Guidance to Support Effective Inter-agency Working Across Irish Children's Services

Contents

Foreword

Following establishment in 2007 the Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) was charged with 'the promotion of inter-agency co-operation including the sharing of information'. From our earliest ventures into this complex domain it was evident that there was little or no direction or guidance available for agencies and individual practitioners who wished to work in this way.

This guidance was developed based on an extensive literature review, a comprehensive consultation process and detailed organisational case studies. The outputs of those processes are available as individual reports and offer for the first time a complete overview of the issues involved in inter-agency working in Irish children's services.

This guidance is therefore an evidence based document. It attempts to help people to understand the issues that support and impede effective inter-agency working and to offer advice on how these issues may be addressed or avoided.

The CAAB is hopeful that this guidance will have a wide relevance and will be helpful to policy makers, managers and practitioners in planning, organising and delivering their services in such a way as to offer the maximum benefit to children and families and to ensure that through working together the greatest value is achieved from scarce resources. I would also commend this guidance to all academic institutions that have an input into the development of those people who hope to work in the children's sector in any capacity.

I must acknowledge the huge contribution to this process by Robert Murphy, Head of Research and Information, who with his team of (Ciarán Ó Searcaigh, Marion Martin and Amanda Downes) has worked tirelessly to produce this guidance and the earlier reports that have made it possible.

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Executive Summary

Purpose: the purpose of this document is to provide a succinct but comprehensive, evidence based, guidance to support effective inter-agency working across Irish children's services.

Definition: inter-agency co-operation or working can be defined as any joint action by two or more agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together rather than separately. It can involve the exchange of information, altering activities, sharing resources, and actively enhancing of the capacity of other agencies for mutual benefit.

Inter-agency co-operation can be formal or informal, take place across different sectors, and take place at policy, at operational or at front-line service delivery level. It is an activity that covers a very broad range of actions and can be applied in numerous areas and settings.

Rationale: there are five broad reasons or rationale for inter-agency co-operation, namely:

- addressing problems with multiple and inter-related causes;
- generating economies of scale;
- benefiting from collaborative advantage;
- reducing policy and service fragmentation;
- adhering to policy or legal requirements.

Impacts: inter-agency co-operation can result in benefits and negative consequences (i.e. impacts). The evidence base consists mainly of the views of those involved in inter-agency co-operation, very little 'hard' or 'numeric' evidence (positive or negative) is reported. Nevertheless, positive benefits are reported for service users, professionals, agencies and the Exchequer.

Tools: different levels of inter-agency working require different tools (also referred to as models, structures, mechanisms, and approaches) and a range of tools are available. They fall into three categories, namely: tools to support inter-agency co-operation in communication and decision-making; tools to support co-operation at operational level; and tools to support co-operation in front-line service delivery.

The tools used should be relevant and specific to the particular level of inter-agency work being undertaken as well as to the settings, agencies and professionals involved. In many cases a combination of tools are used in an inter-agency initiative or project. For example, in a two tiered structure at local level, the first tier uses a consultation or planning mechanism (which may be formally structured as a board, a committee, a steering group) and the second tier uses a service delivery tool (e.g. coordinator or co-ordinating unit, centre-based delivery).

Influencing factors: factors influencing inter-agency co-operation fall into five main categories. namely, working relationships, inter-agency processes, management and governance, resources to support the work and service context. There are a considerable number of facilitators and inhibitors under each of these factors.

Good practice: from our analysis we can identify 15 features associated with good practice in inter-agency co-operation.

1. Have a justifiable rationale.

2. Ensure effective leadership.

3. Develop a shared purpose.

4. Clarify roles and responsibilities for inter-agency working.

5. Discuss and allay workers' fears and concerns.

6. Secure commitment from staff at all levels; strategic, operational and service delivery.

7. Build trust and mutual respect in inter-agency groups/workers.

8. Foster understanding between agencies.

9. Create an inter-agency culture and remove cultural barriers.

10. Ensure effective communication and information exchange.

11. Plan and organise effectively.

12. Achieve effective representation and participation in inter-agency working groups/teams.

13. Invest adequate time, staff and money.

14. Have appropriate corporate governance systems.

15. Monitor, evaluate and renew.

Additional guidance on how to achieve these 15 features is provided in this document.

Introduction

Background

The Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) was established, in July 2007, as an enhanced enabling organisation with the capacity to encourage inter-agency co-operation and information sharing and to support the development of services that are evidence based and outcomes focused.

The CAAB's Strategy 2008-10 notes that 'National policies have been developed for 'at risk' children taking into account the duty and responsibility of the State to deliver the best co-ordinated services across the key sectors for these children. The Office of the Minister for Children has a key role and is a key driver of policy change from the centre. Operational responsibility rests with the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Youth Justice Service, the Probation Service, the Courts Service and the education sector. Most of these agencies have recently undergone changes to structure, change management and strategy, all focused on delivering on the Child Care Act, 1991 and Children Act, 2001 and subsequent amendments.'

Vulnerable or 'at risk' children face complex problems the causes of which are often multiple, inter-related and cross sectoral. Effective co-operation between the above agencies is therefore an essential element in ensuring the delivery of co-ordinated services that maximise positive outcomes for vulnerable children.

This report is produced in the context of recent policy development in the area of co-ordinated services for children. The national social partnership agreement 'Towards 2016' outlines a framework on the needs of children and young people and the establishment of the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group (NCSIG). This high-level group is chaired by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). The vision of the NCSIG is that children children, young people and their families will receive the support and services they need to create better futures for children. This is to be achieved through all the local agencies and organisations working together. The model for integrated service delivery is being developed through the establishment of children's services committees (CSCs) on a phased basis. The committees include representatives from these agencies and organisations. These committees will be responsible for improving the lives of children and families at local and community level through integrated planning, working and service delivery.

Purpose

In light of the above the second of the CAAB's three strategic objectives is 'to facilitate inter-agency co-operation'. One way to help achieve this is to develop and disseminate written guidance on inter-agency working (CAAB, Strategy 2008-10, Strategic Action 2.3). The overall purpose of this guidance document is to provide a succinct but comprehensive, evidence based, guidance to support effective inter-agency working across Irish children's services. To fulfil this purpose the specific objectives are:

1. To explain what inter-agency co-operation is; in terms of definition, the range of actions it covers and different levels of co-operation.

2. To provide guidance on why inter-agency co-operation should used; in terms of the rationale for its use, alternatives to using it and the possible benefits and negative consequences of its use.

3. To provide guidance on how inter-agency co-operation can be implemented; in terms of the

tools available to support inter-agency working, factors that facilitate and inhibit inter-agency working, and tips for effective inter-agency working.

Method

This guidance document was developed based on:

- **An extensive literature review:** the CAAB commissioned a detailed literature review (covering the period 1990 to 2008) involving an analysis of international literature reviews, literature on inter-agency co-operation in Irish children's services and in other Irish public services.[1] The guidance also makes considerable use of a recent review of international evidence of multi-agency working commissioned by the CfBT Education Trust.[2]

- **A comprehensive consultation process:** the CAAB commissioned a gathering of the views and experiences of over 150 managers and practitioners from Irish children's services through a comprehensive consultation process.[3]

- **Detailed organisational case studies:** the CAAB commissioned six detailed organisational case studies (three Irish and three international) of inter-agency co-operation in the delivery of children's services.[4]

Following an extensive review of Irish and international evidence a draft guidance document was circulated for comment and feedback to the members of the CAAB Board, Research Committee and Communications Committee - all of which have a cross sectoral focus. In addition, this guidance document has been independently peer reviewed.[5]

Guidance Structure

This guidance document is structured around its three objectives as follows[6]:

- **What:** Section 1 provides a definition of inter-agency co-operation for children's services and discusses different levels of co-operation.

- **Why:** Section 2 discusses the rationale or main reasons for undertaking inter-agency co-operation and Section 3 describes the impacts, and the benefits that can arise from effective inter-agency co-operation.

- **How:** Section 4 describes tools that can used to support inter-agency co-operation, Section 5 explains factors that can facilitate or inhibit effective co-operation and Section 6 provides tips for good practice.

Appendices: Appendix A presents a bibliography, Appendix B provides a summary of relevant details on data protection and information sharing under the Irish Data Protection Acts, 1989 and 2003, while Appendix C provides details of other guides and useful resources to help people involved in inter-agency co-operation. **References:** the report contains a large number of references so to assist with readability these are provided at the end of the main report and before Appendix A.

1. Definition and Types of Co-operation

'inter-agency co-operation or working is any joint action by two or more agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together rather than separately.'[7]

Having presented the above **definition** of inter-agency co-operation for these guidelines it is important to note that there is no common and widely accepted single definition of inter-agency co-operation. In fact a large number of terms are used in different publications to refer to activity that could be considered 'inter-agency co-operation'. This is confusing as in some instances different terms are used interchangeably (e.g. inter-agency working and multi-agency working), while in others different definitions are provided for the same terms. This has led some commentators to refer to the term as 'overworked, underachieved and seldom defined'[8] and to the area of work as a 'terminological quagmire'[9]. Nevertheless, having reviewed the range of definitions presented in the literature and consulted with stakeholders, we feel that the above definition is the most useful definition for children's services.

It is evident from this definition that inter-agency co-operation is an activity that **covers a very broad range of actions** and can be applied in numerous areas and settings. Indeed, inter-agency co-operation can be:

- **formal or informal:** co-operation can be informal (which includes interpersonal contacts and informal channels of communication that may be achieved through ad-hoc meetings, telephone calls and correspondence) or formal (these include organisational structures, job definitions as well as instruments such as plans, agreements, contracts);

- **vertical or horizontal:** co-operation can be vertical involving joint action of agencies belonging to different government levels or it can horizontal involving the joint action of agencies from different sectors;

- **policy, operational or front-line:** co-operation between agencies can take place in relation to strategic or public policy, operational/organisational or front-line service delivery issues.

Clarity of language and a common understanding of terms is an important factor for effective inter-agency working. Therefore, **it is useful to distinguish inter-agency working** from multi-agency working and partnership working, as the terms are sometimes used interchangeably although technically they can have different meanings.

Multi-agency working involves more than one agency working with a young person, family or project but the agencies do not necessary work jointly (as is the case inter-agency working). **Partnership working** refers to relationships between different groups for mutual benefit but the term usually has a broader application than inter-agency co-operation. It refers to relationships between different groups such as organisations and service users, organisations and different professionals or a combination of public, business and civil constituencies.

When thinking about inter-agency co-operation it is useful to distinguish between the levels of inter-agency approaches, and to do so in terms of **cumulative levels of inter-agency working** as:

- the **exchange of information** (referred to as networking);

- the **exchange of information** *and* **altering activities** (referred to as co-ordination);

- the **exchange of information, altering activities** *and* **sharing resources** (referred to as co-operation);

- all of the **above plus the active enhancing of the capacity of other agencies** for mutual benefit, i.e. the accruing of benefits to each of the agencies, (referred to as collaboration).[10]

2. Rationale

> *There are five broad reasons or rationale or for inter-agency co-operation.*[11]

1. **To address problems with multiple and inter-related causes.** To provide answers or solutions to complex problems the causes of which are multiple, inter-related and often cross sectoral and so cannot be effectively addressed by one agency alone.

