

## **Developing partnership working for behaviour change: preventing risky behaviours in Brighton and Hove's young people**

### **Summary**

#### **The approach**

The Tavistock Institute and Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) worked together with Brighton and Hove City Council to explore how public services working better in partnership could help to prevent risky behaviour taking in young people.

The model we developed following an earlier scoping exercise drew on theories involving social learning where behaviour is influenced by individuals, the role of peers and surroundings. It is also increasingly recognised that behaviour change in citizens is likely to require a cultural shift on the part of provider organisations in relation to the communities which they serve. We therefore also applied a whole systems approach which sees all players in a system as having a role and an impact.

Following extensive negotiations we agreed together to extend the original brief which was around working specifically on teenage pregnancy, to working on a 'basket of outcomes' for young people around risky behaviour (teenage pregnancy and substance misuse).

The work undertaken included:

- engagement with a project team which would act as the main co-workers with LGID/Tavistock Institute staff
- interviews with a vertical and cross-sectional set of local partners
- interviews with young people locally
- action learning sets with groups of partners.

## **Findings (i)      Learning about partnership work**

### **Involving managers to support front line staff and share information**

Partnership work on the front line gets difficult when resources are short. It requires strong linkages with managers to hold on to key tasks and to share information about services and workers availability to prevent staff feeling overwhelmed.

### **Supervision of front line staff can support good work without raising expectations**

The role of managers in ensuring there is adequate supervision is essential to reinforce commitment and strengths in supporting young people making healthy choices, without contributing to an unrealistic sense of responsibility towards those young people.

### **The continuing importance of regular inter-agency meetings**

Even as resources become tighter, the importance of regular meetings of a partnership group remains essential in ensuring best outcomes for citizens, providing an important focus for action planning around outcomes and ensuring that all agenda are included. The increasing focus on outcomes in commissioning processes reinforces the need for these debates.

### **Front line managers need to hold the cross-agency linkages**

One of the purposes of the overall work was to test the hypothesis that 'diagonal' working ie including staff in working groups from different levels in the hierarchy and across organisations, provides opportunities for better understanding, practice and future policy making and that it 'tightens' the linkages. The overall positive experience in Brighton and Hove suggests this should be further explored in other contexts.

### **The role of context specific pathways**

Paying attention to the different contexts in which partnerships are embedded is essential and the transferability of learning from one such context to another cannot be taken for granted.

### **The role of tools in front line work**

Using tools developed to support staff in providing appropriate interventions at an appropriate level and avoid referral culture ensures consistency, provides confidence for staff and can help to contain the anxiety around managing risk and support early intervention. However staff also need to have confidence in their own creativity and resources to support behaviour change.

## **Findings (ii) Learning about the model and its replication**

### **Ownership of the work**

Ensuring the model has buy-in at all levels is essential for its success. Especially in partnership working where multiple agencies are involved, direct support at strategic level and the middle line can make or break an intervention of this type at the front line.

### **Project team**

A facilitated project team provides the forum for beginning the different types of conversations required for improved partnership working and for swift changes in direction. It also provided a locus for experimentation and ensuring all agenda are included.

### **Aligning timescales**

The alignment of time scales is essential. Developing an initiative takes time, and ensuring that work can be undertaken within a specific funding period, or that there is agreement about an extended time is essential.

### **Value for money**

Final outcomes of a piece of work typically occur at some time down the line, and can be difficult to measure, especially where new conversational routines are contributing to outcomes. The benefits of attempting new forms of engagement need to be weighed up against the risks involved in bringing together large groups of people for exploration. However, as place based projects and their progeny display, the requirement for partners to come together and explore ways of providing good services at the same time as identifying cost savings indicates that there continues to be a role for attempting new and deeper methods of working.

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**September 2010**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Scope of the study**

This paper reports on a project undertaken between The Tavistock Institute and LGID to explore the current thinking and practices which relate to behaviour change in local contexts. There have been several aspects to this work. These have included undertaking a short review of relevant literature as well looking for evidence of innovation and good practices across the country. Towards the end of the first phase we held a workshop in which we looked at some of the theory of how people change, heard from those involved in undertaking behaviour change projects and explored what behaviour change might also mean for councils and their partners with the use of an interactive scenario. The outcomes of this work are reported on in the first part of the report. Following that, the report turns to the final phase of this work which has been applying the model developed in Brighton and Hove to explore more specifically issues related to partnership working.

