



# The Learning Institute

## Why work together? The benefits and challenges of multi-agency/multi- disciplinary working

### Overview

The 2004 Children's Act identified the need for a wide range of professionals, organisations, schools and other agencies to work together to support children, especially those with multiple or complex needs. A knowledge and understanding of how this works in practice, and the ingredients that make it successful, are important for all professionals working with children and young people, regardless of whether they are directly involved with this kind of collaborative working.

This CPD will therefore introduce you to some of the key professionals and their roles, and to explore what makes this kind of collaborative working successful..

### Target audience

Any staff working within a multi-disciplinary context

### Duration

Approximately 1 hour

The Learning Institute provides opportunities for individuals and communities through high quality education, training and research programmes that challenge personal barriers and promote social inclusion. To find out more, please get in touch.

## Introduction

The 2004 Children's Act identified the need for a wide range of professionals, organisations, schools and other agencies to work together to support children, especially those with multiple or complex needs.

There are many situations where different professionals will be involved in supporting a child or young person. This CPD aims to introduce you to some of the key professionals and their roles, and to explore what makes this kind of collaborative working successful.

## Objectives

- To gain knowledge of different organisations involved in supporting children and young people
- To explore the principles that underpin effective multi-agency/ multi-disciplinary working.
- To understand some of the key challenges of multi-agency/multi-disciplinary working and to consider how these might be addressed.

## Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- National Careers Service [website] available at <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk>
- Gender Identity Development Service [article] available at <https://gids.nhs.uk/eracleous-davidson-2009>
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) *Partnership working in child protection* [video] available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etkc0LnIRPE>
- SCIE *Partnership working in child protection: Scunthorpe case study* [video] <https://www.scie.org.uk/socialcaretv/video-player.asp?v=partnership-working-in-child-protection-scunthorpe>

## Task 1: Who's who?

Depending on the situation, there are a variety of professionals and organisations that could be involved in supporting individual children and young people. This support may be given within an educational setting or separate from it. There is often a tendency to use acronyms (abbreviations formed from the initial letters of other words) to describe these.

Can you work out the name of the professional/organisation from the acronym in the table below? Check your responses with the answers given at the end of this CPD. (Please note, it is important to be aware of the effect of using acronyms, especially when talking to children, young people and their families; see the **Language Matters CPD** for more information on this.)

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. <b>SW</b>       |  |
| 2. <b>EWO</b>      |  |
| 3. <b>CAMHS</b>    |  |
| 4. <b>SALT</b>     |  |
| 5. <b>OT</b>       |  |
| 6. <b>VS</b>       |  |
| 7. <b>CWP</b>      |  |
| 8. <b>YOT</b>      |  |
| 9. <b>Ed Psych</b> |  |

This is a brief description of each of the roles. Can you match the role with the acronym?

- a. A specialist NHS service offering assessment and treatment when children and young people have emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.
- b. Works with young people whose education is being affected by irregular attendance or absence from school.
- c. Offers short targeted and specific interventions for children with mild to moderate mental health difficulties. Usually employed by CAMHS.
- d. Specialises in assessment and specialist support for speech and language needs.
- e. Supports children/young people and their families at difficult times focusing particularly on the safety of the child.
- f. Promotes the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who **are** or who have been in care
- g. Assesses and supports children and young people who are experiencing difficulties that hinder their successful learning and participation in school and other activities. These difficulties can include a range of learning difficulties including those related to social, emotional and mental health.
- h. Works with children or young people who are at risk of or who have committed a crime, to prevent them from reoffending.
- i. Provides intervention, support and/or advice to children and young people and their families, where there is disability or impairment which impacts on their performance and participation in everyday activities of life.

Now check your responses with the answers at the end of this CPD. If you want to find out more about these roles and what training is needed to qualify, the National Careers Service website, available at <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>, is a useful starting point

## Task 2: What are the principles that underpin effective multi agency/multi-disciplinary working?

Spend a few minutes reflecting on your own experience of when multi-agency working has worked well and why you think this is.

Now access the article *The gender identity development service: Examples of multi-agency working*, available at <https://gids.nhs.uk/eracleous-davidson-2009>

Read the paragraph titled *Multi-agency working as best practice* which highlights three key documents that are still used to inform best practice today. Briefly summarise what each document states needs to be considered to ensure multi-agency working is successful:

1. The Children's National Service framework ( 2004):
2. Every Child Matters ( 2003)
3. Children's Workforce network ( 2008)

Read the example case study below, taken from the same website.