2. **To generate economies of scale.** To generate economies of scale (i.e. to take advantage of reducing cost per unit as 'output' increases). For example, co-operation in the provision of a service that is too expensive for agencies or services to provide on their own.

3. **To benefit from collaborative advantage.** To benefit from the advantages that can flow from two or more people from different agencies working together for a special purpose, e.g. better understanding of issues, improved or new working practices.

4. **To reduce policy and service fragmentation.** To reduce policy and service fragmentation through local level co-operation. For instance, the existence of multiple targeted programmes or services means that the target population for one programme may overlap with the target population for another, which can create problems for both programme managers as well as participants. Local co-ordination, in terms of eligibility rules or the location of services, can reduce these problems.[12]

5. **To adhere to policy or legal requirements.** Adhering to public policy or legal requirements can be a rationale for inter-agency co-operation. Typically, the underlying reason for a specific public policy or legal requirement for inter-agency co-operation will be one, or a combination of, the four reasons above.

It is clear from the rationale for inter-agency co-operation that it can be one way of achieving **service integration**. Service integration 'refers primarily to ways of organising the delivery of services to people at the local level. It is not a new programme to be superimposed over pre-existing programmes: rather it is a process aimed at developing an integrated framework within which ongoing programmes can be rationalised and enriched to do a better job of making services available within existing commitments and resources.'[13]

Inter-agency co-operation is one approach, but not the only approach to achieving service integration. Three **alternatives** to inter-agency co-operation include the following:[14]

- **Sequencing of interventions:** this involves programme designers determining whether it is essential to address issues simultaneously and within the same project or whether sequencing of interventions to deal with various constraints is possible without ignoring crucial linkages or sacrificing critical goals.

- **Reorganising:** means creating or merging organisational units and/or changing the assignment of functional responsibilities to those units. While reorganising is an approach that under certain conditions can help reduce

unnecessary duplication and make public services more efficient, the consensus about its effectiveness is mixed.

- **Competition:** involves creating incentives for agencies to compete for leadership or resources. This can be used when there is a certain degree of redundancy or overlap between different agencies. Rather than try to reduce redundancy, or to force co-operation, an alternative is to promote competition for either leadership in programme implementation or in access to programme resources.

Inter-agency co-operation is **not necessarily** the means of providing services or achieving service integration in all cases. It should therefore, be undertaken where there is a **clear rationale** for it (one or a combination of the earlier points) and where it **can be expected to produce better** services for children or their families, and better organisational or professional performance, or where it can deliver lower costs. The potential impacts of inter-agency co-operation are discussed next.

3. Impacts

3.1 Section Introduction

> *Inter-agency co-operation can impact on service users, on professionals, on agencies and on the Exchequer.*

It is important to understand the possible **benefits and negative consequences** (i.e. impacts) from inter-agency working before, or when, engaging in inter-agency co-operation. This section **summarises the evidence on the impacts of inter-agency co-operation** across children's services (i.e. services in education, health and welfare, and youth justice). The section provides a succinct summary of impacts. For a detailed account and specific examples of actual impacts in Ireland the reader is referred to CAAB Research Reports No. 4 and 5 and for international examples to a recent report commissioned by the CfBT Education Trust.[15]

Impacts are described in terms of those on **service users** (Section 3.2), **professionals** (Section 3.3), **agencies** (Section 3.3) and **the exchequer** (Section 3.5). This section provides guidance on the reported positive impacts (indicated by '✓') and negative impacts (indicated by '✗') of inter-agency working. Before reviewing evidence on impacts it is useful for the reader to be aware of some of the **characteristics of the research evidence**, namely:

- The impacts of inter-agency co-operation are not frequently mentioned in the literature.[16] The literature tends to provide greater coverage to influencing factors (in particular inhibitors).

- The evidence base consists mainly of the views of those involved in inter-agency co-operation, very little 'hard' or 'numeric' evidence (positive or negative) is reported.

- Studies reporting impacts tend to focus mainly on impacts for professionals, there is less focus on impacts for agencies and even less on impacts for service users.

3.2 Impacts on Services Users

Impacts of inter-agency co-operation on service users are reported in the literature in terms of improved services and improved quality of life. Studies reporting evidence of impacts on service users relate to inter-agency working at service delivery level, e.g. through multi- or inter-agency teams, through the use of 'key workers' or through initiatives where other co-ordinated approaches to delivery were adopted.

Improved services are reported through quicker and better access to services, referral to more appropriate services, a more prevention/early intervention focus by services and reduced stigma associated with accessing some services.

Improved lives of children and their families is reported in terms of children being able to remain in the local community, improved support for young people and their parents, improved educational attainment, and families experiencing better relationships with services, reduced stress and better quality of life.

Figure 3.1 summarises the main impacts on service users reported in the literature. None of the studies

report negative impacts on service users. Nevertheless, it is important to recall that relatively few studies examine impacts on service users and very few obtain the direct views of service users.

Figure 3.1: Reported Impacts of Inter-agency Co-operation on Service Users[17]

Improved Services
✔ easier/quicker/better **access to services**, where there is a 'key worker' or multi-agency team
✔ **referral to appropriate** agencies/services
✔ services have a more **prevention/early intervention** focus, especially where a co-ordinated approach to delivery is adopted
✔ early identification and intervention approach through multi-agency working can reduce the **need to access specialist services** and reduce **stigma** attached to accessing services (e.g. police and social services)
Improved Lives
✔ enabled children to **remain at home and in local school**, in the case of disabled children with complex health needs
✔ improved **support** for young people and their parents, as a result of multi-agency teams in local education authorities
✔ improved **educational attainment**, as a result of multi-agency teams in local education authorities
✔ better **relationships** with services, reduced **stress** and better **quality of life** for families with 'key workers' compared to those without'*
✔ reduction in **exclusions and behaviour problems**, for multi-agency behaviour and education support teams*

3.3 Impacts on Professionals

When considering impacts of inter-agency co-operation on service professionals it is useful to distinguish between impacts on personal wellbeing, professional development, professional identities and working practices. All available evidence in relation to the first two is positive, for professional identity the evidence points to positive and negative impacts, and there is conflicting evidence on the impacts on working practices.

It is reported to have positive impacts on **personal wellbeing of professionals** as working in this way is noted to be rewarding and stimulating. It can increase job satisfaction when developing new ways of working, and the experience can increase confidence among professionals and improve relationships with other professionals and families.

Positive impacts on **professional development** are reported in terms of increased knowledge and understanding of clients' needs, of cross disciplinary and cross sectoral issues, and of the roles of other agencies. There is also evidence that the requirement

for 'joined-up thinking' changes professional understandings and practices. In addition, professional development can occur through an expanded role due to new ways of working, opportunity to develop new roles, and the experience and learning on how to engage in multi-agency working.

There is evidence of positive and negative impacts on **professional identity**. There is evidence that professionals involved in inter-agency work can feel more accountable when working across sectors. On the other hand, there is evidence that inter-agency work can cause confusion over roles and professional identities. It can lead to questioning of professional roles and identities especially where there is an expansion of new roles within a team. Inter-agency work can also cause concerns over professional status, where certain professions are felt not to be taking their colleagues seriously or giving their opinions sufficient respect.

In relation to work practices there is consistent evidence that inter-agency work can lead to improved communication between agencies, arising from improvements in a range of areas (e.g. relationships, contacts, more opportunities). On the negative side for professionals there are reports that inter-agency work can lead to an increased workload for individual professionals. Although this is reported to be largely a perception at management level rather than reported by front-line staff. There is potential for duplication when multi-agency teams are in operation across different areas for over-lapping target groups. Figure 3.2 summarises the main impacts on professionals reported in the literature.

Figure 3-2: Reported Impacts of Inter-agency Co-operation on Professionals[18]

Personal Wellbeing
✔ professionals found inter-agency working to be **rewarding and stimulating**
✔ increased **job satisfaction** from the creativity and autonomy afforded to those involved in developing new ways of working
✔ increased **confidence** among professionals
✔ improved **relationships** for professionals with other professionals and families

Professional Development
✔ increased knowledge and **understanding of the roles of other agencies**
✔ improved knowledge and **understanding of cross disciplinary issues** or differences between statutory and non-statutory interventions
✔ raised awareness of **client needs** and issues*
✔ the requirement for 'joined-up thinking' **changes professional understandings and practices**
✔ **expanded role** due to new ways of working developed when working in multi-agency teams
✔ the **opportunity to development new roles** (e.g. key worker)
✔ experience and learning on how to engage in **multi-agency working***

Figure 3-2: Reported Impacts of Inter-agency Co-operation on Professionals[18] *contd*

Professional Identity
✔ professionals feel more **accountable** when working across sectors
✗ confusion over **roles and professional identities** and questioning of individual roles where there was expansion of new roles within a team
✗ concerns over **professional status**, certain professions felt not to be taking their colleagues seriously
Work Practices
✔ improved **communication** between agencies/services arising from 'improved interactions between colleagues, easier to get hold of colleagues from other agencies, easier access to information from other agencies, greater opportunities for information sharing and problem solving
✗ increased **workload** on individual professionals, although reported to be largely a perception at management level rather than reported by front-line staff
✗ potential for **duplication** when multi-agency teams are in operation in different 'areas', e.g. professionals working on multi-agency teams for children with complex health needs found some of their tasks were being undertaken by multi-agency teams in different areas (e.g. multi-agency teams for looked-after children, for children with disabilities)

3.4 Impacts on Agencies

Evidence of benefits are reported in relation to: improved **relationships**, **communication** and **data sharing** with other agencies; efficiency savings; shared **responsibility** and beneficial **extension** of inter-agency working in other areas of agencies' work. There are two areas where positive and negative impacts have been reported; **demands** placed on agencies/services; and, agency **profile**. The evidence shows that inter-agency co-operation reduced demand on agencies/services in some situations whereas it increased demand in others. In some cases those involved in inter-agency work reported that it helped raise their agency's profile while it other cases stakeholders reported a loss of profile of individual organisations or an experience where the benefits of raised profile was felt to accrue to one agency at the cost of another. See Figure 3.3 for a summary of evidence agency impacts.

Figure 3-3: Reported Impacts of Inter-agency Co-operation on Agencies[19]

✔ reduced demand made on services/agencies

✘ increased demand placed on services/agencies

✔ more positive inter-agency relationships

✔ improved communication between agencies

✔ improved data sharing

✔ efficiency savings

✔ shared responsibility*

✔ raised profile*

✘ loss of profile*

✔ extension to other areas of work, where the benefits of inter-agency working have been experienced and highlighted the approach is extended to another areas of the agency's work*

3.5 Impacts on the Exchequer

There can be **budgetary and resource savings** for the Exchequer where inter-agency work has been undertaken to achieve economies of scale (rationale two in Section 2) and where this has been achieved.[20]

Where inter-agency co-operation results in improved services and improved lives for children it can also help improve **value for money** in public services (i.e. overall benefit relative to overall cost).

4. Tools to Support Inter-Agency Work

Different levels of inter-agency working require different tools, this section provides guidance on the range of tools that can be used to support co-operation (see below).

