An interpretation of section four of *Rationale* is that it was seeking to weld together the standards agenda with new and more creative ways of working that engage with the real need of children and young people. The courage to move beyond the target obsessed culture and resist the perverse consequences of targets suggests how the director of the Challenge, who wrote *Rationale*, thought the BSF bid would meet the 'real' needs of communities by resisting targets.

The second example of the Challenge's engagement with the target regime is the emphasis on how new ways of working will benefit schools. *Rationale* reaffirms the central role of schools and remit of the Challenge seems to be to converge schools and non-school services through the Every Child Matters agenda. A section titled 'Engagement of Schools' presents a rationale for a mutually beneficial relationship between schools and non-school services by improving educational achievement by removing the barriers to learning that originate outside of the school,

The Stockborough Challenge recognises that schools are at the centre of the Every Child Matters agenda. It recognises that schools and other educational settings are at the heart of universal provision for all children and young people. Therefore we need to support them as they identify barriers to learning and help them to develop personalised approaches to address those barriers. (*Rationale* §6.3)

Once the centrality of schools is asserted, *Rationale* outlines a mutually beneficial collaborative relationship between schools with non-school services,

In particular, in recognition of the fact that the root cause of many of these barriers lies in the family or the community outside school, the Challenge programme will help schools work with the wider range of children and young people's services to address these issues both in and outside school. (*Rationale* § 6.4)

Thus the Challenge will help support schools to engage with children's services to reduce the barriers to education found in the home or community. This relationship is then explained to be one route for schools to improve their Ofsted inspection report,

Collaborative work between schools – and between schools and other services as part of the Challenge – will largely relate to *personal development and well-being* [italics in original]. This is an outcome standard, based on Every Child Matters, judged by Ofsted and as key to the overall outcome of an inspection as “standards and achievement”. This in turn will mean collaborative work is directly addressing the “good schools” drive of the Challenge. (*Rationale* §6.5)

In both examples the Challenge seeks to find common ground between two sets of dynamics. The first dynamic is the relationship between the target regime and creative ways of working that meet the real needs of children and young people. The Challenge promoted the view that creativity, leadership and new ways of working would necessarily improve outcomes and thus enable professionals to meet their targets. The second dynamic is the relationship between schools and broader children's services in response to which the Challenge emphasised schools as the central loci of activity and enunciated the benefits of schools engaging with other stakeholders from across children's services.

The last development of the second phase of the Challenge was situating it within the Children's Trust. Henry Jacobson describes the period when the Challenge had begun to take shape and he located the initiative with the Children's Trust,

... at that point, to put it at its best [the Challenge] might seem esoteric and to put it at its bluntest might seem vague. So from a position where you can describe the Challenge that people disagree with but is concrete to something

that people can agree with but is vague, right, general, very general. Nevertheless it got to that point. The challenge then was, where does it actually fit? Is it some sort of vague, general, overlaying thing that people are supposed to draw from? We ultimately located it as the campaign of cultural change on behalf of the Children's Trust... That is something that I am personally satisfied of having done that because it is the only chance it has of making a long-term impact. That does depend on the Children's Trust driving it forward and the people on it. But having gotten it to that point is a considerable success.

At this point Henry was able to define the initiative as,

The Stockborough Challenge is a campaign on behalf of the Stockborough Children's Trust to get those of us who work with children and young people and their families to work together better so that we achieve our ambitions for them faster.

Thus far the Challenge had identified how a collaborative culture might improve outcomes by re-orientating a professional's attention from targets to meet the real needs of children and young people. The Challenge had also been located within the Children's Trust, however, apart from a couple of insights into leadership encouraging others to follow suit the Challenge had not explained how the cultural change would be achieved. How cultural change would be achieved was the focus of the third phase of the Challenge.

'A CALL TO ACTION'

Developing the Detail was released in February 2009 with the aim of explaining how the cultural change to the 'one culture' would be realised. The Challenge was described as a campaign and specifically a 'call to action' that through various aggregated activities would foster the 'one culture'.

Developing the Detail begins by reiterating that the Challenge was,

A campaign to develop the culture which will enable Stockborough's ambitions for 2013 to be delivered; that it will pursue both excellence and equity through collaboration and creativity; and that it aims to enable life for Stockborough's young people to get better, faster. (*Developing the Detail* §1.2)

What the campaign would do is,

... encourage people to pursue little programmes or to change their programmes or to badge up or further enhance their change programmes and inform their workforce of what they do impacts on the wider children's agenda. (*Developing the Detail* §1.3)

Thus the Challenge as a cultural change campaign would 'encourage' professionals to re-frame the activities or programmes they were already doing towards the 'wider children's agenda'.

This process as the driver of the cultural change campaign was described as, A call to action, a part of the campaign. It is for each team and each individual professional or support worker to draw from and to contribute to. (*Developing the Detail* §1.7)

The deputy chief executive of the council, who had a background in marketing and organisational change management, was involved in redefining the Challenge. She explained what a 'call to action' is,

A call to action answers the question, 'that's interesting. Now what?'

The Stockborough Challenge therefore posed a challenge to professionals through the 'call to action' to modify her practice or programme to fit with the aims of the Challenge, rather than focusing only on her targets. The Challenge therefore placed a significant onus on the actions, initiative and engagement of professionals with the Stockborough Challenge.

In order to foster the response to the 'call to action', the senior managers sought to associate the Challenge with the interests of and the challenges facing professionals in Stockborough, in such statements as,

We are all in the Stockborough Challenge: it is what we do every day. The Challenge is ours – to respond to the spirit of the campaign and, through our own work or leadership – whether political or managerial – to enable our ambitions to be fulfilled. (*Developing the Detail* §1.8)

The Challenge was then presented as a focal point for a broad swathe of activity from across children's services to aggregate and cohere the various changes

and impacts in programmes and practice to contribute to and enact the Challenge.

The Challenge,

will be a campaign both shaped and built in its details through the work of those who work with children and young people at all levels. (*Rationale §1.3*)

This association of the disparate actions of individual professionals with the Challenge was to be facilitated by ‘badging-up’ various activities as part of the Stockborough Challenge,

We will badge up the work each service does within the six themes – so people know they are contributing. (*Developing the Detail §3.2*)

The various collaborative activities instigated by professionals to contribute to the Challenge would then be celebrated to inspire others and amplify the effects of the initiative,

Celebrating the challenge. Each of the services has its well-established internal celebration mechanisms. In order to maintain the momentum of the Stockborough Challenge campaign, these should be brought together and given greater publicity. (*Rationale §8.9*)

It is through this badging-up and celebrating collaborative activities and then cohering them under the banner of the Challenge that the initiative would engender a cultural change to achieve the ‘one culture’ and in so doing produce ‘additionality’,

Developing one culture: This is where the Challenge seeks to bring additionality and to contribute to the development of the big picture... (*Developing the Detail §5.1*)

How the ‘one culture’ would be developed was outlined under four headings with a total of 57 items of activities. The four headings were:

1. Understanding each other and learning from each other
2. Working together on the ground
3. Seeing schools at the heart of the ECM agenda
4. Developing leadership both within and across services

(*Developing the Detail §5*)

There is insufficient space here to list all 57 activities however it is more important to understand how the activities included in the list to develop the 'one culture' were identified. The activities were,

Generated from the wide range of meetings that have taken place since the Challenge was formally established in September 2008, the four lists aim to spark off ideas for action on both an individual and team basis. (*Developing the Detail* §5.1)

The last sentence of this excerpt is significant. The list of activities was developed during Challenge workshops and meetings during the 'conversation' phase. Professionals were asked how they could or would contribute to the Challenge. The suggested activities were collected, aggregated and organised. The list then served to provide inspiration and a range of opportunities for professionals to act on their own initiative. Then by 'badging up' the aggregated activities and projects that were either inspired by or aligned with the initiative would contribute to and represent the impact of the Challenge. The idea is that the mass of 'Challenge' activity would cause a shift in children's services with professionals working in new ways, as explained by Henry Jacobson,

The idea being, I suppose it's to try to get going a whole set of what Tim Brighouse defined as 'butterflies'. The idea is to start creating things that make a little bit of a difference and hope that is part of the spreading from below as well as spreading from above. You've got working through structures at the top, working through champions at any point really, then you've got the projects from below and you hope that there will be a little bit of a rolling effect whereby people see thinking about new ways of working is important in their work.

It is however important to note that professionals in Stockborough did not engage with the badging-up idea, as is evidenced by this short exchange with Henry Jacobson,

What happened with the badging-up idea?

People just didn't want to do it...

Why not?

I don't know... They just didn't want to...

The lack of engagement by professionals with the Challenge was experienced from both children's services and most crucially the school sector, as explained by Nick Reynolds,

We didn't have the buy-in from schools and children's services directors.

At this point Nick Reynolds the Acting Director of Children's Services was not appointed Director of Children's Services (DCS) and Maggie Wilson was recruited from outside the local authority and thus the Challenge no longer had the guaranteed support of the DCS.

A further significant insight into how the Challenge was meant to foster cultural change is found in the relationship between culture and structures in *Developing the Detail*.

In *Developing the Detail* area partnerships are linked with working 'within a framework of "culture not structure"',

The Extended Leadership Team of CYPs [children and young people services] has commenced work to describe what area partnership working might look like, within a framework of 'culture not structure'. This will be developed further by the Children's Trust. (*Developing the Detail* §2.3)

As Nick Reynolds explains the idea of culture not structure was an embedded feature of the Challenge,

We wanted to work in a way that focused on culture not structure. That was there right from the start. It was, it was an anti-dote to the National Strategies... The National Strategies had a very clear approach to pedagogy in schools. You had your literacy hour and it was ten minutes of introduction then fifteen minutes of the next thing and twenty minutes of something else in every classroom across the country. That permeated everything. That was their [New Labour's] style... We wanted to say *why* we are doing all of this... it was no good trying to change things without people's hearts and minds and getting their buy-in.

One view of the 'culture not structure' dyad is that the senior managers were unable to change structures and so they were speaking over or through structures to professionals to win 'hearts and minds' for working in a collaborative way.

Significantly, the phrase ‘culture not structure’ implies that structures and cultures were implicitly conceptualised as separate and independent facets of potential change programmes.

The counter-posed relationship between culture and structure is made more significant as ‘structures’ seemingly describes networks and/ or the bureaucracy of the council, which are considered to have limited utility in facilitating inter-professional collaboration. In *Rationale* it is noted that,

Co-ordinating structures often turn into forums which devolve issues to given services rather than developing complex, integrated responses; that the different stakeholders continue to look for their own solutions to help them meet their own targets and that the structures often become ineffective, sometimes even largely redundant layers of additional bureaucracy. (*Rationale* §4.4)

Despite raising the limitations of structures and structural approaches the Challenge acknowledges that it will require structural elements. In *Developing the Detail* it is stated that the Challenge will,

put in place the ways of working and light-touch local structures which will help deliver it. (*Developing the Detail* §2.1)

The most significant light-touch structures for the Challenge were the Dalewood pilot management group and the champions network. The Dalewood pilot management group will be explored in embedded unit two and so the focus here turns to the champion network.

THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE ‘CHAMPIONS’

The Stockborough Challenge ‘champion’ role grew to occupy a central component in the Challenge. The champion role emerged in *Developing the Detail*, with the plan to recruit,

a champion in each school or service [who] would promote the Challenge and be responsible for external links.

One interpretation of the champion’s role in being ‘responsible for external links’ could be to act as a ‘boundary spanner’ or a guide to advise professionals on

working with a particular profession, sector or policy context. However in the facilitated Theory of Change workshop the role of the champions was identified as a 'change agent network' where,

Champions will change practices by being 'a thorn in the side' of organisations and leaders without creating extra bureaucracy and processes. (ToC document)

According to Henry Jacobson the champion network would, provide a formal and cohesive structure to drive forward the Challenge without duplicating or increasing bureaucratic structures.

Thus the role of the champion was part of the attempt to embed the Challenge in school and service organisations. Recruited from professionals at leadership and less senior levels, the Stockborough Challenge champions were meant to provide a formal and cohesive structure to drive forward the Challenge without duplicating or increasing bureaucratic structures. It was believed that the champions would change professionals' practice by being a 'thorn in the side' of the leaders and professionals to ensure that the Challenge was remembered and engaged with whenever necessary.

The role of the champion developed and became fundamental to the Challenge due to the enthusiastic engagement of particular professionals with the Challenge, as explained by Henry Jacobson,

So there are people that have run with it, Pauline [Tait] is one and the head teacher we mentioned before [Paul Lawler, from Dalewood High School] is another but there are others for whom it remains something that they have heard about but they haven't taken it further.

Whether or not a professional engaged with the Challenge had marked effects on the impact of the initiative, as described by Henry,

There have been people who've been massively convinced and become firm advocates for the Challenge and there are people who have never heard of it... That has depended partly on how it has been championed by people at succeeding levels by people in the directorate structure and in our partners. Take for example Dalewood High School there can't be a single person who hasn't heard of the Stockborough Challenge. On the other hand, in Dalewood as

a town I was hearing yesterday somebody met a group of health workers and they'd never heard of it.

It is apparent that the impact of the Challenge, in this example, depended on whether or not a champion engaged with and promoted the initiative. These champions were what might be called 'enthusiasts' and acted largely on his or her initiative.

However part of the Challenge change strategy was to recruit champions in every school and service to develop a network of change agents. It was in this rolling-out of the champion role that the director experienced difficulties. Henry found it problematic to move beyond the core group of enthusiastic champions to those whom were unenthusiastic or unconverted to the Challenge message. He explains one problem with recruiting champions,

In too many cases now the leaders have just named themselves, which I don't think is particularly helpful.

The issue with the champions is that the role was not adequately specified for professionals whom were unconverted or un-persuaded by the Challenge message, as is explained by Henry Jacobson,

So the key is getting those people [the unconverted] to take it further... As yet that area of work is undeveloped.

Although champions were identified as being crucial to the Challenge and there were champions who championed the Challenge to apparent effect the Challenge did not have a message to those that were not inclined to champion the initiative, in terms of what to do and how to act.

The displacement and lack of resources assigned to the Challenge was a significant factor in the lack of development of the champion network. It is not the case that those developing the Challenge could not think of anything for the champions to do rather they could not think of something for the champions to do for no additional resources. One idea for the Challenge was for it to roll-out the Stockborough Equity Research Network across Stockborough,

Learn about our own team in more depth the SERN approach (Stockborough Equity Research Network) (*Developing the Detail* §5.2.1)

SERN was a collaborative action research network established in eight schools in Stockborough by the Centre for Equity in Education. SERN was recognised as an effective tool for bringing teachers together in and across schools to improve practice. Implementing a SERN-like approach across all services and sectors as part of the Challenge was an attractive role for the Stockborough Challenge and the champions, with the champions functioning as action research champions focusing on collaboration within and between services. It was decided that utilising the Stockborough Challenge champions as research champions was infeasible, as the Challenge could not provide the resources for training or implementation. The role would have to be extra to current workloads and therefore not a significant part of a professional's role.

By the time the director handed in his notice the issue of how to broaden the champion network was unresolved. By the time of the director's final letter to Children's Trust, the question remained,

How will the Stockborough Challenge champions be utilised?

At this point the Challenge is puzzling in that individuals were championing it yet it could not tell other individuals what to do in order to champion it. There was the champion role that was linked to a wider strategy for change through the Challenge yet there was no specification of the role. To understand the lack of specification it is informative to review the 'placemat' produced to promote the Challenge, see figure 6.

The placemat presents six themes informing sixteen activities that will foster the 'one culture', leading to nine outcomes being achieved. Reviewing the activities it is evident that these are sensible and probably appropriate steps for professionals to take in order to better understand one another and to develop a more conducive environment for professionals to work together. What is not clear is exactly how, for example, networks will build confidence and trust. Networks can exclude as well as include and perpetuate unequal relationships based on professional status, gender

or race (Gray 2007). Each activity is on face value an unarguable good yet there does not seem to be a specific and coherent strategy relating the activities to collaborative working. Indeed, there does not seem to be a specific view of what is collaboration.



FIGURE 6: The Stockborough Challenge ‘placemat’

The Challenge was a developmental process that was interrupted and did not complete its initial promise of providing a vision for collaborative working. The themes of the initial vision laid the foundations for collaborative working in Stockborough. Then, during the conversation, professionals generated ideas for activities to promote collaborative working. These activities would be badged-up under the Challenge to aggregate and amplify the various forms of collaborative working to foster a change in culture to the ‘one culture’. Apart from indications of what collaboration would look like around schools there is no vision in the Challenge documents that outlined what collaboration or patterns of collaboration were. The director of the Challenge admitted in *Developing the Detail* that,

we do not yet know is quite what we are hoping to achieve through the big thinking and the small starts, what the partnership working of 2013 will look

actually look like and how we will get to the point at which we know.

(Developing the Detail §1.5)

Thus the Challenge set out to establish a vision of collaborative working in Stockborough and partly because it was disrupted that vision did not emerge. Instead of a vision the Challenge developed an approach to change that would engender a cultural shift to the 'one culture' where professionals would be inspired and encouraged to resist the target regime and collaborate to meet the 'real' needs of the children and young people they work with.

CONCLUSION

The Stockborough Challenge was described above through three phases however this section draws attention to two versions of the initiative: 'Challenge One' and 'Challenge Two'.

Challenge One was the initiative that Diane Shaw started with the publication of *Bringing Together* and the conversation and continued until she retired as Director of Children's Services. The key features of Challenge One were: the extensive rationale for collaboration, the broad focus on many different types of collaborative working but with a lack of specificity relating to differences between types, and an inchoate vision of seven challenges that needed to be understood and engaged with. There was within the Challenge the intention to develop a model of collaborative working or provide a capacity to help professionals and organisations collaborate but it was disrupted by the retirement of Diane Shaw, the implications of the financial crises and the Baby Peter tragedy.

Challenge Two began when Nick Reynolds became acting Director of Children's Services and re-oriented the initiative to explicitly engage with culture and focus on developing the Children's Trust in Stockborough. In Challenge Two the principal barrier to collaboration were the constraining effects of targets and a target-obsessed culture. Culture was presented as a way of encouraging professionals to focus on the 'real' needs of children, families and communities rather than the proxy, target needs. The 'one culture' was presented as a

collaborative culture that would be realised through the 'call to action' and the actions of the Stockborough Challenge champions.

The difference I wish to emphasise between the two versions of the Challenge was that One sought to understand and develop new collaborative approaches whereas Two engaged with motivational issues. In Challenge One it was evident that responding to collaboration required figuring out: the seven challenges needed to be understood and there might need to be new collaborative governance and arrangements. By Challenge Two the problem of collaboration appeared to be solved whereby targets were identified as the principal barrier and they would be engaged with through the 'one culture' in which professionals would focus on the 'real' needs of the young people with whom they worked. In Challenge Two the problem of collaboration was diffused to professionals in Stockborough Children's Services through the 'call to action' that asked professionals to respond to the Challenge and work collaboratively. Focusing on targets, the 'call to action', and champions all emphasised motivational factors.

The next chapter explores how professionals interpreted and engaged with the Stockborough Challenge.

CHAPTER 6: ANSWERING THE CALL

This chapter explores the interpretations of and engagement with the Stockborough Challenge by the managers in the Stockborough Children's Trust, in embedded unit one, contributing part of the findings to engage with research question 2: How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge's approach to improving collaboration?

The chapter is organised in two sections that focus the interpretation and engagement from those with 'optimist' or 'sceptic' perspectives of the Challenge.

THE STOCKBOROUGH CHILDREN'S TRUST

It is not unproblematic to provide an account of how the 35 members of the Children's Trust interpreted or engaged with the Challenge. The Challenge was a dynamic initiative – Challenge One and Challenge Two, as defined in the previous chapter – and the changes were interpreted and engaged with in different ways by professionals from the various sectors and professions represented on the trust. Although it is somewhat of a simplification two perspectives of the Stockborough Challenge emerged in discussions with members of the Children's Trust. The first perspective was 'optimistic' and was held predominantly by members of the directorate leadership team. The second perspective was 'sceptical' and was shared by 'regular' members of the Children's Trust.

THE OPTIMISTS

There were professionals in the trust who saw the Challenge as a useful and substantive part of improving children's services in Stockborough – these were the optimists. These professionals were largely although not exclusively part of the directorate leadership team. Defining features of the optimist position were having a greater understanding of the revised version of the Challenge – 'Challenge Two' – in terms of the contribution to outcomes, a total and inclusive process, and specifically through the agency of individuals.

Contributing to outcomes

Loraine Dodson, the director of the Children's Trust, was a Challenge optimist and she described the Challenge in terms of the desirable outcomes or consequences it would achieve. This was her view of the initiative,

Could you explain what the Challenge will do?

I think for me the Challenge is fundamental to how we're going to move forward as a Children's Trust. The work that Henry has done has really focused it down on to how a really, critically important area that we haven't spent enough time or energy on, and that is changing culture. That is the one thing that is going to make the biggest difference in my view in terms of re-shaping and re-modelling children's services.

So in this quote the Challenge is understood in terms of cultural change as contributing to the 're-shaping and re-modelling' of children's services with an emphasis on the Children's Trust.

The outcomes to which the Challenge would contribute were multiple, if related, and determined by the requirements of the changing context in Stockborough.

During the fieldwork phase it became increasingly apparent that the 'credit crunch' would lead to a reduction in public expenditure, meaning children services would have to 'do more with less'. During her speech to open the second Stockborough Challenge conference, Maggie Wilson, the new Director of Children's Services (DCS) gave a speech explaining the benefits of the initiative. As a note of caution there is reason to doubt that Maggie Wilson was a Challenge optimist, as she was arguably part of the reason why the initiative was discontinued however her speech promoting the Challenge was characteristic of the optimist perspective. She said,

The Stockborough Challenge is part of the solution. When I came to Stockborough, I struggled with it. What was it? What does it do? It's about bringing together the pieces that fit, working together means joining up to avoid the cracks and the Stockborough Challenge is about that... Now we're facing a different financial situation. There will be less money around however if we

ensure that there's no gaps and overlaps, by working smarter we can make sure we won't let families down, and the Stockborough Challenge is part of this...

In both excerpts the Challenge is associated with contributing to two related but distinct ends re-modelling of children's services and increasing cost-effective practice. The issue is not that improving collaborative working might not have multiple ends but rather the optimists perceived and communicated the Challenge in terms of the outcomes it would achieve rather than what the Challenge would do.

The Revised Challenge

Challenge Two was a campaign of cultural change and one of the characteristics of the campaign was that it created a focal point to which everything and anything within reason could be perceived as contributing to the overall aims. This view is evident in Loraine Dodson's quote about the Challenge, where the Challenge becomes whatever professionals do to contribute to improving outcomes by working in new ways,

Our work with the PCT, for me that is massively the Challenge. If we're talking about the way we're commissioning services, do we, you know, jointly working together, have processes that are more streamlined that is absolutely about changing culture. But if I ask Tom [from the PCT], do you see this as being part of the Challenge, he'd probably say 'no' or that he's not really sure. I think it is about the Challenge wrapping round all of these changes and driving forward that cultural shift... If you look at the way the frontline staff operate in lots of areas, they are massively making a difference because they just get on with it but if you say to them that what you're doing is about, it's new ways of working, which is the Challenge they probably wouldn't recognise it as that but it is.

This view expresses an understanding of the Challenge as a focal point in relation to which which all collaborative activity would be badged-up. What is significant is that the idea of the initiative as a focal point was part of the later development of what the Challenge would do. This is illustrative of the optimist position where professionals had a greater understanding of what the Challenge would do in its later stages when it became a campaign of cultural change.

Although the optimists knew more about the Challenge than the sceptics, when pushed to describe it in more concrete detail the optimists tended to focus on the actions of individuals or specific settings, and largely on Paul Lawler, the head teacher at Dalewood High School.

In her speech at the Challenge conference, Maggie Wilson, the new Director of Children's Services said,

Dalewood High School will show us what the Stockborough Challenge looks like in practice in a school. My shorthand way of explaining it... the Challenge is the way we make the Stockborough Children's Trust work in practice... that's a school focus but it goes across the piste of children and young people's services.

Similarly, Loraine Dodson, described the Challenge in terms of the actions of the head teacher at Dalewood High School,

Paul is the embodiment of the Challenge... he really is the Stockborough Challenge...

He says that he has put the Challenge at the centre of his school.

Absolutely, he's really embraced it. You know we need to get that culture embedded across all of our services.

It would be easier if there were 100 Paul's out there.

Of course it would. I think, the interesting thing with Paul is that he reaches out. I think the Challenge is like a DNA, something that can change something else.

Here the Challenge is equated with the actions of a head teacher in initiating collaborative projects in his school and in doing so the Challenge becomes what the head teacher has done. How the head teacher made use of the Challenge will be explored in embedded case two below. However by associating the initiative with a case of integrated working, which has been judged successful and effective, the Challenge is deemed a useful and transferable component of change programmes to be applied in other schools and other settings. The belief that the Challenge is generalisable is similar to Maggie Wilson when she talked about the applicability of the Challenge 'across the piste', at the second Challenge Conference. The DNA simile suggests that the head's actions in the school are the phenotype or the

observed properties of the Challenge but there is also a genotype, the hereditary information, which informs the development of collaborative working in a range of different contexts.

Of course, the closest thing the Challenge had to a DNA was the idea of cultural change and culture as an enabler of collaborative working. Culture was a substantive focus of the Challenge rhetoric and a clear focus in professional's interpretations. The views of the optimists in relation to cultural change were interrelated to the barriers facing professional collaboration. In the discussions of culture in relation to collaboration and the Challenge were usually expressed through the mediating role of culture in overcoming or mediating the barriers to collaborative working.