### **1.2. What makes behaviour change?**

There are a range of different ways of achieving change. In our earlier work we looked at how these were relevant to the topic of collaborative and partnership working under investigation. Of the myriad approaches, we looked to: political coercive change theories which are not entirely relevant to this topic, although Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) work to central government targets; behaviourism, psychological theory of individual behaviour change, which relate mainly to individual citizens and their motivation for change; and theories involving social learning where behaviour is influenced by individuals, surroundings and the role of peers. Shared norms are developed through conversational routines and observed and modelled good practices. In this project, this normative theory of social learning and the extent to which it is mobilised in partnership work was adopted as the most relevant to use to explore how partnership working may affect partnership delivery.

The earlier work also suggested two main strands to explore were strengthened partnership working for better delivery and locally-driven policy formation which are discussed in the next section.

## **2. Outcomes of the scoping phase**

### **2.1. Strengthened partnership working for better delivery**

During the course of the scoping work, The Tavistock Institute and LGID narrowed their focus to how changing behaviours in our citizenry (including policies which affect all of us) will entail a degree of change at many levels in local systems, in particular inter-agency and cross boundary working.

The shift to this way of working, which is becoming the norm in the public sector, makes extraordinary, but often unexplored, demands on organisations and the individuals working within them, as they struggle with different norms, expectations and practices. Unclear and contested roles are sometimes reflected in policy and practice. Often, local strategic partnerships work together effectively, but problems exist in integrated service delivery, without clear messages being communicated up or down the line.

The evidence we found in the first part of the work, and more recently, findings emerging from place based research, suggested that improvements can be achieved in different ways. Exploring new ways of relating to partners, joining up services, or aligning budgets to deliver on agreed results; these all support the development of a better integrated public sector. What this means in practice is that authorities and partners can provide some support to encourage changes in behaviour. There has been a growing realisation that this is not solely about providing more and better services in traditional ways, even through a reduction of the silo'd thinking and behaviour as an outcome per se is compelling. More recently, financial imperatives and value for money issues require that local authorities and their partners achieve savings through working together, or at least increased efficiency in delivery.

At The Tavistock Institute we use a systems approach which sees all players in a system as having a role and an impact. Behaviour change is likely to involve a cultural shift on the part of the LSP and provider organisations in relation to the communities which they serve from representing and delivering on separate organizational goals to shared goals. Encouraging changes in behaviour in others, also involves understanding and values, agreement about desired behaviours which can only be achieved through negotiating conversations. It is likely to involve change in the current patterns of working within councils and partners. Local authorities can look to their own culture and values in order to support changes in the wider community.

### **2.2. Locally-driven policy formulation**

Another key strand in the earlier research lay in an understanding of what localism means in the context of behaviour change. We noted that in

determining the shape and nature of services, local authorities and partners often inadvertently prescribe solutions from the centre with limited recourse to local need or context (an unpopular measure when practised by central government!).

A different response is to gain deeper understanding of local communities by being open to learning with and from them. Policies 'co-produced' by government departments, local partners and target populations, encourage 'buy in' and provide access to community aspirations and understanding of an issue. Front line staff, the voluntary and community sector and local politicians may also have keys to unlocking solutions.

This system-wide view of behaviour change means that councils and partners may need to hold different kinds of conversations with each other and with their communities to discover solutions together. Allowing policy and solutions to be created 'side-by-side' may require change by agencies used to driving policy. However working in this way provides additional opportunities for organisations and groups to develop the capacity to learn, and increase resilience.

### 2.3. Developing a model

LGID and The Tavistock Institute worked on developing a model to explore current thinking and practices relating to behaviour change in local contexts, focusing also on what partners can also do to make a difference.

We looked at two key questions:

- Why strategic and delivery partnerships are deemed to be effective, use best practices and yet results remain static?
- If the conventional approaches are not working, what can we do differently that will be successful?

