Fact Sheet
Multi-agency working

Multi-agency working is an effective way of supporting children and families with additional needs and helping to secure real improvements in their life outcomes.

Background
Following the Green Paper Every Child Matters (Sept 2003), it is becoming increasingly common for education, health, youth justice, social care, youth work, voluntary and community sector and other children’s services to join forces to work more collaboratively around a preventative agenda.

Multi-agency working can make a unique contribution to preventative and early intervention services, because it has been shown to be an effective way of addressing the wide range of cross-cutting risk factors that contribute to poorer outcomes for children and young people.

The next few years will see an extensive reconfiguration of services, to offer earlier, more coherent support which meets the needs of children and families in convenient locations and in a more streamlined way.

Different models of multi-agency working
A lot of progress has already been made at a local level in the development of multi-agency projects and initiatives. The diversity demonstrates that there is no one, correct way of multi-agency working. However, a review of practice shows that it is possible to group multi-agency working into three very broad models. These are intended to assist local areas in thinking through the different structures and issues, but there are no hard and fast rules about how multi-agency services should be set up:

1. Multi-agency panel
   - Practitioners remain employed by their home agency.
   - They meet as a panel or network on a regular basis to discuss children with additional needs who would benefit from multi-agency input.
   - In some panels, case work is carried out by panel members. Other panels take a more strategic role, employing key workers to lead on case work.

   An example of this type of working arrangement is a Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP).

2. Multi-agency team
   - A more formal configuration than a panel, with practitioners seconded or recruited into the team.
   - Team has a leader and works to a common purpose and common goals.
   - Practitioners may maintain links with their home agencies through supervision and training.
   - Scope to engage in work with universal services and at a range of levels - not just with individual children and young people, but also small group, family and whole school work.

   Examples include Behaviour & Education Support Teams (BESTs) and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

3. Integrated service
   - A range of separate services share a common location, and work together in a collaborative way.
   - A visible service hub for the community.
   - Has management structure that facilitates integrated working.
   - Commitment by partner providers to fund/facilitate integrated service delivery.
   - Usually delivered from school/early years setting.

   Examples include Sure Start children’s centres and extended schools that offer access to a range of integrated, multi-agency services.

Getting started in multi-agency working
A web-based resource to support managers and practitioners is now available. It is structured around the three service delivery models and provides working solutions and good practice examples relevant to these models. As it develops, it will provide a forum for sharing practice. The resource addresses:

   - The benefits of multi-agency working.
   - Success factors for effective multi-agency working.
   - Practical advice on setting up services and working through some of the challenges.
   - Case study examples.
   - A common language glossary, exploring how different practitioners use common terms.
   - An agency A-Z explaining the roles and responsibilities of different agencies.

Further guidance is being developed for strategic managers to enable effective decision making around when multi-agency services are needed to promote prevention and early intervention, and which models are appropriate to local needs.

For more information:
http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/multiagencyworking/

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