Communication and Decision-Making

- inter-agency decision-making groups
- single council for several programmes
- inter-departmental liaisons
- use of common geographical boundaries

Operational/ Organisational Level

- joint programming and planning
- co-operative (non financial) agreements
- joint funding
- joint purchase of services
- joint administration of a programme
- common definitions, planning periods
- consultation and training

Front-line Service Delivery Level

- coordinator or co-ordinating unit
- centre-based delivery/co-location
- multi-agency team delivery
- case-management
- key worker
- placement scheme
- shared information services
- universal eligibility/referral mechanisms and consolidated application forms

CHILD

Different levels of inter-agency working require different tools so this section provides guidance on the range of tools that can be used to support inter-agency co-operation according to three key categories. Namely, tools to support inter-agency co-operation in communication and decision-making, tools to support co-operation at operational level and tools to support co-operation in front-line service delivery. When considering the guidance it useful for the reader to be aware of the three following **aspects of the available evidence on tools**:

- The literature is **primarily based on analysis of existing initiatives and projects** with inter-agency elements, and analysts observing the characteristics of these and identifying a range of different 'categories' of inter-agency co-operation. Different authors use different terms to describe the 'categories' they identify, e.g. models, strategies, approaches, structures. In this section we use the term 'tool', i.e. 'something that helps you to do a particular activity'.[21] So material described in this section as a tool is often described using different terminology in the source literature, e.g. it may be described as a model, an approach or a strategy.

- There is **no single source document** that provides a comprehensive description of tools, so this section draws on material from a range of sources covering a number of different jurisdictions (e.g. Ireland, the UK, America and Canada). In a small number of instances specific terms used by original authors are changed in order to enhance readability and to facilitate easy understanding (these changes are noted in the endnotes).

- While the literature points to a range of potential tools that can be used in inter-agency working **it does not systematically describe the relative merits and weaknesses of particular tools** in responding to specific circumstances, groups or issues. Nor does it establish the circumstances or different contexts in which a tool could be the preferred, most appropriate and most cost effective one or when it should in fact be avoided.[22]

When reading about these tools and considering which tool, or combination of tools, is most appropriate to a reader's situation it is important to note two points.[23]

Firstly, tools used should be relevant and specific to the particular context. In particular, tools should be relevant and specific to the particular level of inter-agency work being undertaken as well as to the settings, agencies and professionals involved.

Secondly, in many cases a combination of tools are used in an inter-agency initiative or project. For example, a common feature in many inter-agency initiatives in Ireland (e.g. area-based partnership companies, local drug task forces) is for a two-tiered structure at local level. The first tier uses a consultation or planning mechanism (which may be formally structured as a board, a committee, a steering group, task force or similar) and the second tier uses a service delivery tool (e.g. coordinator or co-ordinating unit).

4.2 Tools for Communication and Decision-making

The most commonly used tool to support communication and decision-making in inter-agency initiatives is inter-agency decision-making groups.[24] Other tools used include a single inter-agency group to administer several investment programmes, inter-departmental liaisons and the use of common geographic boundaries.[25]

Inter-agency decision-making groups: provide a forum for professionals from different agencies to meet to discuss issues and to make decisions. Decision-making tends to be at a strategic level, but is also expected to impact indirectly on service delivery at operational level. There is a two-way exchange of information represented by the arrows (see Figure 4.1) as professionals bring views and information to the group to feed into the decision-making process, but also take away issues from discussions to feed back to others in their own agency.

Inter-organisational groups vary according to how specific their purpose is and they have many different names ranging from *ad hoc* committees, to inter-agency task forces to cabinet councils. Inter-agency task forces tend to be more specific and project oriented than cabinet councils, which usually address more general policy issues.[26]

Figure 4-1: Inter-agency Decision-Making Group

Source Atkinson et al. (2002)
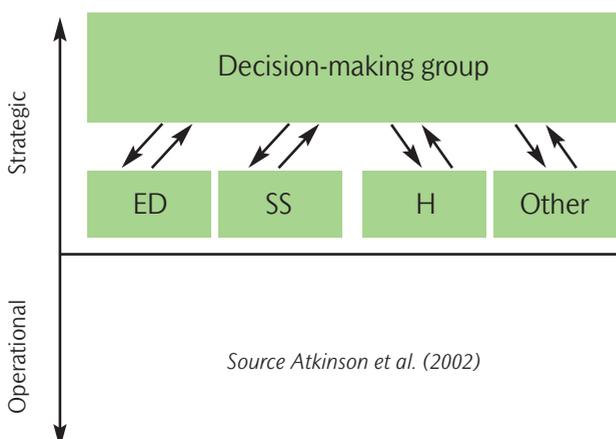
While inter-agency decision-making groups are used extensively at the strategic and public policy level, three separate types of family welfare conferences (provisions for which were made in the Children Act, 2001) are commonly used at an operational to service delivery level in Irish children's services. These are family welfare conferences, diversion or restorative conferences and family conferencing (sometimes referred to as family group conferences).[27]

Single council/group for several programmes: involve an inter-agency council/group covering several investment programmes or service areas. It can support joint or consolidated planning and centralise authority for policy/strategic recommendations for separate programmes.

Inter-departmental liaisons: involve the use of inter-departmental liaisons to promote information sharing among several agencies.

Common geographical boundaries: common geographic boundaries can facilitate co-ordination across agencies by making it easier to integrate planning and other activities.

4.3 Tools for Operational Co-operation

A variety of tools can be used to support inter-agency co-operation at operational level. These can provide some degree of integration of programmatic operations either through formalising relationships among programmes or organisational units or by creating particular operational patterns.[28] Tools include joint programming and planning, co-operative agreements (financial and non-financial), consultation and training, and the use of common definitions and planning periods, and quantified objectives.[29]

Joint programming and planning: enables the generation of agreed priorities, administrative guidelines, and programmatic proposals across agencies. The work is typically done through inter-agency decision-making groups (see Section 4.2) but the joint programmes and/or joint planning documents help to co-ordinate agencies' activities and/or services delivery.

Co-operative (non-financial) agreements: these agreements, typically written, specify the particular activities to be undertaken by each agency, the division of labour between or among agencies, activities to be co-ordinated and ways in which activities will be co-ordinated.

There are a number of **co-operative financial agreements** that can be used to strengthen links among providers, to develop and expand services, and to allow for more comprehensive service delivery. Three of the most common types of fiscal linkages are joint funding, joint purchase of services and joint administration of a programme.

Joint funding: where two or more agencies share the costs of implementing a programme which both are responsible for implementing. Joint funding is closely related to **joint commissioning** which is when two or more agencies work together to commission services for agreed strategic purposes, and usually includes pooling of financial resources.

Joint administration of a programme: involves joint decision-making and oversight of a programme.

Common definitions and planning periods, and quantified objectives: when used across similar or related programmes these can facilitate joint action and make it possible to share credit and compare accomplishments.

Consultation and training: where professionals from one agency enhance the expertise of those of another agency by providing consultation and/or training. This usually takes place at operational level.

Within this type of activity there is usually a two-way exchange of knowledge and understanding (as indicated by the arrows in Figure 4.2), but one agency is generally considered the provider and the other the receiver.

Figure 4-2: Consultation and Training

Source Atkinson et al. (2002)
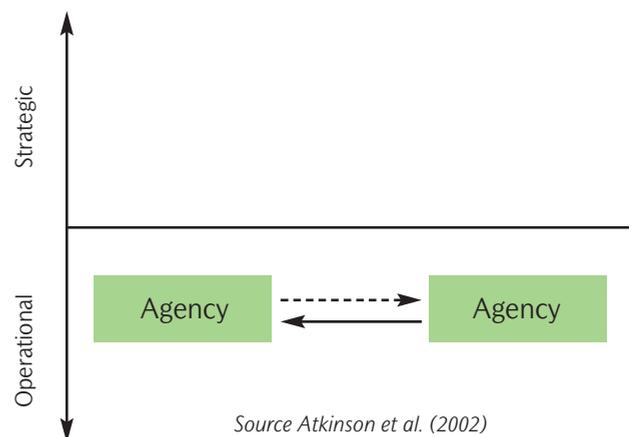
4.4 Tools for Service Delivery

A number of tools can be used to support inter-agency co-operation in front-line service delivery. These include the use of a coordinator or co-ordinating unit, centre-based delivery (also referred to as a one-stop shop or co-location), multi-agency team delivery, case-management, shared information services, the use of key workers,

universal eligibility and referral mechanisms, and consolidated application forms.

Coordinator or co-ordinating unit: involve using a coordinator or co-ordinating unit to draw together the services from a number of agencies involved in the delivery of services so that a more co-ordinated and cohesive response to need can be adopted.

Where a *coordinator* is used, he/she has responsibility for pulling together previously disparate services. While the coordinator might be seen as operating between service and strategic level, delivery by the agency professionals is at front-line level. Professionals from different agencies often have limited contact with each other, but they receive information and gain understanding of other agencies through links with the coordinator (as indicated by the two way arrows in Figure 4.3).[30]

Figure 4-3: Coordinator or Co-ordinating Unit


Source: Derived from Atkinson et al. (2002)
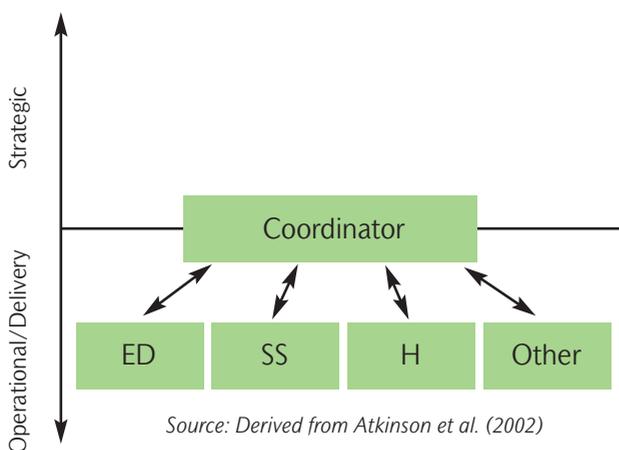
When a *co-ordinating unit* is used, an organisation or organisational unit is established to co-ordinate decisions and actions among units of a system. It has greater autonomy and a more formal structure than an inter-organisational group: generally, the unit has its own offices, separate operational budget

(if not control over other funds) and is staffed by its own personnel. Often it does not implement any of the tasks it is charged with co-ordinating, specialising instead in planning, managerial and administrative activities.[31]

Centre-based delivery, one-stop shop or co-location: involves gathering a range of expertise together in one place in order to deliver a more co-ordinated and comprehensive service. While professionals may not jointly deliver services to clients by locating professionals from different agencies in a central base (represented by the box in Figure 4.4), exchange of information, ideas and discussion between agencies can be facilitated (as indicated by the arrows). They can thus be aware of each other's role and could deliver a more co-ordinated approach. In addition, access to agencies by clients can be facilitated. This is also referred to as one-stop shop or co-location. Physical co-location, however, is not an automatic form of improved co-ordination unless concerted efforts are made to combine and co-ordinate services.[32]

