

An Introduction to Multi-Agency Working

ECAY4003

2023



Feedback

- In our last session I asked you to feedback on Prisoners rights to vote
- What are your thoughts?



Multi-Agency Working



What is Multi-Agency Working?

- From a children's Advocacy Perspective:
- Different **services, agencies**, teams of **professionals** and other staff working together to provide the **services** that **fully meet** the **needs** of children, young people and their parents or carers.

What is Multi-Agency Working?

- From a sociological Perspective:
- a **key concept** in social and educational policy since 2000.
- a shift in **philosophy of** how services **work**
- Working **with service users** more closely
- ‘**Bottom-up**’ not ‘**top-down**’
- Addressing needs in a **holistic** way.
- Previously, focus was on the view of the **service organization** and focused on **organizational specialism**.

(Gasper, 2010)





The Aims of Multi-agency Practice

- ‘**joined-up**’ thinking and services.
- **value opinions** of all **agencies**, and **service users**.
- **services more relevant** to the needs of users
- Identify the **needs** of the user
- **most appropriate** help from all relevant agencies.
- allow service users to take **greater control** over own lives/feel **empowered**/develop skill.

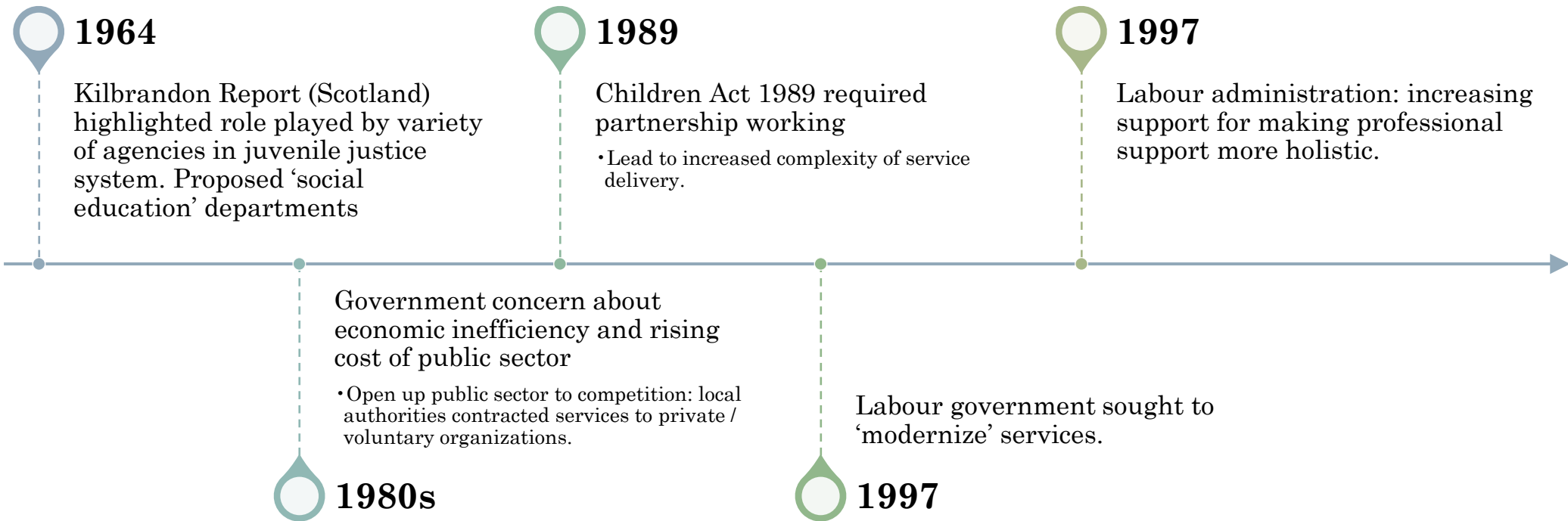
(Gasper, 2010)

A Brief History of Multi-Agency Working

- From mid-19th century health and social services worked together to reduce poverty.
- 1980s and '90s social services chaired joint meetings over child protection issues.
- **BUT:** this kind of joint working is controlled by professional agencies
- Tended to be in response to a 'crisis', and did not allow for voices of those 'at risk'



A Brief History of Multi-Agency Working





A Brief History of Multi-Agency Working

- Local authorities combined **Health and Social Services**
- **Families** and ‘**community development**’ grew in importance
- **Increased partnership** with private and voluntary sector
- BUT also more accountable and better quality as part of ‘**modernization**’ agenda: e.g. **targets, evaluation**, etc.
- Drive to ‘work together’ to **achieve agreed outcomes**.