Our first suggestion was couched in establishing principles for action in which The Tavistock Institute and LGID would work together in an action research mode. The work would focus on the following:

- concentrating on joining up the current good practices and improving communications so that the whole system works more effectively together
- creating space in which partners can explore underlying issues contributing to or obstructing successful partnership allowing for constructive challenge, so that progress is grounded in an honest and collaborative appraisal of the issues
- working with the unique characteristics of a place and the experience of residents' everyday lives in deprivation hot spots

- bringing community members together with local strategic partners and front line staff.

The intention was to use a combination of methods including individual interviews, action learning sets and whole system community events to, deepen understanding, set goals and consolidate change which would be negotiated with a host setting. The setting finally agreed was with Brighton and Hove City Council.

### **3. Working with Brighton and Hove**

In collaboration with senior officers at Brighton and Hove, it was decided to use this approach with the Council and partners' work in relation to teenage pregnancy, which was, at the time, one of the areas which the council had been working on as a priority. This focus was later expanded to include risky behaviours more broadly, including sexual health and substance misuse.

It was in November 2009 that the project was allocated a sponsor and champion in the Head of Strategic Commissioning for the CYPT, following a change in Chief Executive. This led to an engagement between local partners and Tavistock Institute/LGID staff in the period to July 2010.

The project can be considered a work in progress as the policy context develops and partnerships are constantly evolving. A current challenge for Brighton and Hove City Council and their local partners is a re-organisation around 'Intelligent Commissioning', based on outcomes and with a strong emphasis on place.

In the following sections of this report we briefly outline the initial model, then describes the project in Brighton and Hove, interviews undertaken by the LGID/Tavistock team and then goes on to examine project work with schools-based front line staff working with young people to support healthy choices. It goes on to set out some of the changes which Brighton and Hove officers and partners have begun to develop as a result of the project.

#### **3.1. The model applied to Brighton and Hove**

The model outlined in the previous section was agreed in principle to be applied in Brighton and Hove through the following activities:

- engagement with a project team which would act as the main co-workers with LGID/Tavistock staff during the project
- interviews with a vertical and cross-sectional set of local partners
- interviews with young people locally
- action learning sets with groups of partners
- whole system conference, involving a diagonal set of strategic, operational and front-line staff across partners and local citizens (which did not, in the event take place).

#### **3.2. Outcomes agreed**

A series of outcomes for Brighton and Hove were identified and agreed and they included:

- shifts in the way that departments and organisations relate to each other
- shifts in the communication patterns between individuals in their organisations and also with community members
- development of a 'learning community' which champions change
- greater shared understanding and purpose about the issues which impact on teenage pregnancy and the worlds that young people and their families inhabit
- capacity building to bring about solutions which are derived with and from the community
- a shared understanding of how change can happen and the steps that need to be taken to secure it.

### 3.3. The engagement with local actors

This section outlines the different activities which were undertaken by LGID and Tavistock Institute staff during the project, which involved some adaptation of the original model, particularly in relation to engagement with the project team and the action learning sets and, finally, the whole system conference.

#### 3.3.1. Engagement with the project team

A project team was brought together under the chairmanship of the Head of Strategic Commissioning for the CYPT. It brought together the Commissioner for Teenage Pregnancy and Substance Misuse with managers of locality services and voluntary sector managers. Other agencies, such as the police, did not send representatives, though they were approached.

After an initial meeting with the Head of Strategic Commissioning, CYPT, and the Commissioner for Teenage Pregnancy and Substance Misuse, who had a day to day role in liaising with Brighton and Hove partners for the project, the project team met on five occasions. These meetings were well attended and supported the external action researchers by providing information and opening gates to engagement with other key officers, including those with strategic, operational and front line roles, and with young people.

However, there were some issues around the relationship between us. On reflection, the changes were largely unspoken, especially as time moved on and there was a sense of time running out (ie funding for the project), which in itself became a theme in meetings.

Another, equally significant, was the reshaping of the 'working with' role of the project team so that it took on a 'hands off' steering role. In part we conclude that this was largely a result of the project as a whole being handed on by those

initially involved to a different set of actors, especially at strategic level, and as work in the council on teenage pregnancy developed, this project became less of a priority. There were several implications to this change, which again, went largely unspoken. One was that the project became more of a conventional research project being undertaken for Brighton and Hove than originally anticipated with The Tavistock Institute/LGID providing information upon which the project team could act. This in turn meant that the data collection activities of the scoping phase were increased and the ‘action’ focus reduced (including not undertaking a whole system conference).