Pauline Tait, a directorate leader described the barriers to inter-professional collaboration. It is interesting that she drew a distinction between factors located with the individual professional and relational, cultural dimensions between professions. When asked to identify barriers to collaborative working, Pauline said,

people's conditions of service, working conditions, sort of, how they're line managed, what the barriers in their particular organisation are in relation to integrated working and collaborative working. Also, what their remit is...

Pauline then went on to outline factors that facilitate or constrain inter-professional interactions in the relational characteristics between professionals,

So if you bring it down to it, it is understanding people's professional perspectives to start off with... and the profession that they work in and respecting it... there is a kind of hierarchy of professionalism... that's one of the biggest barriers because that hierarchy of professional culture has also been created by the value that the government has put on certain areas and the money has put on it.

Inter-professional interaction is understood as individual professionals bound by their context (i.e., professions and organisations) meaning that individual professionals have limited ability to work in different ways and so levels of trust, understanding and respect result in better or worse inter-professional interaction.

Pauline then described the traits of collaborative individuals,

It's normally people who listen. People who give time to other colleagues. People who will go out of their way to understand what you do. It's a two-way process of listening to each other. It's that responsibility of the people on that group to talk to one another. I'm just trying to think. I think the people on that board who really engage collaboratively are the people who really have a passion actually for working with children and young people and their families but don't do it in a half-hearted way... it's to do with their humanity and that isn't a professional quality because what you find when you get professionals together they're all trying to fight their corner and who has the biggest voice. In a classroom full of kids, or in a family all the kids are vying for attention. Yet the person who works truly collaboratively doesn't do that. They work from underneath but they have a strong voice, and a calmness... I can't quite explain it... I'm thinking of one person in particular. He's a stakeholder actually. And he runs a private enterprise. He has a real sort of a passion for the community he serves.

The manifestation of collaborative culture is a man who aside from the other distractions facing professionals in terms of territories, boundaries and targets is focused on 'the community he serves.' It is interesting that the collaborative quality that Pauline talks about is not related to professionalism but above and beyond that relating to an individual's 'humanity'.

Maggie Wilson provided a similar view of culture,

I'm running a training session on culture with mid-level managers tomorrow. The way I define culture is 'the way we do things round here'... to work together we need to change our culture. When we're working with children everyone needs to think: who should I be working with to help this child? Who is missing? We need to shape our processes to support that. But it's up to all of us to think what you can do. It's about owning issues. About holding the ring together around a child. If you let go of the ring, throw it to someone else, duck it, miss it, throw it to someone else it means missed chances for that family...

In this excerpt the implied barriers to collaboration might be different with the suggestion of apathy or irresponsibility nevertheless changing culture will mean taking responsibility or ownership for what needs to be done and doing it.

Engagement

In terms of engaging with the Challenge the optimists were more likely to draw upon or employ the initiative. The two most prominent utilisations of the Challenge were using it to brand the Children's Trust and secondly to meet the requirements of national and local policy requirements.

Henry Jacobson described that an outcome of the Challenge in re-branding the 'children's and young people management group' the 'Children's Trust',

There are people who are obsessed with structures and they don't realise it. They think the more you wrap things up in bureaucratic terminology the better. So there were people that thought that the absurd children's and young people management group that doesn't mean anything to anybody was the best name for the trust and that just made a barrier for the trust being understood outside of its own meetings. We came up with the idea of calling [it] 'the Children's Trust', which came from the Challenge.

Branding may seem a trivial and contemporary concern but the trust did have an image problem. For professionals not attached to the children's trust, there was usually a lack of understanding about the role, remit and resources available in the meeting. During a funny and engaging presentation to the Trust, the professional passed around a questionnaire that claimed to be, 'under the guidance of the Stockborough Children's Trust.' The professional said he was being presumptuous in assuming the questionnaire would be legitimated by the Children's Trust. Then he said,

I didn't know what the Children's Trust was, I asked around and was told it was a place where you present reports and asked for money.

Everyone in the room laughed but the joke contained more than a grain of truth, as it was a common occurrence for representatives from projects whose funding was coming to an end to come to a Trust meeting and ask for money.

There is a case that for members of the Children's Trust the Challenge vision provided a focus and direction to work towards when it was not entirely clear what the Children's Trust was meant to do. It is difficult to substantiate this claim, partly because of the contextual factors that served to displace the Challenge in relation to the continual development of the Children's Trust in Stockborough and the increasingly specified policy and guidance for Children's Trusts (e.g., DCSF 2008b; DCSF 2009). An external advisor shared this view, however, offering her take on the development of the trust,

It's strange how you have these things called Children's Trusts and they had one in Stockborough but they didn't know they had one and then they were drip fed the guidance and then there was a moment when they said 'oh, it's about commissioning.'

There is a case that until the policy was formed or more clearly asserted that the function of the Children's Trusts was commissioning services and senior managers understood this that the Challenge provided some purpose and cohesion to the trust and its meetings. Of course the Challenge and commissioning were not mutually exclusive and are conceivably complementary yet there was a sense that in addition to a range of other factors once a definite purpose had been identified for the trust the Challenge was less important and not required.

There was also a sense that the Challenge provided the Children's Trust with something to be about and to communicate to front-line professionals, especially with the diminished capacity for locally defined dialogue due to the various other external agencies 'talking to' the children's workforce in Stockborough. Nick Reynolds explained the constraints placed upon senior managers in initiating the local dialogue, which they were expected to lead,

One thing I'm interested in is the 'initiativitis' of New Labour? You know initiative after initiative ... How were you dealing with that?

Well it was unhelpful and it was unhelpful because it happened on so many different layers and levels. So for example, if you just focus on something like the National College of School Leadership if you're trying to develop leadership across an area, you say I'm going to develop leadership and you set about

developing leadership. Then comes along the National College who're also trying to develop leadership but they're trying to do it nationally. So you're a sub-set of what they are trying to do. And then what you find is that they develop a set of off-the-peg products that you find you have to use those products. You can't use the Masters degrees that people were using and you can't develop your own thing so you have to use theirs. Then you have to develop your own response working around those products and processes... and that's just one little area. So that's what we were trying to do, get people doing things, building on a process and an experience and through that help people make local sense of the plethora of initiatives...

The second use for the Challenge was to meet the demands for senior managers in Stockborough to have developed a vision and cultural change programme. Senior managers in Stockborough developed various proposals and strategies in response to New Labour policy, which typically advocated the development of a local vision. Having a vision document and campaign was a useful asset, as is explained by Nick Reynolds,

The Challenge had a vision and it was going to do whatever but actually having a vision ticked a number of boxes. You needed a vision for BSF, you needed one for the... David's [Chief Executive of Stockborough Council] corporate change programme...

Yep... the local strategic partnership... every time you went to make an application for something it asked 'what's your vision for this?' Well there it was off-the-peg.

So that was a useful thing?

Yeah. You could have this conversation that this is how we're going to tackle it. This is how we're making sense of it and bring it together.

Furthermore, the Challenge was used to fit into the wider change processes across Stockborough Council. The deputy chief executive of the council was implementing a change programme called 'Transformation'. Transformation consisted of 3 C's: customer, cost and culture. Each directorate was tasked with developing a project or programme to engage with the cultural change programme, Loraine Dodson said,

for us the Challenge kind of embodies the cultural change that needs take place for us and in our partners as well.

The Challenge was therefore primarily used as a means to communicate the Children's Trust to professionals and to meet the requirements for visioning documents and cultural change programmes at the local level from the council and nationally in policy. There is however a suspicion that the uses of the Challenge were external to its supposed aim of improving collaborative working and did not require it to, for example, develop a model of collaboration or make collaboration easier and is evident from the sceptical view of the Challenge.

THE SCEPTICS

The sceptics were members of the trust who doubted that the Challenge provided any additional support or guidance in relation to collaborative working.

The sceptics tended to be less clear about what the Stockborough Challenge intended to do and why. In speaking to members of the trust in a number of cases there was some confusion surrounding the Challenge and I found myself explaining what the initiative was to them, as is found in the excerpt below,

To be honest with the Stockborough Challenge itself, I'm not sure of its purpose. I've read all the stuff and I know it's about changing the behaviour of staff to do what exactly?

It is a campaign. It is taking examples of things that may or may not be happening anyway, aside from the trust, and taking those as examples and using them to inspire people towards more collaborative activity

no matter how many times you advertise it as being a really great idea unless you can demonstrate the impact of something like that it's not worth the paper it's printed on. You need to say okay we started off here, this is our baseline and this is where we are going to be at the end of the Challenge... but I don't see anything like that, that says the impact of this will be, that. We'll move from here to there... and it might be there but I haven't seen. It may be because I'm ignorant of what the Challenge is and why we are doing it...

Nevertheless the sceptics had an expectation and hope that the Challenge would deliver on its initial promise to provide a vision of collaboration to make collaborating easier. Sally Jenkins, a member of the trust, opined,

People want to [collaborate] but people are very fond of saying ‘well really we should join this all up together, and I should know what you’re doing.’ And everyone says ‘yes, yes, yes’ and then nothing happens. So there is quite a lot of, we rarely stray into the how bit. I think the chair of the [Children’s Trust] group ought to be moving us in that direction, the how of it... It is hard because one of the other... barriers is resources. Everyone is so busy with their day job to actually take time out to say right I want to collaborate is really hard. This is why I think things like the Stockborough Challenge are particularly good because there is a dedicated resource to look at ways in which people can collaborate, and get people together because without getting people together it won’t happen.

The displacement and scaling back of the project meant that the Challenge did not present a model of integrated working, as described by Tom Waites from the Primary Care Trust,

One thing I’ve heard from other people is that the Stockborough Challenge doesn’t really have a vision of what integrated, collaborative working should actually look like. Would you agree?

I think I probably would.

Do you have a vision?

Me, what collaborative working would look like for me? For me, in terms of commissioning it starts off with having, with not commissioning health or e-services but commissioning children’s services. Having a framework to say that these are the services that are needed and these are the sorts of things that could be. It’s about doing it together. It’s about taking into consideration each partner’s statutory responsibilities, so how do you achieve those, it’s also about taking risks for one another, to give up something for the good of the partners, so you’ll all be achieving something together. On the ground it’s about ‘no wrong door’, trying to get concepts like the lead professional working, concepts like what child care is available in your local area, so parents and CYP having a range of information and can find where services are.

So you don't think the Challenge has provided that, a framework to bring people together?

No.

There is talk of the 'one culture', that's what the Challenge provides, what do you think of that?

I'm not sure. I think it's trying to be the triumph of simplicity. One culture, what does it mean? When professionals work together it's the differences that get in the way, cultural differences... saying we have 'one culture' seems far too simplistic.

Tom believes that the Challenge has not provided a vision or model of collaborative working. It is interesting also that his view of culture seems not to be the same as that of the Challenge. Tom sees culture as inter-professional culture with collaboration constrained by the different assumptions and practices of professional training rather than a single organisational culture of focusing on need not targets.

In not providing a specific vision of integrated working, the Challenge did not develop an appropriate approach for translating the vision into action through facilitating processes of inter-professional collaboration. Sally Jenkins described the progress,

What's happened to the Challenge?

It's disappeared a lot... for me there's a lot of stuff around integrated working, which is, I don't know, is embedded in the Challenge but we don't really seem to have an integrated working vision or focus...

What in terms of the Challenge or the Children's Trust?

No I mean in terms of, as a kind of focus group or something that's looking at integrated working on a practical, operational level, you know. That seems to be lacking. You know, the Challenge voiced all the integrated working stuff on a high, strategic level and did that and as made that sort of consciously aware for various people what it is and what it's meant to be doing on a strategic level but on an operational level that journey from there – the Challenge – to what it

means operationally, which is what is the basic nuts and bolts of integrated working isn't there. There isn't a clear route from one to the other.

I think that's well put. I think changing the way people work, it takes more than slogans, it's about practices and spaces...

It's about training and we don't have any of that. I think that's a massive downfall. I looked at the safeguarding proposal for next year. In there is all the hard end reactive stuff predominantly and there's nothing in that about integrated working. So if the Challenge is to manifest it needs tools to do it.

It was apparent that the absence of a vision of integrated and collaborative working had not been developed through the Challenge and that also that such a vision had not emerged through other channels or processes. Tom, from the PCT, explained,

I don't know enough about what goes on below the trust. It is interesting that I don't. I think we haven't got a clear strategic picture. We've had a year with a stand-in director and then now we've got them figuring out what they plan to do. I suppose what I would like is a clear picture of here is the trust, here is what is happening, here are the links, here is what is happening to the work at the frontline, here is how it fits in with the Children's Plan directly and with the other strategic functions we have to link in with.

The Challenge vision was one apparent means for bringing professionals together however for some members of the trust the vision was of limited use. A headteacher and member of the Children's Trust stated,

The Stockborough Challenge is a vision of how we'd like our world to be but it's not like that. We come here and talk about the Challenge but we'll all go back to our desks and reality.

The sceptics were less likely to engage with the Stockborough Challenge partly due to the lack of belief that it provided something substantive with which to engage but also that the initiative was focused on schools. A recurrent topic in interviews was whether or not the Challenge was schools focused and therefore only of interest to and use for those working in a school. For example, the interviewee below perceived the Challenge to have begun with a focus on schools,

It's been led by a very education dominated children's services, it was led by an ex-headteacher – who was a very established, excellent headteacher – but using those links. There seemed to be little links outside of children's services or education. They've recognised that since then... it was around schools. It seemed to be around getting schools to work together more closely, as schools have closer relations with the LA. As I've got more involved I've realised that there is a much broader vision but I don't think it's been successful yet in getting a broader remit or acceptance outside of those areas.

For some professionals outside of the education sector the Challenge was only useful to those working in schools because it engaged with the particular constraints to collaborative working experienced in the education sector, Sally Jenkins describes her view,

I'm interested in whether the Challenge is useful to you? Do you use it?

In what way?

I'm interested in the role of the Challenge as a myth. We all collaborate in Stockborough look at the Challenge... like the way that the ECM agenda might help you?

All that stuff is just embedded stuff. It's so what? ... We don't really need to get people to reflect that it fits in with Stockborough Challenge on this and this and this because it's self-evident.

Okay, maybe not for you because you seem quite progressive but is it some sort of currency that you can use with other people?

No. It has no, I don't mean it's not valuable. It's just like somebody's branded our way of life, that's great but we don't actually need something to say 'oh this new way of doing a bit of work will help you to understand what it's about'... I think there's an also, I'm not sure how widespread it is... I do find that the whole teaching and learning... [sector have not been] hugely imaginative. It's lovely the enthusiasm but it's almost that in the last few years people have been talking about extended schools and services as it is something really new and fantastic idea but we've been doing it for years!

Whether fair or not the perception that the Challenge was a form of remedial action to introduce the school sector to collaborative working was widely shared amongst those from other backgrounds and sectors.

There is some support to the notion of the Challenge being focused on schools. Diane Shaw, Nick Reynolds and Henry Jacobson all had an education background and as Nick said the Challenge was implicitly trying to bring in schools and headteachers. However, the managers believed they had reduced the focus on schools and broadened the Challenge to engage with all of children's services. Whether the Challenge was too educational or broad enough to engage across children's services is illustrative of the divide in children's services between education and the other sectors that work with children. Indeed the development of the Challenge reflected and was influenced and shaped by the bringing together of learning services with other supposed non-educational services. Joyce Toynbee a manager of the housing trust and Children's Trust member said,

People say that Paul Lawler has put the Challenge at the centre of his school.

Have you done that?

No.

Why not?

I just don't see it as relevant to what we do...

But you're a member of the trust, you work with kids and families... [but] the Challenge isn't relevant to what you do? Why not?

Look Paul's made it work in his school and good for him, he gets a lot of praise for it, but I just don't see it fit with what we do. I don't see the value added by the Challenge for our work.

For the sceptics the Challenge did not offer a model of collaboration and it did not support them in either collaborating or as managers in developing systems and processes to support staff in collaborative working. The sceptics saw the Challenge as something to do with schools and engaging with the particular needs of schools rather than being broadly applicable across children's services. Exploring the

role of the Challenge in a school and community context is the focus of the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented two broad perspectives of the Challenge, optimists and sceptics, that related to the two versions of the Challenge. The optimists were senior managers on Stockborough Children's Trust who focused on and engaged with Challenge Two as a process of cultural change. When the optimists described culture in relation to the Challenge they believed it was doing what was needed and meeting the needs of the people the professionals worked with (i.e., Pauline Tait) or as ownership over problems (i.e., Maggie Wilson). The engagement with the Challenge however seemed to be to use the initiative for strategic purposes, such as, a standard visioning tool for the Building Schools for the Future application. The sceptics on the other hand were managers on the Children's Trust and overall were confused by the Challenge but saw greatest utility in Challenge One's intention to develop a model of collaboration. The sceptics repeated that in Stockborough there was the motivation to collaborate but that there needed to be a concerted effort to translate the strategic vision into the practices and training that would make it a reality.

A number of the sceptics were of the opinion that the Challenge was not only schools focused but only really relevant to schools. Reflecting on Nick Reynold's comments in the previous chapter, he was acknowledged that the Challenge had an agenda of marketing the Every Child Matters agenda to schools. Thus the next chapter explores the Stockborough Challenge in a school and community context. The focus is on Dalewood High School, which was identified as a site where the Challenge was in effect.

CHAPTER 7: COLLABORATION IN CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the engagement with the Stockborough Challenge in Dalewood High School – embedded unit two – to observe the initiative at the ‘frontline’. The importance of Dalewood High School is that it was repeatedly presented as an exemplar of the Challenge in action and so for this research it is informative to understand what was happening in practice. In so doing, this chapter contributes further to research question 2: How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge’s approach to improving collaboration?

The chapter is split into two parts that explore the engagement with the Challenge in Dalewood High School and the school’s collaborative relationships in the Dalewood Pilot Management Group. The focus is on the location of the Challenge in a school context and perspective, and the influence of the discourse of collaboration on the initiative.

DALEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Paul Lawler, a self-proclaimed and widely recognised Stockborough Challenge champion and the headteacher at Dalewood High School, enthusiastically engaged with the Challenge. He used the initiative as part of his school improvement process and the associated attempt to initiate collaborative working.

To understand Paul’s engagement with the Challenge it is useful to describe the situation when he arrived at Dalewood High School to find a school with mounting problems, as he explained,

There’s low aspirations in Dalewood. It’s the kind of place that would look at money going into another part of town and think those swings should’ve been ours... When I arrived in post I was facing what became a £1.57 million deficit... We were a school in crisis. The school had just been given a category, we got a satisfactory but the school had issues and partly it was breaking down these barriers and letting people in. That includes the authority officers as well. The school was quite isolated, geographically but also support wise the relationships weren’t great. I thought I’d been let down, not told about the true situation but I

decided to stay and give it a go. Some people walk away from accidents. Me? I like to get stuck in.

The issues Paul faced extended beyond his school to the existing relationships with the local authority,

It says in the Children's Plan, innovation, strong collaborations across professional boundaries. That's what we are trying to do. But we're all in our silos and I do call it 'the silo model'. I didn't know who else was available. Even though I had been a head for a year, I didn't know before the Stockborough Challenge started, I still didn't know. I had sort of seen people. I was taken by Diane Shaw, then Director of Children's Services, to meet people but I saw five empty offices. I saw Pauline Tait just going out. But I didn't know what roles these people did but I did know that these people are here. So I actually spent time finding out who these areas were. Until I found out most of our time was spent camped out in learning services. That's when I realised that we'd have to do things in a different way.

Paul Lawler was determined to make changes in his school and when he heard of the Challenge he recognised that it aligned with his ambitions,

When I arrived I came with a real view of the school in terms of the Children's Plan with a real view of the school at the heart of a learning community and working with agencies... To me the Challenge, when it came along, it was saying all the sorts of things that I wanted to hear. So actually the Challenge could have been my manifesto as a head teacher. I felt it had been written for me.

Indeed, Paul agreed with the Challenge's message that professionals should focus on the 'real' needs of children and young people rather the targets they are expected to meet,

We're not just responsible for a school; we're responsible for a community... We're doing what we're doing not to tick a box. We're doing what we're doing because it's right for children and young people and ticking the box afterwards.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Stockborough Challenge became central to Paul's school improvement process. At the second Stockborough Challenge annual conference, Paul Lawler described how he used the Challenge,

The Stockborough Challenge was how we turned my school around... The Challenge gave me the permission to develop my crazy ideas... And because it is under the banner of the Stockborough Challenge and because it brings people together the branding gives it a real strength. And that's something that I've got from it because it has given my crazy ideas some respectability.

In interpreting this statement the word 'permission' is of particular interest. Head teachers of secondary schools are relatively powerful individuals within local education systems and a head does not normally require permission to launch school-based projects. However, it is important to note that Paul had tried to initiate similar change twice before but both instances ended in failure. After the first failure to promote integrated working within his school Paul tried again with the backing of members of the Stockborough Children's Services directorate leadership team,

I came to Dalewood, I tried to get things going but it sort of floundered because the school wasn't there. So I engaged with people in the authority and there was a great desire from people like Pauline Tait, and other services other than learning services to take part and really go for it. I went for it again, knowing that there was a senior level backing to try and get the thing going again... and it faltered again.

After the second perceived failure to initiate school improvement processes Paul met Henry Jacobson, the director of the Challenge, and they decided to focus on Dalewood High School to kick-start both the Challenge and the school improvement,

I spoke to Henry, he could see I had a passion for it [the Stockborough Challenge], so we said let's call it the Dalewood pilot and get people together and that's what we're working towards now.

Thus Paul Lawler became a self-appointed Stockborough Challenge 'champion' or as he also called himself a 'collaborative entrepreneur'. Paul clearly identified with being a leader, and it was evident that leadership was important to him. He was influenced by a number of contemporary and high-profile approaches to school improvement and would use the terminology of, for example, the National College of School Leadership and other education organisations and thinkers,

There is a guy called Sir John Jones – a former head teacher who talks about leadership in education settings – and he came up with a term 'courageous leadership' being the key. You can't wait for everyone to be on board. That's my approach I talked about getting plates spinning.

Paul was aware that his leadership made him a fulcrum between the school and the process of school improvement he was seeking to implement. As a school leader he was very sensitive about the messages he communicated to his staff and the reception of the message. Aware that his staff might find his approach against the famed level-headed temperament in that particular part of England he went to lengths to ensure his staff did not balk at his 'buzzwords'. He told me one technique he used to overcome his staff's reticence,

Do you know bullshit bingo? Well I was going to give them a talk and I was going to say how I was a 'collaborative entrepreneur'... So I made a bullshit bingo grid with all the words I was going to use and I got Dawn to hand it out and say, 'we're going to have a laugh, look at this.' So they didn't think I knew and when I was giving my talk I heard a little 'House.' And so I said, 'What's that?' And there was some laughter and we carried on. You see they were listening and learning but there's that joke to it so it isn't too much.

The way in which Paul used the Challenge as part of his leadership strategy is illustrated by how he sought to embed his courageous and visionary leadership throughout the school,

Have you heard it? It's brilliant! President John F. Kennedy was walking around NASA checking up on the preparations for the moon shot. He stopped a janitor pushing a mop and asked him what he was doing. 'I'm helping to put a man on the moon, sir.' That's what I'm after.

Thus when Paul talks of ‘permission’ it is the tacit permission and commitment of the staff at the school that he sought.

The Challenge was a local-level, system-wide change process that enabled the Paul to situate his school improvement strategy within a broader set of change processes taking place across Stockborough through the Challenge and nationally through the Children’s Plan and associated strategies. His approach appeared to have some traction with the staff. Towards the end of the research period the school launched the Dalewood Challenge, as described by the deputy head, who was leading it,

The Dalewood Challenge was started to make sure that everything that’s happening across Stockborough with the Stockborough Challenge is happening here in Dalewood.

What do you think is happening across Stockborough through the Challenge?

Well... I’m not sure to be honest.

It is hard to know how much to read into this exchange. Was the deputy head motivated to work on the Dalewood Challenge because he was inspired by the work being done across Stockborough or, more prosaically, had he been asked to run the Dalewood Challenge by the headteacher and his response reflected the rhetoric surrounding the Challenge in the school? I believe he was genuinely engaged with the Challenge and the collaborative working it promoted but this instance does reflect the use of slogans and leadership style techniques to motivate staff.

A FOCAL POINT

The Stockborough Challenge provided Paul Lawler with a focal point around which he could cohere all the separate activities in his school (e.g., the trip to Auschwitz with the cooking project) as part of a broader initiative – the Stockborough Challenge – as part of the school’s engagement with the Every Child Matters agenda. Paul described this process of linking initiatives,

It all comes back to the Challenge, where ever you start, the cooking project, school leadership it all comes back to, contributes to the Challenge. This is leadership of 'think big and start small.' You have your vision, what I want to do in Dalewood. So you have that and you do something that works towards that. So all those things I've talked about are under the umbrella of our vision [The Stockborough Challenge] and that's a really powerful thing.

Thus the Challenge became a way to relate the many and varied activities that were part of the frenetic approach to school improvement. Paul's approach was to build momentum for the school improvement process by getting things going, 'spinning plates',

My thing is to get plates spinning. You know there's a phrase in Dalewood, we've got more pilots than Heathrow. You look at it, you pilot it and you review it. If it doesn't work you let that plate drop but you've got other plates spinning and you put another plate up and get that going...