Figure 4-4: Co-location or One-stop Shop

Source: Derived from Atkinson et al. (2002)
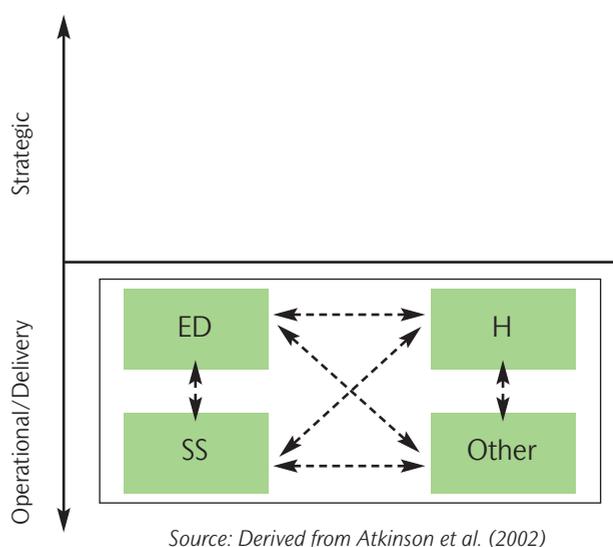
Multi-agency team delivery: these teams support professionals from different agencies to work together on a day-to-day basis and to form a cohesive multi-agency team that delivers services directly to clients. The professionals involved in operational teams work in close proximity and work together to deliver services to clients. Thus, a two-way exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills can take place between all those involved (as indicated by the arrows in Figure 4.5), and roles and responsibilities are often less distinct than in other approaches.[33]

Figure 4-5: Multi-agency Team Delivery
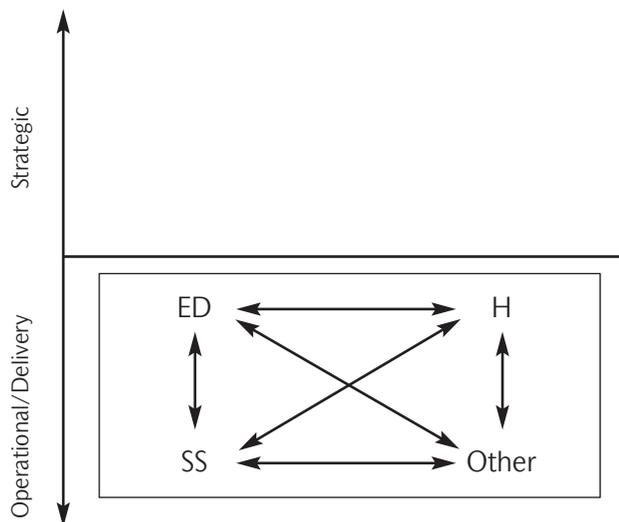
Case-management: this is a process in which an individual or unit is assigned to assist a client (an individual or family) in developing and executing a co-ordinated plan of services. Though characterised by a number of different approaches - e.g. management via an individual or an interdisciplinary team - case management typically involves five main functions. These are assessment of client need, development of a cross-programme

service plan, arrangements for service delivery, service monitoring and assessment, and evaluation and follow-up. The case manager tracks the progress of the client, aims to make sure the appropriate mix of services is provided, and tries to address problems in the co-ordination of services.

Key worker: the term key worker is sometimes used inter-changeably with the term case manager, i.e. where a case management process is used, the case manager as per the description above is in effect the service user's key worker. In other situations the term key worker is used to refer to a worker who is the 'broker' for a client where a case work approach is adopted (although this may not involve all five stages of case management as explained above for case management). In such cases the key worker is the broker in the process who becomes the single point of contact for the service users, not only in providing information on the types of services that are available, but also in mediating and advocacy on their behalf, both within their own organisation and other relevant bodies.[34]

Placement schemes: involve creating posts that cross the organisational divide, e.g. social workers working in primary health care. Holders of these posts usually acted as care managers, but not necessarily as part of a multi-agency system.

Shared information services: involve developing electronic information systems that allow the full mix of service providers that work with a client to share information about that client. These information systems can reduce duplication of effort, make it easier to track clients as they move through the system, and facilitate service delivery.

Universal eligibility and referral mechanisms, and consolidated application forms: these are mechanisms to help overcome a big barrier to co-ordination in very fragmented sectors, i.e. disparate and contradictory eligibility criteria and information requirements for different programmes.

A number of other tools are identified in the literature as potentially supporting co-operation in service delivery (i.e. **shared credit mechanisms, shared staff, using client as purchasing agent**) but are not defined here as insufficient information is provided on these in the literature.[35]

5. Influencing Factors

5.1 Section Introduction

> *Factors influencing inter-agency co-operation fall into five broad categories.*
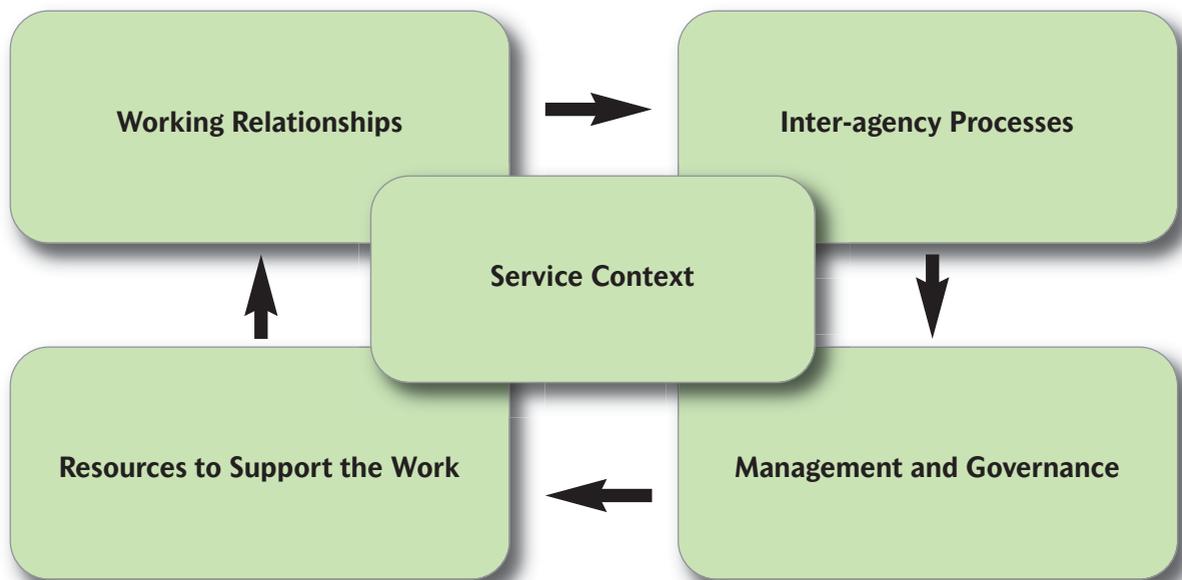
Inter-agency co-operation or working involves professionals from different organisations working together towards a shared aim. Therefore, **it is important to have a good understanding of the factors that influence (facilitate or inhibit) inter-agency working** when planning and undertaking inter-agency co-operation.

Irish and international literature (see endnotes 36, 38, 39 and 40) on inter-agency co-operation both **provide considerable attention to the factors that facilitate and inhibit** inter-agency working. There is considerable **commonality across the evidence base** on facilitators and inhibitors. This is true of evidence across Irish children's services and other areas of Irish public services, and across children's services in Ireland and internationally.

Examination of the evidence shows that **facilitators and inhibitors are inextricably linked**. This section provides guidance on the facilitators and inhibitors that influence inter-agency co-operation in children's services. It presents the key factors and describes how each can facilitate (indicated by '✓') or inhibit (indicated by '✗') inter-agency co-operation.

5.2 Working Relationships

Key factors influencing working relationships are **role demarcation**, **commitment**, **trust/mutual respect** and **understanding** of other agencies (including culture). There is evidence of these factors acting as both facilitators and inhibitors of inter-agency working. Inappropriate role demarcation is very frequently cited as an inhibitor of inter-agency working, while positive commitment is frequently

referred to as a facilitator.[36] Although not reported as frequently as the other factors, there is evidence that **joint training and team building**, and **past history** of inter-agency working, can support inter-agency working. Figure 5.1 provides a summary of facilitators and inhibitors in relation to these.

Figure 5-1: Working Relationships: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)[37]

Role Demarcation	
✔ clarity over roles of agencies	✗ status issues/power struggles
✔ clear role boundaries	✗ professional and sect oral hierarchies
✔ acknowledging professional differences	✗ lack of equal representation
✔ status/hierarchies addressed	✗ blurring of professional boundaries/role ambiguity
✔ understanding of each other's responsibilities	✗ different core beliefs and identifies

Commitment	
✔ willingness to work together	✗ inappropriate levels of representation
✔ commitment from all staff (strategic, senior and front-line)	✗ absence of partners
✔ fulfilling responsibilities*	✗ not fulfilling responsibilities*
	✗ inter-agency work not a priority

Trust and Mutual Respect	
✔ trust and confidence in, along with mutual respect and positive regard for, workers from different agencies	✗ lack of trust between individuals and agencies

Understanding Other Agencies	
✔ understanding the role and work of other agencies	✗ lack of understanding of other agencies
✔ awareness of what other agencies can contribute	✗ stereotypical thinking about other professionals
✔ appreciation of different contexts in which professionals work	✗ ignorance of other services
✔ understanding the range of perspectives that can be brought to bear	✗ failing to recognise the contribution of other agencies
✔ understanding cultural differences and developing a partnership culture	✗ differing professional models and beliefs/ explanations of client needs/solutions
	✗ conflicting professional and agency cultures

Figure 5-1: Working Relationships: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)[37] *contd*

Other Factors		
✔ a positive history of joint working	✗	tradition of not planning for co-ordination of services*
✔ joint training and team building		

5.3 Inter-agency Processes

Key features of inter-agency processes are **communication** between partners, **clarity of purpose** for the inter-agency work, **effective planning and consultation** with stakeholders, **organisational** policies, processes and procedures, and **information exchange** between organisations. A review of international evidence shows that communication was the most frequently identified facilitating factor for inter-agency processes.[38]

Factors identified less frequently than those above, in international evidence, are **forums for discussion** of different views and beliefs, and having the **right people** on inter-agency groups, while a **lack of a common language** among professionals and agencies is identified as an inhibitor. All three of these issues were highlighted in consultations with practitioners and managers in Irish children's services. Facilitators and inhibitors are summarised in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5-2: Inter-agency Processes: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)[39]

Communication		
✔ transparent structures for communication	✗	lack of clear channels of communication
✔ maintaining constant communication	✗	poor inter-agency communication
✔ good inter-agency communication		
✔ adequate IT systems		
Clarity of Purpose		
✔ establishing clear and realistic aims	✗	lack of clarity about the rationale for multi-agency work
✔ aims understood and agreed by all agencies	✗	divergences in objectives
✔ developing a shared vision based on jointly held values		
✔ having appropriate targets		
✔ clear justification for partnership		
✔ justification that the group provides value for money		

Figure 5-2: Inter-agency Processes: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)[39] *contd*

Planning and Consultation	
✔ inclusive planning systems	✗ lack of consultation with key stakeholders, limiting commitment
✔ consulting service users	
✔ conducting a needs analysis	
✔ extensive consultation	
Organisational Aspects	
✔ effective systems, protocols and procedures	✗ failure to address temporal aspects of partnerships
✔ establishing formal protocols	✗ competing policies and procedures
✔ clearly defined structure or model	✗ complex and time consuming negotiations
✔ continual reassessment of processes and procedures	✗ organisational restructuring
	✗ different targets and incentives
Information Exchange	
✔ establishing clear protocols for information exchange	✗ confidentiality issues
✔ accurate and up to date shared data between agencies	✗ different rules and protocols around information sharing
	✗ legal, ethical and practical obstacles
Other Factors	
✔ opportunities (forums) to discuss different views and beliefs	✗ lack of a common language among professionals and agencies
✔ involving the relevant and appropriate people in inter-agency groups	
✔ the use of mediators*	

5.4 Resources to Support Inter-agency Work

Key resource factors are **funding** to support inter-agency working, **staffing** to develop and sustain working together, and the availability and investment of **time**. For further guidance on facilitators and inhibitors see Figure 5.3.

