

# Sharing the learning from whole family support work:

## The role of collaboration in supporting change

Debbie Byrne: Children's Services Implementation Consultant CELGIS



## **CELCCIS Children's Services Reform Research 2023 - Four strands and concluding report:**

# Qualitative Findings – Strand 4:

## Leadership of children's services and shared strategic working:

### The findings show that effective and sustainable change depends on

- Trusting relationships,
- A skilled and stable workforce,
- Long term funded services,
- Non siloed working
- Reduced power imbalances
- Non stigmatising and responsive support
- The meaningful participation of children, young people and families.

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES REFORM RESEARCH: Scotland's children's services landscape: The views and experiences of the children's services workforce

Date: November 2023

Authors: Dr Alex McTier, Mihaela Manole, Jane Scott,  
Emma Young, Dr Nadine Fowler, Dr Leanne McIver,  
Carol Ann Anderson, Dr Robert Porter and  
Dr Heather Ottaway

Editor: Samantha Fiander

# Qualitative Findings – Strand 4:

## Leadership of children's services and shared strategic working:

**Positive examples:** leaders able to create a learning culture, moving beyond seeking feedback to enabling change and fostering innovation

**Characteristics of good leaders and managers:** showing enthusiasm and commitment to improving the life of children and families; collaborative; with solid understanding of the area of work they provide oversight for, and of the daily experiences of front-line staff

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## Shared strategic working:

- The importance of **shared visions and long-term objectives** which would continue throughout funding cycles, and not be cancelled if management changed;
- The importance of **building trust and transparency** (i.e. with third sector).

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# Collective leadership in Scotland - What does our learning tells us?

- Challenges – complexity, uncertainty, complex policy landscape
- One person or organisation alone is not enough – place based change requires local partners to work as a whole system
- Traditional management approaches – fall short
- Paradoxes faced by leaders –
  - *Long term transformational change v being judged on short term outcome measures*
  - *Collaboration across services & boundaries whilst remaining accountable for own service*
- Assumptions re capacity for change

# Collaborative Action:

*CELGIS support to local areas - examples:*

- Establish structured spaces for collaboration
- Develop cross-agency principles and ways of working
- Co-design responses with families, practitioners and communities
- Identify a locality to act as an initial transformation zone or focus for a test of change
- Shape or introduce new roles, pathways & processes

## Principles of Collective Impact

*Based on Kania & Kramer, 2011; and Collective Impact Forum, 2018.*

**1. Common Agenda** - All participants share a common understanding of the problem and a joint vision for change. In practice, this involves developing a shared Theory of Change and agreed goals across agencies or sectors.

**2. Shared Measurement Systems** - Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures alignment and accountability. This requires defining a small set of shared indicators that all partners use and report on.

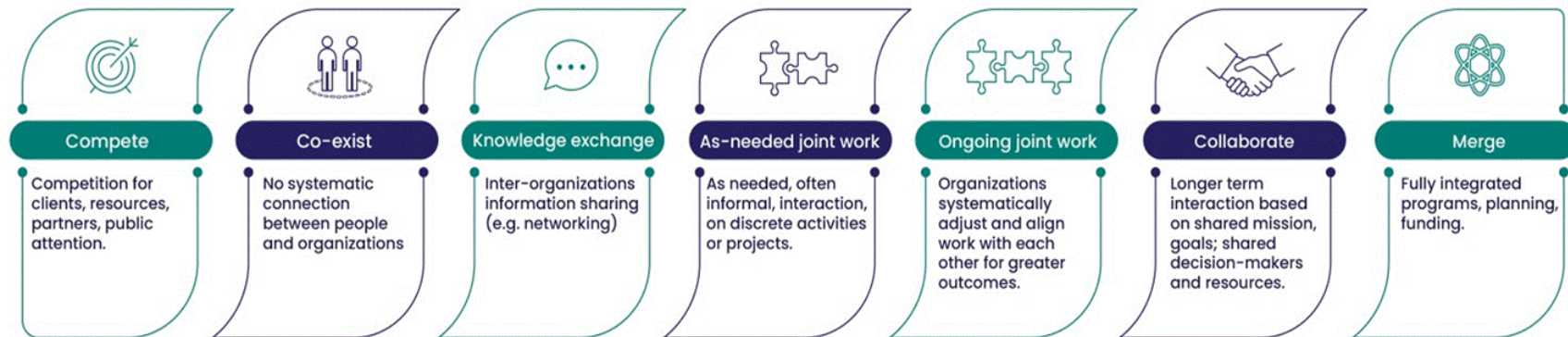
**3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities** - Each participant undertakes specific activities that support and coordinate with the actions of others. Partners align their strategies (not necessarily identical) toward the shared goals.

**4. Continuous Communication** - Regular, structured communication builds trust, assures mutual objectives, and enables shared learning. Formal communication channels, learning sessions, and feedback loops are essential.

**5. Backbone Support Organization** - A dedicated team provides coordination, facilitation, data management, and administrative support. The 'backbone' may be a lead agency, collaborative hub, or neutral convener.

## The Five Core Conditions of Collective Impact

## The Collaboration Spectrum



# Key messages

## **We need to commit to:**

- Collaborative working - this is what complex change requires
- Shared leadership characterised by delegated authority and trust
- Creating conditions for learning and reflection - crucial to an effective learning system
- Relational practice and what this means for leaders, the system and children and families
- This work being in service to families and communities-*holding families at the core, modelling empathy and kindness*
- Developing shared purpose and shared agreement
- Increased partnership and working across organisational and system boundaries flexibly