There is the feeling that within the school a lot was happening – the 'spinning plates' approach to change. Towards the ends of the fieldwork phase, Paul Lawler moved onto another headship and a new head, Helena Sexton, was appointed. She saw her role as consolidating what Paul had started,

My job is to make sense of all this, get things on paper.

In Dalewood High School the use of the Challenge as a focal point to cohere collaborative working and to encourage and inspire professionals to collaborate and work together was clearly in effect. The Challenge seems to have played a demonstrable role in Paul Lawler's third attempt at school improvement, of which collaborative working was a substantive part. The issue is however whether the Challenge in Dalewood influenced or improved collaborative working beyond the school, or was it more about facilitating and motivating school improvement in the school, and it is to this we now turn.

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

This section describes the approach that Paul Lawler and Henry Jacobson used to develop the Challenge. It is informative to consider the difference between their understanding of collaboration and what was required to encourage, in relation

to the barriers that professionals in children's services faced when attempting to work collaboratively. Specifically, we see the contrast between the Challenge's approach, developed in Dalewood High, and the perspective of professionals from children's services with greater experience of working collaboratively.

Developing relationships with external partners was an integral part of Paul Lawler's engagement with the Stockborough Challenge. Paul was determined to develop external relationships with organisations and professionals to provide the support to improve pupil's achievement, by removing the barriers to learning for his pupils,

The most disadvantaged have massive barriers, so the Stockborough Challenge for me targets those barriers, helps remove them, helps young people to overcome them and then you put opportunities in the way to open those doors for learning.

Paul described how he would bring people together to remove the barriers pupils face,

I'm a 'collaborative entrepreneur'... my style of leadership is to get the right people in the right room to solve the problems... putting the right people round a table, guiding that coalition of partners, that's sustainable... it's all, to be honest for me, it's a glorified dating agency. The way I'm approaching the Challenge, it's possibly a bit irreverent but the way I approached the launch meeting we had. It's about getting people together. Helping to build relationships. If you imagine a dating agency for people with very damaged relationships that's how it feels. What seems to have happened in the old silo approach. There was no synergy at all. It was just, 'can you do this, we need an art project, can do you that?' Rather than that we make the right links, partnerships with the right people in the agencies and develop something beautiful, no matter how small or large, and then generate these things.

In order to make the right links Paul decided to work with Henry Jacobson to form the Dalewood pilot management group.

DALEWOOD PILOT MANAGEMENT GROUP

Paul Lawler and Henry Jacobson formed the Dalewood Pilot Management Group (DPMG) to increase collaborative working in Dalewood. Paul explains,

How the pilot group came about... [I] wanted to implement the Children's Plan and through school and working with all the agencies that should be involved in all children's workforce and it's about trying to get everyone together... So I spoke to Henry and we decided to set up the Dalewood group, to set plates spinning...

A range of professionals from Dalewood and the upper vale area were invited to attend the first meeting of the DPMG. To open the meeting, Henry gave a presentation on the Stockborough Challenge. Then, Paul outlined the two aims for the meeting, which he later described to me,

The group had two goals. I asked Henry if there was anyway he could find to help us celebrate our work and he came up with the newsletter. So that was the first task, everyone had to submit 100 words and a photo on a piece of collaborative or multi-agency working they'd done. They would send it to Henry and he'd put it in the newsletter so everyone could hear about it. Second goal, at every meeting we'd make one new partnership. That's lots of new relationships, partnerships, being made and lots of plates spinning.

Thus the DPMG was set up for its members to come together to share examples of collaborative working through a newsletter and to make new partnerships with other professionals and organisations in the group.

The first goal was to share and celebrate recent examples of collaborative working in Dalewood. The choice of celebration as a strategy to bring professionals together and share information on what an organisation was doing was thought to be a good idea. Patsy Hughes, an area manager in children's services, thought,

Celebration is a good idea, not enough of that takes place to be honest... It's a combination of celebrating a team's achievements and informing other people. It helps with partnership working because someone could see it and we could tie-in with them, instead of doing it separately, someone who should be involved. It's easy to exclude people who need to be involved then that can lead to more good stuff.

Patsy perceived the purpose of the celebration component as both to recognise good practice and what is possible but also to share information about what opportunities to collaborate there are, to enable professionals to join up to 'lead to more good stuff' happening.

The response to the request to write an article for the newsletter was lukewarm. Some saw it as another task added to a busy professional's 'to-do' list. Mary Thomas from the play team said,

I didn't do it... I thought what's the point?

Patsy Hughes engaged with the activity but still thought that it was limited as a strategy to bring professionals together,

I submitted the 100 words and the photo. The article we gave Henry is old news. Still it will be good to see it in the Challenge newsletter but it'll be old. It's not what I'm doing now.

Patsy clearly had a different need in mind when she says that the work will be old and that since then she was working on something else. Historical information does not help professionals join-up and contribute to collaborative projects by helping them identify common ground with other professional's work or have other professionals recognise commonalities with her work. Instead the newsletter tells the reader what someone did with funding they had but not what they are currently doing or plan to do. Although not dismissing the notion of celebrating their previous work professionals are more concerned about the next project, the one they are developing and the challenges they face. Patsy explains the struggle,

You have to keep moving to remind people that you're there and your agenda crosses with theirs. You have to get over that hurdle. I've just found out about a meeting that I haven't been invited to. I have to keep jumping up and down and saying I'm here. Maybe because we're new but it is a constant battle. We have to keep meeting people and then they change jobs, which makes it worse.

The second goal of the DPMG was that each professional should make a new partnership at every meeting. However, all the professionals in the DPMG were already working with one another,

We were asked to make contacts with someone [new] but everyone in that meeting I already knew and we are working with them in some way or another.

Paul and Henry's underlying assumption for goal two was too little collaboration was happening in Dalewood and so 'plates' needed spinning to increase collaboration. However, outside of schools and between the organisations and professionals in children's services more broadly, collaborative working was more established and common. On reflection Paul Lawler was surprised on the amount of integrated working going on outside of schools in Dalewood,

I'll admit it was a surprise.

The fact that there were already more 'plates spinning' than assumed by Paul and Henry is interesting because the non-school members of the DPMG interpreted the actions of the head and the director of the Challenge using cultural explanations. As stated above, the Stockborough Challenge was generally perceived to have been from an education perspective and this attitude was found in the pilot group,

The Dalewood group, well the whole Stockborough Challenge is from an education perspective isn't it... a colleague of mine from the YOT [Youth Offending Team] was in the meeting on the day and... we struggled to understand what the ethos of the Stockborough Challenge was...

The non-school professionals saw the head's actions and more broadly the Stockborough Challenge through the lens of a cultural discourse in which schools and heads were aloof and dominant.

Dominic Young, a manager with the Youth Offending Team said,

So it is about a bit of a perception about where people see themselves in their universe, is about you know, do you put yourself in the centre of the universe or do you see yourself as one of the planets. I think that schools, see themselves as the centre of the universe and everything else rotates around them.

Mary Thomas, shared a similar impression,

What I got the feeling is that [they] wanted to establish something that was doing something new, when that exists everywhere... and part of the issue is that schools are not good at working in partnership with people outside of

schools... it's a bit patronising to present to people that this is something that the schools are inventing, what the Stockborough Challenge is inventing when that's the world that we live in.

Paul Lawler was quite aware and open about the typical behaviour of schools and headteachers in such situations,

I agree totally... Schools egotistically again are at the heart of what goes on and I'm not surprised by that... I think that schools dominate the agenda.

Paul readily acknowledged that some mistakes were made in setting up the DPMG and he and the deputy head, in the Dalewood Challenge, took on board the feedback and re-engaged in external partnerships by bringing together an existing network with their network to form the 0-19 extended services network.

Another issue that I want to emphasise about the DPMG was the approach to collaboration. The second goal of the group was, as Paul Lawler explained,

at every meeting we'd make one new partnership. That's lots of new relationships, partnerships, being made and lots of plates spinning.

We can interpret in this a particular attitude to collaboration, which is broadly speaking: the more the better! In this part of the Challenge we see a very positive view of collaboration. The intention in the DPMG was to 'get plates spinning'. There was therefore an emphasis on increasing the activity or the quantity of collaboration. The goal to make a new partnership per meeting and build the number of 'plates spinning' does not however consider which partnerships should be made, and between whom? Collaboration in this sense becomes an end in itself; representing the belief the more joined-up services are the better they will be, rather than the better services are configured the better they will be for improving outcomes for the service users.

Relating the approach to collaboration in the DPMG there are parallels to Paul Lawler's school improvement process. In the school improvement process Paul wanted to motivate teachers in the school to do more things, to try harder, to do the equivalent with the pupils of putting a man on the moon. These activities were cohered under the banner of the Stockborough Challenge, and then the Dalewood

Challenge, to further inspire other action. The staff were united in a common process, and it appeared to be quite a successful strategy.

The question is whether the school improvement process and the initiative to improve collaboration between professionals working in different organisations, through the DPMG, were equivalent processes?

I would argue that there is a difference between the increase in activity in a school and the increase of collaborative activity between different organisations. As stated earlier in this thesis (p.12), there is a paradox of collaboration in that it appears to be logical and easy to collaborate yet experience demonstrates it is hugely problematic, often unreliable and often requires a considerable investment of effort. Indeed, I argue that the belief that collaboration is unproblematic and generally effective is part of a discourse of collaboration.

A second issue is that the school improvement process was broadly motivational, Paul Lawler wanted his staff to jump off the 'lily-pad' and commit to the improvement process as they hadn't in the previous, aborted attempts. It is not clear that motivation was the primary issue for the children's services professionals working in Dalewood. For them working collaboratively was a more established part of their job. It is therefore pertinent to consider what were the challenges these professionals faced when seeking to collaborate?

One of the primary barriers professionals faced when seeking to collaborate was getting enough information about opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and organisations. As Patsy Hughes described above on page 173, when she talked about the 'hurdles' of reminding people 'that you're their and your agenda crosses with theirs.'

When I observed professionals in the DPMG, this process of saying 'I'm here' was a recurrent feature. Meetings typically started with a 'networking' activity at where the professionals explained what projects they were currently working on. For example, in the second DPMG meeting a professional described a project she was developing,

I just want to say that this all sounds fantastic... Pauline Tait asked if I could come and talk to you about the FAST programme. It's from America and now there's been a pilot in Liverpool and we're looking to develop it in Stockborough... The project is supported by Middlesex Uni, there's a professor of social work supporting us so we have all that research capacity and ability to generate and analyse evidence to make sure we know what works... The other selling point for this is that it is for the family... it's built around a meal... this is universal. Once staff are trained it is not resource intensive... we have a trainer of trainer component... the best thing about this is that it's reactive to preventative.

After she spoke the participants noted that the FAST project fitted with Paul Lawler's project with Fantastic Food Organisation and another professional's project MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition... Do It!). Another participant, the head teacher of a local primary school, said that she would raise it at the primary headteacher's forum and she asked if the professional had met with the members of the parenting forum? Professionals discussing, signposting, advising and joining-up of projects were central practices of the DPMG meetings and other network fora I attended across Stockborough children's services.

To understand why professionals wanted to continually discuss and share their current projects, it is informative to reflect on the discovery in one DPMG meeting that there were eight cooking projects for children and young people in development in Dalewood, a town with a population of roughly 10,000. That there were eight cooking projects is not the issue. Professionals working with children often seek to personalise and develop appropriate services for specific needs in particular contexts. So there could be a cooking club in a primary school using a school cook whereas another project could be with disaffected youths in a community centre. What is significant is that there were eight cooking projects in development and the network meeting was the only opportunity to identify this. This raises the question of whether there were in reality nine cooking projects being developed or five gardening projects that may not have been mentioned and the duplication not discovered.

Thus although Paul Lawler had underestimated or was not aware of the extensity and intensity of collaborative working in Dalewood it was also the case that professionals with greater experience and engagement with collaborative working had similar difficulties in gaining sufficient knowledge of what was happening in Dalewood, a relatively small town and only a part of Stockborough children's services.

Another issue relating to the contrast between the Challenge's approach to collaboration and the experience of the professionals seeking to work collaboratively in children's services was found in Challenge Two's focus on targets as being the most significant barrier to collaborative working. Dominic Young, the manager of the YOT, disagreed with the view that targets were the only problem,

The Challenge seems to say that targets are the biggest obstacle to collaboration, is that right?

Well they can be but not always. Take FTE [first time entrance into the criminal justice system] is now an indicator for the whole local authority. The FTE used to be a sole indicator for the YOT. So maybe the focus of our partners weren't as sharp as it could have been. Because it was very much seen as well that's your objective that's not our objective. But now that is everyone's objective, it's being discussed. (Laughs.)

So does that help with the collaborative work?

Well surely. As I said before, if there's a common theme... where you get a commonality of where you get a focus you can do partnership work it becomes better.

What are the barriers then? How do you start or initiate collaborative or partnership work?

So a lot of the work we do is about speaking to people and pitching an idea or selling an idea and asking if you could participate in this. So a lot of this is actually knowing the practitioners and continuing to deliver while at the same time insuring that as much as possible you keep on throwing the net out to capture new providers and partners to help do what we do... but we need to get

beyond personal relationships. After a while you muddle through, find things out, the right person to work with but that's what the Challenge should be about.

Here Dominic is talking about the practical tasks of working collaboratively. Targets are not unimportant and indeed the sharing of targets appears to facilitate collaboration as more professionals essentially have the same problem. It is important to acknowledge however the practical barriers to collaboration that relate to finding an appropriate professional or organisation with whom to work. These barriers led to duplicated projects, consumed a professional's time in finding new links or stopped new ways of working emerging through the forming of new professional relationships. Dominic Young thought that this was the area in which the Challenge could have supported professionals.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have described what was happening with the Stockborough Challenge in Dalewood High School, which is of particular significance because the managers developing the initiative identified Dalewood as an example of the Challenge in action.

I argue that Paul Lawler's school improvement process informed and was the model for the development of the Stockborough Challenge, meaning the Challenge's understandings about collaboration and the barriers to it were imported from the school improvement process in Dalewood High School.

The Challenge, especially in the DPMG, was developed according to the school improvement process at Dalewood High. The consequence of this was that two ideas were imported from the school improvement context in a school to the Challenge, the focus of which was collaborative working in a multi-organisational and inter-professional context. These ideas were that more collaboration was better than less and that motivation was the primary barrier to be overcome for professionals to collaborate.

The school improvement process was a success but it engaged with a particular problem in a specific context. Paul was trying to reinvigorate Dalewood High and motivate his staff to do a range of different things, which would be unified

and cohered under the banner of the Stockborough and Dalewood Challenges in order to add to the momentum drive to improve the school. In the school improvement process the more 'plates' being spun the better. His idea of cohering activity in his school under the banner of the Stockborough Challenge is similar to the Challenge's 'call to action' in which professionals would be instructed to collaborate and the diverse activity would be 'badged-up' under the Stockborough Challenge to represent a coherent process of change, as discussed in chapter five (pp. 133-138),

The view that 'the more collaboration the better' was in evidence in the DPMG is found in the second goal set for the members by Paul and Henry, as Paul explained,

at every meeting make one new partnership. That's lots of new relationships, partnerships, being made and lots of plates spinning.

This view that more collaboration is necessarily better ignores that developing new collaborative relationships may not benefit children and young people. In fact, it may divert time and resources away from service delivery to endless meetings and negotiations. There is therefore a focus on increasing collaborative activity as an end rather than adopting a strategic approach to developing appropriate and requisite collaborations. I associated this view with the discourse of collaboration that argues for perpetual joining-up and collaboration.

The second issue with the Challenge imitating the school improvement process was that motivation was identified as the principal barrier for teachers failing to engage with the improvement process and so motivation was similarly thought to be the main obstacle to collaboration. Thus the DPMG would celebrate collaboration and remind professionals to start new collaborations.

The impression there was too little collaboration was, however, due to the lack of knowledge and experience of those from the school sector. As was repeatedly voiced by children's services professionals, there was much more collaborative working outside of schools and that once professionals were working collaboratively they faced the practical challenges of organising for collaboration,

such as finding the right person to work with at the right time to develop a project. These practical barriers were not engaged with by Challenge Two, which instead engaged with a professional's motivation to collaborate.

The next chapters explore why Challenge Two did not engage with the practical barriers to collaboration, realising Challenge One's aim of understanding collaboration and developing appropriate supporting conditions, but instead engaged with apparent motivational dimensions to collaborative working. To engage with this issue, the next two chapters locate the Challenge in the national-to-local context.

PART 3: CONTEXTUALISING AND INTERPRETING THE CHALLENGE

CHAPTER 8 – THE CHALLENGE IN CONTEXT

The purpose of this and the next chapter, which adopts a more interpretive approach, is to locate the findings of the previous three chapters in the national-to-local context, in order to respond to research question 3: How did national-to-local contextual factors influence the Stockborough Challenge?

An assumption I have made throughout this thesis is that the purpose of the policy relating to the Children's Trusts and the Stockborough Challenge was singularly to improve collaborative working: indeed this is the focus of my research questions. However, by situating the Challenge in the national-to-local context, especially within a policy enactment frame, I have to consider that improving collaboration was not the initiative's first and only focus. It is therefore important to consider the possibilities that the managers may have had alternative priorities, such as securing the commitment of school leaders or engaging with the constraining effects of targets on collaboration, which in turn may have implicated particular strategies, values and assumptions in the way in which the Challenge developed. This is not to say that the senior managers did not prioritise collaboration but that they may have been influenced by particular discourses or accepted the lenses within prominent policy technologies, which is the focus of the next chapter.

This chapter reviews the Challenge to situate it in the national-to-local context. In particular, I draw attention to the differences between Challenge One and Two, and in particular I focus on the reason why Challenge Two did not realise the Challenge One aim of developing a model of collaboration and supporting structures and capacity?

As stated previously, Challenge One and Two were not different or opposite but phases of the same initiative. There were continuities between the two versions or phases with the maintenance of the broad rationale for collaboration, but also additional features in the move to Challenge Two in the identification of targets as the principal barrier to collaboration, as well emergent features such as the explicit focus on culture.

CHALLENGE ONE – COLLABORATION AS LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Challenge One began as the strategic response of senior managers in Stockborough to New Labour's collaborative re-organisation of children's services, through the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda.

A significant feature of Challenge One was the extensive rationale for, and an open and exploratory approach to, collaboration. The initiative began with the 'conversation' phase and the presentation of seven challenges, which constituted part of the Challenge vision. Each of the seven challenges represented a broad, complex and unresolved task. Rather than Diane Shaw – the original Director of Children's Services – stating in relation to each task, 'we know how to do this', she began each challenge with an acknowledgement that, 'we need to...' learn how to do this. For example, the first challenge was,

Sustainable leadership: we need to develop innovative proposals for ensuring sustainable high quality leadership in our schools and services, recognising that, if we are to achieve our vision, service and school leaders and managers will need a different skill set from what was required before we embarked on this change programme. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.7)

It is not entirely clear if 'innovative proposals' refer to training, guidance or new models of leadership but it is evident that in Stockborough they did not know what leadership for collaboration looked like and they would need to understand this as part of the development of the Stockborough Challenge.

Leadership was, explicitly and implicitly, a significant component of the Challenge. There was a vision document, written and presented by the senior leader of children's services in Stockborough, and leadership was a focus and driver of the initiative.

Challenge One was not however solely focused on leadership. There were plans to provide an extra resource to bring the wider children's services together around schools, as was described in *Bringing Together*,

Fundamentally, the key objective of the Stockborough Challenge will be to support schools to bring together the standards and the wider ECM agenda. In particular, the project will support schools to identify barriers to learning and help them to develop personalised approaches to address these barriers for all children and young people who are under-achieving... (*Bringing Together* §5.17)

The Challenge was positioned as a dedicated resource available to help schools navigate the barriers to engaging with the ECM agenda and collaborative working. What this additional resource would be was not clarified but a series of sites, processes and relationships were identified, such as,

Commissioning and Partnership Services and Learning Services to consider how schools can be supported to participate and contribute actively to community based integrated service provision. (*Bringing Together* §6.2.7)

In addition to the extra capacity, part of Challenge One was the development of new structures to support collaboration, to which end the Challenge would,

... provide the opportunity for individual and/or groups of schools to work with the [Local] Authority to explore the feasibility and desirability of the development of collaborative governance arrangements and of new forms of school organisation. (*Bringing Together* §5.16)

The belief that new structures might be required to facilitate collaboration led in Dalewood to the formation of the Dalewood Pilot Management Group (DPMG). The DPMG brought professionals together from across children's services in Dalewood with the intention of increasing collaborative activity. The DPMG was meant to function as a pilot for groups in other areas in Stockborough. It was not possible however for the Challenge to provide support for such structures elsewhere, due to a lack of funding, and so the idea became something to inspire the independent action of professionals, rather than a model the Challenge would implement across Stockborough.

Two things are evident in the senior managers' initial approach to the Challenge. One, they believed that to bring schools and services together would require leadership, some sort of dedicated organisational capacity and new structures to support schools to engage with the ECM agenda. They also

acknowledged that they needed to understand more about collaboration. Two, the way in which the Challenge would function demonstrates that the local authority was reaching out to schools on the schools' terms to secure commitment. The reason for this was arguably the mixed economy of schools in Stockborough with foundation, independent and state schools with varying levels of autonomy from the local authority and children's services; the senior managers could not therefore command headteachers to engage with the Challenge and realised they would have to rely on softer forms of suasion, such as leadership. Although Paul Lawler's apparent success and enthusiasm at Dalewood High School was arguably additional factor.

Challenge One was disrupted, displaced and reduced. As outlined in chapter five (pp. 125-126), a range of contextual and coincidental factors beset the Challenge. They were, in brief, the retirement of the original Director of Children's Services (DCS) Diane Shaw, the need for efficiencies after the 2008 financial crisis, and Nick Reynolds not being appointed DCS. It is significant that part of the reason for the reduction of the initiative was that there was a lack of resources for such a project. Maggie Wilson, the newly appointed DCS stated that,

That's what most people don't realise: The money was never there.

Stockborough received no extra money from government for the development of the Children's Trust or for cultural change at the local level. Thus for Challenge One money was brought together from various budget sources from within children's services. The lack of money meant that the original idea for providing a dedicated support structure or unit to help schools work with children's services was financially infeasible. The Challenge would have to be reformulated, which leads us to the emergence of Challenge Two.

CHALLENGE TWO – COLLABORATION AS LEADERSHIP AND CULTURAL CHANGE

I argue that the government's growing emphasis on leadership for collaboration approach substantively influenced Challenge Two, with the initiative coming to emphasise leadership and culture and thus a more motivational approach to collaborative working.

Challenge Two was an attempt to refocus and re-invigorate the initiative, after it was disrupted and reduced by personnel changes and the advent of public sector cuts. The growing prominence of the Children's Trust and cultural change in guidance (DCSF 2008) and evaluation (DfES 2005) accounts for the direction Paul Lawler and Henry Jacobson followed after the retirement of Diane Shaw. The development of the Children's Trust with the associated processes of cultural change became a statutory and exhortatory requirement for senior managers in local authorities (DCSF 2007). The senior managers understood they needed to lead a cultural change process and so the Challenge became, in the words of Henry Jacobson,

A campaign within and on behalf of the Stockborough Children's Trust.

With the shift to culture, Challenge Two identified targets and the consequential target-obsessed culture as the reason why professionals did not collaborate, for example, as was reported on page 113, 'the narrow, prescriptive focus on target setting [and] the target-obsessed culture.' (*Rationale* §4.1)

In response, the Challenge presented the 'one culture' in which professionals would be motivated to resist the constraining effects of the target regime and focus on 'real' needs, or what needed to be done. By 'squinting' at her targets a professional would perceive the same, common and shared 'real' needs as her colleagues from different professional backgrounds and thus be able to collaborate with them.

The 'one culture' would be achieved through influence, inspiration and motivation in such processes and roles as the 'call to action' and the Stockborough Challenge 'champions'.

The 'call to action' was identified as the main driver of cultural change. The premise of the 'call' was that professionals were presented with the Challenge rationale and vision and urged to take action and work collaboratively. During the 'conversation' phase, at Challenge workshops and events, professionals were instructed to propose collaborative activities they could perform to contribute to the initiative. These suggestions were organised in a list in *Developing the Detail* where

they were intended to, 'spark off ideas for action on both an individual and team basis' (*Developing the Detail* §5.1).

The range of disparate collaborative activities when performed would then be 'badged up' as part of the Stockborough Challenge, to celebrate the success achieved through collaboration in order to spread and deepen collaborative working. As Henry Jacobson explained, 'The idea being, I suppose it's to try to get going a whole set of what Tim Brighouse defined as "butterflies".'

A consequence and implication of the 'call to action' was that the senior managers developing the initiative apparently assumed that professionals in Stockborough knew what was collaboration and how to do it. Indeed, the purpose of the 'call to action' from its original function in commercial marketing is to persuade a potential customer sufficiently for them to click a web link, phone a number or perform a clearly defined and discrete action. As the Deputy Chief Executive of the council, explained, 'A call to action answers the question, "that's interesting. Now what?"' In the case of the Stockborough Challenge however the 'Now what?' was to work collaboratively which was a complex social process that I argue was not sufficiently understood by those who were asked to act.