Alex is a biological female who at referral was aged fifteen and presented as being unhappy with his biological gender. He also experienced a low mood and difficulties at school including bullying. We used the name "Alex" and male pronouns throughout our work out of respect for his wishes. Alex moved between the homes of his grandparents and his separated parents in North Wales as his mother had limited space in her home and was waiting to be re-housed by the local authority. Alex's mother lived with her five young children in council accommodation. The families all lived nearby so that Alex had regular contact with both of his parents and two sets of grandparents.

Imagine you are coordinating a multi-agency support plan for Alex.

How could you ensure the key principles identified in the documents you looked at are followed?

- Designing support that addresses Alex's needs as a whole rather than individual 'problems.'
- Empowering Alex to positively contribute to designing this support.
- Bringing in a diverse range of professionals whilst making sure they share the same values and their different strengths are used?

Revisit the article, available at <https://gids.nhs.uk/eracleous-davidson-2009>, read the paragraph entitled *Alex* and compare your support plan with the one the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) put in place for Alex.

### Task 3: What are the obstacles to successful multi-agency/multi-disciplinary working?

When it comes to child protection and safeguarding, multi-agency working is a legal requirement. Many of the obstacles to its success in this area can be applied to other types of multi-agency working too.

Watch the video entitled *Partnership Working in Child Protection*, which was produced by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etkc0LnIRPE> The video is 7 minutes long, but pay particular attention to the clip between 2.41 and 3.30

- List all the barriers/obstacles highlighted in this clip.

### Task 4: How can these obstacles be overcome?

Access the nine minute video *Partnership working in child protection: Scunthorpe case study*, available at <https://www.scie.org.uk/socialcaretv/video-player.asp?v=partnership-working-in-child-protection-scunthorpe>

Have a look at the table below. The first column identifies some of the key obstacles you will have identified in Task 3. As you watch the case study video, fill in column two with the ways that Scunthorpe has addressed each obstacle.

These obstacles can apply to other situations where multi-agency working is needed. Think about some of the situations you may experience in your setting. Using the ideas in the Scunthorpe case study, as well as your own thoughts, complete the last column; be as specific as you can.

| <b>Obstacle</b>  | <b>How has it been addressed in Scunthorpe case study</b> | <b>How could this obstacle be addressed in your setting?</b> |
|--|---|--|
| Different professional approaches and perceptions of an issue (e.g. what constitutes maltreatment of children) |   |  |
| Lack of training opportunities   |   |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Poor communication between different agencies |  |  |
| Lack of clarity about roles                   |  |  |
| Misunderstanding and mistrust                 |  |  |

## Task 5: Reflection on learning

Note down your responses to the following questions:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- How can I apply what I now know to my practice?

## Sources

Eracleous, H. and Davidson, S. (2009) *The gender identity development service: Examples of multi-agency working*. Available at <https://gids.nhs.uk/eracleous-davidson-2009> (Accessed: 29 April 2020)

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2016) *Partnership working in child protection*. 2 September. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etkc0LnIRPE> (Accessed: 2 May 2020)

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2016) *Partnership working in child protection: Scunthorpe case study*. Available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/socialcaretv/video-player.asp?v=partnership-working-in-child-protection-scunthorpe> (Accessed: 2 May 2020)

## Further reading

Cheminais, R. (2009) *Effective multi-agency partnerships: putting Every Child Matters into practice*. London: Sage.

Chapter 1 'The origin, concept and principles of multi-agency partnership working' available at: <http://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9739/e67726937cd5e5587615bbec2d2ce713bffe.pdf>

Chapter 2 'The benefits and challenges of collaborative multi-agency working' available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/baf3/d2fba6f89e2534dbac29788d1671edf24668.pdf>

HM Treasury (2003) *Every child matters* (Cm. 5860). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-matters>

National Careers Service (2020) Available at: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk>

## Task 1: Answers

| Acronym            | Stands for...                              | Definition |
|--------------------|--|------------|
| 1. <b>SW</b>       | Social Worker                              | e          |
| 2. <b>EWO</b>      | Education Welfare Officer                  | b          |
| 3. <b>CAMHS</b>    | Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service | a          |
| 4. <b>SALT</b>     | Speech and Language Therapist              | d          |
| 5. <b>OT</b>       | Occupational Therapist                     | i          |
| 6. <b>VS</b>       | Virtual School                             | f          |
| 7. <b>CWP</b>      | Children's Wellbeing Practitioner          | c          |
| 8. <b>YOT</b>      | Youth Offending Team                       | h          |
| 9. <b>Ed Psych</b> | Educational Psychologist                   | g          |

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