### **Further adaptations to original model**

The nature of the environment in which we were working required that we were flexible in the implementation of the scope of work we undertook.

A change which was welcomed by all parties involved in the project was the broadening of the focus to include risky behaviours more generally. This came about partly because by the time the project was up and running, there had been considerable developments in the work that Brighton and Hove were undertaking in targeting preventing teenage pregnancy. In addition, the broader focus on what came to be termed a ‘basket of outcomes’ for young people which included sexual health and substance misuse chimed both with the strengthening of the outcomes focused agenda in Brighton and Hove and with a recognition that internally, staff understood their work in this arena to be more generally to be around ‘risky behaviours.’

Other changes to methods occurred at different stages of the work. Very early on the focus on the very local aspects of the work diminished (for example for the team to work closely with young people and organisations working with young people in areas of deprivation). However, the growing emphasis on improving partnership activity amongst agencies in particular with schools was warmly welcomed.

### **3.3.2. Interviews with local actors**

Interviews with a wide set of local actors relating to the topic focus were undertaken. These were seen as ‘diagnostic’ of partnership behaviour by the external (action) researchers and as bringing back of data to the project team.

*Table One: Interviewees as part of the diagnostic phase*

| <b>Roles of interviewees</b>                  | <b>Number of interviewees</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Cabinet Member for Children and Young People  | 1                             |
| GO SE Regional Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator | 1                             |
| Director of Service                           | 1                             |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| team leaders / service managers/area managers   | 12 |
| Front line staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IYSS PA</li> <li>• YMCA Staff</li> <li>• TP Prevention workers</li> <li>• Social Worker</li> <li>• EWO</li> <li>• School Nurse</li> </ul> | 14 |
| Young People  | 10 |

The main findings from these interviews were:

- good work was being undertaken in relation to teenagers' risky behaviours by partners in Brighton and Hove
- further embedding of tools to support front line work required embedding in practice
- more work was needed to extend the prevention work into areas adjacent to teenage pregnancy, such as young men's sexual health and the reduction of harm caused to young people by alcohol and drugs misuse
- linkages between different agencies, departments and levels needed more development to provide a more co-ordinated approach which makes best use of resources.

### 3.4. Action learning sets

One of the main outcomes of the scoping phase was the creation of an action learning set based in a school in Brighton and to which a number of workers from other agencies were invited. The aims, method and outcomes of these are outlined in sections below.

#### 3.4.1. Overall aim and method

It was agreed with the project group and with the participants that the main aim of the action learning set was:

- Helping young people to make healthy choices around risky behaviours (teenage pregnancy and substance misuse) – creating clarity about the processes which invoke early implementation responses and appropriate referral pathways and interventions.

There were three meetings with multi-agency schools-based partners over a period of two months. The school was asked to participate as it was known to already have good systems in place in supporting vulnerable young people.

As well as the Tavistock Institute facilitators, two other local partnership staff attended, one from the healthy schools team and one from the teenage pregnancy team. These meetings departed from the action learning design, as schools-based staff found it easier to share their thoughts and feelings of a single case in each meeting in which each of them had had some role. In addition, the communication to participants in setting up the meetings, and indeed the desires of those setting them up, meant the meetings included the identification of processes and pathways as part of the task for the group. The meetings provided a practice focus for participants, as well as information sharing, and we observed evidence of learning over the course of the sessions.

### **3.4.2. Observations derived from across the three meetings**

Colleagues at the sessions reinforced each others sense that good and careful work was being done with vulnerable young people at the school.

#### **On referrals and pathways for support**

The partnership structures which support vulnerable young people were working, but they need some strengthening. In terms of both referrals and services for young people two main perspectives predominated: on the one hand there was a sense that the school, on occasions, has to 'go it alone,' and it does not always get support from partners when it asks for it. On the other hand, others felt that reduction in frequency of All Agency meetings, might exacerbate this feeling and reduce the opportunities for partners to contribute usefully.