From the point-of-view of the senior managers, when they believed that professionals in Stockborough knew how to work collaboratively, the necessary task appeared to be to motivate them to collaborate. The Stockborough Challenge 'champions' were identified as a chief driver of this process of motivation. The champion initiative emerged out of the enthusiastic engagement of particular professionals with the Challenge, such as Pauline Tait and Paul Lawler. However, in the end the champion network did not materialise because Henry Jacobson could not specify the role to explain to professionals what they should do, if they were not already enthusiastic about working collaboratively. The inability to specify the champion role was down, in my view, to the lack of money available to resource the role and also the absence of a specified understanding of what was collaboration. As Henry Jacobson acknowledged in *Developing the Detail*,

What we do not yet know is quite what we are hoping to achieve through the big thinking and the small starts, what the partnership working of 2013 will look

actually look like and how we will get to the point at which we know.

(Developing the Detail §1.5)

The Challenge's approach therefore sought to lead, motivate and influence professionals to work collaboratively but a considerable limitation was that it did not define the thing – collaboration – it was seeking to change.

It is significant that Challenge One set out to formulate a new model of collaboration, generate knowledge around the key challenges facing children's services, and develop new structures such as the Dalewood Pilot Management Group. However, by Challenge Two, this open and exploratory approach had given way to the identification of targets as the primary barrier to collaboration, cultural change as the appropriate response and the belief that professionals effectively knew how to collaborate and so the remaining task for managers was to motivate professionals to collaborate, part of which involved the professional ignoring his or her targets to focus on 'real' needs.

Summary

Comparing the two phases of the initiative, I am interested in why the senior managers developing the Challenge did not continue with the initial aim to create a model of collaborative working and the appropriate facilitating structures, and help professionals with the practical tasks of organising for collaboration? Instead the focus was placed on overcoming the constraining effects of targets on collaborative working. There is a simple answer to this question, that the money was not available in Stockborough for such a process. However, then it is pertinent to ask why money was not made available by government and how was the problem of improving collaboration represented that alternative approaches were both possible and sensible? I will begin to engage with this question below by considering the Challenge in relation to New Labour's 'leaderist' approach to tasking leaders with reconciling contradictions in policy.

LEADERS RECONCILING CONTRADICTIONS

In chapter two, I drew attention to the contradictions in children's services that emerged between and across different sets of reforms and policies, in the form

of the ambivalent relationship between schools and children's services, and the tensions between the targets, markets and collaboration. The Challenge's focus on schools and targets is recurrent finding in this research.

I draw on O'Reilly and Reed's (2010) concept of 'leaderism' to understand the Challenge's focus on schools and targets. In leaderism, leaders and leadership are used in ways that,

potentially alleviates and absorbs the endemic tensions between politicians, managers, professionals and the public inherent in NPM [New Public Management] systems by drawing them together into a unifying discourse of a leading vision for their services in which they, collectively, play a major role. (O'Reilly and Reed 2010: 961)

Thus leaders present a unifying discourse and vision, which resolves the 'endemic tensions' in NPM public sector contexts. A number of authors have identified leaderist approaches in New Labour policy (Fairclough, 2000, Newman 2001; Currie et al 2005, Lewis and Surrender, 2005, Currie et al 2008; O'Reilly and Reed 2010) and I wish to make a similar case for the Stockborough Challenge.

In presenting the argument for the influence of leaderism I am interested in how the 'problem' of collaboration came to be represented in the development of the Children's Trust through policy, and interpreted and enacted in Stockborough through the Challenge, due to the leaderist emphasis on leadership.

That leaders and leadership were assigned the role of reconciling contradictions in policy implicates that leadership and the associated interpretations, assumptions, logics, approaches and tools would be used or implicated in engaging with collaboration. Thus leaderism promotes leadership but what does this mean in relation to collaboration?

Here I draw on Bacchi's (2009) 'what's the problem represented to be' approach for understanding how policy represents problems in particular ways, ones that may be different from how evidence-based approaches may view them or ways that obscure and deny alternative understandings and engagements with the problem that may be equally valid.

I argue that the focus of the Challenge was displaced from what might be called a pure focus on engaging with improving collaboration by helping professionals in the practical tasks of organising for collaboration, to a focus on schools and targets due to the government assigning leaders with the role of reconciling contradictions within and between policies.

SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The first contradiction I relate to the Challenge is the ambivalent relationship between schools and children's services within the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. Securing schools' commitment to the Stockborough Challenge was, as it was made clear on a number of occasions by the managers developing the initiative (p.118), an implicit feature of the Challenge's rationale. This role is evident in the centrality and significance of schools in the Challenge's vision and, for example, slogan,

schools at the centre...

When the 'schools at the centre' was perceived by non-school staff in Stockborough to be overly focused on schools, which confirmed suspicions that the Challenge was school-centric, the slogan was altered to,

schools as the hub...

Thus schools were placed at the rhetorical and operational centre of the Challenge, which is evidence of the local authority reaching out to the schools to secure their commitment. In using the Challenge in this way by using softer forms of suasion or a leadership approach the senior managers were in line with the logic of government policy for children's services.

As discussed in chapter two (pp. 34-36), there was a gap between what the government could legislate in relation to collaboration in children's services and what was deemed necessary as part of the ECM agenda. The Director of Children's Services (DCS) was charged with developing the Children's Trust, the foundational component of which was the Section 10 'duty to cooperate'. The duty brought together all the appropriate stakeholders with a 'shared commitment to improving children's lives' (DCSF 2007: §2). At first schools were not included in the duty to

cooperate but were added in later legislation (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009). What is significant however is that the duty was to establish the arrangements of the Children's Trust rather than members of the Trust being obliged to routinely work collaboratively.

The fragmentation of children's services that was a consequence of the New Public Management reforms had led to a number of different stakeholders in children's services, especially schools with varying levels of autonomy, and so no one really had the power to compel or command collaboration across all organisations at the local level. Thus it was up to the senior managers in the local authority and children's services to induce, to motivate, and to influence those working in children's services to cooperate and collaborate. The government's exhortation of senior managers in the Children's Trust to lead cultural change (DCSF 2007) can be viewed in terms of providing the additional impetus and motivation that all the stakeholders should commit to working collaboratively in line with the ECM agenda to improve outcomes for children and young people in the local authority.

Thus the Stockborough Challenge engaged with collaboration from the perspective of schools, which was a sensible strategy but one that had consequences for the development of the initiative in relation to collaborative working. To understand what these were it is informative to further explore the relationship between the Challenge and what I am calling here 'the school's perspective of collaboration'.

When Henry Jacobson, an ex-headteacher, was appointed as director of the Challenge his assessment was that there was too little collaboration taking place in Stockborough Children's Services and so his task was to increase the quantity of collaboration. This belief informed Henry's decision to convene the Dalewood Pilot Management Group (DPMG), with Paul Lawler, the aim of which was,

To get plates spinning in Dalewood [with regards to collaborative working].

The Challenge was meant to catalyse action by motivating professionals to collaborate. However, the belief that too few 'plates' were being spun was incorrect, as outside of schools professionals often worked collaboratively.

The architects of the Challenge had a school's background – headteachers, teachers, and a director of learning services – and typically less experience of collaborative working. The ECM agenda gave schools a rhetorical impetus to work collaboratively but the headteachers and teachers I met were newcomers to collaborative working and did not understand its history outside the school sector, which led to many quietly exasperated remarks, from, for example, Sally Jenkins, a Children's Trust member, as reported on page 162, 'we've been doing it for years!'

Paul Lawler and Henry Jacobson quickly realised through the DPMG that outside of schools collaborative working was fairly established. Paul Lawler acknowledged this,

I'll admit, it was a surprise...

There is a question why the Challenge stuck with a broadly motivational approach to improving collaboration when it became clear, at an early stage, that professionals outside of schools were already motivated to collaborate. The influence of school improvement processes and public sector management are discussed below.

As described above, there were parallels between the Stockborough Challenge and the Paul Lawler's school improvement process at Dalewood High, and that Henry Jacobson sought to apply the approach to the rest of children's services through the Challenge. When he was tasked with clarifying and creating concrete examples of the Challenge in practice Henry Jacobson started working with Paul Lawler at Dalewood High School to develop the initiative in a school context. As a headteacher Paul Lawler was obviously committed to the ECM agenda and collaborative working it entailed but he was also a headteacher trying to instigate a school improvement process in turning his troubled school around. He had already tried to start a school improvement process twice before, both of which had failed, as he explained,

There's three frogs on a lily pad. One decides to jump off. How many frogs are there on the lily pad? Well there's three because one has only decided to jump off. So I jumped off several times, thinking that people would come with me but they didn't so I got back on.

His perception was that he needed to motivate his staff to engage with the school improvement process and the Challenge fit with this aim. Paul used the Challenge as a focal point to which all activities in the school could contribute and thus cohere and amplify the apparent effect, which in turn would motivate more staff to engage with the Challenge and school improvement process, as he explained,

Wherever you start it leads back to the Challenge...

The logic in the school of motivating staff to work harder or differently and then cohering all these activities under the Challenge brand clearly parallels the 'call to action' in which professionals were asked to identify new ways of working and then celebrate what they did to inspire others to follow suit. That the Challenge adopted Paul Lawler's focal point strategy for cohering school improvement activity and sought to apply it across children's services speaks to the de-contextualised approach to collaboration. It was seemingly not understood that collaboration presents, as I argue, a distinct set of organisational challenges and tasks that require appropriate knowledge, skills and capacities.

The Challenge was therefore grounded in an attempt to motivate change to get professionals to collaborate, something it was erroneously believed that they were not doing. When Henry and Paul learned that collaboration was more widespread than they previously thought Henry maintained the approach that focused on the motivation to change. This may have been due to the Challenge's unsuccessful ulterior motive of motivating schools to engage with the ECM agenda. In addition to this I think it is also important to understand the influence of the articulations, ensembles, and policy technologies that were presented in policy and guidance that arguably influenced how the managers developing the Challenge perceived the tasks they faced and the appropriate responses to these tasks.

What is significant is that, as was described in the previous chapter, when the Challenge engaged with collaboration through the rationale, assumptions and approaches of Dalewood High's school improvement process it ignored or obscured other, non-motivational barriers to collaboration. For professionals outside of schools developing collaborative projects involved considerable effort in networking, discussing projects, and working with others to join-up projects. There were

numerous barriers to the practical challenges of organising for collaboration. As Dominic Young, explained, on pages 178-179, 'a lot of the work we do is about speaking to people and pitching an idea... and asking if you could participate in this.'

Challenge Two did not engage with these practical issues. Aside from motivating professionals to ignore targets to collaborate it did not offer much. This may have been down to the location of the initiative on the model of the school improvement process. I think it is also sensible to consider the influence of the discourses of leadership and collaboration, which will be engaged with in the next chapter.

Next we turn to the influence on the Challenge of the perceived need to resolve the contradiction between targets, markets and collaboration in children's services.

TARGETS, MARKETS AND COLLABORATION

The second contradiction that influenced the development of the Challenge was the series of tensions between targets, markets and collaboration. One of the continuities between Challenge One and Two was the focus on the contradiction between targets and collaboration. Indeed, the issue of the tensions between competitive-collaborative dynamics helps to explain the emergence of the focus on targets, in Challenge Two, as the primary barrier to collaboration and the instruction to professionals to ignore his or her targets and focus on 'real' needs as part of the 'one culture'.

From the beginning a key concern in Stockborough was the relationship between schools and wider children's services. A critical issue for the Challenge was therefore resolving the key dilemma within the ECM agenda, which was identified by Diane Shaw in *Bringing Together*,

One of the key challenges has been to reconcile what, at times, have been perceived both nationally and locally as tensions between the standards and ECM agendas. There have been times when national policy development and pronouncements have given the impression that these are two separate and, potentially, conflicting agendas. (*Bringing Together* §3.28)

The formation of strong, collaborative relationships between schools and the wider children's services was threatened by the 'tensions' between the standards and ECM agendas, towards which schools and children's services were at times respectively and divergently orientated and incentivised. Diane Shaw then states that policy makers were taking steps to resolve this dilemma through,

... the establishment in the most recent government restructure in June 2007 of the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the mantra that there is *no ECM without standards and no standards without ECM* which is now being affirmed at the most senior level in the DCSF is helping to strengthen the message of bringing together and joining up. (*Bringing Together* §3.29)

Challenge One did not provide a simple answer to bringing schools and services together, overcoming the potentially divergent incentives, but the approach was broadly to use leadership and the development of new capacities and structures in line with promoting the notion that services would help schools achieve their targets due to the interrelatedness of the ECM and standards agenda.

Challenge Two maintained the focus on the contradiction, when the target regime was identified as the key barrier to schools and wider children's services working together. It is indicative that the rationale that targets were the primary barrier to collaboration was supported by theory and evidence from the school context, in the use of David Hopkins system leadership research in Challenge policy documents (as described on pages 133-134).

Thus the primary focus of Challenge Two was the constraining effects of targets on collaboration. The Challenge policy documents argued that as each organisation was focused on its respective targets this created inertia and prevented collaboration across children's services, for example,

Co-ordinating structures often turn into forums which devolve issues to given services rather than developing complex, integrated responses; that the different stakeholders continue to look for their own solutions to help them meet their own targets and that the structures often become ineffective, sometimes even largely redundant layers of additional bureaucracy. (*Rationale* §4.4)

The belief was that if professionals focused on 'real' needs, not the proxy needs of targets, professionals would be able to collaborate and so projects and programmes would do what needed to be done, for example,

the government's Building School for the Future (BSF) programme is prominent within one of the themes. However, the Challenge will ensure that such developments take place within the context of the collaborative culture we are developing and that proposals reflect the needs of local communities. (*Rationale* §3.4)

It was thought that there was a 'real' need of local communities and that through leadership, cultural change and 'environments' these needs could be met, by ignoring the negative effects of targets, which would in turn mean the targets were met. For example,

Stockborough Council will continue to have its high stakes targets; the Stockborough Challenge, if successful in creating the leadership, culture and environments to enable the Council's vision to be fulfilled, will impact in any case on those targets. (*Rationale* §4.7)

The idea was focusing on the 'real' needs of a child would enable a collaborative response, the success of which would in turn would others to collaborate, realising the 'one culture' – the culture that was conducive for collaboration.

At this point it is wise to reiterate Lumby's (2009) concern that focusing on the needs of children and young people to unify professionals sounds sensible enough but the abstraction of 'real needs' fails to specify which learners, at which point and in relation to other learners will be focused on. Indeed, there are a number of reasons to question such an approach in the public sector. The public sector is constituted by a range of segmented groups defined by profession and policy, each with differing conceptualisations of problems and solutions (Hall 2005). A 'need' can be understood in different ways according to different social, cultural, political, and theoretical perspectives (Dean 2010). Which of the various ways of understanding a 'need' would be the 'real' one, and would all professionals share this definition?

Now we turn to the second contradiction that the Challenge engaged with, thus influencing how it developed, the Public Sector Reform Model (PSRM).

THE PSRM: RECONCILING THE CONTRADICTION

As outlined in chapter two, New Labour's modernisation project led to successive waves of extensive and substantive reforms of public and children's services. The reforms included the target and market dynamics as part of the standards and choice agendas in the public sector (e.g., National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies 1998, 1999). Evidence emerged suggesting that there was an apparent contradiction between the loose set of imperatives fostered by the targets and markets and New Labour's increasingly collaborative approach to complex social issues (Harris 2003; Milbourne et al 2003). Rather than undo the previous reforms, New Labour chose to harness and cohere top-down, bottom-up and horizontal pressures to create 'a self-improving system' (PMSU 2006: 4) to continuously improve public services through the PSRM's four pressures (see figure 7):

- Top-down performance management
- Market incentives to increase efficiency and quality of service
- Users shaping the service from below
- Capability and capacity

The PSRM captures how leadership, workforce reform, and organisational development and collaboration were emphasised in public service reform by New Labour. The 'capacity and capability' pressures would reconcile the contradictions and divergent forces and develop the conditions to foster collaborative working and achieve the claimed improvement in outcomes across a range of policies.

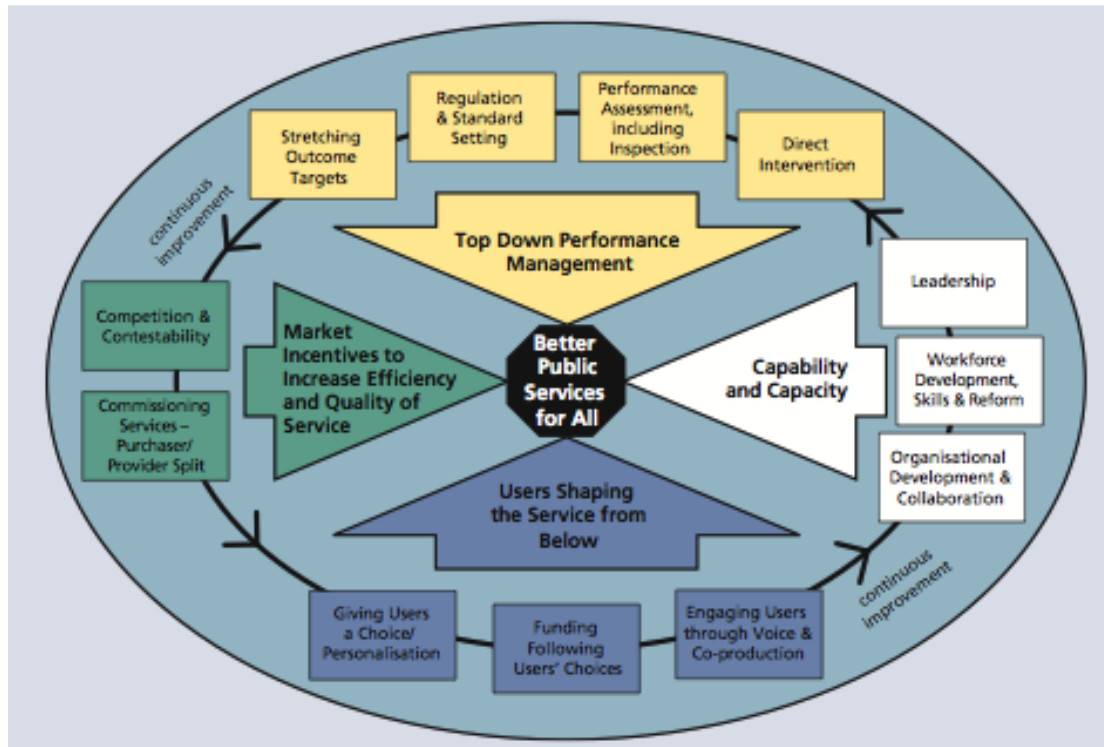


FIGURE 7: The Public Sector Reform Model (PMSU 2006)

The PSRM presented a neat solution to the apparent contradiction between targets, markets and collaboration but placed a considerable onus on leadership providing sufficiently converging forces to enable collaboration to take place. Thus research suggested that there was an *either/ or* dilemma relating to the performance-accountability regime and collaboration but the PSRM presented a *both/ and* articulation in which all the rigours of target and market pressures could be mediated by leadership, enabling professionals to come together to collaborate.

It is however a substantive issue that the belief that the divergent forces of competition and collaboration could be reconciled was based on a theoretical or ideological, rather than empirical, basis (Ball 2008). It is not unproblematic to state that the PSRM was not evidence based yet there are indications of New Labour's ideology within the model (Coffield and Steer 2007). The model assumes the superiority and relevance of private sector dynamics in the public sector, the ability to ameliorate the perverse effects of targets, the need for transformational change, and a chain of control where the government controls senior managers at the local level whom in turn control frontline professionals (Coffield and Steer 2007). Significantly, the potential for the contradiction between, for example, collaboration

in a competitive system was acknowledged but it was believed that the contradictions within the model could be overcome through the components of the model, through leadership (Coffield and Steer 2007).

I draw on the PSRM to understand the processes that were taking place in Stockborough Children's Services. Ball (2008) states that the re-organisation of education and children's services was within the PSRM, and so I consider the model to be an appropriate lens for interpreting the Challenge. Indeed, there is evidence that the development of the Children's Trusts was in line with the PSRM. It is prudent to note that the PSRM was not fixed but rather a post-hoc rationalisation of how New Labour policy makers sought to reconcile contradictions in policy (Ball 2008) and so different components of the model may have been implemented at different times.

All the features of the 'capacity and capability' strand of the PSRM were present, at different times and in different ways, in the development of the Children's Trust. The legislation to establish the Children's Trust is evidence of organisational development processes (DCSF 2008a). There was also 'workforce reform' in the form of the 'Common Core' (DfES 2005b) and Children's Workforce initiatives (DCSF 2008c). As has been previously stated, the lack of progress and impact of the Children's Trust was identified by government guidance (DCSF 2008b), which advocated leadership and cultural change as crucial for realising the potential of collaboration through the Children's Trust.

Although the PSRM does not necessarily state that leadership and cultural change are required to reconcile the contradiction it is arguable that the model implicates leadership to this end. I see cultural change as a common tool associated with leadership (e.g., Smircich 1983), and thus the identification of leadership can be thought of as selecting leadership and associated tools and approaches. Thus all three features of the 'capacity and capability' strand of the PSRM were implicated in developing the Children's Trust, with government policy makers increasingly emphasising leadership when progress stalled and the decision was made to use leadership to provide an additional impetus to realise the ostensible potential of collaboration.

RECONCILING THE CONTRADICTION IN STOCKBOROUGH

Returning to Stockborough, I argue that the Challenge is illustrative of the type of initiative that the PSRM approach promoted, manifest in the local context of children's services. Leadership was promoted as a way in which the contradiction between targets, markets and collaboration could be reconciled. The senior managers in Stockborough did not have the authority to ignore the targets they and the professionals they managed were set by the government. As was explained in the Challenge policy document *Rationale*,

Stockborough Council will continue to have its high stakes targets... (*Rationale* §4.7)

The articulation of 'real' need and the apparent logic, was that it was possible for professionals to focus on them and collaborate to do what needed to be done whilst also meeting targets, can be read in one of Paul Lawler's quotes,

We'll do what needs to be done and tick the box afterwards.

This quote suggests that Paul thought it was possible to work collaboratively to 'do what needs to be done' to meet the 'real' needs but that this will still require a professional to meet his or her targets in 'tick[ing] the box afterwards.' This statement can be understood as both how he will act and how he expects his staff to act. Thus what happened in Stockborough is not that the contradiction between competition and collaboration was reconciled but it was diffused and the onus was placed on professionals to both meet their targets and collaborate.

As policy delegated the reconciliation of the contradiction in the PSRM to senior managers, in the Stockborough Challenge there is evidence that in turn the senior managers delegated and diffused the reconciliation of target and market dynamics to professionals in children's services. There is no convincing case that there was a trade-off between meeting the target and market incentives and doing what needed to be done to meet 'real' needs. Thus, the *both/ and* articulation of collaboration and standards and markets became, at the frontline, that professionals should *both* meet their targets *and* collaborate to improve outcomes. The contradiction in the assemblage was in effect not reconciled but maintained, held in tension and left for individual professionals to resolve.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the way in which the problem of collaboration came to be represented, interpreted and enacted was influenced by considerations other than a singular and exclusive focus on improving collaboration.

Drawing on the concept of leaderism, which describes how New Labour tasked leaders with reconciling contradictions within and between policies, I presented the case that the development of the Challenge was influenced by the perceived need in Stockborough to resolve the ambivalent relationship between schools and children's services in addition to the tensions between targets, markets and collaboration. Furthermore, the central role allocated to leaders in resolving these issues meant the problems would be engaged with through the lenses, approaches and biases of leadership.

The senior managers developing the Challenge were those responsible for enacting the Children's Trust policy. There is a case that the senior managers as they developed the Challenge used the initiative to resolve two problems they faced, creating particular biases in the initiative.

The first source of bias is found in the managers' need to secure the commitment and engagement of schools to the Every Child Matters agenda, the Children's Trust, and the Stockborough Challenge. As stated previously, the managers used the Challenge to gain the support of schools and headteachers by locating the initiative in the school's perspective of collaboration. As described in chapter seven, and re-explained above, the Challenge was modelled on Paul Lawler's school improvement process that sought to motivate teachers to do more activities, which would contribute to the Challenge in the school and motivate other staff members to commit to 'improving' the school. The consequences of modelling the Challenge on the school improvement process was that the focus was to increase collaborative activity and the assumption that the barrier to this was the lack of motivation to work collaboratively. Similarly, the Challenge identified and engaged with motivational problems (e.g., targets and apathy) to collaboration and promoted motivational responses (e.g., the 'call to action').

The second source of bias on the representation and interpretation of collaboration was the apparent need to engage with the tensions between targets and markets and the conditions required to collaborate in children's services. Challenge One was concerned with the contradiction between the ECM and standards agendas but when Challenge Two focused on targets as the barrier to collaboration and the solution as partly ignoring them to focus on 'real' needs there was a more pronounced engagement with the tensions between targets and collaboration. I related the Challenge's focus on targets to the Public Sector Reform Model that identified leadership, in addition to other approaches, for reconciling the contradiction. It is important to recognise, however, that in the Challenge, there was the belief that collaboration would necessarily improve outcomes and so meet the targets. Thus the contradiction was not meaningfully resolved but rather the idea was that professionals if motivated would both collaborate and meet their targets, which identifies the influence of the discourse of collaboration in which collaboration is necessarily effective.

So, in the Stockborough Challenge collaboration was represented, interpreted and enacted from a school's perspective that focused on motivating professionals to increase the quantity of collaboration, and one in which the constraining effects of targets and market pressures would be reconciled through leaders articulating visions and other techniques. Returning to Bacchi (2009), the problem of collaboration came to be, at least in part, about engaging with schools and resolving issues with targets as well as improving collaboration.