A Brief History of Multi-Agency Working

- A gradual **combining** of Health and Social Services, and creation of **new units**, such as the Children and Young People's Unit (2000), supported by government initiatives in the early 2000s.
- Some included:
 - **Sure Start**
 - **Youth Offending Teams**
 - **Connexions (in England)**

Growing national and **international** recognition of **inter-dependence** of health, social welfare and education.

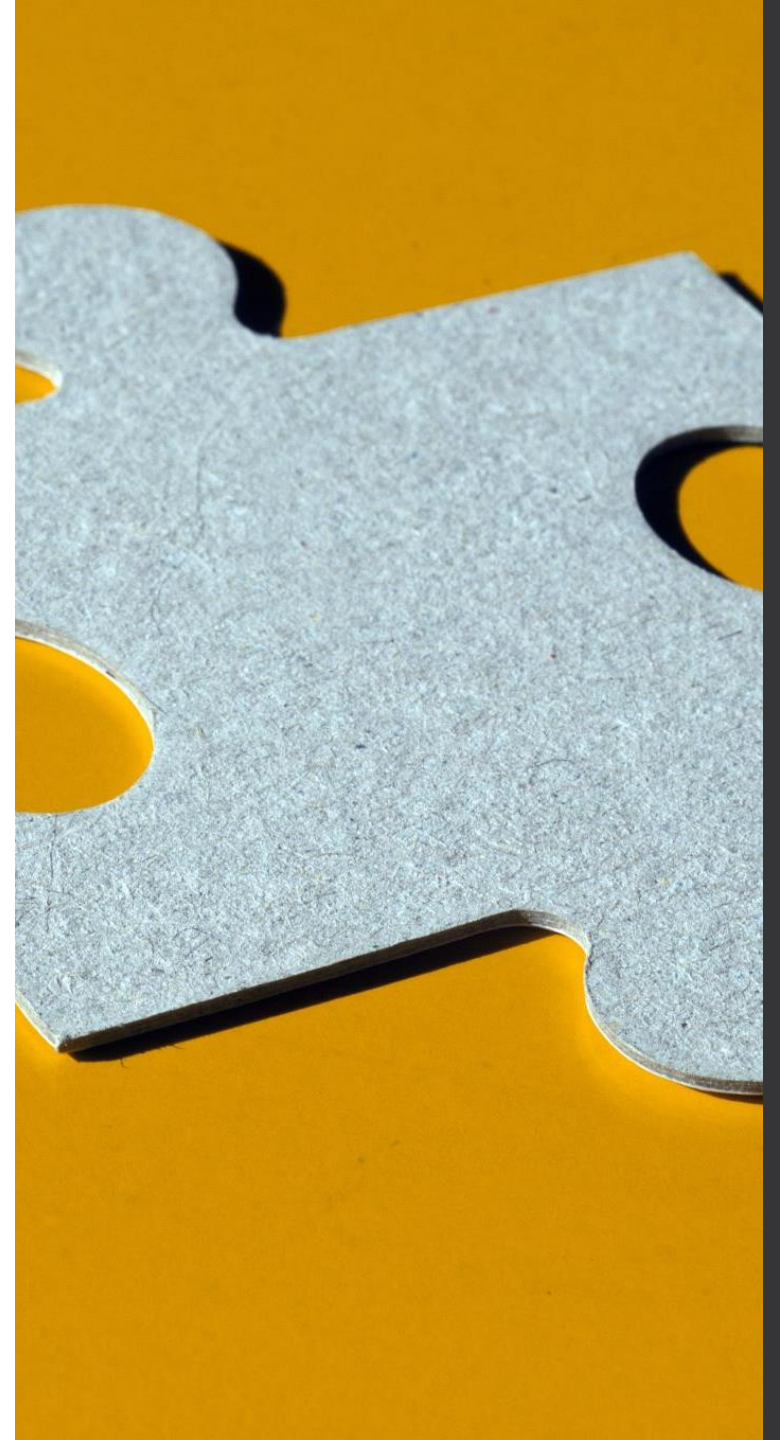
Increased focus on service users as key stakeholders

- **BUT...**



Problems

- **1990s:** some services (e.g. children in care) seen to be **failing**. Cases such as:
 - Victoria Climbié(2000)
 - ‘Baby P’ (2009)
- Highlighted **continued failure** of agencies to **communicate**
- Need for greater **information sharing**
- **Practical issues for service users still existed:**
- **Conflicting advice**
 - Attending multiple meetings
 - Needs still not met
 - Lack of power over decision making
 - Feeling of ‘missing out’ on services