Figure 5-3: Resources to Support Inter-agency Working: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)[40]

Funding	
✔ adequate funding*	✗ inadequate funding in the early stages of development of initiatives
✔ adequate funding with shared access	✗ inadequate funding or unequal funding
✔ financial certainty	✗ conflicts over funding within and between agencies
✔ equity between partners	✗ general lack of funding for inter-agency activity
✔ explicit agreements about the pooling or sharing of resources	✗ time-limited funding challenging sustainability
✔ sufficient administrative support	✗ concerns over sustainability of funding limiting inter-agency development
	✗ management of a variety of funding streams
	✗ lack of joint budgets
	✗ budgetary constraints resulting in lack of staff to devote to inter-agency working
	✗ lack of funding mechanisms to support inter-agency applications*

Staffing	
✔ ability to recruit and retain staff	✗ staff turnover and recruitment difficulties challenging sustainability
✔ effectiveness of particular personalities	✗ staff shortages and lack of qualified staff
✔ adequate staff in place	✗ salary differentials
✔ co-location of staff from different agencies in one site	✗ variations in conditions of service
✔ co-locating staff, joint location or change of location	✗ uncertainty over future of job/post due to continuing policy change

Time	
✔ ensuring time is available for working together	✗ a lack of time
✔ dedicated time for start-up	✗ the time involved in developing and sustaining relationships
✔ an incremental approach to joint working	✗ lack of time to devote to joint working

5.5 Management and Governance

Important management and governance factors are **leadership** of inter-agency working, **governance and accountability** in relation to the work, and **performance management** of policies, procedures and impacts. Figure 5.4 provides further guidance on facilitators and inhibitors.

Figure 5-4: Management and Governance: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)[41]

Leadership	
✔ clear managerial presence and support	✗ absence of clear leadership
✔ a specific leader or coordinator	✗ lack of support and commitment from upper management
✔ strong and effective leadership	
✔ a multi-agency steering or management group	
✔ existence of allies and champions at strategic and operational levels within all of the organisations involved	
Governance and Accountability	
✔ clear framework of accountability and responsibility	✗ poor governance
✔ an environment that gets the most out of people charged with making partnership work	✗ lack of clarity around accountability
✔ a structure that facilitates effective and efficient decision-making	
✔ agreed arrangements for accountability	
Performance Management	
✔ monitoring and evaluation	✗ traditional focus of services on activities rather than improving outcomes*
✔ demonstrating the work is making a difference, through evaluation frameworks	✗ limited experience of monitoring and evaluation*
✔ highlighting benefits, to promote commitment	
✔ reviewing policies and procedures in light of changing circumstances and new knowledge	
✔ incentives*	

5.6 Service Context

When seeking to achieve service integration through inter-agency co-operation, barriers can arise due to the 'service context' or from 'other services'. This is a key factor in Irish children's services and Figure 5.5 shows a number of inhibitors in this regard.[42]

Figure 5-5: Service Context: Facilitators (✓) and Inhibitors (✗)

Planning and Consultation	
✔ service agency past experience of joint or inter-agency working	✗ long waiting lists for 'key' services
	✗ gaps in service provision
	✗ lack of services outside of 'normal office hours'
	✗ referral procedures of certain agencies 'blocking' access to other services
	✗ limited levels of involvement by some services (due to crisis driven nature) limiting ability to engage in ongoing inter-agency co-operation
	✗ limited intervention services, preventative services and family support services

6. Tips on Good Practice

6.1 Section Overview

This section provides guidance on good practice in inter-agency co-operation. Because of the extensive number of actions that can constitute inter-agency co-operation and the very broad range of contexts within which it can be used, a 'single model' of good practice cannot be identified. Instead this guidance document identifies 15 features associated with good practice in inter-agency co-operation (Section 6.2) and provides additional evidence informed guidance on how these features can be achieved.

6.2 Top Tip – There are 15 Features of Good Practice

From our analysis we can identify **15 features** associated with good practice in inter-agency co-operation.

1. Have a justifiable rationale.

2. Ensure effective leadership.

3. Develop a shared purpose.

4. Clarify roles and responsibilities for inter-agency working.

5. Discuss and allay workers' fears and concerns.

6. Secure commitment from staff at all levels, strategic, operational and service delivery.

7. Build trust and mutual respect in inter-agency groups/workers.

8. Foster understanding between agencies.

9. Create an inter-agency culture and remove cultural barriers.

10. Ensure effective communication and information exchange.

11. Plan and organise effectively.

12. Achieve effective representation and participation in inter-agency working groups/teams.

13. Invest adequate time, staff and money.

14. Have appropriate corporate governance systems.

15. Monitor, evaluate and renew.

6.3 Additional Tips on How to Achieve the 15 Features

This section lists each of the **15 features** associated with good practice in inter-agency co-operation, and provides additional guidance on how each of these can be achieved. It lists a range of actions that are identified in the literature that can help to achieve each feature, either when used in isolation or in combination.

1. Have a justifiable rationale.

A justifiable rationale can be achieved by:

a. being clear on what the **underlying rationale** for engaging in inter-agency co-operation is in each situation. Is it to address problems with multiple and inter-related causes? Is it to generate economies of scale? Is it to benefit from collaborative advantage? Is it to reduce policy and service fragmentation? Is it to adhere to policy or legal requirements?;

b. being clear that inter-agency co-operation, in the context of services for children, should not be seen as a way of compensating for **poor quality services**, for the lack of services or for **underperforming agencies**;[43]

c. constructively **questioning the basis** for inter-agency co-operation and considering **alternative approaches** (see Section 2);

d. having an **understanding** of how inter-agency co-operation could improve the existing situation or what targets it is to achieve;[44]

e. clearly **identifying when and in what ways** inter-agency approaches can contribute to meeting children's needs and achieve strategic objectives;

f. establishing a **clear justification** for the co-operation and having the time, space and information to ask, 'Why work together?'[45]

2. Ensure effective leadership.

Effective leadership can be promoted by:

a. **having a leader** to manage the multi-agency group;[46]

b. ensuring that leaders are the **key decision makers**;[47]

c. providing leaders with **time to fulfil** their role;[48]

d. ensuring that leaders have the necessary **skills and characteristics** such as:

   ■ the ability to communicate a shared vision which is child centred, with enough clarity and strength to promote the equality of the agencies involved;[49]

   ■ a tenacity to drive the inter-agency agenda with exceptional persistence – these are people who 'never give up';[50]

   ■ strong entrepreneurial skills for relationship building and networking, and are fully committed to the inter-agency group;[51]

   ■ have a sustained impetus to build effective partnerships;[52]

   ■ a strong vision for the potential of the inter-agency setting;[53]

   ■ an understanding of the wider context and whole system within which the inter-agency service operates – they 'see the bigger picture';[54]

   ■ the capacity to stay with the project and to be comfortable with the isolation that may come where there is resistance to the inter-agency work;[55]

   ■ energy, hard work and openness to other ideas and approaches;[56]

e. supporting leaders with **'local champions'** who promote cultural changes, establish partnerships and help to deliver joint action;[57]

f. supporting leaders with **networks of other leaders**.[58]

3. Develop a shared purpose.

A shared purpose can be developed by:

a.   agreeing a shared **vision**[59] and shared understandings of **purpose**;[60]

b.   agreeing a shared vision with **appropriate features**, i.e. defines the partnership's scope and purpose, but is also inspirational and based on jointly held values;[61]

c.   clearly articulating the **goals** and anticipated **outcomes**;[62]

d.   ensuring that all staff have a sense of agreed **strategic objectives** and shared **core aims**;[63]

e.   establishing a clear justification for the partnership and having the time, space and information to ask, 'Why work in partnership?;[64]

f.   developing **targets** that are shared and relevant across agencies;[65]

g.   underpinning **clarify of purpose** by a needs analysis and mapping existing provision;[66]

h.   holding **open days** and providing **joint training/staff development**.[67]

4. Clarify roles and responsibilities for inter-agency working.

Roles and responsibilities can be clarified by:

a.   taking **time in initial** multi-agency meetings to discuss and clarify roles and responsibilities;[68]

b.   each worker **having a clear role**;[69]

c.   each worker having **a clear sense of how they contribute** to a wider purpose;[70]

d.   sustaining relevant discussions and clarity **throughout** inter-agency work.[71]

5. Discuss and allay workers' fears and concerns about inter-agency working.

> ### Workers' fears and concerns about inter-agency working can be allayed by:
>
> a. acknowledging that inter-agency working can be a **dynamic process of change** and so roles can become blurred, confused and flexible,[72] but emphasise that effective inter-agency co-operation should not imply that clarity of roles is lost;[73]
>
> b. acknowledging that some workers can have a real **fear** that professional service delivery may be compromised,[74] but allaying this by emphasising the **benefits** and examples of where service delivery has improved due to inter-agency working;
>
> c. acknowledging that some workers may feel that in inter-agency teamwork their **skills and expertise** (and hence professional identify) can be undermined, but stress that in effective inter-agency teams individual skills are recognised and developed;[75]
>
> d. being aware that while working together on a day-to-day basis can break down some prejudices and facilitate communication, that it can also **enhance difference**, hierarchy and professional stereotypes;[76]
>
> e. engaging in activity that leads to a renegotiation of practice and to reduced anxiety over professional **barriers** (e.g. boundary crossing)[77] and helps to reduce professional **stereotypes** (e.g. joint training or shared learning in groups);[78]
>
> f. providing **time to reflect** on new professional identities that can arise from inter-agency teams;[79]
>
> g. emphasising that successful inter-agency teams respect specialist expertise but combine this with a willingness to explore and celebrate **professional diversity** regardless of status;[80]
>
> h. being aware that barriers related to status/hierarchies can be addressed by recognising and valuing differences and by building a **definition of expertise** that values diversity;[81]
>
> i. taking into account, when forming new service delivery teams, that forming a new work identity is a **process of negotiation** and that there is therefore a need to interact with others in planning and forming roles;[82]
>
> j. engaging in **pre-planning** to anticipate and therefore minimise the potential for problems to arise from 'turf issues'. For example, by highlighting potential positive outcomes and disseminating the benefits of other collaborations in order to minimise any tensions;[83]
>
> k. taking in other features of good practice to allay workers' fears such as by building **trust** and mutual respect (see Feature 7), fostering **understanding** between agencies (see Feature 8) and by creating an inter-agency **culture** (see Feature 9).