When a young person is demonstrating behaviour in school which raises high concerns amongst school staff, and which lead to 'statementing' and/or child protection procedures being invoked, the responses and referral pathways were fairly clear. Schools' services sit together and work closely with the assistant head teacher, and this contributes to identifying and sharing concerns about vulnerable individuals' behaviour which may be troubling staff, though not at a child protection level. However, in these cases the pathway for 'screening,' and further referral was less clear and more informal. There were also concerns about confidentiality, and too many people asking questions to the young person identified.

It was noted that the complexity of the system suggested that further sharing of information about the kind of support that is available is required. The fast turnaround of projects and pilots in Brighton and Hove led to schools staff in particular not being fully aware of what support is available in Brighton and Hove and how to access this support. They noticed that they use 'well trodden, reliable paths', but were pleased to learn about other options which would provide a good outcome for a young person. Equally, messages from other partners around how best to refer need to be further embedded in the system.

As in all cross agency partnership working, the issue of information sharing remains a difficult one for this system. Community CAMHS, schools and police (though the latter were not invited to these meetings) often hold vital information about young people which cannot be shared. However, the group felt that there was room for improvement around this in order to better support young people.

The level of risk carried by schools occasionally felt overwhelming to staff. The multi-agency forum provided an opportunity for this to be shared and for workers from other agencies to both reassure colleagues and provide information and advice about other opportunities. It was recognised that schools did good work with students and the support may be in the form of endorsing school interventions which would provide confidence.

### **Screening tools for use with young people**

One of the key points emerging was that the level of anxiety around having the substance misuse conversations was much higher amongst staff than having conversations around sexual health, which were accepted as already relatively commonplace. It was agreed that staff in general knew less about the effects of drugs, and provoked more concern as the implications of getting it wrong around this subject were greater ie directly life threatening.

Members of the group felt comfortable about the idea of working with the sexual health screening tool. They said that these conversations in general, were not difficult for them though finding the right place do have it could be difficult. The tool could be used equally in the health drop-in as by a key work, or mentor.

### **Supporting staff**

In each of the sessions the importance of continuing learning and training opportunities for staff was highlighted. Staff identified that they would like further training related to substance misuse and on how to handle working with sexualised behaviour. The session where the early identification tools were discussed also indicated a further training need.

Opportunities for enhanced line management and supervision outside these sessions for schools staff were also highlighted.

## **3.4.3. Outcome of Action Learning Set**

### **Meeting with managers of ALS participants**

These findings were taken to the managers of ALS participants which in the main comprised members of the project team, with the addition of the school Deputy Head.

As a result of the discussion with the managers a number of action points were agreed, which focussed on how to support those working in the specific context, and also, importantly, how to translate this into city wide support. (It was also noted that the findings mirrored those in a different mental health focussed project taking place elsewhere in the city).

The key support to be set in motion comprises:

- Joint liaison meeting at the start of the year, based in the school, which provides the opportunity for school support staff and teachers to meet with other services to share information and learn about the support each other can provide to ensure best outcomes for a young person are achieved. This to be kept at individual school level, not city wide, so that relationships between school and other services can be developed and enriched. The process likely to be extended to other city schools.
- Training and development needs of schools staff are to be attended to, with the support where possible of the schools and communities team (including educational psychologists, educational welfare officers and school nurses) The training is to be evaluated and extended across the city.
- School Deputy Head is to provide regular ongoing opportunities for group supervision of the schools support staff. This to be supported also by the schools and communities team.
- An information system about services to be further improved and access made to all workers in this area via the family information service.
- A package to be developed out of all this work for dissemination with other schools, community services and the voluntary sector in six months. This to be taken to the children's trust board, which includes a wider variety of agencies and services, including, for example GPs (not part of this study).

## **4. Learning derived from the project**

### **4.1. Learning for Brighton and Hove in particular**

As well as the outcomes from the action learning set, there were other points which were specific to Brighton and Hove. More general points for the sector derived from this work are outlined 4.2 and 4.3 but also apply to Brighton.