And more Problems

- Lack of **information sharing** across agencies and services
- **Duplicated assessments** to identify needs and provision
- **Poorly coordinated** activities across agencies
- Too much '**buck-passing**' and referring on of clients between agencies
- A **lack of continuity** and **inconsistent** levels of service provision
- Unclear **accountability**
- **Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003)** - legislation in response to the Laming inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié
- **Children Act 2004** strengthened the requirements for agencies to work together more closely in multidisciplinary teams

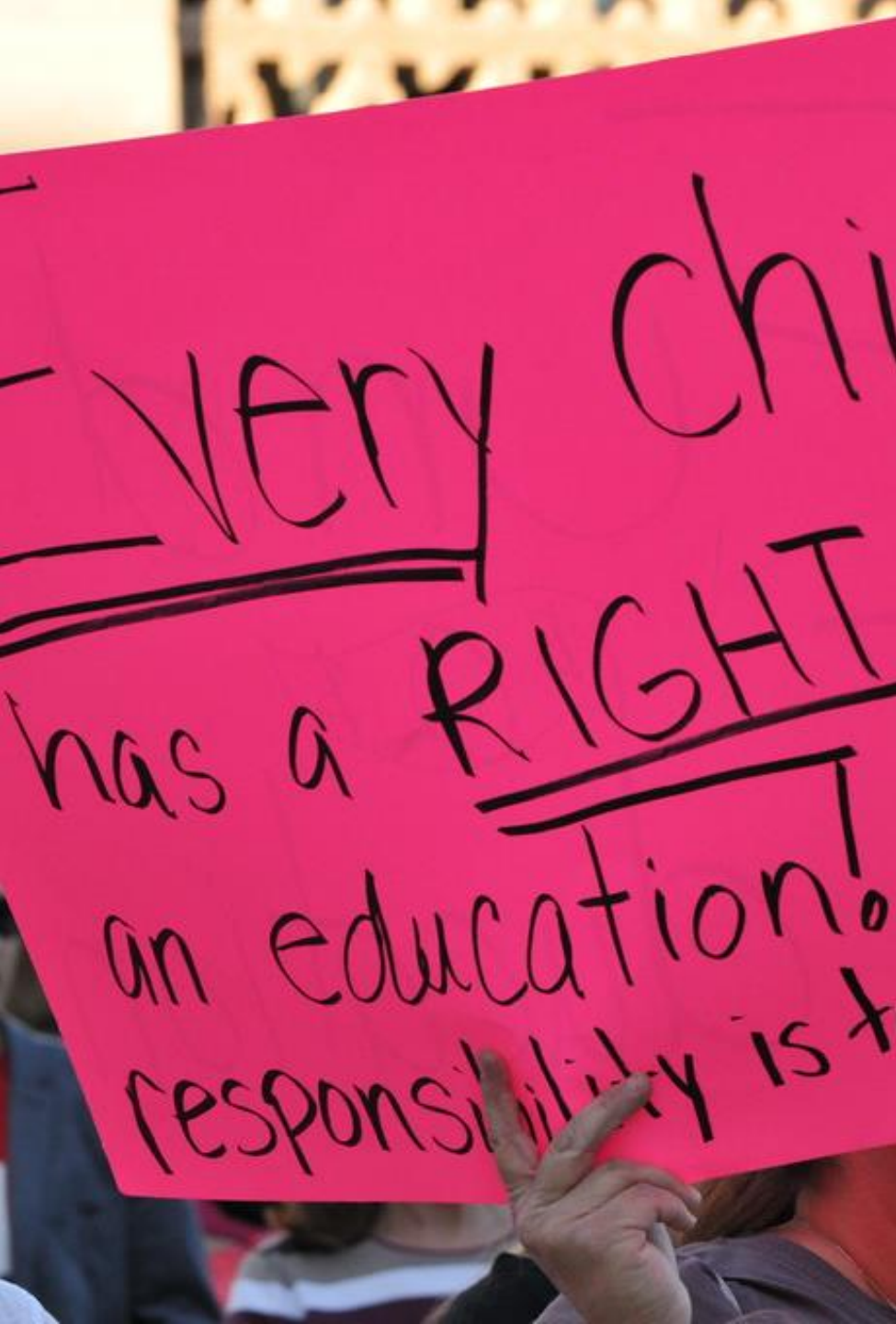
(Cheminais2009: 2)