The next chapter develops this analysis with a more interpretive approach that looks at how discourses and policy technologies were similarly influential in how collaboration was represented, interpreted and enacted in the Challenge.

CHAPTER 9: INTERPRETING THE CONTRADICTIONS

This chapter adopts a more interpretive approach to understanding the Challenge in the national-to-local context, in order to further elaborate on research question 3. My reasons for doing this are two-fold.

One, the purpose of this thesis is to develop recommendations for future initiatives for improving collaboration in children's services yet I feel that the previous chapter might provide a simplistic and impracticable response – managers should focus singularly on collaboration – that would not be a sufficient or realistic basis to inform better practice in the future. We may never see New Labour's level of intervention and micro-management again at the local level but there will always be additional priorities and sources of bias when managers develop initiatives to improve collaboration. So, in this chapter I want to explore the influence of discourses and policy technologies on the interpretation and enactment of the Challenge.

Two, I want to return to the critique I developed in the literature review and apply this to the experience of the Challenge, in order to foreground the discussion of my contribution to knowledge presented in the conclusion. To do so, I use an amended version of the four-point critique on research on collaboration I outlined in chapter three to explore the representation of the problem of collaboration, how this influenced the enactment of the Challenge, and to a lesser extent the implications for the research and practice of collaboration.

The chapter proceeds in two main sections focusing on the specification and contextualisation of collaboration, and considerations of the ideological influence on leadership and cultural change.

CRITIQUE ONE: SPECIFYING AND CONTEXTUALISING COLLABORATION

In this section I argued that the difficulties the Challenge had in defining collaboration can be understood with reference to the discourse of collaboration, with its extensive rationale but lack of specificity as to what is collaboration.

The first point of the critique presented arguments that research does not sufficiently specify or contextualise collaboration. There is an acknowledged lack of definitional clarity (Audit Commission 1998; Warmington et al. 2004; Salmon and Faris 2006; Robinson et al 2008; Canavan et al 2009) and where there is specificity it relates to well-defined generic definitions such as 'partnership' (e.g., Glendinning et al 2005) or 'collaboration' (e.g., Hardy et al. 2005), and that this de-contextualises collaboration by ignoring the different forms that develop in response to particular policies, goals and purposes (Powell and Dowling 2006; Nylén 2007).

In addition, in chapter two (pp.24-25), I explained that New Labour's approach to collaboration was characterised by a discourse in which there was an extensive rationale but a lack of specificity as to its different forms, with claims made without supporting evidence (Clarke and Glendinning 2002; Davies 2009). This lack of specificity was found in policy documents where collaboration was expressed through 'policy condensates', where synonyms for 'joined-up' and 'partnership' were used in different sectors without clarification with the intention of representing the possibility that all things could be joined-up (Clarke et al, 2006; Clarke et al, 2008; Ball 2008).

Returning to the Challenge, we can observe the influences of the discourse of collaboration. One of the Challenge's most developed components was the rationale for collaboration. *Bringing Together*, the first Challenge policy document, presented an extensive case for change in children's services and for initiative in particular, with justification at national, regional and local levels. As is evidenced by the excerpt below, collaboration and the Stockborough Challenge were associated with engaging with a broad and ambitious agenda,

The Stockborough Challenge project is therefore about bringing about change in the way we provide both universal and targeted services for children, young people and families, including school provision in Stockborough but it is change for a purpose and that purpose is to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and young people, to raise standards and improve pupil performance and to enable all Stockborough's children and young people, whatever their needs, to achieve. (*Bringing Together* §2.6)

This extensive and incredibly complex problem raises many questions that are not fully understood and were left unengaged with as Challenge One became Challenge Two, and the focus moved from understanding collaboration to focusing on targets as the primary barrier to collaborative working.

In line with the discourse of collaboration, the Stockborough Challenge was overwhelmingly positive about the efficacy and practicability of collaboration. The drive to integrate and join-up was typified in one of the Dalewood Pilot Management Group's (DPMG) goals, which asked of each member, as Paul Lawler explained to make a new collaborative relationship with another member of the group at every meeting.

For a professional to 'network' by learning more about what other members do and how this might benefit the children and families he or she works with is prudent but starting a new collaborative relationship or project, essentially for the sake of doing so, seems to accept collaboration as an end in itself. The view that collaboration was an end in itself, rather than a means for helping professionals as they seek to improve outcomes for children and young people, perceives collaboration as an unqualified good. As Hansen (2010: 44) explains, 'the goal of collaboration is not collaboration but better results.' Yet, in the Challenge, there was no engagement with how a particular form of collaboration would benefit which service users and why?

The Challenge approached collaboration by seeking to increase the quantity of collaboration, by motivating or influencing more activity, but this is different to improving the quality of collaboration. The focus on making more collaboration happen was partly a consequence of a lack of engagement and specification as to what was collaboration, and as discussed above the influence of the Dalewood High school improvement process. As stated previously, the Challenge did not continue with the Challenge One aim to develop a model of collaboration.

Despite the comprehensive rationale, the Challenge was far less developed in terms of the practicalities of making collaboration work. Henry Jacobson, the director of the Challenge, acknowledged the absence of a definition of collaboration, using a model or theory, in *Developing the Detail*,

What we do not yet know is quite what we are hoping to achieve through the big thinking and the small starts, what the partnership working of 2013 will look actually look like and how we will get to the point at which we know.
(*Developing the Detail* §1.5)

The claim that the Challenge did not define collaboration requires clarification and explanation. In the Challenge policy documents there were numerous different and synonymous terms for various patterns of collaborative working. In *Bringing Together*, for example, the text refers to ‘multi-agency, multi-faceted organisations’ (§3.34), the bringing together of ‘community development and regeneration’ agendas (§2.12.5), and locating the Stockborough Challenge and Children’s Services in relation to the ‘local authority’s wider social and economic regeneration strategy’ (§3.9). The point is not that these terms were used incorrectly, such as ‘inter-professional’ when ‘partnership’ was more appropriate, but that they were used without clarification.

The way the Challenge policy documents discussed forms of collaboration was indicative of New Labour’s use of policy ‘condensates’, as described above. Thus organisations, agendas, strategies and professions were presented in a way that suggests that all could be brought together and ‘joined up’ as part of a ‘collaborative’ approach to delivering ‘integrated’ services. The point is not that it is impossible to bring organisations, professions and agendas together but rather the Challenge did not explain how this would be achieved, and assumed that increased integration and increasing the quantity of collaboration was the appropriate direction of travel, as the Challenge One aim of identifying a model of collaboration was replaced by Challenge Two and the emphasis on increasing the quantity of collaboration and cultural change.

SPECIFYING COLLABORATION

It is debatable whether or not the senior managers developing the Challenge could or should have defined and explicated in technical detail all of the terms describing different types of collaboration with which the initiative was seeking to engage. The Challenge’s focus was across children’s services and so, for example, social workers would understand and relate to multi-agency working whereas a

community development practitioner might focus on integrated community services. Instead of employing a prescriptive approach by delineating the various types of collaboration, the managers essentially delegated the definition of collaboration and working collaboratively to those working in specific parts of children's services.

There is a case that the Challenge approach was distributed and emergent. Senior managers presented a vision to professionals in Stockborough Children's Services and then, as part of Challenge Two, instructed professionals to respond to the 'call to action' and work collaboratively to meet the 'real' needs of children and young people, as part of the 'one culture'.

I argue that not defining collaboration was in fact a limitation for the Challenge because it constrained the ability of the managers to develop appropriate interventions to improve collaboration. The managers did not specify collaboration or differentiate between different types and so they were not able to develop a culture that 'fit' collaboration and they accepted the existing organisational arrangements as effective, as will be explained.

The first limitation of the managers' undifferentiated approach to collaboration relates to the issue of 'fit' or appropriateness between culture and collaborative activity. If, as has been argued, the Challenge was an example of organisational culture it is necessary to remember Alvesson's (2002: 43) counsel to avoid 'premature normativity'. There is not one type of superior culture. Instead it is best to think in terms of the 'fit' or appropriateness between culture and the organisational process, purpose or goal.

The significance of 'fit' is relevant to the Challenge's 'one culture' which was focused on meeting the 'real needs' of children and young people however this is problematic in terms of determining the fit between culture and collaboration because 'needs' can imply substantively different organisational and cultural forms depending on the type of 'need' and the number of children involved, as will be explained,

In line with the ECM agenda, a child's needs may relate to any of the five outcomes. The issue is that meeting each need may have required significantly

different organisational responses and corresponding cultures. For example, a child's 'Stay Safe' outcome would have typically been met through safeguarding procedures. Safeguarding was characterised by a fairly bureaucratic and legalistic process where a professional was meant to follow a clearly delineated process, in terms of to whom they should and should not talk (Frost and Parton 2009; Munro 2011). Effective safeguarding requires collaboration across professional and organisational boundaries but it is arguably very different from forms of collaboration that emerge in interventions for more than one child.

In, for example, multi-agency working or a children's centre there might be looser forms of collaboration between organisations and so there are arguably different emphasises on particular elements of working practice that would differ according to the context. In a multi-agency setting it seems sensible that professionals should invest time and effort in group meetings to establish a consensus around what terms mean, and how practice can be improved or better understood (e.g., Clegg and McNulty 2002). In looser forms of collaboration however it is infeasible and not preferable to dedicate a similar amount of resources to ensuring the fidelity of meaning between professionals working together at all times. Thus the appropriate culture for each of these scenarios would be different and multiple rather than common and 'one'.

The second limitation of the undifferentiated approach to collaboration is that the senior managers developing the Challenge did not consider developing alternative structures to support professionals to collaborate.

When communicating the Challenge, the senior managers described collaboration in terms of existing examples such as Dalewood High School and the Children's Trust both of which I maintain were contextualised approaches to collaboration.

At the second Stockborough Challenge conference, Maggie Wilson introduced the Challenge and stated, as described on page 152, that although so far it had a 'school focus but it goes across the piste of Children and Young People's Services.'

Similarly, the example of the Children's Trust was used as a template for collaborative working in different contexts. In *Developing the Detail* one idea for improving collaboration was to,

Develop the notion of schools as Children's Trusts. (*Developing the Detail* §3.1)

Thus in Stockborough, collaboration became associated with the example set by Dalewood High School and the existing structure of the Children's Trust. The issue with drawing on these context and purpose-specific examples of collaboration was that the Challenge was seen by some to be trapped within these contexts. This is the issue voiced by the manager of a housing trust, and a Challenge sceptic, when she said, as presented earlier on page 163, 'Look Paul's made it work in his school... but I just don't see it fit with what we do.'

In defence of the senior managers, Maggie Wilson did say 'that's a school focus but it goes across the piste of children and young people's services.' But the view that the Challenge was some how generalisable and universal ignores the historical and strategic development of the initiative within a school context and specifically a school improvement process, and the need of the managers who developed the Challenge to get schools to commit to the Every Child Matters agenda.

There is a similar issue when collaboration was exemplified by the Children's Trust. The Children's Trust was equated in policy with improving collaboration yet it is prudent to remember the multiple origins of and influences on the Trusts, specifically managerialism and accountability (e.g., Laming 2003). Assessing the Children's Trust arrangements from an assemblage perspective it is clear that the Trust was an assemblage of various discourses and technologies, such as the Children and Young Person's Plan, a vision, a cultural change process, meetings, networking, strategy documents, and minutes and so on. There is a question of whether this was an appropriate set of components to help professionals and organisations to collaborate within the context of the divergent and convergent forces in the wider assemblage of children's services? Or more simply, did the Children's Trust help professionals collaborate?

I cannot provide a definitive view of whether or not the Trust facilitated or constrained collaborative working however there are indications that the Trust did not engage with particular issues that professionals in different parts of the local authority faced in trying to work collaboratively.

What was more evident was the lack of specification and differentiation of collaboration contributed to the managers' inability to develop alternative approaches to organising for collaboration. Without specifying or rationalising why and how something should be done it is difficult to outline the facilitating and constraining conditions and to develop more conducive systems, procedures and relationships.

Henry Jacobson, the Challenge Director, planned to recruit a network of Challenge 'champions' but, as described above (pp. 140-141), it was not possible to specify what the champions should do to champion the initiative, and the component was duly discontinued. Without specification the possibility of identifying patterns of collaboration and developing appropriate facilitative conditions is lost, obscured by an homogeneous category and generic, management-based change processes.

There was a lack of critical engagement with the structures and processes that facilitated collaboration and a greater emphasis on the commitment, motivation and values related to collaboration. For example, Nick Reynold's thought that the structures were more or less developed and the high-leverage act was to change the culture to catalyse collaboration,

We thought that the structures were basically in place, with the Trust and all that... like I said before, we wanted to say *why* we are doing all of this. That's why we focused on culture.

The belief that the primary problem of collaboration was to be found within the individual professional, her values and motivation, was at odds with the views of professionals seeking to collaborate at the frontline. As discussed above, from the point of view of professionals, improving collaborative working required more than motivation, as Sally Jenkins, a Challenge sceptic, explained on page 159, 'People want to [collaborate] ... [but] we rarely stray into the how bit.'

This section has explored the implications of the lack of specificity and contextualisation of collaboration in research and also in the Stockborough Challenge. By not specifying collaboration the managers were unable to develop supporting roles, structures and conditions.

An additional purpose of this section is to demonstrate the importance of specifying and contextualising collaboration in research and practice, which will be further engaged with in the next chapter, but it is important to note at this point that without understanding collaboration in contextually-specific terms the important details that help define what is happening, what is needed and why things are or are not working are obscured.

Next we turn to the exploring the ideological influences in the promotion of leadership and cultural change in the public sector.

CRITIQUES TWO AND THREE: THE IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE ON LEADERSHIP AND CULTURAL CHANGE

In the literature review the critiques of leadership and cultural change were presented separately but here they merged for the purpose of illuminating the influence of managerialism and leaderism on the way in which leadership and cultural change were promoted by government and interpreted and enacted in the Challenge.

In the section critiquing leadership I critically engaged with the literature with a focus on New Labour and certain academic's articulation or utilisation of new forms of leadership, such as distributed leadership or system's leadership, and the contradiction between these more collective types of leadership and the managerial context in which they were deployed (Gunter and Ribbins 2003; Higham and Hopkins 2007; Lumby 2009). Rather than focusing on the types of leadership I argued that it is more important to understand the purposes of leadership, within the managerialisation of the English public sector (Earley and Weindling 2004; Simkins 2005). To help understand the purposes of leadership, O'Reilly and Reed (2010) present leaderism, which describes how New Labour used leadership as a social technology, wherein leadership,

potentially alleviates and absorbs the endemic tensions between politicians, managers, professionals and the public inherent in NPM [New Public Management] systems by drawing them together into a unifying discourse of a leading vision for their services in which they, collectively, play a major role. (O'Reilly and Reed 2010: 961)

O'Reilly and Reed (2010) observe that leaderism is aligned with and complementary to previous managerial reforms of the public sector. Thus the continuities and discontinuities between leadership and managerialism should be attended to but it is important to acknowledge the assumptions, logics and biases of managerial approaches when continuities are found (Fergusson 2000). So when interpreting leadership for collaboration it is crucial to attend to the relationships to managerial reforms and any associated biases and assumptions that may bias the representation of the problem of collaboration.

A similar argument can be made in relation to New Labour's use of culture and cultural change. New Labour's policy associated culture with an integrative function that remediates fragmentation and contradiction in children's services (e.g., DfES 2004b; DCSF 2007). Such a view is indicative of a particular approach to culture, one that originated in the fields of business and management (e.g., Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982; Schein 1985) and has been heavily critiqued in general and in the public sector in particular. So the question is what is the influence of such an approach, if it was evident in the Stockborough Challenge?

In this section I seek to illuminate how these issues might have influenced the development of the Stockborough Challenge, especially relating to Challenge Two, which came to rely on leadership and cultural change as the solution to a particular representation of the problem of improving collaboration.

LEADERSHIP AND LEADERISM, MANAGEMENT AND MANAGERIALISM

During New Labour's period in government there were changes in approaches to public management and administration, with a growing emphasis on leadership and tensions between traditional forms of management approaches and the networked and collaborative policy contexts Labour were developing and seeking to support. The interpretation of the Stockborough Challenge must

therefore be situated within these changes in modes and approaches to leadership and management in the public sector and children's services.

Before continuing it is important to clarify the terminology. Managerialism is understood here to be the ideology of management (Clarke et al 2000), and leaderism is understood as the discourse surrounding the utilisation of leadership in the public sector (O'Reilly and Reed 2010).

Given the complexity of the changes in children's services in relation to the empirical focus of the Stockborough Challenge situated within a complex context, it is difficult to evidence a clear relationship of causality. However, drawing on Gale's (1999) concept of intertextuality I wish to draw attention to the ideas that were present in children's services policy in order to describe the information and ideas, present in a range of different policy documents, that I argue could have influenced the way that the senior managers interpreted and enacted the Challenge. To be clear I am not suggesting managers read and were influenced by these documents. It is a limitation of this research that I cannot say which documents were read and to what impact. Nevertheless, instead of exhibiting the smoking gun I seek to describe the smell of gunpowder in the air. I aim to do this by exploring the influence of the notion of 'common' that I link with management thinking, and the application of particular management tools on the managerialist assumption they were generically effective.

COMMON

I want to make the case that the Challenge's engagement with 'real' needs and the emphasis on notions of commonality, especially in relation to culture, were influenced by the ideology of managerialism.

As described in chapter three, there is a tradition of management thinking that views culture as a managerial tool to improve organisational performance (Smircich 1983). This approach is the critical variable view of organisational culture, which promotes the utility of 'strong' or widely shared cultures, in which culture integrates. Driscoll and Morris (2001) associate this view of culture with unitarism, which conceptualises organisations as 'an integrated and harmonious whole existing for a common purpose' (Farnham and Pimlott 1990: 4). As explained in the critique

of organisational culture this is a particular and contested understanding of culture (Martin 1992; Smircich 1983), and despite criticism it has nevertheless been influential in the public sector.

The unitarist view of business organisations provides the background to Garrett's (2009) identification of Hogan and Murphey's (2002) book 'Outcomes' as indicative of the business-inspired use of notions of 'common' applied to the public sector. For Hogan and Murphey (2002) the reason why businesses are so successful is the practice of working together towards common goals, as they say,

The spirit of working together toward common ends is at the centre of business success and this spirit should be emulated by public sector professionals. (2002: 33)

They advise that clear and simple messages provide the foundation for collaboration, for example,

Clarity of message and purpose can set the foundation for new relationships with the business community. Government gobbledygook and bureaucratic complexity have ruined many well-meaning efforts at collaboration. A new simplicity of language could change that. (Hogan and Murphey 2002: 33)

It is of course highly unlikely that the senior managers read Hogan and Murphey's book but there was across a range of policy documents and guidelines in the children's services that sought to communicate aims in simple language (e.g., the ECM agenda) and numerous examples where 'commonality' were presented in various policy documents as key organising principles in children's services (e.g., DfES 2006), for example, the Children's Plan stated,

Senior managers must lead on workforce reform and drive culture change to embed integrated working and common processes, communicating to their staff and to external stakeholders a clear vision of integrated working and how to achieve it... (DCSF 2007: §7.45)

It was repeatedly stated in guidance that the culture in children's services would be outcome-focused (e.g., ECM Next Steps 2004). Significantly, the 'Turning the curve stories' (DCSF 2008d), which were case studies of how local authorities had developed effective Children's Trust arrangements, developing a culture that

was outcome focused was repeatedly identified as a factor in successful attempts to develop an appropriate culture for the Children's Trusts.

That 'culture' might be reduced and equated to focusing on the 'needs of children' and young people' is evident in this paragraph from a report written by the Audit Commission (2008), on evaluating the progress of the Children's Trust initiative, where focusing on need is equated with culture,

These outcomes are linked to a value-led framework that brings 'working together' (partnerships), developing 'new ways of working' (innovation), and focus on the 'needs of children and young people' (culture) together as the basis of local success. (Audit Commission 2008: §24)

I argue that in Stockborough the senior managers interpreted and translated the numerous representations of 'common' in addition to a focus on shared and interdependent outcomes into the local dialect of 'real' needs, 'doing what needs to be done', and the 'one culture', as discussed above.

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

A second feature of the influence of leadership and managerialism on the Challenge was the utilisation of generic management approaches, with the managerialist assumption that they were generically effective.

The Stockborough Challenge was constituted by a number of practices and tools that can be associated with private and public sector management. There was a vision, initiative champions, the identification of outputs and outcomes, and what I have argued to be organisational cultural change. I do not claim that these tools are only related to management. For example, visions are equally a part of religion as management. My concern is not that the tools employed are exclusively from management approaches or that these tools were necessarily inappropriate. Identifying and recruiting 'champions' when seeking to start a new initiative is eminently sensible. In my opinion these tools were however management tools due to the fact that they were selected and employed by managers in Stockborough. They were also managerial – that is reflected the ideology of management – as the managers assumed that they could employ these tools to initiate change amongst

the people they manage and they assumed these tools were essentially effective regardless of the process, purpose or aims (see Fergusson 2000).

Thus in the Challenge, the managers presented an initiative vision yet this vision did not develop into what collaboration was or how processes and organisations would be changed to facilitate it. The belief was, apparently, that a vision had significant utility, even if it was not developed in terms of the structures and capacities required to achieve it. In addition, the managers decided there would be Challenge 'champions' to champion the initiative but, again, beyond identifying champions as a strategy for implementing the initiative what the champions would do was not specified. In both instances the senior managers developing the Challenge used particular tools, such as champions and visions, but these tools were not specified or adapted to engage directly with collaborative working.

So in the Challenge we have senior managers selecting and using particular tools but these were not developed or calibrated for collaboration. There is therefore a question as to what did the tools and approaches the managers used do? How did they function, who did they benefit, and to what end? I argue that the focus of these tools and thus the Challenge itself was motivation, the motivation of a professional to collaborate.

MOTIVATION AND MANAGERIALISM

I wish to draw attention to the foundational role of motivation in the discourse and practice of leadership; the consequence of which is that when leadership is identified as a strategy to engage with a particular policy problem, such as collaboration, the response will unless checked assume and predispose motivation as a key issue and focus for engagement.

There is insufficient space here to develop the relationship between leadership and motivation fully but we find, for example, the role of a leader as motivator in Cuban's (1988: xx), definition of leadership,

By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends.

Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others.

Thus, admittedly somewhat of a simplification, leaders motivate, direct and influence professionals to do. Aside from the positionality of the leader in relation to the led, it is important to recognise the context from which managerial and leadership approaches have emerged and the consequential biases if used unquestioningly (e.g., Fergusson 2000).

For example, the principal managerial tool employed by the Challenge was, as I interpreted it, organisational cultural change, which has been associated with motivating employees. There is a critical strand in the literature on organisational culture that relates the rise and emergence of the 'excellence studies' (e.g., Peters and Waterman 1982) with regards to the needs of managers in industry and commerce to motivate employees after the downsizing, re-organising, and mass redundancies of the 1980s in Western corporations relative to the rise of Japan (Wilson 1999; Dingwall and Strangleman 2005). Similarly, in relation to the public sector context, Christensen (2007) identifies in the post-NPM wave of reforms – characterised by the promotion of cultural change through the fostering of a common culture based on a strong and shared values and normative framework to unite departments and agencies around a single agenda – a response to the 'cultural resistance' to NPM reforms in the public sector.

This is obviously a very complex matter that should not be reduced simply to motivation but I think there is something persuasive and central in leadership and cultural change being used to build motivation and commitment in employees in relation to organisational missions and goals (e.g., Wright et al 2012).

Returning to the Challenge, I argue that the tools the senior managers employed functioned to develop the motivation of a professional to collaborate. There were project launches, promotional materials, an online presence, pilot projects, Stockborough Challenge 'champions', the 'call to action', a vision, and cultural change. Again, this is not to suggest that these and the other technologies were inappropriate but they all predominantly focus on motivation. Indeed, the vision and the 'call to action' were effectively the Challenge's clarion call to build a professional's motivation to collaborate.

Although I cannot say the two are related, it is interesting to consider the Challenge's focus on motivation especially in relation to the Challenge as indicative of a leaderist project to reconcile the contradiction between targets, markets and collaboration in line with the Public Sector Reform Model (PSRM). A further consideration is the role of leadership, cultural change, and common and shared values in the emergence of post-NPM (Christensen 2007) and the engagement of the tensions between the competitive dynamics of previous NPM reforms and the rising prioritisation for collaboration in public services. So there is a case that a focus on motivation was not incidental but an integral part of policy seeking to promote collaboration in a managerial context.

MOTIVATION RECONCILING THE CONTRADICTION

I have argued that one way to interpret Challenge Two's focus on targets as the barrier to collaboration and the articulation of 'real' needs as solution is to relate the initiative to the types of local reforms that were required by the PSRM. Leaders would reduce the tensions between competitive and collaborative dynamics, possibly as O'Reilly and Reed (2010) described by presenting a vision, which provides the context to explain the Challenge's vision and the focus on 'real' needs not targets to enable collaboration to take place. Motivation here is central. Managers could not remove the targets only seek to change the way professionals met them, uncollaboratively or, as the Challenge intended they would if motivated, collaboratively.

One way of understanding the PSRM is that it brought together different approaches for organising public services, based on particular understandings of how to motivate professionals to work towards particular ends. There were traditional New Public Management (NPM) approaches such as targets and markets in addition to more collective or collaborative management approaches such as post-NPM.

Stoker (2006: 43) notes that debates over different paradigms of public administration or management,

are not technical disputes about what works best... They are about differences around the fundamental understanding of human motivation that narratives imply...