6. Secure commitment from staff at all levels: strategic, operational and service delivery.

Commitment can be secured by:

a. making sure that the **commitment of senior managers** is clearly seen by the workforce;[84]

b. **consulting** with professionals and clients to secure commitment;[85]

c. promoting an **environment** where participants are willing to work towards a common goal;[86]

d. highlighting the **potential benefits** of multi-agency practice;

e. bringing out the **positive outcomes** for service users;[87]

f. **acknowledging and valuing** peripheral team members (part-time staff or seconded members) in order to secure widespread commitment;[88]

g. **using resources** to underpin commitment;[89]

h. **promoting attendance** at meetings, by creating opportunities for decision-making at meetings and by ensuring that meetings are chaired effectively, supported by clear/accessible minutes and prevented from becoming too large.[90]

7. Build trust and mutual respect in inter-agency groups/workers.

Trust and respect can be built by:

a. group members **being honest** about gaps in knowledge;[91]

b. creating an **environment** where people feel able to be open and honest with other agencies and to discuss any concerns and difficulties;[92]

c. finding ways to enable professionals to **share experiences** and to appreciate one another's role;[93]

d. **sharing skills** and expertise;[94]

e. having, in some circumstances, equal **resource distribution**;[95]

f. developing **close working relationships**.[96]

8. Foster understanding between agencies.

Understanding can be fostered by:

a. encouraging each agency to provide an **agency presentation** (providing information about their role and procedures) prior to any multi-agency work;[97]

b. making available accessible, **practical guides** to working with different sectors;[98]

c. using joint **training or forums** to share information about different agencies;[99]

d. giving key players more **time together** to foster a mutual understanding;[100]

e. using **work-shadowing schemes** for different professions.[101]

8. Create an inter-agency culture and remove cultural barriers.

An appropriate culture can be created by:

a. using a leader with **'cultural intelligence'** (i.e. one who can identify the cultures within different organisations and then construct appropriate responses to them) to create a shared culture;[102]

b. giving a high priority to a **partnership culture**;[103]

c. creating opportunities for professionals to engage in **crossing boundaries and sharing expertise**;[104]

d. **placing strategic members** of staff in departments where there is some reluctance to work collaboratively in order to break down barriers and raise the profile of inter-agency work;[105]

e. increasing **understanding of professionals** in different agencies (see Feature 8);

f. using **'staff loan' programmes** (allowing representatives of a collaborating agency to be loaned to another agency and housed in that office) to assist with professional learning and understanding of other agencies.[106]

10. Ensure effective communication and information exchange.

Have appropriate processes by:

a. **embedding communication** into working practices;[107]

b. having transparent **structures** for communication within and between agencies and clear **communication protocols**;[108]

c. establishing **clear protocols** for information exchange and **formalising the process**.[109]

Have appropriate communications channels by:

a. using both **formal and informal** *modes* of communication.[110] More informal modes of communication can be encouraged through the development of personal connections;[111]

b. using an appropriate combination of **different** *types* of communication, e.g. face-to-face meetings[112] and accessible written information and web-based communication;[113]

c. using **written updates** to minimise miscommunications, especially in the early stages of multi-agency work,[114] or in deep and inclusive discussions;[115]

d. providing frequent **opportunities for communication** (e.g. meetings, phone calls and emails);[116]

e. developing **proactive approaches** to communication, discussing problems and being 'up-front' with issues.[117]

Have appropriate supports for communication by:

a. encouraging and supporting effective **communications skills** in the professionals involved in inter-agency working, in particular the skills of listening, negotiating and compromising;[118]

b. encouraging different professional groups to **value one another** in order to establish trust around information sharing;[119]

c. using **joint training** to facilitate information sharing;[120]

d. using, where appropriate, **co-location** as a tool to improve communication.[121]

Develop a common language between stakeholders by:

a. ensuring that all representatives **understand terms** or acronyms;[122]

b. facilitating professionals to **explore differences** in terminology and come to terms with their own understandings;[123]

c. giving key players **time together** to foster mutual understandings and informed dialogue;[124]

d. **investing time and resources** in activities (e.g. team building) to encourage the creation of a shared language;[125]

e. **documenting** common and agreed terms and definitions.

Support sharing of client information and adherence to Data Protection Legislation by:

a. ensuring staff are aware that the Data Protection Acts do not prevent the sharing of **data that is not personal**, i.e. aggregate or anonymised data may be shared;

b. ensuring staff are aware that the Data Protection Acts do not prevent **data being provided to an entity providing a funded service on your behalf** for the provision of that service. Such an entity is a 'data processor' which requires an appropriate contract for the passing of the data. That data may then only be used by the data processor in the provision of that funded service;

c. ensuring staff are aware that data can be shared where **explicit consent** has been given by the data subject and where it is prescribed by law. Other certain exemptions include for example, where it is in the vital interest of data subject or in the prevention of crime. However, the 'vital interests of a child' cannot be relied upon for generalised and ongoing exchange of data in relation to children.

See Appendix A for more details.

11. Plan and ~~organisation~~ $\land$ effectively.

Effective planning can be achieved by:

a. being aware that while the specifics of inter-agency work must determine the process, mechanisms and so on it is possible to **learn from previous initiatives** and reinventing the inter-agency wheel can be avoided[126], Section 4 and Appendix B provides a list of useful resources;

b. taking into account that **different types of inter-agency approaches require different tools**, structures and mechanisms of co-ordination. For example, where the objective is to engage in planning or decision-making a forum or similar structure within which the key agencies are represented is required. On the other hand integrated service delivery requires to be reinforced and underpinned by a formal structure such as a forum or network but is delivered through different mechanisms such as shared protocols, key workers or case conferences, centre-based delivery, multi-agency teams;[127]

c. undertaking effective **consultation** as part of the planning process, e.g. consulting service providers and potential partners on needs, issues and priorities[128] or involving service users in partnerships;[129]

d. carrying out a **needs analysis** and mapping existing provision;[130]

e. taking time to **set up** structures to support joint working, e.g. co-operative agreements, service level agreements or co-ordinating bodies;[131]

f. **taking time** to set up structures to support inter-agency working, e.g. transforming strategic plans into operational policy;[132]

g. **consulting** with all stakeholders, keeping them informed and considering their views, agreeing or seeking agreement/approval prior to signing-off on plans.

Effective organisation can be achieved by:

a. **selecting** the tools, structures, models or strategies, relevant to context, (see Section 4 and Appendix B), i.e. that are relevant to the specific and particular level of inter-agency work being undertaken as well as settings, agencies and professionals involved;[133]

b. documenting clearly defined **structures, models or tools** to explain how the inter-agency process will operate to professionals and service users;[134]

c. giving **written commitment** to inter-agency working and the adoption of pro-collaboration policies;[135]

11. Plan and ~~organisation~~ effectively. *contd*

d. clearly **mandating and facilitating staff** to work in an inter-agency way;[136]

e. transforming **strategic plans into operational policy**;[137]

f. developing **shared protocols** with all professionals involved and reviewing them regularly;[138]

g. being aware that if developing a protocol is seen as a prerequisite for working together there is **scope for endless negotiation** that can hold up progress;[139]

h. being aware that where used, protocols or agreements about ways of working can take a number of different forms and fulfil a **number of functions**. They can[140]:

- address work practices;

- describe how casework would be managed;

- set out the arrangements for information sharing about children and families;

- set down values and principles to guide the relationship among agencies;

- offer an opportunity to tease out the 'boundaries' of inter-agency working;

- serve as a vehicle for formally securing the 'buy-in' of partner organisations which must sign up at senior management level;

- be a means of sharing knowledge about the inter-agency commitment and how it will work;

- serve as a way of ensuring that potential members understand what is expected of them and what commitment they are making to their partners;

i. using **joint training** and **catering for different working conditions** in different organisations;[141]

j. using **joint training** as effective practice.[142]

12. Achieve effective representation and participation in inter-agency working groups/teams.

Effective representation can be achieved by:

a. when deciding on the membership of an emergent inter-agency group, **balancing** the need to involve all organisations, with an interest, with the need to deliver inter-agency objectives as efficiently as possible[143] and to ensure the group remains flexible and reasonably small;[144]

b. purposefully selecting the **composition** of inter-agency groups to ensure that all represented agencies have equal representation;[145]

c. ensuring that an inter-agency group has enough members at sufficiently **senior management** positions in their own institution to enable them to 'make things happen' as opposed to more junior staff who 'have less clout',[146] and that senior management participate and show commitment;

d. using a checklist **of all the agencies** involved with the client group as a check on who could valuably be included;[147]

e. involving, where appropriate, **service users**;[148]

f. involving people in the **early stages** of development;[149]

g. proactively **supporting networking** by key stakeholders where there are few inherited inter-agency linkages;[150]

h. using training to **address issues** that may arise from a variability of members' history of inter-agency working.[151]

13. Invest adequate time, staff and money.

Appropriate commitment of time can be achieved by:

a. enabling staff to **devote sufficient time** to inter-agency-agency work, both participating in inter-agency activities (e.g. meetings, steering committees) and also sufficient time to complete responsibilities between inter-agency activities;[152]

b. providing individuals **time to reflect** on new professional identities (which in turn leads to clearer role demarcation);[153]

c. providing **time for development** of inter-agency working, e.g. to allow for the development of trust and working relationships between stakeholders, and for the development of appropriate systems and protocols;[154]

d. having **realistic timetables** for developing and implementing new arrangements, and to build in time for the actual planning and development of partnerships.[155]

Appropriate staffing can be achieved by:

a. providing a clear **mandate** for workers to undertake inter-agency co-operation;[156]

b. **signalling the importance** of inter-agency working (e.g. include in job descriptions);[157]

c. being aware that **dedicated resources** are needed to support the management and administrative functions of inter-agency working;[158]

d. recognising the **value of inter-agency work**, by acknowledging and valuing staff activity in inter-agency co-operation and developing mechanisms to measure the benefits of inter-agency co-operation;[159]

e. **training, supporting and empowering** workers (especially front-line workers) to work in an inter-agency way;[160]

f. ensuring sufficient staffing capacity in order to provide **continuity** over time to promote effective partnerships;[161]

g. setting up **support networks** for coordinators and encouraging delegation to other senior staff to relieve individual pressure on coordinators, which can help to alleviate problems with staff turnover due to high pressure;[162]

i. adhering to **other good practice features** (e.g. Features 2 to 10).