#### **4.1.1. Project team working**

The project group meetings provided a focus for action planning and discussion with a broad set of partners which encouraged reflection on the direction of the work and provided for the opportunity for change. For example, during the course of the work, the focus was broadened to include a wider set of issues extending the focus to risky behaviour more broadly. There were a number of reasons for this; one was that the conception rates in Brighton and Hove were reducing so that the team felt more confident in broadening out the agenda again; another was that project team members argued that some staff were better able to relate to the broader agenda in terms of partnership working, and that front line staff in particular worked to the broader scope. Finally, The Tavistock Institute staff were working with the idea that achieving better outcomes for young people required the broader focus in the partner agencies.

The team meetings also provided a forum for different agencies to ensure that their agenda were included (for example, ensuring that promoting healthier lifestyles might also be part of the message).

#### **4.1.2. Ownership**

Having a different sponsor for the work from the one originally agreeing to the project, compounded by lack of continuity between actors agreeing the work internally and those with operational responsibility, meant that it was hard to get internal ownership of this project. It was conceived from the outset with active support from the strategic layer, but this then diminished. The direct support of the LSP which would have helped to foster ownership of work which focused on inter-agency collaboration (mirroring its own practice) was not available. Ownership of the project was passed to the middle line. While any intervention crucially requires the support of the middle line to succeed, lack of direct support or provision of a reporting into mechanism at strategic levels meant that the project seemed to struggle to get priority among staff involved locally.

In the light of this, The Tavistock Institute should have invested more time at each stage of the project (and particularly with the project team) in agreeing the aims, the method and the outcomes to be achieved. Much was lost from the original (perhaps over ambitious) methodology as a result.

### **4.1.3. Working to timescales**

Once the project had been agreed it was difficult to work to the timescales that the funding period dictated. Timescales slipped in Brighton due to organisational changes and the operational readiness of the authority partly as a result of this. The LGID funding period could not stretch to an additional term. As a result, something was lost in translation in the work that could be achieved together.

### **4.1.4. Role of middle managers**

The role of the middle managers in this work was essential in providing the cross agency links at all levels. Unusually in an action learning situation, a middle manager was included in the group. This was a positive experience for both the manager and for the other participants as her presence at the meetings ensured that training and practice needs could be identified and taken further and issues arising from the set could be clearly articulated at the subsequent managers meeting. Middle managers also worked well together in the project team which provides evidence to support the notion that this level is pivotal in ensuring and securing change.

### **4.1.5. Different support models**

The ALS identified a particular set of professionals who were key in supporting students, in the referral processes and the interventions linked with the school in question. It was noted however, that the different models of student support in operation across the schools in Brighton and Hove means that, potentially, a number of different mechanisms would need to be established to cater for this difference and to ensure the focus is on the outcome for the young person rather than service provision.

### **4.1.6. Working with tools**

A number of tools had been developed in Brighton and Hove to support workers in dealing with young people around risky behaviour (teenage pregnancy and substance misuse). These were considered useful in establishing thresholds and pathways but were acknowledged to be only one element of the staff tool kit. The action learning set provided significant evidence that the relationships between front line staff and young people are complex (in this context especially schools staff and students) and staff also rely on their own skills, experience and complexity in their work.

### **4.1.7. Value for money**

Since the final stages of the work – the implementation of the plan post action learning set - have not yet been completed, it is hard to identify in full the value

for money that the project might represent. Certainly, some of the expected outcomes highlighted earlier are still somewhat down the line, although there are indications that the ALS provided a valuable opportunity for agencies to connect, hold conversations with different people and begin to re-establish relationships which would support young people better. The outcome of the meeting of middle managers set about a process which will, improve the collaboration between agencies and the support offered to young people.

In terms of resources the work certainly cost the Council and its partners time and resources in meeting with the LGID/ Tavistock team. For the local actors, the benefits of bringing operational managers and front line workers together across partnerships to develop new norms has been construed as a useful exercise for partnership working which may support working together in other settings. On the other hand, the cost of staging a whole system event was considered difficult in an environment where cost savings are being required.

## **4.2. Learning about partnership working for the sector**

The Tavistock Institute, LGID and the project team agreed that there were key learning points about working in partnership that could extend beyond this work, and contribute to the sector more generally.

The learning pointed especially to the pivotal role that middle managers play, in supporting the front line, in providing resilience in the face of staff anxieties and in maintaining links and contacts with other relevant agencies. Middle level links with the strategic level were also identified as important in ensuring that specific agenda are consistently prioritised.