There was therefore in the PSRM multiple understandings of or approaches to human motivation. The target and market dynamics that had been the staple of NPM reforms were based on a liberal utility maximising ethic in which individuals or in this case professionals are cast as self-interested and therefore requiring appropriate incentives to frame their interest (Kaboolian 1998; Boston 2011). This view of the public servant as rational and self-interested was part of the ‘micro-foundations of New Labour’s approach to the public sector’ (Stoker and Moseley 2010: 10).

The PSRM reflected a realisation of the limitations of New Public Management and market logics and the corresponding constraints of the liberal utility maximising ontology on which the two narratives are based in relation to working collaboratively across boundaries (O’Flynn 2007). The contradiction in the assemblage was at root a contradiction between understandings of motivation and related institutional structures to support these.

In maintaining targets and markets within the PSRM and in the assemblage of children’s services, New Labour maintained the institutional conditions that related to the corresponding motivations, targets and markets. The belief was that leadership and the associated technologies could elide the contradiction in the assemblage by altering the motivational calculus that dictated how professionals decided how to act – from targets to outcomes or ‘real’ needs.

The Challenge was a leaderist strategy that sought to temper the ‘narrowing’ effects of targets and institutional boundaries through leadership and a presentation of a vision that aimed to broaden the focus of professionals from sector-defined needs and a focus on, for example, the ‘pupil’ to a focus on a child’s holistic or ‘real’ needs. For example, in the policy document *Rationale* it was written,

A genuine cross-service vision and dialogue therefore needs to develop if individual services are not to be driven solely by their own priorities. (*Rationale* §4.5)

Thus Challenge Two’s focus on outcomes, ‘real’ needs, and commonality can be argued to have been to motivate or encourage professionals to revalue how they

perceived and responded to targets so that they could in effect do what needed to be done, to collaborate to meet the 'real' needs of the children they worked with.

There is a question of whether or not seeking to bolster the motivation of a professional to partly ignore his targets was a viable strategy in a context in which targets were such a powerful force, especially for schools?

Paul Lawler, was inspired by the pronouncements of the Challenge and, for example, the National College to be a system leader and loan a mathematics teacher to another school with an understaffed department,

So, I've lent them one of my maths teachers. It's systems leadership. There's no point my school being strong in maths if the kids in the school down the road are doing badly. It's the children's workforce, it's the Stockborough Challenge, it's doing right by all the kids in the area.

Paul Lawler's use of system leadership approaches to share a mathematics teacher with another school is no doubt a laudable act but his attitudes to distributed and systems leadership associated with the Stockborough Challenge were not shared by other headteachers in Stockborough, with one exception of a headteacher who was inspired by the Dalewood Pilot Management Group to form a similar inter-professional collaborative group. I cannot comment on why other head teachers did not engage with the Challenge, although one head remarked,

We talk about the Stockborough Challenge but at the end of the day we go back to our desks and reality.

Talking to interviewees in Stockborough there was the sense that leadership and visions were fine but somewhat removed from the high-consequence stakes built into the performance-accountability regime. Dominic Young, the manager of the YOT explained his position,

The YOT is tied by a very tight reporting process. It is non-negotiable. If we don't deliver then we get the spotlight on us, whether that is politically, public or personal through the youth justice board. So if suddenly our figures go awry then we'll be audited. There's no negotiation. We'll be audited. Your practice will be examined. In the worst-case scenario you'll have a team coming in and working with you, and it's swift.

It is important not to overstate the influence of targets in relation to constraining collaboration. Dominic Young observed of targets being a significant barrier to collaboration,

Well they can be but not always....

Challenge Two identified targets as the principal barrier to collaboration and sought to motivate a professional to collaborate in spite of his targets but as Dominic Young observed targets were not the only obstacle. Furthermore, the focus placed on motivation by the leadership approach represented the problem of collaboration in a particular way that ignored or obscured other issues relating to organising for collaboration.

THE BIASES AND BLIND SPOTS OF MOTIVATION

Challenge Two, influenced by policy and the discourses of leadership and collaboration, focused on targets as the barrier to collaboration and a motivational response as the answer. I argue that the focus on motivation promoted a particular representation of the 'problem' of collaboration that obscured the practical processes and tasks of organising for collaboration.

Challenge Two emphasised targets and whilst they were not unimportant they were not the only factor. As Dominic Young observed that collaboration, at least for those working outside schools, was necessary and so the challenge professionals faced was to find others with whom they could collaborate. He described these challenges, on pages 178-179, working collaboratively involved 'pitching ideas' and developing new relationships with partners when required.

Instead of helping professionals engage with such issues the task of organising for collaboration was seen only in terms of leadership and values rather than as one requiring management and skills. As stated in chapter two, there is a tendency to separate leadership from management (Glatter 1997; Bush 1998; Cuban 1998; Leithwood et al 1999). Tasks relating to management, such as managing relationships and organisational restructuring, were under-engaged with replaced by the Challenge's emphasis on vision, rationale, purpose, motivation and influence all of which relate to leadership.

For example, the Stockborough Challenge vision was questioned by some I interviewed, especially the sceptics in the Stockborough Children's Trust. Sally Jenkins, a Challenge 'sceptic', described the lack of development of the Challenge vision, from pages 160-161, 'the basic nuts and bolts of integrated working isn't there.'

The Challenge therefore had a vision, notions of organisational culture and a focus on motivation and these were a useful to a point but there was insufficient focus to improve the conditions for collaboration, and once professionals were motivated the initiative had little to offer or inform.

This study found that professionals faced a range of organisational and administrative challenges to collaboration, other than motivational factors. As Hansen (2010) argues when engaging with the traps of collaboration, some barriers require motivational responses but in the case of search and transfer it is necessary to develop 'nimble networks' (p. 63). The Challenge did not however get to the point at which it could specify the issues professionals faced in attempting to engage with particular forms of collaboration. It did not get to the *how* of collaboration. Henry Jacobson, director of the Challenge, stated during the theory of change workshop, 'The how of collaboration, yes, that's something we haven't said much about.'

As I observed in the previous chapter, one explanation for the Challenge not presenting a model of collaboration and getting to the *how* of collaboration was that the initiative was mainly focused on remediating the contradictions in the assemblage, rather than improving collaboration per se. Thus the 'problem' of collaboration went from the Challenge One approach of understanding collaboration and developing a specific and appropriate response to becoming a problem of leadership. The absence of collaboration was therefore a deficit of leadership and culture to be remediated through leadership to improve collaboration. This meant Challenge Two's focus was not on understanding collaboration but rather improving leadership to increase collaborative working.

In this section I have explored the influence on the development of the Challenge of the leadership and managerialism on the way that the problem of

collaboration was represented and the tools and approaches with which it was engaged. Policy and the Challenge adopted a particular view of culture that is related to organisational culture, which promoted notions of commonality to bring professionals together as found in the Challenge's 'real' needs and the 'one culture'. The managers used tools that can be linked with management approaches but, indicative of the ideology of managerialism, they were not specifically tailored to collaboration but implemented with the assumption they would be necessarily effective. The problem of collaboration was perceived to be one of motivation, in terms of targets or encouragement to collaborate, which hid the challenges professionals faced when seeking to collaborate.

CONCLUSION

As described in the previous chapter, the government's leaderist approach for reconciling the contradiction in the assemblages of children's services helps explain the contradictory position of the managers in Stockborough and the growing emphasis on a leadership approach in Challenge Two, rather than on Challenge One's aim to understand more about collaboration and how to support professionals to work collaboratively.

In this chapter, I drew attention to the influence of the discourse of collaboration on the Stockborough Challenge. Similar to the discourse of collaboration, the Challenge had an extensive rationale for collaboration but was not clear about what were the forms of collaborative activity that would make this happen. This lack of specificity and attention to context meant that the senior managers had trouble developing appropriate supporting roles and conditions. Furthermore, they accepted particular approaches to collaboration (e.g., the Dalewood High School and the Children's Trust) and attempted to translate them to other contexts without attending to the contextual specificity of these forms of collaboration, the needs they engaged with and those they ignored.

Influenced by the government's promotion of leadership to reconcile the contradiction, leadership and its associated discourses, tools and strategies became the logical choice to improve collaboration. However, the leadership approach

implicated a series of associated managerial tools, logics and assumptions. Thus motivation became a key focus for the Challenge, both in terms of the perception of the barriers to collaboration (i.e., targets) and the means of supporting collaboration (i.e., championing). Furthermore, the focus on leadership and the motivation to collaborate was at a detriment to an engagement with the managerial dimensions or the 'how' of organising for collaboration.

The next chapter makes recommendations for how senior managers can specify and contextualise collaboration, and develop appropriate facilitative conditions to improve collaboration at the local level.

CHAPTER 10: ASSEMBLING COLLABORATION

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the findings and present recommendations for how a local authority could better improve collaborative working, in order to engage with research question 4: What can be learned from the Stockborough Challenge to inform initiatives to improve collaboration?

It is important to acknowledge the change in government since the research began. Although it is too soon to comprehend the long-term impact of Coalition Government's reforms it is likely that the role of local authorities will be reduced due to the growth in academies and free schools (Academies Act 2010) and this will lead to greater fragmentation at the local level.

Another significant development in the re-organisation of the English school system is the Teaching School Alliance (TSAs) initiative, which relies on school-to-school collaboration described as 'support' (DfE 2013). A reading of Matthews and Berwick's (2012) think piece 'Teaching schools: first among equals?', stored on the DfE site to explain TSAs, raises some concerns in light of the findings of this thesis. Although they cite Hargreaves (2012) 'A self-improving school system: towards maturity' paper which provides some useful indications for how to proceed; there is in the discourse underpinning the TSAs a similar array of concepts as articulated in the rationale of the Stockborough Challenge and surrounding policy context: system leadership, moral purpose, and knowledge management. I would argue it is crucial to attend to leader's and teacher's interpretation of these concepts, their capabilities and resources to meaningfully enact these activities and processes, and the tensions between the 'support' networks and the managerial and competitive context in which schools and leaders are located. At all points it is important to consider whether these de-contextualised managerial concepts, such as 'knowledge management', provide a comprehensible focus for leaders to develop clear and defined purposes for collaborative activity with appropriate structures, roles and technologies to facilitate school-to-school 'support' networks.

It is likely that New Labour's attempt to join up children's services will become a highpoint in terms of the integration in children's services. It is unlikely

that collaboration will go away however due to the imperative to provide services for less, as was illustrated in the Big Society policy agenda (Cameron 2011), and to engage with complex social issues. Indeed, coordination in the context of a post-bureaucratic state is arguably a direction of travel for policy and practice.

This chapter reflects on the findings and draws on the work I conducted as part of the replication and verification phases of the research design through the design experiment and action research project to explore the challenges that professionals face when seeking to work collaboratively. It proceeds in two sections that present the case for developing and utilising a purposive definition of collaboration, and developing a more specific and realistic approach to collaboration.

DEVELOPING A MODEL OF COLLABORATION

My first recommendation is to develop a model or models of collaboration. The Challenge sceptics in the Stockborough Children's Trust were typically those with the greatest experience of collaborative working and, in my opinion, offered the wisest and most sophisticated views on the initiative and collaboration. The sceptics were typically more interested in Challenge One's initial aim to develop a model of collaboration that would make it easier to collaborate. To re-quote Sally Jenkins, from page 159, a member of the Children's Trust, 'People want to [collaborate] ... [but] we rarely stray into the how bit.'

In engaging with the 'how' of collaboration it is important to acknowledge the work of Powell and Dowling (2005) and Nylen (2007) relating to what I call the de-contextualisation of collaboration: the focus on generic labels of collaboration, such as 'partnership', which obscure the different forms and purposes of collaboration. So rather than thinking of 'collaboration' as singular, it is better to think of different forms of collaboration, each of which should be engaged with in terms of the idiosyncratic constraining and facilitating factors in order to develop tailored responses and supporting conditions. Thus I assert the need to contextualise collaboration.

In the literature review (pp. 54-57), I noted that there were a number of theories or approaches to collaboration that did not de-contextualise collaboration

(Easen et al 2004; Anning et al 2006; Lumby 2009; Hansen 2010; Sullivan et al 2012) and that a common feature was the focus on the aims or goals of that particular form of collaboration in context. Following on, the kernel for my definition of collaboration was found in conversation with Paul Lawler, the headteacher at Dalewood High. He said his approach to leadership, which was interpreted as his approach to collaborative working, was,

to get the right people around the room to solve the problem.

Thus we begin with what he is aiming to do, what the purpose of the activity is for him. From the professional's point of view what is involved in bringing together the *right* resources depends on the issue in hand. The processes, roles and organisational challenges in bringing together the necessary resources and professional expertise would be different if it was a safeguarding issue or a child had a disability, if the 'problem' related to one child or a group children or if the 'problem' was clearly defined or was open and a 'wicked issue' (Clarke and Stewart 1997; Easen et al 2004). From this I contend that there are different patterns of collaborative working and the issue is to create a meaningful way of differentiating between them both for researchers and practitioners.

After an extensive review of the literature the approach that seemed most appropriate was Hansen's (2010: 16) 'disciplined collaboration'. For Hansen it is important to, 'Identify the collaboration premium... the goal of collaboration is not collaboration but better results' (p.44). This involves determining when to collaborate and when not to collaborate, identifying an appropriate case or form of collaboration, and then initiating appropriate processes to overcome the 'traps' to collaborating. The 3 cases for collaboration are:

1. Better innovation by recombining existing resources,
2. Better sales by cross-selling (selling existing customers new products), and
3. Better operations through more efficient practices and sharing good practice (pp. 26-31).

Hansen identifies a series of traps to collaboration and then proposes an approach that tailors appropriate supporting measures to support the different cases of collaboration. The traps to collaboration are,

‘hostile territory, over-collaborating, overshooting the potential values, underestimating the costs, mis-diagnosing the problem, implementing the wrong solution’ (p.11).

He goes on to identify four barriers to collaboration, in relation to the three cases of collaboration, they are: not invented here, hoarding barrier, search barrier, and transfer barrier. Significantly each of these barriers require different and tailored solutions. The first two (not invented here and hoarding) should be engaged with by motivational responses whereas the second two (search and transfer) require ‘nimble networks’ (p. 63).

Hansen’s (2010) book was clearly written for the private sector and a business and management audience and thus requires modification for application in the public sector in order to achieve this it is prudent to identify the utility of Hansen’s ‘disciplined collaboration’. One, it is a counterweight to the over-eager and lack of specificity in the discourse of collaboration that promotes collaboration seemingly in all instances, as found in the Challenge. Two, with reference to the de-contextualised and conflated conceptualisations of different patterns of collaboration in research and policy his approach maintains clarity about the case for collaborating and identifies the form of collaboration required. Thus collaboration can be differentiated in terms of types of activity that are orientated towards achieving categories of specified outcomes. Three, the categories of collaboration are understood to pose particular organisational challenges to professionals and so appropriate measures are put in place to mediate the barriers to collaborative working.

I argue for applying Hansen’s approach to the public sector but make two changes, one in relation to the name and the other in terms of the heuristic categories to organise collaboration in the public sector.

The first change I make is to re-label Hansen's 'disciplined collaboration' with 'cases' for collaborating, a *purposive* definition of collaboration with different *purposes* for collaborating. The intention is not to remove Hansen's (2010) emphasis on defining a case for collaborating rather the word 'case' denotes the calculative logic whereby a monetary profit determines what action should be taken. In the public sector there are fewer concrete and discrete metrics of an outcome, than the profit margin in the private sector. The aim is to articulate a term that fits with how public sector workers perceive their work and relationship to their activity in relation to the goals they are seeking. Thus, patterns of collaborative working and supporting mechanisms are defined as 'purposive', but which purposes?

Hansen's business related cases require translation into public sector processes. All three of Hansen's (2010) cases for collaborating appear to have public sector analogues. Innovation and sharing good practice can be considered equivalent in the public sector, with cross-selling products to existing customers equated with sign-posting service users to additional services. Due to the serious and specific nature of safeguarding it arguably warrants being classified as a separate purpose.

The apparently arbitrary assignation of purposes raises the question of what purposes are and how they are identified. The purposes identified here are asserted as heuristics and intended to provide professionals with a tool to make sense of de-contextualised and undifferentiated policy and research. The purpose of the purposes is to provide categories that represent a series of organisational challenges professionals encounter when working collaboratively, and enable both them and researchers to identify what are the supporting roles, relationships, processes and organisational forms that should be prioritised and are thought to effectively facilitate the purpose.

This research did not seek to develop a comprehensive typology of purposes for collaborating in the public sector however the purposive approach does provide a lens to reconsider what forms of collaboration I actually researched, which I describe as collaboration as innovation in public service delivery.

Perhaps due to the nature of the access I had to professional collaborative practice, the research on which this thesis is based was predominantly interested in the networking professionals engage in to develop new relationships to deliver and develop collaborative projects. I am therefore best placed to comment on the purpose of collaboration that is collaboration for innovation in public service design and delivery (hereafter 'collaboration for innovation'), which will now be discussed as an example of how specific patterns of collaboration could be engaged with.

AN ASSEMBLAGE FOR COLLABORATION AS INNOVATION

The purposive definition of collaboration provides a simple solution for contextualising and specifying collaboration whereby collaboration can be understood through categories of purpose-specific activity that make sense to the practitioner. I complement the purposive definition of collaboration with assemblage thinking to provide conceptual clarity to different purposes of collaboration and to understand how the different components come together to facilitate or constrain collaboration.

As a reminder, an assemblage describes the institutionalisation of a series of diverse components (e.g., 'policies, personnel, places, practices, technologies, images, architectures of governance and resources') to achieve a political project (Newman and Clarke 2009: 2) or by extension an organisational project. Thus the task in developing an assemblage for collaboration is to bring together, to assemble, a diverse combination of components to achieve or not a political or organisational project: the question is what is the project?

In order to develop an appropriate assemblage for collaboration as innovation the first task is to define the organisational project the assemblage is seeking to achieve. I describe this as: At the level of an individual intervention, collaboration requires bringing together the *right* people and organisations with the *right* skills, incentives and resources at the *right* time on a specific project and then, of course, initiating the *right* sort of processes to facilitate effective collaborative working. The question then is how to facilitate this by developing an assemblage that brings together the *rights* in a way that is as cost-effective, reliable and

replicable as possible? Furthermore, from an assemblage perspective, what then brings professionals together or keeps them apart?

In the findings there were repeated instances when professionals reported struggling to find other professionals or the information they required to develop relationships, organise meetings or events, and thus develop projects. Paul Lawler, the head teacher at Dalewood High School, offers a telling example. When he set up the Dalewood Pilot Management Group a number of the non-school professionals in the group interpreted his actions in seeking to set-up what already existed in terms of a cultural discourse that framed him as yet another arrogant head teacher. Whether or not Paul was typical of headteachers, the more substantive issue here is that information of what existed in terms of networks, services or projects was difficult to come by. Although Paul had duplicated a network, such duplications were apparently common, for example,

So when we did the Dalewood pilot we found out that there were 8 different organisations trying to do cooking with young people... There's lots of good things out there but we don't know about it.

Non-school professionals were supposedly better at collaborative working and had more time to dedicate to meetings and networking yet even they struggled with the administrative and organisational challenges of networked working, as was evidenced on page 173 by Patsy Hughes, an area manager in Dalewood,

These two excerpts are presented as examples of 'system opacity'. The Every Child Matters agenda promoted the general joining-up of children's services and, in a very basic sense, this encouraged professionals to collaborate with other professionals from different services or organisations, in the same town or local authority. To collaborate as innovation, professionals had to find and communicate with other professionals with whom they may have common ground to develop projects but it was not always clear who these were. It was found that this process was constrained by the complexity of the architecture for service delivery, existing working practices, traditional and bureaucratic communication and decision-making systems, and ad hoc methods for the identification and utilisation of new arrangements for the delivery of services. The consequence of these factors was

system opacity, which is the aggregation of the communicational, professional, organisational and sectoral boundaries preventing access to the requisite information to collaborate in order to innovate in public service design and delivery.

System opacity corresponds to the idea of the congested state (Skelcher 2000) and other research that has found that the increased networking of local governance has increased demands on professionals in networking and joining up policies, projects and organisations (Stoker 2005). The question is, how to reduce system opacity producing the conditions to exploit system capacity?

INFRASTRUCTURE – THE NETWORK

One way to enable professionals to overcome the barriers of system opacity is by developing an appropriate infrastructure. There are a number of authors writing from different perspectives that identify the significance of infrastructures to support communities to achieve particular ends (e.g., Engestrom 2008).

While talking to one of the professionals involved with the extended schools initiative in Stockborough, he said that to develop a project a manager needs to develop a supporting infrastructure,

When we were at the beginning of the extended schools project we had to figure out how we were going to bring it off. We had to be extra careful on it because it was short-term funding. It was never going to be run by us in the long-term. It was about us supporting the schools to make it sustainable so we were focusing on the systems to make it work. My background is in business and I've had some experience of this. Early on you have to build the infrastructure, start talking to people, building the relationships and pushing it, making sure the guidance is out there and getting people to actually read it. Then you're thinking about training... People start talking... and slowly it starts to come together.

In the above excerpt the manager explains how he built the 'infrastructure' that under-girded the extended schools project. The extended schools project was however a national project with a relatively defined remit, relationships, sites, and funding and so on.

In terms of collaboration as innovation there is an apparent need for an open infrastructure, one not dedicated to existing or defined projects so as to enable professionals to develop new relationships to innovate. To provide the conditions for professionals to find the *right* professionals and organisations the infrastructure would have to overcome system opacity by providing the *right* amount and type of information to enable professionals to determine with whom they should develop relationships. One approach to this issue is to develop an appropriate infrastructure.

Cass Sunstein (2009) coined the phrase an 'architecture of serendipity' to describe how old media (e.g., newspapers) created the conditions for citizens to learn about issues in which they might not previously have been interested, an event that is threatened by the tendency for the internet and social media to segment information according to common interests and in so doing balkanising communities.

What I take from Sunstein is the idea that there are particular architectures for configuring information to provide the conditions for an individual to develop psychological and/ or inter-personal relationships. In organisational terms there is nothing new about such an idea. The humble notice board is an example of an intra-organisational architecture for serendipity. The challenge for professionals and managers developing appropriate systems in the case of collaboration in a system context is that too little or too much information creates an opaque view across the system.

Social web technologies and specifically social networks (e.g., FaceBook) are proposed as an appropriate infrastructure for collaboration for innovation in children services.

boyd and Ellison (2008) identify three core features of a social network site: users create and are represented by profiles, users establish links to other users' profiles, information is public within the bounded network and so users can view and traverse each others' profiles and the profiles and groups they are linked with. Within networks users can create various forms of groups or connections focused around specific proposals, interests or activity. Once networks are established various applications enable the sharing of information – messages, photographs,

documents and diaries and so on – between users in one-to-one, one-to-many or many-to-many interactions in ‘real’ or asynchronous timeframes (Shirky 2009).

The social network technology is the ‘architecture of serendipity’ by providing professionals with the tools to bring together the *right* people and organisations with the *right* skills, incentives and resources at the *right* time to develop an innovative project.

Traditionally, the ‘who, what and why’ of planning a project might be decided at a strategic level or by policy. Social network technology has a different approach, one that is more entrepreneurial and open to serendipity. Using the facility to publish information quickly, cheaply and accurately, social network technology’s enable network members to share a problem or propose a project with other members of the network on the rationale that asking more people increases the likelihood of finding the *right* person to collaborate with (e.g., Surowiecki 2004; Howe 2009).

It is salient that the functions of a social network would not be limited to the instrumental purpose of serving as an architecture of serendipity in helping professionals find information to collaborate but also helping professionals manage their interpersonal relationships and monitor the relationships between colleagues and the forming of coalitions (Tufekci 2008).

The recommendation for using social networks is informed by a professional social network I attempted to develop in Dalewood.

THE 0-19 EXTENDED SERVICES NETWORK

As part of the replication and verification phase of the fieldwork, I conducted a design experiment in the form of a professional social network. The design experiment was based by the definition of collaboration as innovation, and the findings relating to system opacity as a barrier to innovation as collaboration.

There is insufficient space here to provide a detailed overview of the network or the design experiment. Managers in Dalewood funded a private, professional social network for £2000. The network was based around the ‘Narrowing the Gap’ project that Dalewood High School was implementing with other professionals and

organisations in children's services. The idea was to identify fifty 'problem families' in Dalewood with children in Dalewood High School and engage holistically with the needs of the children and families in school and in the community.

The social network afforded professionals with an online space to register their profiles, display what work they were developing and use log frame analysis as a planning tool in a way that represented what the project was seeking to do, why, what resources were needed, the risks they faced and the progress they had made.

The 0-19 extended services network was admittedly a bit of a failure. Although there was a lot of enthusiasm surrounding the project at the beginning few professionals used the network. Speaking to professionals it was apparent that there were issues about technical competency in using the network. I ran three training sessions to develop the skills required but the sessions were under-attended.

When it was apparent that professionals were not using the social network as had been hoped, we ran a session where one professional discussed the project she was developing in order to simulate face-to-face the activity that could be taking place online. She described her experience of discussing the project she was working on,

It was helpful to get everyone's ideas.

What was helpful?

Well I've been struggling to find enough families for the project to go ahead. I need to find 25 families by January! From what Jackie said maybe I've been pitching it wrong. It's a project for obese children but maybe that puts parents off. ... It was useful, from what people said I should be able to find the other 20 or so families I need to run the programme by getting them to signpost families to me.