13. Invest adequate time, staff and money. *contd*

Good practice in relation to funding can be achieved by:

a. **ring-fencing money to invest** in establishing effective inter-agency co-operation;[163]

b. leadership/management **re-allocating money** to new inter-agency co-operation service delivery approaches;[164]

c. developing/using funding mechanisms and ways to **enable multiple funders/service providers**;[165]

d. being aware that **dedicated resources** are needed to support the management and administrative functions of inter-agency working;[166]

e. taking into account that there is a need for senior managers to **recognise the importance of shared resources** and to act as champions for funding arrangements at strategic and sometimes operational levels;[167]

f. being aware that there is evidence that having **stable funding** is important,[168] that having clearly **written agreements** for funding arrangements is useful,[169] that **committing resources** can keep all agencies engaged[170] and that in certain circumstances **distributing resources evenly** across agencies can be beneficial;[171]

g. knowing that **pooled budgets and joint funding** can, in certain circumstances, help to reduce conflicts over funding between agencies and secure greater commitment;[172]

h. identifying and using **alternative sources** of funding where appropriate;[173]

i. knowing that asking individuals to engage in multi-agency work without **funding support** while they are still accountable for their full workload can cause difficulties.[174]

14. Have appropriate corporate governance systems.

Appropriate systems of governance can be promoted by:

a.	ensuring the inter-agency body/group is **accountable** to relevant stakeholders (e.g. the wider partnership group, service users and external stakeholders);[175]

b.	developing systems to ensure accountability that are **appropriate** to the type of inter-agency partnership/group;[176]

c.	having clear **roles and responsibilities** for the accountable body and all elements of the partnership;[177]

d.	ensuring the lines of **accountability make sense** for front-line workers;[178]

e.	having well-defined transparent **decision-making processes** that ensure decisions are made at the appropriate level;[179]

f.	having, where relevant, a **project management system** that is common to all of the work undertaken in the partnership.[180]

15. Monitor, evaluate and renew.

Monitoring, evaluation and renewal can be achieved by:

a. having **clear aims and objectives**[181] and documenting these;

b. engaging in regular and systematic **monitoring** (i.e. a regular analysis of progress) through the use of appropriate structures and tools (e.g. a formal committee to monitor progress, monitoring indicators, and written progress reports);

c. establishing **joint review and evaluation protocols**[182] and by periodically ensuring that **formal evaluation** of the work is undertaken (i.e. systematically judged on its continued relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and appropriateness of management and information systems);

d. developing **joint performance indicators** that reflect that nature of the work undertaken in multi-agency contexts[183] and by ideally developing performance (monitoring) indicators that capture resources (resource indicators), activity (output indicators), benefits (result indicators) and medium-term benefits (impact indicators);

e. having appropriate **baselines** and **targets** for indicators. Baselines, or baseline data, refer to the initial value against which an indicator is subsequently measured. While a target is something you intend to make happen, indicators need quantified targets because otherwise the extent to which the original objectives are being met cannot be measured;

f. having a **performance management system** that reflects the complexity of **partnership working**, is **bespoke** for the needs of the partnership and can relate partnership activity to the achievement of **outcomes**[184] (results and impacts);

g. periodically taking the time to review and evaluate activity and then to **alter or renew** the work.

Endnotes

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[5] This document was independently peer reviewed by Nick Frost is Professor of Social Work (Children, childhood and families), at the Faculty of Health, Leeds Metropolitan University. Nick has published in the fields of child welfare and professional learning, including as co-author of 'Developing Multi Professional Teamwork for Integrated Children's Services' (OUP, 2006). Most recently he has written, 'Understanding Children's Social Care' (with Nigel Parton, Sage, 2009). His primary research interest is integrated professional working. Nick is a registered social worker, and practiced in local authority social work settings for 15 years before commencing his academic career.

[6] The structure of Sections 3 and 5 in this guidance is derived from Atkinson et al (2007) with two additions. Section 3 includes the additional sub-heading '3.5 Impacts on the Exchequer' and Section 5 includes the additional sub-heading '5.6 Service Context'.

[7] Bardach, E. (1998) *Getting Agencies to Work Together: The Practice and Theory of Managerial Craftsmanship*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

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[13] OECD (1996) cited in Eivers, E. (2001) 'Integrated Service Provision for At Risk Children and Their Families', Irish Journal of Education, 2001, xxxii, pp 44-62

[14] Serrano (2003) discusses these three approaches as alternatives for achieving multi-sectoral goals, but they can equally be applied as alternatives for achieving service integration.

[15] Hibernian Consulting in association with the CAAB, (2009); Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C., (2009); Atkinson *et al* (2007).

[16] Atkinson *et al* (2007) in their review of 33 international reports note that references to impacts were found in just under half of the sources examined.

[17] The split of impacts (into improved services and improved quality of life) is taken from Atkinson *et al* (2007). The specific entries in Figure 3.1 are as cited in Atkinson *et al* (2007) with the exception of entries superscripted with '*', which are as cited in Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[18] The split of impacts (into personal wellbeing, professional development, professional identities, working practices) is taken from Atkinson *et al* (2007). The specific entries in Figure 3.2 are as cited in Atkinson *et al* (2007) with the exception of entries superscripted with '*', which are as cited in Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[19] The specific entries in Figure 3.3 are as cited in Atkinson *et al* (2007) with the exception of entries superscripted with '*', which are cited in Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[20] For specific reference see Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[21] Cambridge Advanced Learner's Online Dictionary.

[22] Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[23] For a discussion of these two points see Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[24] Atkinson *et al* (2007), and Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009).

[25] Descriptions of tools in Section 4.3 are derived from Serrano (2003) except for the main description of inter-agency communication and decision-making groups which is derived from Atkinson (2002). The term 'inter-agency communication and decision-making groups' is used where Atkinson used the term 'decision-making model.'

[26] Serrano (2003).

[27] See Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009) for a discussion of these.

[28] Serrano (2003)

[29] Descriptions of tools in Section 4.3 are derived from Serrano (2003) except for the description of joint commissioning which is from the Every Child Matters' website and the description of consultation and training which is from Atkinson (2002).

[30] Atkinson, M., Wilkin, A., Stott, A., Doherty, P. and Kinder, K. (2002) Multi Agency Working: A Detailed Study, Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

[31] Serrano (2003)

[32] Serrano (2003).

[33] Text and figure from Atkinson (2002).

[34] Definition of key worker from NESF (2006) Delivering Quality Public Services, Dublin: NESF.

[35] These terms are used in Serrano (2003), but he does not define them or discuss them in any detail. The terms are not discussed in any of other international literature reviews, undertaken from the period 1990 to 2008, of inter-agency co-operation examined, they are not mentioned in Irish literature in relation to inter-agency co-operation in children's services, and they are not mentioned in relevant online resources, e.g. the glossary of terms on the Every Child Matters website.

[36] Atkinson *et al* (2007) in their review of 33 international reports note that inappropriate role demarcation was the most frequently cited inhibitor and positive commitment the most frequently cited facilitator of inter-agency co-operation in relation to working relationships.

[37] The split of working relationships into sub-categories in Figure 5.1 is taken from Atkinson *et al* (2007). The specific entries in Figure 5.1 are as citied in Atkinson *et al* (2007) with the exception of the entry superscripted with '*', which is as cited in Serrano (2003). All of the issues raised in the bullet points are citied in reviews of Irish experiences of inter-agency co-operation – specifically Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009) and Hibernian Consulting in association with the CAAB (2009).

[38] Atkinson et al (2007) in their review of 33 international reports note that communication was the most frequently cited facilitator of inter-agency co-operation in relation to inter-agency processes.

[39] The split of working relationships into sub-categories in Figure 5.2 is taken from Atkinson et al (2007). The specific entries in Figure 5.2 are as citied in Atkinson et al (2007) with the exception of entries superscripted with '*', which are as cited in Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009) and Hibernian Consulting in association with the CAAB (2009). All of the issues raised in the bullet points are citied in reviews of Irish experiences of inter-agency co-operation.

[40] The split of working relationships into sub-categories in Figure 5.3 is taken from Atkinson *et al* (2007). The specific entries in Figure 5.3 are as citied in Atkinson *et al* (2007) with the exception of the entry superscripted with '*', which are cited Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009) and Hibernian Consulting in association with the CAAB (2009). All of the issues raised in the bullet points are citied in reviews of Irish experiences of inter-agency co-operation.

[41] The split of working relationships into sub-categories in Figure 5.4 is taken from Atkinson *et al* (2007). The specific entries in Figure 5.4 are as citied in Atkinson *et al* (2007) with the exception of the entry superscripted with '*', which are cited in Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009) and Hibernian Consulting in association with the CAAB (2009). All of the issues raised in the bullet points are citied in reviews of Irish experiences of inter-agency co-operation.

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[44] Duggan, C. and Corrigan, C. (2009)

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[46] Harker *et al*., (2004) cited in Atkinson *et al*., (2007)

[47] Lawrence *et al*., (2003) cited in Atkinson *et al*., (2007)

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Appendix B:
Data Protection and Sharing Client Information

B.1 Appendix Introduction

Concerns about the legal requirements in Ireland under the Data Protection Acts and the implications for data sharing was expressed by practitioners and managers as a barrier to inter-agency co-operation across Irish children's services. Therefore, this appendix provides information in relation to the following questions:

- What is data protection? (Section B.2);

- What are the implications for sharing client data with services/professionals? (Section B.3);

- What resources are available to help? (Section B.4).

The information is taken from publications and the website of the Data Protection Commissioner and is accurate as of October 2009. The user should consult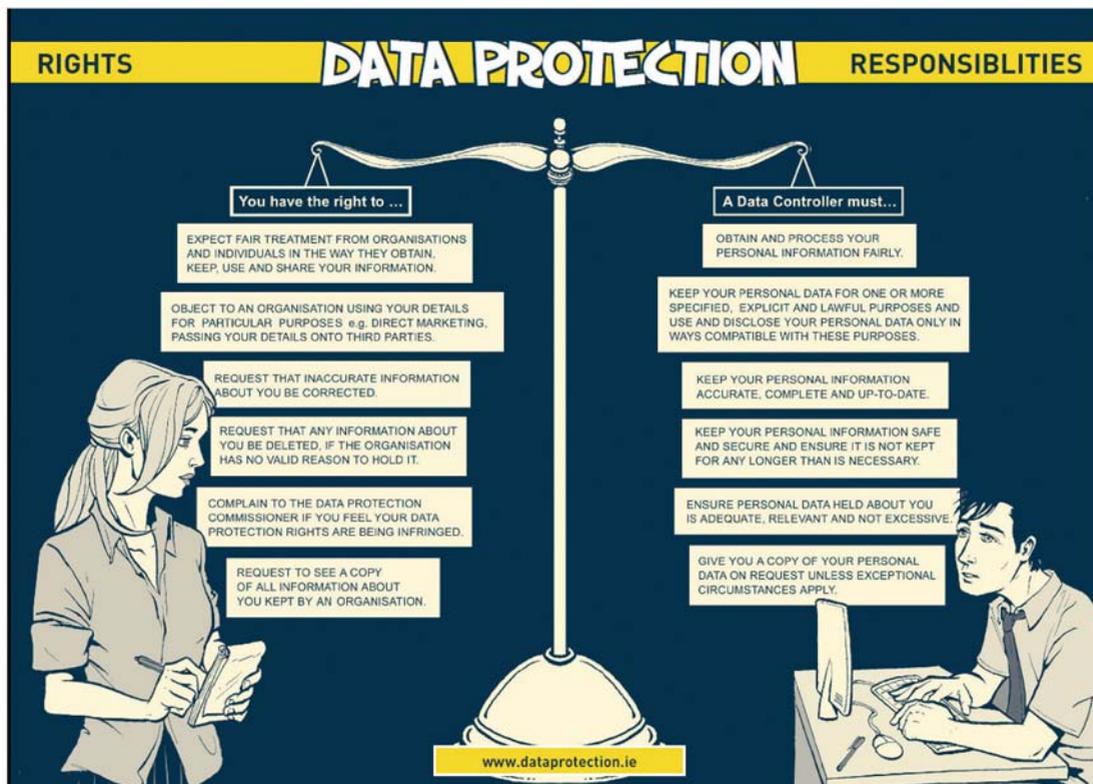 the website of the Data Protection Commissioner (www.dataprotection.ie) for the most up to date information and for specific queries.