Every Child Matters (2003)

- To improve information sharing
- Establishing a Common Assessment Framework
- Introducing a 'lead professional' system
- Establishing multi-disciplinary teams administering care 'around the child'
- Co-location of services





Children Act 2004

Children Act 2004 focused on five areas:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Emphasised:

- Greater recognition of children's rights
- Greater consultation
- Agencies working more closely together

Welsh Context

NAFWC12/07 - Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004

- Working together to safeguard and promote the well-being of children

Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010

- Sets out duties for Local Authorities in relation to their Child Poverty Duty
- Child poverty, play and participation
- Child minding and day care
- Integrated family support teams





Welsh Context

- Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery
- Guidance published following the Children & Families (Wales) Measure
- Sets out how major agencies will work together
- Established a Single Integrated Plan which replaces:
 - The Community Strategy,
 - The Children and Young People's Plan,
 - The Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy, and
 - The Community Safety Partnership Plan

But what Agencies?

- We have seen that one aim of multi-agency working is that all relevant agencies provide appropriate support
- In the context of Advocacy Services which agencies or organisations would you consider to be relevant?
 - Who might advocates have to work with?



‘Joined-up’ Services

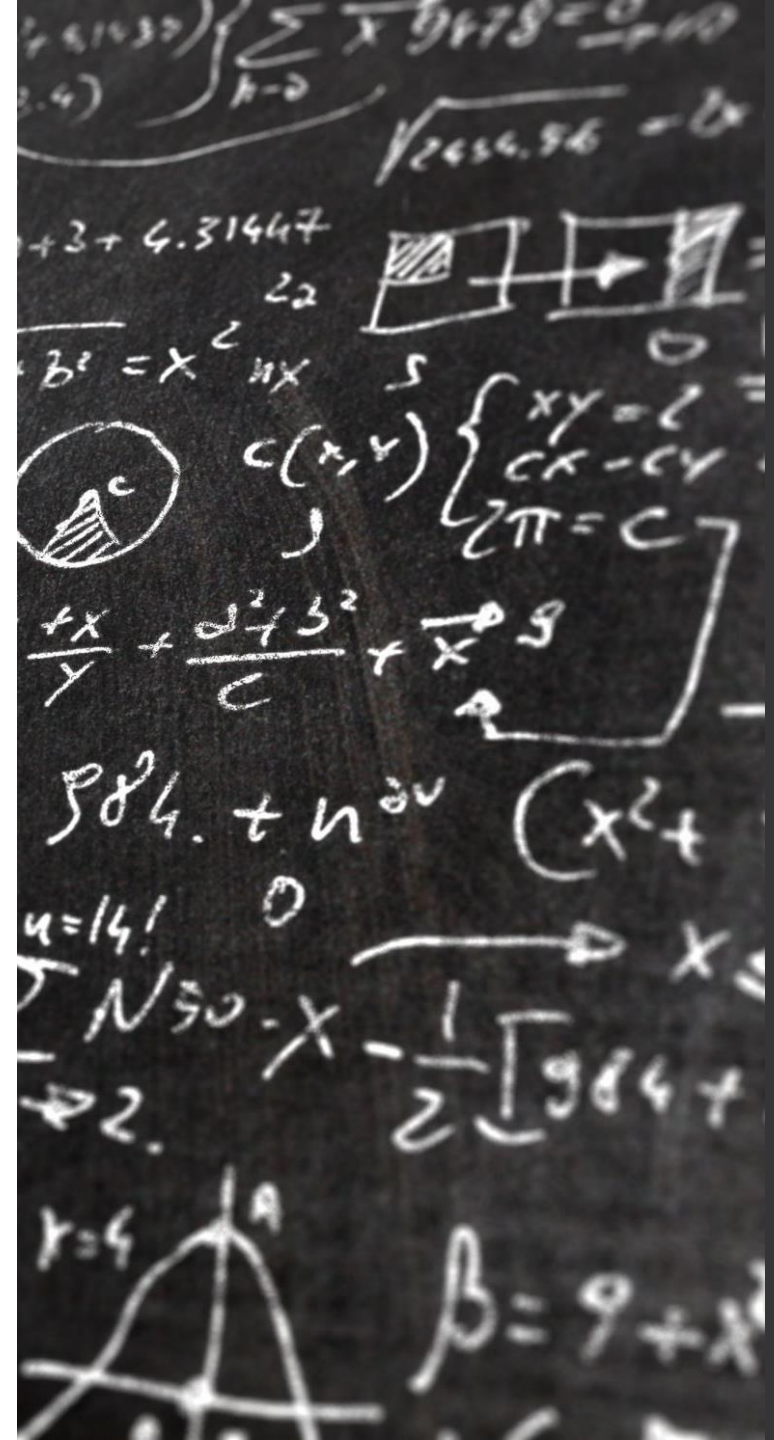
- Youth work, social work & health work – trend in policy development within the UK
- Professionals are expected to **work together** and share their expertise and skills.
- This can have **positive** outcomes:
 - New ways of working can be developed.
- BUT some may feel their ‘unique’ skills are **downgraded** or **lost**