Here we observe the perhaps unsurprising finding that when a professional could talk to her colleagues from different professions and services they could help her think about her project in new ways and sign-post service users to her. This is what the social network was meant to do in a more efficient way, but it did not take off in this small-scale pilot.

There are a number of reasons for the failure of the project. There is something called the 'empty box' problem relating to social networks and social action platforms, which is the issue that there is no point logging onto a network if there is no information that you find interesting or other users that you are seeking to interact with. Thus the network is not useful until it is used by many users, each providing information and the potential to develop serendipitous relationships, however until that point there is a negative cycle of people not using the platform so it is not useful or used.

Developing professional social networks requires momentum or dynamism between the users and this is often a case of having sufficient resource or authority to encourage professionals to log on, register, and upload his or her information to develop to network of users. The social network we set up in Dalewood was under-resourced and was arguably not significant enough to become a useful tool to professionals seeking to learn what other collaborative working was taking place in Dalewood or Stockborough and so with whom they could collaborate.

The issue I now consider is whether the social network did not work for such practical reasons or if the network was not needed and its rationale was influenced by the discourse of collaboration, that collaboration is necessarily good?

BEING SPECIFIC AND REALISTIC ABOUT COLLABORATION

A pertinent question at this point is that, aside from the technical issues of implementation, was the social network really needed? The rationale for the social network was that it would provide an infrastructure for a professional in his or her attempt to collaborate. However, how important was collaboration?

In several sections of this thesis I have referred to the discourse of collaboration, which frames collaboration as a positive thing – the more collaboration the better. Given the paradox of collaboration (see page 12) and the slew of findings over the years that demonstrate the failed attempts and various barriers to collaboration (Miller and Ahmad 2000; Tett et al 2003; Sloper 2004; Stead et al 2004; Connelly et al 2008; Canavan et al 2009), it is arguably prudent to adopt a specific, focused and more realistic approach to working collaboratively.

Huxham and Vangen (2005: 13) said of collaboration 'don't do it unless you have to.' A natural follow up question is why would you do something you did not have to do? This speaks to the discourse of collaboration: To join-up is better.

I argue there is a need to go beyond the discourse of collaboration with its extensive rationale and lack of specificity of forms of collaboration to a more specific and realistic approach, one that does not seek to join and integrate everything at every point.

There were in the research different views on the degree to which services and professionals should be joined-up, with different implications for what this meant in practice. For example, Maggie Wilson told those at the second Stockborough Challenge conference that,

When we're working with children everyone needs to think: who should I be working with to help this child? Who is missing? We need to shape our processes to support that.

This reflective approach to collaboration, wondering what other professional expertise or resource may benefit a child or family, is different to the way collaboration was engaged with in the Dalewood Pilot Management Group (DPMG). Paul Lawler, the headteacher at Dalewood High, explained the goal, that,

at every meeting we'd make one new partnership. That's lots of new relationships, partnerships, being made and lots of plates spinning.

The focus of the goal was moot in that the majority in the network were already working with one another. Nevertheless the notion that professionals should develop a new partnership is qualitatively different from wondering which professionals should be contacted in a particular situation. Collaborative projects often require the investment of considerable resources and effort to develop, and so they should not be entered into lightly (Huxham and Vangen 2005). There is also a question as to whether services were so narrowly focused and so organised in silos that this level of integration was or is required?

It is not obvious that all professionals need to work collaboratively with other professionals at all times. My definition of collaboration as innovation in service

design and delivery may similarly be influenced by the discourse of collaboration as it characterises at least a part of working in children's services as an on-going search for new partners to work with to deliver novel projects and new types of services.

In my research I found various forms of evidence of particular organisational challenges and tasks that suggested working collaboratively involves professionals searching to find other professionals to collaborate with and thus the social network would offer a useful set of tools to facilitate collaboration. However, it is important to recognise some of the limitations of these data, especially with regards to the issues of self-report discussed in the critique of the literature.

For example, Dominic Young explained some of the challenges he faces in attempting to work collaboratively, on pages 178-179. It is important to remember that I was interpreting Dominic's self-report and so in light of the critique I made of such methods in the literature review (pp. 73-76) I should be careful of how I interpret this data. I do not know how much 'a lot of the work we do' actually is in terms of, for example, a percentage of his total activity at work. It might be that he has to pitch an idea once every month or thrice a year.

To engage with such issues I initiated an action research project to go beyond self-report methods to explore the challenges professionals face in attempting to work collaboratively. In the 'Iprog' project I discovered similar problems, of not knowing whom to work with or how to contact people. My experience as, in effect, a new employee seeking to develop a new project cannot, of course, be seen as representative of the experiences of other professionals. I began with the intention to start a collaborative project and I did not know all the appropriate people. That said, I had been researching in Stockborough for almost a year by that time and other professionals initiated collaborative projects and reported the same struggles as Dominic Young (on pages 178-179) and Patsy Hughes (on page 173).

An alternative interpretation that warrants discussion is that the professionals over-emphasised the importance of collaboration to their work, or felt they should collaborate more. From this perspective, one that the Challenge both reflected and promoted, it was necessary to integrate and join-up at all points. The informational demands when seeking to join-up as much as possible are different

and more significant than when not seeking to do so. There is an imperative to know of more professionals with whom it might be possible to join-up and collaborate.

A finding I have emphasised in this thesis is the discovery in the Dalewood Pilot Management Group that there were eight cooking projects in development for children and young people in a relatively small town. It is important to recognise that this is an anecdotal point and so arguably little should be invested in it. I do not know anything of the particular details of each of cooking project.

What I do know about this finding is that the professionals in the group were shocked by it. There is potentially nothing that surprising that there were eight cooking projects in Dalewood or that they should necessarily be joined-up. Cooking and children's eating was a high-profile media issue at the time. I am interested that this shocked the professionals, and why?

The shock might have been the idea that collaboration should be routine, all the cooking projects should be joined-up in some way, that 'synergies' should be explored between the projects that caused the pressure for professionals to find more information about and opportunities to collaborate.

There was a sense that the professionals in Stockborough Children's Services felt pressured or motivated to work collaboratively, to develop ever more innovative collaborative projects. While in Stockborough I observed a number of standout successful examples of the collaborative development and delivery of new services or projects. There was a Summer University for young people in Stockborough and at Dalewood High School a chance encounter between the catering manager and a group of community activists led to a £1 million plus project to form a food hub in the school. These projects could be taken as an example of the potential for significant innovation in all organisations in children's services. To think this would probably be a mistake however. These were exceptional cases, with admittedly many more smaller and less-high profile examples from Stockborough, so although they provide quintessential cases of the benefits of collaboration it would be a mistake to base the re-organisation of relationships in children's services around attempting to make such atypical projects occur routinely.

So I argue that instead of seeking to increase more collaborative activity, a more sensible approach would be to develop some sort of understanding of the purpose and ends of collaboration. Again, this follows Hansen's (2010: 44) counsel that the, 'the goal of collaboration is not collaboration but better results'. This approach is in line with the initial aim of Challenge One.

The seven challenges of the Challenge vision demonstrate the work that was needed to adequately understand what collaboration would look like in children's services. For example, the first challenge stated,

Narrowing the gap: we need to understand more about the different needs and challenges for children, young people and families in localities and communities throughout Stockborough and develop community based multi-agency integrated services that respond effectively to this range of needs, recognising that all Stockborough's children and young people are different and we need to be able to meet the full diversity of their needs if they really do matter. In particular, we need to focus on narrowing the gap in key outcomes for children and young people between localities and groups who currently are not achieving across all five ECM outcomes as well as their peers. (*Bringing Together* §2.12.1)

This 'challenge', one of seven, is considerable and was un-engaged with by the Stockborough Challenge. The question therefore remained: how can services, arranged in any number of configurations, be best brought together to serve the diverse needs of children and young people in line with principles of equity and the imperatives of policy?

This raises a number of hugely problematic issues that would require extensive exploration, dialogue and research that linked outcomes with organisational processes. It is likely that the answer would however go beyond the approach that Challenge One and increasingly Two adopted in attempting to increase the quantity of collaboration and broadly joining-up services and projects where and when possible. Understanding how particular purposes of collaboration improve outcomes for children and young people would help policy makers and managers develop appropriate conditions for the right sort of collaboration and help

professionals understand the types of collaborative working which they should utilise.

An emerging option for engaging with the 'how' and 'what' of collaboration in children's services is the Children's Zone model. Based on the principles of the Harlem Children's Zone, Dyson et al (2012) have developed a focused model for establishing appropriate arrangements for addressing disadvantage in specific areas. The model is to convene a group of partner organisations, develop governance structures and funding arrangements, conduct an analysis of disadvantage in that area, develop a strategic and holistic plan in line with this analysis, implement the plan, and then conduct rigorous evaluation to demonstrate what worked and what did not. Although collaboration between partners is an integral feature of the Children's Zone it is subordinated to an analysis of why collaboration is needed in that context and what is required to reduce disadvantage children and families experience.

In the development of the Children's Zone model, I argue there would need to be purposes for collaboration in order to specify how particular configurations of professionals, organisations and resources should be brought together to achieve the desired outcome

I also believe that it would be important to develop appropriate structures, relationships, roles and capacities to enable professionals in the Children's Zone or in children's services to adequately coordinate collaboration as innovation. My findings, acknowledging the limitations, demonstrate that whether for the unusual projects such as the Summer University and Dalewood High's school food project, or the project I ran as action research to raise the funding to develop an 'app' for young people there is a need for professionals to be able to communicate across professional, sectoral and organisational boundaries. Even if robust purposes for collaboration were developed there is still a case that an opportunity for funding might arise that would make it useful for different groups of professionals to come together to develop for innovation. Any pathways, structures and relationships devised would never be so complete that an additional layer that helped more ad hoc and piecemeal interaction would not be useful. Thus these circumstances

suggest the utility of providing professionals with the tools and structures to adequately coordinate in order to collaborate as innovation.

The emphasis on providing adequate coordination for professionals to communicate across boundaries fits with the findings from other research. Contrary to government policy that tasked senior managers with developing the organisations for collaboration, in the form of the Children's Trust, the appointment of the Director of Children's Services, and exhorting cultural change. There are a number of scholars who take an alternative view to the focus on developing *organisations* and instead emphasise coordination or what we might call 'organising'. Kettl (2002) argues for developing appropriate coordination in the development of the governance of the 21st Century. Similarly, in relation to discussions of joined-up governance, 6 (2005) argues that rather than integration across the board the focus should be on providing structures for professionals to cross boundaries to bring together complementary expertise for particular purposes. Lumby (2009) concurs that within a managerial context it is more appropriate to align activity than integrate due to the constraints of organisational-centric incentives.

I believe that a social network infrastructure would help professionals to adequately coordinate for collaboration as innovation, within the Children's Zone model or indeed other approaches to the organisation of children's services.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented recommendations for how managers might do collaboration better in the future, based on my findings of the Stockborough Challenge and my attempts to work collaboratively. I made two broad recommendations:

One, that collaboration is understood using a purposive definition that uses assemblage thinking to identify which components are brought together to achieve a particular project or outcome. Thus rather than speaking of a 'partnership' or 'collaborative working' I make the case that it is better for researchers and practitioners to develop heuristics of different purposes for collaboration, such as collaboration as innovation in public service design and delivery. Then, following

Hansen (2010), the task is to develop a tailored response for each purpose of collaboration.

Two, go beyond the discourse of collaboration and adopt a specific and realistic approach to collaborative working. Like Challenge One or the Children's Zone model there is a case that collaboration is not well understood and that more needs to be learned about the different configurations of services that should be brought together to achieve specific goals.

The next chapter concludes this thesis, presenting my responses to the research questions and outlining my contribution to knowledge.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides my responses to the research questions that informed this thesis, which are followed by the contribution to knowledge, a discussion on the limitations of this study with ideas for further research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first part of this chapter presents my responses to the research questions that defined this thesis:

1. HOW DID THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE SEEK TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION?

I found that the Stockborough Challenge was not a unified attempt to improve collaboration but that two phases of the initiative were distinguishable: Challenge One and Two. Challenge One was a more open and exploratory process that sought to develop models of collaboration and supporting structures and capacities. The initiative was however disrupted by personnel changes and the lack of additional funds from government. Challenge Two emerged as a campaign of cultural change as part of development of the Stockborough Children's Trust. The focus of Challenge Two was the performance-accountability regime, specifically the targets that were believed to constrain collaboration by orientating professionals to divergent organisational targets or incentives. In response the Challenge asked professionals to focus on the 'real' needs of the children and young people they worked with enabling professionals to focus on shared or common needs and thus collaborate. Once it was assumed that the barriers to collaboration were removed, the Challenge focused on motivating professionals to collaborate through a range of approaches. A network of 'champions' was proposed but what the champions would do was never outlined. The 'call to action' was the main driver of culture change and involved professionals being motivated to work collaboratively as part of the Challenge and influence other professionals to also work collaboratively. The initiative did not realise the initial aim of developing a model of collaboration and supporting conditions but rather focused on motivating professionals to overcome the barriers to working collaboratively.

2. HOW DID PROFESSIONALS INTERPRET AND ENGAGE WITH THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE'S APPROACH TO IMPROVING COLLABORATION?

To explore how professionals, including managers, interpreted and engaged with the Challenge I researched the initiative in the Stockborough Children's Trust and a school and community context. A significant and common finding was that the difference in interpretations of and engagements with the Challenge related to, in crude terms, whether an individual had leadership responsibilities in that particular context or were from the school sector. Before continuing it is important to point out that these findings are somewhat of an issue as those that were in a leadership position and from the school's sector in the research were those involved in developing the initiative, so a little caution is required in interpreting the results.

Those most positive about the Challenge and who engaged with it most were on the senior management team on the Stockborough Children's Trust and Paul Lawler, the headteacher at Dalewood High. The optimistic position focused on and engaged with Challenge Two as a campaign of cultural change that would contribute to improving outcomes. However, in terms of the engagement with the Challenge it is interesting that the optimists used the initiative in ways other than singularly to improve collaboration. For example, the initiative was used as a ready-made policy to meet the need for having a local vision for a range of local and national policy needs, such as the Building Schools for the Future application process. Similarly, Paul Lawler used the Challenge as a vehicle for his school improvement process.

The sceptics on the other hand were more interested in the aim of Challenge One to develop a model of collaboration appropriate for children's services complemented by the right structures, support, training and capacities to help them collaborate easier and more effectively. The sceptics in the Children's Trust and the DPMG were predominantly professionals with a background in children's services and non-school services and had more experience of working collaboratively and so to them the message to collaborate and work in new ways was old-hat. The Challenge offered little to the sceptics and so apart from seeing it as a way of working with schools they did not engage with the initiative.

3. HOW DID NATIONAL-TO-LOCAL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS INFLUENCE THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE?

I explored the interactions between the Challenge and the national-to-local context in terms of how the problem of collaboration came to be represented by policy, and interpreted and enacted by the senior managers in Stockborough. Challenge One began in response to New Labour's collaborative, Every Child Matters, agenda. As at this point government policy was less specific, Challenge One is presented as the way that senior managers in Stockborough thought collaboration might be approached through an exploratory engagement, then using leadership and developing new structures and capacities to bring professionals together. The initiative was disrupted by a number of factors, including the lack of additional funds made available by government to improve collaboration at the local level.

Challenge One became Challenge Two and the emphasis and focus was re-orientated in line with government policy for leadership and cultural change to develop the Children's Trust (DCSF 2007).

I argued that increasingly, with the shift to Challenge Two, the initiative was focused on priorities other than simply improving collaboration. New Labour's leaderist (O'Reilly and Reed 2010) approach to reconciling contradictions within and between policies meant that the leaders developing the Challenge were also responsible for securing the commitment of schools to the Children's Trust and, perhaps less definitely, resolving the barriers between targets and markets and the conditions for collaboration.

Thus the Challenge subtly changed to engage with collaboration from a school's perspective and to focus on the constraining effects of targets, indicative of the Public Sector Reform Model. Furthermore, the representation of collaboration as a problem to be solved by leadership meant that leadership and managerial approaches, assumptions, tools and biases were imported into the Challenge. I argue that this led to the Challenge focusing on motivational issues relating to collaboration but also in obscuring and ignoring the challenges professionals face in the practical task of organising for collaboration.

4. WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE STOCKBOROUGH CHALLENGE TO INFORM INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION?

From this study I make two main recommendations about how collaboration in children's services might be better approached.

The first lesson is to develop and utilise a purposive definition of collaboration. Building on the argument made in critique one in the literature review of the lack of specificity and de-contextualisation of collaboration in addition to the constraints found in the Challenge when trying to improve collaboration without a clear understanding of it, I argue for adopting a purposive definition of collaboration. Identifying heuristics of distinctive, purpose-specific patterns of collaboration such as collaboration as innovation in service design and delivery would enable managers to develop appropriate supporting roles, structures and capacities.

The second recommendation is to be realistic and specific about collaboration. The initial aim of Challenge One – to understand more about collaboration, when and in what forms it can benefit service users – was lost and should be re-engaged with. Thus in the Challenge there was a general drive to increase collaborative activity, to join-up and integrate whenever possible, which placed a considerable pressure on professionals to network and collaborate. Developing effective models of collaboration, such as Children's Zones (Dyson et al 2012), would provide a framework for collaboration, enabling professionals to focus on developing services that benefit children and young people rather than endlessly seek to integrate and join-up to increase collaborative activity. Although, in addition to formal models of collaboration I argue for developing infrastructures and capacities to provide adequate coordination for professionals to communicate across professional, organisational and sectoral boundaries to collaborate as innovation.

These are a summary of the findings of this study. Below, I describe the contribution to knowledge these make.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

My primary contribution to knowledge is to the field of collaboration in children's services. For the first time I brought together critiques of the way in which policy and research conceptualise collaboration and the implications for initiatives to improve collaboration, especially those involving leadership. There is, as has been pointed out, a lack of specificity in definitions of collaboration in research (e.g., Robinson et al 2008; Canavan et al 2009). I added to this by emphasising a concern about the lack of context in conceptualisations (e.g., Powell and Dowling 2006; Nylén 2007) and identifying the benefits of definitions that sought to contextualise collaboration by focusing on what the professional is attempting to do (e.g., Hansen 2010; Sullivan et al 2012). In response I presented a purposive definition of collaboration that illuminates the importance of specifying and contextualising collaboration in terms of the aim of the activity, in, for example, collaboration for innovation in public sector design and delivery. This definition will provide greater clarity for researchers, policy makers and practitioners when seeking to improve or research collaboration in children's services.

Also, in relation to the study of collaboration in children's services, I redressed the under-engagement with the ideological dimensions and influences of both leadership and cultural change in relation to collaboration, through the use of appropriate concepts and methods:

In order to develop my critique of the literature I applied the concepts of policy enactment, articulation and assemblage to the study of collaboration, something not previously done. The concepts enabled the analysis to relate the broader processes of managerialisation and modernisation in the public sector to the way in which the problem of collaboration was 'represented' (Bacchi 2009). Furthermore, assemblage thinking offered an alternative ontological understanding of what really existing forms of collaboration are, and how they should be understood. In particular, assemblages complemented the aim to contextualise collaboration by relating the various component parts and technologies of a 'partnership' with the end or purpose sought.

Although there is research that engages with the managerial context in which collaboration is enacted (e.g., Lumby 2009), the majority of the literature is a review or empirical research that adopts self-report methods. I conducted extensive empirical research using multiple methods to unpick how the discourses of collaboration and leadership influenced how managers and professionals interpreted and enacted collaboration in practice rather than how they retrospectively made sense of what they did by drawing on common explanatory forms such as leadership.

My second contribution to knowledge, the research provided a rich case study of a local-level attempt to develop New Labour's Children's Trust initiative. The Children's Trust reflected the broader process of seeking to join-up children's services and public services, from the school and youth club to the Local Strategic Partnership. The previous research was based on literature reviews (e.g., Purcell et al 2012) or evaluation that engaged with a self-selecting sample of enthusiasts (e.g., Bachmann 2008). The appropriate concepts and methods enabled my work to add to the critique of New Labour's integrative approach to collaboration, using culture and leadership to promote shared and common aims (Garrett 2009; Lumby 2009).

I added to the critique of New Labour's policies by offering an insight into the limits, biases and assumptions of leadership in policy, practice and research relating to the Children's Trust. The emphasis on leadership represented collaboration as tractable through standard managerial technologies and approaches, indicative of the ideology of managerialism. Specifically, the leadership approach in policy meant that in Stockborough the primary task for improving collaboration was perceived to be motivating professionals using rationales, visions and champions. The over-emphasis of motivation was to the exclusion of seeking to understand the idiosyncratic organisational challenges posed by collaboration and developing relevant structures and technologies to help professionals collaborate.

Finally, this research provides insights into re-articulations and shifts within the managerialisation of the public sector, from New Public Management (NPM) to post-NPM. Fergusson (2000) and Newman (2000) wondered how New Labour's greater use of collaboration would change managerialism? The post-NPM trend indicates that a substantive response was the greater use of leadership and cultural

change in government change programmes (Christensen et al 2007). I connected the post-NPM shift with the Public Sector Reform Model, and the government's exhortation for cultural change in children's services to the Stockborough Challenge. At all levels there was a concern between the contradiction between targets and markets and collaboration, which was found in the Challenge's 'one culture' and the focus on 'real' needs not targets. One way to explain this is through O'Reilly and Reed's (2010) 'leaderism' that locates leaders as reconciling contradictions within and between policies. Developing on 'leaderism', I identified that rather than leaders reconciling contradictions, in the Challenge at least, they diffuse the responsibility to the professionals working for them and ask them to collaborate *and* to meet their targets. The disruption caused by seeking to remediate the limitations of targets in the public sector suggests that alternative forms of accountability and organisation should be developed as a matter of priority.

Next I consider the reasons and options for improving the quality of the findings.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE FINDINGS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In chapter 4 I explained the steps taken to safeguard the quality of the data and findings; and so it is prudent to offer the reader an account of the limitations of the research, how the quality might be improved, and how further research could address these matters and make additional contributions to knowledge. The four major limitations or concerns considered are the limited evidence base, researching within the transformation of the English public sector, and the failure of the social network project.

The first concern is whether, as raised on page 82, I was perceived to be an 'insider' or 'outsider' researcher by the people I interviewed and if this affected the responses they gave? My position in relation to the Stockborough Challenge and the professionals I spoke to was a continual source of speculation for me. When I began researching the Challenge I sought to position myself as a 'critical friend' (Swaffield 2007), a robust and equal relationship of informed critique from an outsider to a practitioner. It became readily apparent to me that if there was a relationship

between equals in the embedded research relationship it was between my supervisors and the managers in Stockborough, leaving me as a somewhat junior partner related through elders, a 'critical nephew' of sorts. Then once Diane Shaw, Nick Reynolds and Henry Jacobson left Stockborough and the Challenge was discontinued I redefined myself as a 'critical orphan', left as it were to fend for myself – hence my rationale for setting up the professional social network and applying for funding for Iprog.

Whether being an insider or an outsider, a critical nephew or orphan changed the things I was told or the way I interpreted them is hard to know. It is possible to point to general trends such as the senior managers of Stockborough Children's Services presenting an optimistic view of the Challenge but then it is difficult to know whether to attribute this to their perception that I was an insider or outsider? Senior managers have a responsibility to 'fly the flag' for initiatives, especially to junior staff and, in an era of accountability and inspection, to outsiders also. I feel on the whole that my assurance of confidentiality of data was a key feature of the relationship with those whom participated in the research. Apart from the senior managers, the majority of those I spoke to were happy to talk to me and relay a range of negative opinions but were guarded about what I reported, as the results would be shared within their professional network.

I do not believe that any level of 'insiderness' the way in which I interpreted the data I recorded however doing collaboration, in the design experiment and the action research did provide me with a greater appreciation for the mundane and practical challenges of organising for collaboration in the complex and congested context of the English local authority.

The second limitation of the research stemmed from the disruption caused when the Stockborough Challenge was discontinued. The early demise of the Challenge created an interesting space for this research but also, as I interpreted it at the time, confronted me with finding a substantive focus for research. My response was to explore collaboration in various contexts and forms, observing and then initiating collaboration. There are perhaps issues relating to the credibility of the findings, with regards to which part of 'reality' do my results match? The research

strategy increasingly focused on one particular aspect of the Challenge and collaborative working and this develops into claims about collaboration as innovation in public service design and delivery but this is based on a relatively small and diverse evidence base.

The limited evidence base is an issue because collaboration as innovation is part of the purposive definition of collaboration that I present to contextualise collaboration. The literature review emphasised the importance of contextualising collaboration yet this research did not engage with researching the outcomes of collaboration as innovation, as might be advisable (e.g., Sloper 2004). The purposive definition of collaboration as innovation was offered as an heuristic and half-measure in relation to the constrained resources. There is a question whether this is a useful tactic both for practitioners and researchers? Further research is required to work with practitioners to develop the heuristic of collaboration as innovation in addition to other purposive definitions of collaboration, or evaluate it as ineffective.

The third limitation of this research is indicative of the difficulty of researching within the frenetic pace of the 're-disorganisation' of English public services (Pollitt 2007). For example, a significant element of the argument rests on policy makers and senior managers perceiving cultural change and motivational factors as crucial in facilitating collaboration, partially ignoring other considerations relating to *organising* for collaboration. There is sound evidence that in the case of the Stockborough Challenge motivation was indeed a primary locus of engagement but this may have changed if the initiative had not been displaced and reduced. There are therefore potential issues with the transferability of the findings, whether, for example, such an approach was idiosyncratic to the troubled process in Stockborough, a logically consistent manifestation of government policy, or indeed somewhere in between?