The learning points fell under the headings outlined below

### **4.2.1. Involving managers to support front line staff and share information**

Partnership work on the front line gets difficult when resources are short. In particular, the seamlessness of different services tends to fragment when key staff from agencies work part time, when people work at different times and when services often funded only for a short term change fast and frequently. It requires strong linkages with managers to hold onto the key tasks and to share information about services and when workers are available to prevent staff from feeling overwhelmed.

### **4.2.2. Supervision of front line staff can support good work without raising expectations**

The responsibility of working with vulnerable young people displaying risky behaviour lies heavily with individuals and teams. Collegiate support from other

agencies, who can provide advice and endorsement of particular interventions, even at an informal level, ensures that colleagues don't feel on their own with a problem. The role of managers in ensuring there is adequate supervision is also essential to reinforce commitment and strengths in supporting young people making healthy choices, without contributing to an unrealistic sense of responsibility towards those young people.

#### **4.2.3. Front line managers need to hold the cross-agency linkages**

One of the purposes of the overall work was to test the hypothesis that 'diagonal' working ie including staff in working groups from different levels in the hierarchy, provides opportunities for better understanding, practice and future policy making and that it 'tightens' the linkages. The overall positive experience in Brighton and Hove of including a middle manager in the ALS suggests that this should be further explored in other contexts.

#### **4.2.4. The role of context specific pathways**

Paying attention to the different contexts in which partnerships are embedded is another of the learning points that arose from this work. The transferability of learning from one such context to another cannot be taken for granted. For example, lessons learned about a pathway of support based on a model which includes a specific set of professionals may not be appropriate where workers with a different professional background lead a service.

#### **4.2.5. The role of tools in front line work**

Using tools developed to support staff to help them provide appropriate intervention at an appropriate level and avoid referral culture is important in ensuring consistency and provides confidence for staff for whom the task is not the only priority. They can help to contain the anxiety around managing risk and support early intervention thereby supporting staff to encourage behaviour change directly with young people. However, encouraging staff to have confidence in their own creativity and resources and not foster an over-reliance on tools to provide answers is an important message for managers to reinforce.

#### **4.2.6. The continuing importance of regular inter-agency meetings**

Even as resources become tighter, the importance of regular meetings of a partnership group remains essential in ensuring best outcomes for young people. These meetings provide an important focus for action planning around outcomes and ensuring that all agenda are included. The increasing focus on outcomes in commissioning processes reinforces the need for these debates.

### **4.3. Learning about the model and its replication**

Another set of learning points derive from learning about the model originally devised as a way to support behaviour change by focusing on what the sector needs to do to change as well as working for change in individuals and groups. The following represents this project's learning.

#### **4.3.1. Ownership of the project**

Equally, making sure that the model has buy-in at all levels is essential for its success (and mirrors the emphasis on diagonal working). Especially in partnership working where multiple agencies are involved, direct support at strategic level (LSP) and the middle line can make or break an intervention of this type at front line levels. Minimally this means ensuring that there is a mechanism for reporting into strategic discussions. More active encouragement by the LSP would further reinforce the message.

#### **4.3.2. Project team**

A facilitated project team provides the forum for swift change in direction and to begin the different types of conversations required for improved partnership working. It also provided a locus for experimentation and ensuring all agenda are included.

#### **4.3.3. Aligning timescales**

A key issue when doing work with one agency, paid by another, is that of aligning time scales. Setting up a project can take considerable time, and ensuring that work can be undertaken within a specific funding period, or that there is agreement about an extended time is essential.

#### **4.3.4. Value for money**

Final outcomes of a piece of work typically occur at some time down the line, and can be difficult to measure, especially where new conversational routines are contributing to outcomes for target groups. The difficult financial climate will mean that even more careful thought will need to be put into the scale of work to be undertaken and the cost implications of this. The benefits of attempting new forms of engagement need to be weighed up against the risks involved in bringing together large groups of people for exploration. However, as place based projects and their progeny display, the requirement for partners to come together and explore ways to provide good services at the same time as identifying cost savings suggest that there continues to be a role for attempting new methods of working.

For those interested in replicating this model of working, the lesson lies in holding to the principles of the work, while being flexible in the method.

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