(Tucker *cited in* Harrison & White 2005:208)



Multi-agency Working: Terminology

- Each of the key agencies has their **own language** and **codes**:
 - Community Work, Education, Social Services, Health, Housing, Police, Family Support, Counselling Services etc etc...
 - Complexities of practitioners 'working together' not helped by **proliferation of terminology** used to describe it.
 - '**Conceptual hybridity**' : one concept being grafted onto another = **confusion**!
 - Multi-agency/inter-agency/'Trans-agency
 - Multi-professional/inter-disciplinary
 - Coordination/cooperation/collaboration/partnerships
 - 'Joined-up-thinking' and 'joined-up-working'
 - Cross-boundary working/networks/integrated working





Terminology

- **‘Working Together’** a useful ‘catch all’ term, but often we refer to Multi Agency Working. This is a more **specific type** of working together:
- Inter-agency - Agencies working together to create better services.
- Multi-agency - Agencies working together to create better services.
- Inter-disciplinary – Types of agency, implies a ‘type’ of worker.
- Multi-professional - Types of agency, implies a ‘type’ of worker.
- All of these can be **intentional** or **accidental**, **formal** or **informal**, **structured** or **unstructured**.

Foley and Rixon(2008)

Terminology

- ‘**Partnership**’: risen to prominence in **government strategy**:
- **1997 labor gov.** often delivered through ‘partnerships’ e.g. ‘Sure Start’.
- Required bringing together of all stakeholders in statutory, voluntary, and private sector, but also parents and carers.
- Aimed to bring **smaller voluntary organizations** into **partnership** with **larger statutory ones**, especially small community organizations and faith groups.

(Foley and Rixon, 2008)





Terminology

- ‘integrated’
- ‘holistic’
- ‘partnership’
- Words that give a **positive spin** to practice
- Whereas in **reality** this practice is often experienced as:
- ‘separate’
- ‘isolated’
- ‘frustrating’
- In other words, working in partnership can be **easier to talk about** than **make happen in practice**

(Reid *cited in* Harrison et al 2007:165)

New Ethos

- New ethos of working may be better described as ‘Partnership working’ as it entails:

“The underlying desire for new ways of developing and refining the complex (pattern) of professional relationships focused on improvements for families and children”.

(Michael Gasper, 2010:5)



Partnership Working

- A coalition of organisations and individuals from one sector who agree to work together for a common aim or a set of compatible aims, and agree to work together in a co-operative and mutually supportive fashion.
- Involving parents and carers in planning and developing services is the best way of creating cost-effective, responsive services that work for families.