One way of improving the transferability of the findings would have been to employ a comparative research design focusing on Stockborough and additional local authorities that were implementing cultural change processes although this was not possible due to the limited resources and the embedded research relationship with Stockborough Children's Services.

In terms of future research there is scope to explore the findings where leadership and cultural change are being promoted in alternative sites and processes that are indicative of the post-New Public Management (NPM) trend. The Challenge offered an interesting case to reflect on the emergence of a trend labelled as post-NPM, which is characterised by the increased use of leadership in public services and attempts to converge professionals and organisations around notions of 'common' and through unifying cultures. The relationship between the local case of the Stockborough Challenge and government policy and more broadly developments in the ideological project related to the transformation of public services in England is an interesting focus for developing and applying the findings of this research.

A focus for the post-NPM research could be the links between managerialism and leadership with motivation in relation to collaboration. The self-interested, rent-seeking public servant is a foundational component of New Public Management (e.g., Kaboolian 1998; Boston 2011) and arguably later adaptations (e.g., le Grand 2006, 2007) however, as is informed by the concepts of articulation, assemblage and Bacchi's (2009) 'what's the problem represented to be', it would be interesting to further explore what assumptions and approaches to collaboration are obscured by the focus on leadership and motivation. Furthermore, there are insights from this research that although competition and collaboration are not necessarily contradictory there are apparent issues with targets constraining collaboration and the limited capability of leadership and cultural change to reconcile the contradictions. Such findings suggest engaging with and researching alternative traditions of public management such as public value management (Stoker 2006).

The fourth, and perhaps most regrettable, limitation of the research was the failure of the social network action research project to fully establish. The emphasis on motivation and leadership raises the question of what would alternative forms of organising for collaboration look like? There is a burgeoning literature on the application of social media for government (e.g., Noveck 2010), business (e.g., Howe 2009), leadership (e.g., Li 2010), and collaboration (e.g., Shirky 2008). Social technologies are not a panacea for collaboration but there is sufficient potential to explore the contribution of social media together within appropriately designed

assemblages within public services to facilitate collaboration to achieve specific purposes. I would like to initiate a better-funded project on a bigger scale with support from significant figures of authority to explore the potential of social network technology in children's services or Children's Zones.

Once a series of robust purposes for collaboration are identified there is an opportunity to make a useful contribution to the research and practice of collaboration. The first step in this process is a mapping exercise to outline the respective challenges and facilitating factors for each of the different purposes of collaboration and then developing and testing various components for an appropriate assemblage.

An interesting focus for further research is the interface between policy makers and senior managers. Policy, legislation and guidance played a significant role in the development of the Stockborough Challenge and the eventual approach to collaboration in Stockborough Children's Services. A slightly caricatured depiction of the policy process is that New Labour came to prioritise collaboration and mandated that local authorities should found Children's Trusts and then instructed senior managers to instigate cultural change processes to realise the potential of the Trusts. In Stockborough senior managers developed the Trust and led cultural change processes however as, for example, the Stockborough Challenge 'sceptics' averred there was no clarification and specification of the relationships between what was collaboration and how the Trust and the cultural change would contribute to improving it.

There is a case that government policy tasked the senior managers with developing the organisations for collaboration, in the form of the Children's Trust, the appointment of the Director of Children's Services, and exhorting cultural change. In Stockborough there was a case that government policy tasked senior managers with developing *organisations* and they did this but with insufficient engagement about the processes of *organising* for collaboration. It would be interesting to explore how policy makers could communicate more effectively to senior managers both the forms and the purposes of the change processes they are instructed to implement.

An additional area for research is to explore policy enactment and how better understandings of the processes of representation, interpretation and enactment can facilitate the communication of policy. Helping managers to get better at enactment represents a considerable challenge but one that would conceivably pay huge dividends both in the context of collaboration in children's services but also in other areas. Future research could explore how managers respond to national policy when designing an initiative, and how they are influenced and can critically engage with the various discourses and policy technologies that may bias how they interpret and enact policies.

FINAL WORDS

I began this thesis with the paradox of collaboration, which expresses the view that collaboration makes so much sense that the frequent failures and many barriers are baffling. The purpose of this thesis was to engage with this paradox by researching the case of the Stockborough Challenge, a local authority initiative to improve collaboration in children's services, to identify how managers and practitioners might do collaboration better in the future. The Challenge provided an incredibly rich example of the interrelationships between the representation of the problem collaboration in policy and research, and its interpretation and enactment at the local level to engage with this issue.

The literature review presented a four-point critique of previous approaches to research and in so doing I argued for maintaining specificity and contextualising definitions of collaboration, critically engaging with the discursive and dynamic relationship between leadership and collaboration, and adopting an empirical approach that went beyond self-report methods to explore collaboration in practice in context.

The research identified two significant phases of the Stockborough Challenge. Challenge One originated as an attempt to figure out collaboration and engage with it through leadership, dedicated structures and capacities. The initiative was disrupted and reduced by a range of factors, and re-focused on the government's instruction for senior managers to drive cultural change (DCSF 2007). Thus

Challenge Two was a campaign of cultural change within and on-behalf-of the Stockborough Children's Trust, using leadership to increase a professional's motivation to collaborate.

The majority of the research and thesis was focused on understanding the shift from the open, exploratory and focused approach to collaboration in Challenge One in contrast to Challenge Two's identification of targets as the barrier to collaboration and leadership and motivational approach to improving collaboration. In the shift from Challenge One to Two there were interesting developments in the way that the problem of collaboration was represented, interpreted and enacted.

To understand these changes I employed the concepts of policy enactment, articulation and assemblage to the study of the representation and construction of leadership for collaboration.

A key finding was the interpretation that the Challenge was not singularly and solely focused on improving collaboration but rather it was an initiative in a context with other policies, priorities and approaches. O'Reilly and Reed's (2010) concept of 'leaderism' illuminated New Labour's approach of using leaders and leadership to reconciling contradictions within and between policies by articulating visions and using other leadership-based strategies.

There were indications that the Challenge was influenced by leaderism. The Challenge's focus on collaboration from a school's perspective, and the identification of targets as the primary barrier to collaboration were related to the need to reconcile the ambivalent relationship between schools and children's services in the Children's Trust arrangements, and the tensions between targets, markets and the conditions for collaboration, as part of the Public Sector Reform Model

New Labour's leaderist approach to reconciling these contradictions promoted leadership and thus implicated leadership approaches, logics and assumptions in the representation, interpretation and enactment of the problem of collaboration. I found the leadership approach to collaboration resulted in particular biases and blind spots relating to what was collaboration and what were the barriers

to it, with an emphasis on motivational issues and a lack of engagement with the challenges professionals face in the practical tasks of organising for collaboration.

The purpose of this thesis was to develop recommendations for how collaboration could be done better in the future. I made two broad recommendations. One, that a purposive definition of collaboration is adopted that uses assemblage thinking to understand how specific components are and should be brought together to achieve a particular purpose, such as collaboration as innovation in public service design and delivery. Two, managers approach collaboration in a specific and realistic manner seeking to understand what different forms of collaboration are and how they help improve outcomes for service users.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTACT LETTER

James Duggan
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University of Manchester
Oxford Road
M13 9PL

(Insert address)

(Insert date)

Dear (insert name),

My name is James Duggan. I am a researcher on the Stockborough Challenge and a PhD student at the University of Manchester.

I am writing to see if you would be willing to be interviewed by me about your recent participation a Stockborough Challenge project, the (insert project name), you attended on (insert the date). The interview would focus on your thoughts and impressions on the achievements of the project. If so, could you please provide a date, time and place for the meeting and I will hopefully be available to meet you.

If you have any questions or comments about the interview that I could address before you agree to be interviewed I would be happy to hear from you. Please find enclosed a copy of the Research Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Letter to help you decide whether you wish to participate or not.

Best wishes,

James Duggan

(Encs.)

APPENDIX 2: THEORY OF CHANGE EXPLANATION FOR PARTICIPANTS



Theory of Change Workshop

The purpose of this workshop is to articulate a framework which will guide the long-term development of the Stockborough Challenge and make it easier to assess its impacts. We will do this by clarifying what is sometimes called a 'theory of change' for the Challenge. Theory of Change starts from the basis that the leaders of initiatives work with (often implicit) assumptions about what is needed in a particular situation, and how their actions will achieve what is needed. The theory of change makes explicit these assumptions, tests them for internal coherence and plausibility, and then seeks evidence as to whether events on the ground are matching the predictions made by the theory.

Defining the problem

What are the problems or issues in Stockborough that the Challenge is seeking to engage with? Also, what are the possibilities and resources in Stockborough?

Identifying the outcomes

What long-term outcomes do we wish to produce through the Challenge? How will the situation be different if we are successful in 2013?

Selecting the actions

What do we intend to do to produce those outcomes?

The process of change

What will be the sequence of changes that will eventually produce our intended outcomes? What immediate impacts will our actions have? How will the situation change in the short term? How will these first changes produce further changes?

Evidence

What evidence can we gather to monitor the change and assess whether the process matches our prediction and theory?

Contact: Prof. Alan Dyson, Centre for Equity in Education, School of Education
University of Manchester, Tel: 0161 275 8290, D.A.Dyson@manchester.ac.uk

APPENDIX 3: AIDE MEMOIRES FOR INTERVIEWS

- Notes for conducting interviews
- Interview will last up to 1 hour
- Ask participant to read and sign the ethics statement
- Audio record the interviews if permission is given
- Remember to challenge, clarify and ask participants for examples

Members of the Stockborough Children's Trust

Introduction: Thank them for agreeing to participate and remind them that they can withdraw his/ her consent at any point. Explain the purpose of my research to develop evidence for the Stockborough Challenge but explain that data will be anonymised or kept confidential if requested.

Q1: Could you briefly describe your role and your organisation?

Q2: How important is collaboration to what you do?

Q3: What are the barriers you experience to working collaboratively?

Q4: What are the facilitating factors to collaborating?

Q5: How important is culture?

- What is culture?

Q6: What is the Children's Trust, and what does it do?

Q7: How do you think the Children's Trust is developing?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

- What could be improved?

Q8: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important?

Interviewing key respondents for the Stockborough Challenge

Introduction: Thank them for agreeing to participate and remind them that they can withdraw his/ her consent at any point. Explain the purpose of my research to develop evidence for the Stockborough Challenge but explain that data will be anonymised or kept confidential if requested.

Q1: Could you introduce yourself and your role?

Q2: What was/is your involvement with the Stockborough Challenge?

Q3: Could you explain the development of the Challenge?

Q4: What is the Stockborough Challenge?

- Has it changed? If so, what were the changes and why?

Q5: What did the Challenge seek to do?

- What were the tools and approaches etc?

- What was the rationale for these approaches?

Q6: Why was it needed and has it met this need?

Q7: What barriers and obstacles were encountered and how were these engaged with?

Q8: How successful has the Challenge been?

Q9: Looking back, what might have been a different/ better approach to improving collaboration?

Participants in the Dalewood Pilot Management Group

Introduction: Thank them for agreeing to participate and remind them that they can withdraw his/ her consent at any point. Explain the purpose of my research to develop evidence for the Stockborough Challenge but explain that data will be anonymised or kept confidential if requested.

Q1: Could you briefly describe your role and your organisation?

Q2: How important is collaboration for your work?

Q3: What are the barriers you experience to working collaboratively?

Q4: What are the facilitating factors to collaborating?

Q5: How important is culture?

- What is culture?

Q6: What is the DPMG, and what does it do?

- How does it help them work collaboratively?

- What doesn't it do?

Q7: How do you think the Children's Trust is developing?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

- What could be improved?

Q8: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important?

Collaborators in the Iprog project

Introduction: Thank them for agreeing to participate and remind them that they can withdraw his/ her consent at any point. Explain the purpose of my research to develop evidence for the Stockborough Challenge but explain that data will be anonymised or kept confidential if requested.

Q1: Could you briefly describe your role and your organisation?

Q2: How important is collaboration for your work?

Q3: What are the barriers you experience to working collaboratively?

Q4: What are the facilitating factors to collaborating?

Q5: How difficult is the 'organising' part of working collaboratively?

Q6: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important?

Members of the Professional Social Network

Introduction: Thank them for agreeing to participate and remind them that they can withdraw his/ her consent at any point. Explain the purpose of my research to develop evidence for the Stockborough Challenge but explain that data will be anonymised or kept confidential if requested.

Q1: Could you briefly describe your role and your organisation?

Q2: How important is collaboration for your work?

Q3: What are the barriers you experience to working collaboratively?

Q4: What are the facilitating factors to collaborating?

Q5: Could you describe, in your own words, what the professional network is?

Q6: Have you found it useful?

Q7: What has it enabled you to do?

Q8: What might improve the network?

Q9: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important?

APPENDIX 4: CODING FRAMEWORK

			Code Label		
RQ 1 How did the Stockborough Challenge seek to improve collaboration?					
Rationale	Policy	Contradiction	RPC		
		ECM agenda	RPEcm		
	Culture	Professional	RCProf		
		Organisational	RCOrg		
	Leadership		RL		
	Collaboration	Facilitating factor	RCFac		
		Constraining Factors	RCCon		
	Implementation	Components	Vision	ImpCVis	
Conversation			ImpCCon		
Culture change			ImpCCul		
Call to action			ImpCCal		
Leadership			ImpCLead		
Management tools			ImpCMan		
Functions		Convergence		ImpFCon	
		Change culture	Organisational	ImpFChanO	
			Professional	ImpFChanP	
		Motivate		ImpFMot	
		Inform		ImpFInf	
		Organising for collaboration		ImpFOrg	
		RQ 2 How did professionals interpret and engage with the Stockborough Challenge?			
		Interpretation	Policy	Contradiction	IntPCon

		ECM agenda	IntPEcm	
		Local-National	IntPLoc	
		Challenge One	IntPC1	
		Challenge Two	IntPC2	
	Optimist		IntOpt	
	Sceptic		IntScep	
	Collaboration	Importance	IntCImp	
		Facilitating factors	IntCFac	
		Constraining factors	IntCCons	
	Leadership		IntL	
Engagement	Components	Vision	ECVis	
		Conversation	ECCon	
		Culture change	ECCul	
		Call to action	ECCal	
		Leadership	ECLead	
		Management tools	ECMan	
	Functions	Convergence	EFConv	
		Change culture	Organisational	EFChangO
			Professional	EFChangP
		Motivate		EFMot
		Inform		EFInf
		Organising for collaboration		EFOrg

APPENDIX 5: CODED DATA

Name: Lorraine Dodson	Role: Director of the Children's Trust	Date: 5 th November, 2010	Location: XXXXX house
§	Question/ Response		Code Label(s)
	<i>Could you describe an example of good inter-professional collaboration in Stockborough?</i>		
3	<p>We've been doing really good with our teenage pregnancy work, it's a real good piece of practice. What that involves is school nurses and youth workers working together to provide drop-in services in the schools. From one school I've had feedback that they are queuing out the door to access the service. The can get condoms, have you heard of the (Stockborough) S-Card scheme? Young people are trained in using condoms and then they get a card, like a credit card, so they can go to lots of places that do S-Card in Stockborough and they are given condoms free. School nurses are now trained to do emergency contraception in school. Now with the PCT [Primary Care Trust] they commission an element of that service and we do as well. So they commission the school nurses because they are doing something over and above what they would normally do. They do drop-in sessions at schools but they do them on their own and it's usually quite a narrow focus. As it's an extended role they need to be commissioned to do that. Now it's been done as a pilot in these 4 schools...</p>		IntCFac
	<i>Is it commissioned because it requires extra money for training?</i>		
4	<p>There's two ways of doing it. You could either pay them more money to employ more people or commission them to do that role and de-commission something else. School nurses do a range of tasks and there's only so many of them so you have to say that we want you to do No Worries and not do something else. What commissioning can also do is change the way that services are provided. So they've been commissioned in these 4 schools to do No Worries now because it is so successful we want</p>		IntCFac

	<p>to role that out and when I say we, the teenage pregnancy partnership board and the Children's Trust want to role it out. So decision made as a priority that No Worries should be rolled out. The reduction of teenage pregnancies is what is called a world class commissioning priority in the PCT. So the PCT have 8 World Class Commissioning Priorities. So what we need to ensure is that the decision-making process of the PCT is such that it will take into account that the Children's Trust have given this a high priority, teenage partnership board have said yes we want this commissioned. So what we are saying to the PCT is that we'd like them to commission this and if it costs additional money then we'd like them to fund it. We're basically saying to the school nurses service that we want you to do this and not do something else if it comes to it. The question I asked the commissioner from the PCT was, if the Children's Trust say it should happen, why should it have to go through the decision-making processes of the PCT because as far as we're concerned it's a done deal and the PCT should agree to it. The PCT has 3 different committees that it has to go through. So clinically it is sound, the doctors and the nurses have all agreed that clinically it is a sound way of working with young people, clinically effective, low risk and you've got trained staff. So the question is then for them, are we going to allocate any more resources to it? So that's the bit of the jigsaw that we haven't quite got sorted yet. It's about how, and this is important to the Children's Trust in terms of governance, it's how the Trust make a recommendation the PCT should act on that. Because potentially they could say 'we're not going to do that.'</p>	<p>IntCFac</p> <p>IntPCon</p>
	<p>So there's no mandate of the Children's Trust over the PCT, there's no hierarchy?</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>It's interesting you should ask that question because... the governance arrangements are crucial for your research. Basically the actual, this is one of the big issues about Children's Trust in terms of governance because one of the things that... I went to a talk recently by a person who is writing the new guidance for Children's Trust and you know the Learning, Apprenticeship and Skills Bill that's going through Parliament, part of that bill is to look at the governance arrangements for the Trusts. This is something</p>	<p>RPC/ IntPCon</p>

	<p>that is taxing a lot of people, how CTs operate. I got this document out to bring this to your attention, it's a document by the Audit Commission and it came out last week. Improving financial management of the Trusts, it's all about the LAS Bill, putting CTs on a statutory footing. Every LA has to have a CT but it's not enshrined in law. They've extended the section 10 duty to cooperate to include schools, not GPs ... and they've given Children's Trusts the power to pull funds and share resources, which is new because one of the issues is that one of the issues we've had is that the only way you could do that before was going through something called a Section 75 Agreement, which is a very bureaucratic process a legally binding agreement to share resources, whose the lead agency and who is going to share resources, and take the responsibility for the funds etc. Those agreements can take a year to do, with it going backwards and forwards, so not many places have done that. Even when you've done that, if you think about the governance arrangements we've got the Trust here so take the example of the No Worries service, if the Trust say they want the No Worries service funding there's another group called the health and social care partnership board and that board has got members on it. So it's got 4 elected members – the leaders of the main party political groups, it's got non-executive members, it's got the Chief Executives of both the PCT and the local authority on it. That group has been constituted and at this moment in time it doesn't have any decision making powers that would trump either of the powers of the LA or the PCT so if we were going to fund a project and the service costs over the life of the project were going to be over £200,000 we would have to go to cabinet for a decision about that.</p>	<p>RCCon</p> <p>RPC/ IntPCon</p>
	<p>So early on it sounds like the arrangements weren't right for the Children's Trusts?</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>It's something that's been developing... there was nervousness when Trusts were first proposed under ECM then in authorities, some councils possibly, some senior officers in councils felt that a Trust would be like a new organisation, like a PCT is a new body, and a Trust, the initial perceptions were that you could create a new organisation, and which would be huge and have a big budget and if it was separated</p>	<p>RPC/ IntPCon</p>

	<p>off from the LA from the council then the council would not become viable. One of the biggest elements of your council is children's services and if you include schools funding in that, our schools funding is £150m but we just passport it really, we get it in and the money goes out to schools, we keep a little. So our base budget is by far the biggest budget in the council. It's very political. The influence the Trust has over the... if we were to look at the teenage pregnancy thing, the decision is about whether to fund No Worries or nursing, it sits here [pointing at organogram] not there at the moment. Is there a political will to make it to here? There's no requirement to do that, even under the new guidance there's no inkling that's going to happen. I've just read bits of the guidance, because I only got it this week. You've seen 'Are We Nearly There Yet?'</p>	<p>IntPEcm</p>
	<p>Yes.</p>	
	<p>Good, it's a useful document. It came out in 2008. It was very critical of the Trusts in that they promised a lot in terms of potential but they were achieving very little. Uses of money and value for money is their focus, this document is really about asking questions about how effective your Trust is. Does it pool resources? And we haven't done, up to now. Politically the agenda is moving on in terms of all partnerships and there is something called the 'total resource agenda' which is looking at how partners use our total resource, so how does every single organisation use its resource together... how do we use all of that resource. In terms of a principle it's absolutely right. In terms of the practicalities, those are the things that get in the way, that's what the Trust has been trying to work on to get that right and I think that we're closer than we've ever been to figuring that out. We've now got these two bodies understanding what the Trust is trying to achieve but we're still not there yet. We still don't understand if we're going to continue with the system that we've got now or are we going to change the delegation and that's the same for a lot of other partnerships.</p>	<p>RPEcm</p> <p>IntPCon</p> <p>IntPEcm</p> <p>IntPLoc</p>

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM

MANCHESTER
1824

The University
of Manchester

**A local authority initiative to foster a collaborative culture between
organisations working with children and young persons**

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

- | | Please
Initial
Box |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree that any data collected may be used to inform the development of the Stockborough Challenge | <input type="checkbox"/> |

I agree to take part in the above project

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX 7: 'MEMBER CHECK' PROVOCATIONS

1. The government released a range of legislation, policy, reform and guidance to facilitate collaboration between professionals. Despite and because of all this government action there was a great deal of work to be done at the local level to implement changes and to resolve conflicts between policies etc. So the government, in for example the Children's Plan, tasked senior leaders with driving cultural change to facilitate collaboration. However cultural change and collaboration were never really defined or explained.

2. The Stockborough Challenge started out as an ambitious, broad-ranging programme but due to changing personnel and priorities the Challenge became 'a change programme on the cheap.'

3. The Challenge's aim was to improve inter-professional collaboration however it never really defined what collaboration was. Instead culture and facilitating cultural change was identified as the mechanism for improving collaboration. However culture or cultural change – apart from the 'one culture' – was not defined by the Challenge but culture was implicitly understood as 'the way we do things round here' or as good working relationships.

4. The Challenge became a 'call to action' however it was never really clear what action it was to be taken. This is one of the issues with the 'champions' because it wasn't clear what the 'champions' should champion.

5. Without a theory of collaboration the Challenge pointed to the pilot projects, the DPMG and what happened in Dalewood High School as examples of what the Challenge was.

6. The Challenge sought to increase professionals' motivation to collaborate by raising the profile of collaboration and celebrating examples of collaborative work. Professionals, however, face a range of barriers to collaboration that are not related to their motivation, such as system opacity which relates to obstacles to finding the right person at the right time with the right resources, skills and aligned interests.

7. There are different forms of collaboration (e.g., safeguarding, innovation in service delivery, signposting, contract-commissioning, coordinating service delivery) and each requires different processes, systems, and cultures.

APPENDIX 8: PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

Name	Profession/ Position	Phase ² / Member Check
Diane Shaw	Director of Children's Services	1
Nick Reynolds	Head of Learning Services/ Acting Director of Children's Services	1, 2 + MC
Henry Jacobson	Director of the Stockborough Challenge	1, 4 + MC
Loraine Dodson	Director of the Children's Trust	1, 4 + MC
Paul Lawler	Headteacher at Dalewood High School	1, 2 + MC
Pauline Tait	Director of Family Support Services	1, 2
Sally Jenkins	Community, Voluntary Sector Manager	1, 2 + MC
Tom Waites	Primary Care Trust, Commissioning Manager	1, 2 + MC
Joyce Toynbee	Housing Trust Manager	1, 2
Patsy Hughes	Children's Services Area Manager	1, 4
Mary Thomas	Play Team Manager	1
Dominic Young	Youth Offending Team Manager	1, 2
Respondent 1	Secondary Governors Rep.	1
Respondent 2	Community Services	1
Respondent 3	Community, Voluntary Sector Manager	1 + MC
Respondent 4	Community, Voluntary Sector Manager	1 + MC
Respondent 5	LAA Support Officer	1
Respondent 6	Government Office	1

² Phases: 1. Pilot, 2. Research, 3. Reflection, and 4. Replication and Verification.

Respondent 7	Primary Head Rep.	1
Respondent 8	Teachers' Union Rep.	1
Respondent 9	Acting Head of Children's Services, PCT	1
Respondent 10	Community, Voluntary Sector Manager	1 + MC
Respondent 11	Community, Voluntary Sector Manager	1 + MC
Respondent 12	Head of Care Services	1
Respondent 13	Children's Services Manager	2, 4
Respondent 14	Communications Officer	2
Maggie Wilson	Director of Children's Services	2
Helena Sexton	Deputy head/ Headteacher at Dalewood High School	2
Respondent 15	Workforce Development Team	2
Respondent 16	Headteacher	2
Respondent 17	Headteacher	2
Respondent 18	Community Volunteer	2
Respondent 19	Community Volunteer	2
Respondent 20	Business Manager	2
Respondent 21	Teacher	2
Respondent 22	Year Head/ Leader of Dalewood Challenge	4
Respondent 23	IT Officer	4
Respondent 24	Youth Worker	4
Respondent 25	PCT Youth Health Team	4
Respondent 26	Teacher	4
Respondent 27	Teacher	4
Respondent 28	Administrator	4