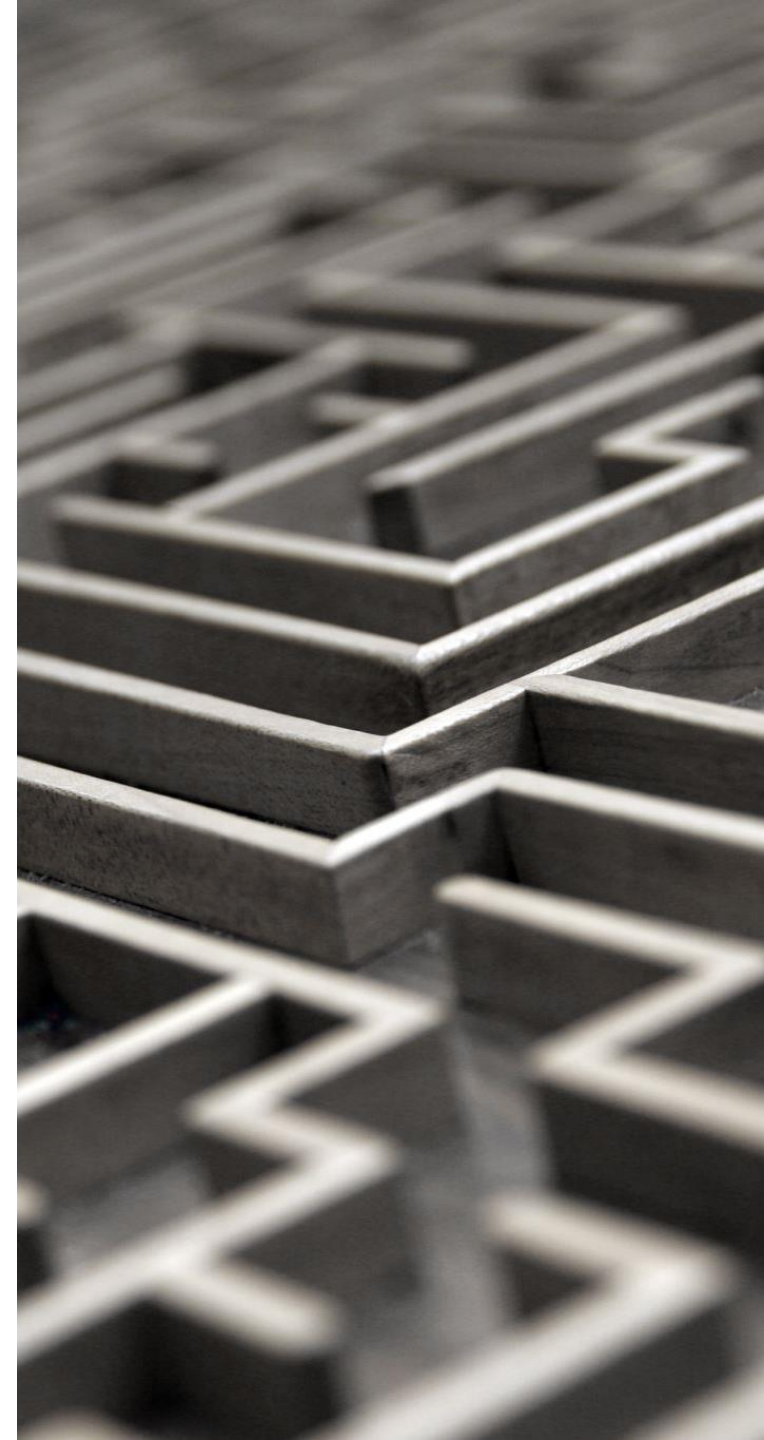


Key elements of effective Partnership Working

- All stakeholders are valued
- Change from the bottom and not the top down
- Services brought to the community rather than other way round
- Co-location ‘under one roof’
- Access to training
- Prioritising to highest areas of need
- Causes rather than effects need to be analysed and addressed
- Greater development of advocacy services – giving the vulnerable a voice
- Support to encourage independence not dependency
- Non-judgemental working
- highest areas of need

Opportunities and Challenges

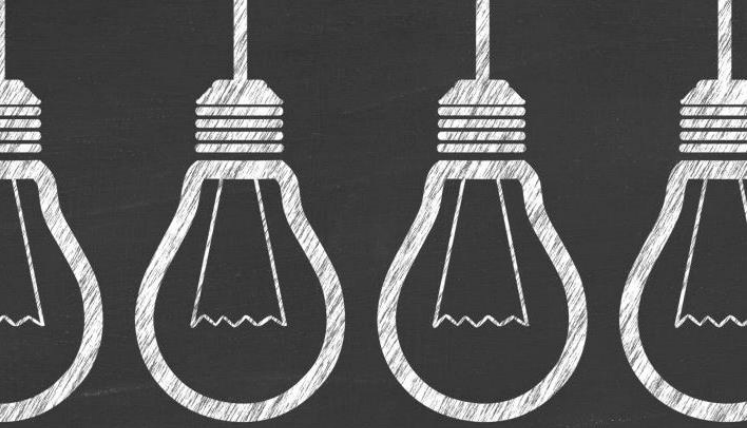
- Opportunities:
 - Easier access to services for users and carers
 - Wider access to a range of skills and expertise
 - Improvement in professional competence
 - Joint planning
 - Sharing budgets





Opportunities and Challenges

- Challenges:
 - Fear of change
 - Sharing Budgets!
 - Leadership
 - National priorities versus local need
 - Different (competing?)
 - New ways of working



Conclusions

- Partnership – working policies – as with any social policies- emerged out of:
- Political necessity – changing needs
- Economic necessity – changing demography
- Milestone/Events- changing perceptions
- New philosophy – changing ideas about how to meet need
- Research and Consultation

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