B.2 What is Data Protection?

Data protection is the means by which the privacy rights of individuals are safeguarded in relation to the processing of their personal data. The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 confer **rights** on individuals as well as placing **responsibilities** on those persons *processing personal data*. The requirements of the Data Protection Acts apply to all legal entities in this jurisdiction, whether government, private, voluntary or charitable, that control personal data.

Figure B.1 summarises the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of a data controller under the Acts.

Figure B.1: Summary of Rights and Responsibilities Under the Data Protection Acts

Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website

Definitions of key terms in the legislation and the eight principles of data protection are presented in Figure B.2.

Figure B-2: Summary of Key Data Protection Terms and the Eight Principles of Data Protection

Personal Data

Personal data means data relating to a living individual who is or can be identified either from the data or from the data in conjunction with other information that is in, or is likely to come into, the possession of the data controller. This can be a very wide definition depending on the circumstances. **Data** means information in a form which can be processed. It includes both *automated data* and *manual data*. *Automated data* means, broadly speaking, any information on computer, or information recorded with the intention of putting it on computer. Manual data means information that is kept as part of a relevant filing system, or with the intention that it should form part of a relevant filing system. Relevant filing system means any set of information that, while not computerised, is structured by reference to individuals, or by reference to criteria relating to individuals, so that specific information is accessible.

The Acts also define **sensitive personal data** relates to specific categories of data that are defined as data relating to a person's racial origin; political opinions or religious or other beliefs; physical or mental health; sexual life; criminal convictions or the alleged commission of an offence; trade union membership. The Data Protection Acts require additional conditions to be met for the processing of such data to be legitimate. Usually this will be the consent of the person about whom the data relates.

Processing

Processing means performing any operation or set of operations on data, including:

- obtaining, recording or keeping data;
- collecting, organising, storing, altering or adapting the data;
- retrieving, consulting or using the data;
- disclosing the information or data by transmitting, disseminating or otherwise making it available;
- aligning, combining, blocking, erasing or destroying the data.

Persons Processing Personal Data

Data Controllers are those who, either alone or with others, control the contents and use of personal data. Data Controllers can be either legal entities such as companies, Government Departments or voluntary organisations, or they can be individuals such as GPs, pharmacists or sole traders.

Data Processor is a person who processes personal data on behalf of a data controller, but does not include an employee of a data controller who processes such data in the course of his/her employment. Again individuals such as G.P.s, pharmacists or sole traders are considered to be legal entities.

Data subject is an individual who is the subject of personal data.

The Eight Principles of Data Protection

1. Obtain and process information fairly

2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes

3. Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes

4. Keep it safe and secure

5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date

6. Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive

7. Retain it for no longer than is necessary

8. Give a copy of his/ her personal data to that individual on request

Source: Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 A Guide For Data Controllers, Data Protection Commissioner

See Section B.4 for a list of resources in relation to the above.

B.3 What are the Implications for Sharing Client Data?

B.3.1 Overview

At the CAAB National Conference 2008 the Deputy Data Protection Commissioner made a number of relevant points in relation to data sharing and data protection as follows:

- The Data Protection Acts do not prevent data to be shared that is not personal, i.e. aggregate or anonymised data may be shared.

- The Data Protection Acts do not prevent data being provided to an entity providing a funded service on your behalf for the provision of that service. Such an entity is a 'data processor'

which requires an appropriate contract for the passing of the data. That data may then only be used by the data processor in the provision of that funded service.

- Data can be shared where explicit consent has been given by the data subject, where it is prescribed by law, and in other certain exemptions. Exemptions include for example, where it is in the vital interest of data subject or in the prevention of crime. However, the 'vital interests of a child' cannot be relied upon for generalised and ongoing exchange of data in relation to children.

At the CAAB National Conference 2008 the Deputy Data Protection Commissioner also offered the following 'good practice advice':

- Have you identified what information you feel you need but don't have?

- Have you considered whether the same needs could be met by non-personal data (e.g. case conference to discuss case without actual name)?

- Where personal data is still necessary: Is there consent in place? Is there an appropriate legislative basis? Is there a vital interest at stake?

- Suggest that to codify these issues that an appropriate data sharing framework be put in place between relevant organisations specifying the circumstances – 'Trigger mechanisms' where information may be shared.

- We [the Data Protection Commissioner] have already worked at a national level on such codes and at local level and happy to continue this work where it is beneficial.'

The following sub-section provides more detailed information on the first three of the eight data protection principles.

B.3.2 Detailed Information on Data Protection Principles 1 to 3
The Eight Data Protection Rules
As noted in Section B.2, and repeated below, there are eight data protection principles or rules. Data controllers should adhere to all eight principles or rules. The first three rules are particularly pertinent to sharing of client data, and the following sub-sections provide more detailed information in relation to complying with the first three principles.

1. Obtain and process information fairly

2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes

3. Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes

4. Keep it safe and secure

5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date

6. Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive

7. Retain it for no longer than is necessary

8. Give a copy of his/ her personal data to that individual on request

Data Protection Rule 1

Data Protection Rule 1: Overview
'the data or, as the case may be, the information constituting the data shall have been obtained, and the data shall be processed, fairly' - section 2(1)(a) of the Acts This is the fundamental principle of data protection. If your organisation wishes to keep personal information about people on computer, then you must collect the information fairly, and you must process (or use) the information fairly. **Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website**

Data Protection Rule 1: Some Key Questions
You should be able to answer YES to the following questions: **1.** When people are giving you information: ■ do they know what information you will keep about them? ■ do they know the purpose for which you keep and use it? ■ do they know the people or bodies to whom you disclose or pass it? **2.** If you collect information about an individual from a third party (e.g., from a husband about his wife) you have to consider whether the individual (in this case the wife) needs to be made aware of what is being noted about her as well as the purpose in holding that data. In general, the fair obtaining principle requires that every individual about whom information is collected for holding will be aware of what is happening. **Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website**

Data Protection Rule 1: Extract from 'A Guide for Data Controllers'
1. Obtain and process information fairly To **fairly obtain** data the data subject must, at the time the personal data is being collected, be made aware of: ■ the name of the data controller; ■ the purpose in collecting the data; ■ the identity of any representative nominated for the purposes of the Acts; ■ the persons or categories of persons to whom the data may be disclosed;

Data Protection Rule 1: Extract from 'A Guide for Data Controllers' *contd*

- whether replies to questions asked are obligatory and the consequences of not providing replies to those questions;

- the existence of the right of access to their personal data;

- the right to rectify their data if inaccurate or processed unfairly;

- any other information which is necessary so that processing may be fair and to ensure the data subject has all the information that is necessary so as to be aware as to how their data will be processed.

In addition, where the personal data is **not obtained from the data subject**, either at the time their data is first processed or at the time of disclosure to a third party, all the above information must be provided to the data subject and they must also be informed of the identity of the original data controller from whom the information was obtained and the categories of data concerned.

To **fairly process** personal data it must have been fairly obtained, and:

- the data subject must have given consent to the processing;

or

- the processing must be necessary for one of the following reasons:
  - the performance of a contract to which the data subject is a party;
  - in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract;
  - compliance with a legal obligation, other than that imposed by contract;
  - to prevent injury or other damage to the health of the data subject;
  - to prevent serious loss or damage to property of the data subject;
  - to protect the vital interests of the data subject where the seeking of the consent of the data subject is likely to result in those interests being damaged;
  - for the administration of justice;
  - for the performance of a function conferred on a person by or under an enactment;
  - for the performance of a function of the Government or a Minister of the Government;
  - for the performance of any other function of a public nature performed in the public interest by a person;
  - for the purpose of the legitimate interests pursued by a data controller except where the processing is unwarranted in any particular case by reason of prejudice to the fundamental rights and freedoms or legitimate interests of the data subject.

Data Protection Rule 1: Extract from 'A Guide for Data Controllers' *contd*

To **fairly process sensitive data** (see definition in Figure B.2 in Section B.2) it must have been fairly obtained and there are additional special conditions (one of the conditions outlined above must also be met) of which at least one of the following must be met:

■ the data subject has given explicit consent (or where they are unable to do so, for reasons of incapacity of age, explicit consent must be given by a parent or legal guardian) to the processing, i.e. the data subject has been informed of the purpose/s in processing the data and has supplied his/her data with that understanding;

or

■ the processing must be necessary for one of the following reasons:
  – for the purpose of exercising or performing any right or obligation which is conferred
  – or imposed by law on the data controller in connection with employment;
  – to prevent injury or other damage to the health of the data subject or another person, or serious loss in respect of, or damage to, property or otherwise to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another person in a case where, consent cannot be given, or the data controller cannot reasonably be expected to obtain such consent;
  – to prevent injury to, or damage to the health of, another person, or serious loss in respect of, or damage to, the property of another person, in a case where such consent has been unreasonably withheld;
  – it is carried out by a not for profit organisation in respect of its members or other persons in regular contact with the organisation;
  – the information being processed has been made public as a result of steps deliberately taken by the data subject;
  – for the purpose of obtaining legal advice, or in connection with legal proceedings, or is necessary for the purposes of establishing, exercising or defending legal rights;
  – for medical purposes (more extensive advice as to what constitutes medical purposes is available from www.dataprotection.ie or you can contact the office directly);
  – it is carried out by political parties or candidates for election in the context of an election;
  – for the purpose of the assessment or payment of a tax liability;
  – in relation to the administration of a Social Welfare scheme.

Source: *Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 A Guide For Data Controllers*, **Data Protection Commissioner**

Data Protection Rule 2

<table>
<tr><td align="center">**Data Protection Rule 2: Overview**</td></tr>
<tr><td>

Specifying the Purpose
'the data shall have been obtained only for one or more specified explicit and legitimate purposes'
– **section 2(1)(c)(i) of the Act**

You may not keep information about people unless it is held for a specific, lawful and clearly stated purpose. It is therefore unlawful to collect information about people routinely and indiscriminately, without having a sound, clear and legitimate purpose for so doing.

Data controllers who are required to register with the Data Protection Commissioner include in their register entry a statement of their purpose for holding personal data. If such data controllers keep or use personal data for any purpose other than the specified purpose, they may be guilty of an offence.

Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website

</td></tr>
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<table>
<tr><td align="center">**Data Protection Rule 2: Some Key Questions re Having A Specified Purpose**</td></tr>
<tr><td>

You should be able to answer YES to the following questions:

1. Do you specify the purpose for which you are collecting and keeping personal information?

2. Is that purpose lawful?

3. Can you make a precise statement of that purpose?

4. Has the purpose been made known to those for whom, and about whom, you keep personal data?

5. Have you made out a list of the different sets of data which you keep and the specific purpose of each?

Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website

</td></tr>
</table>

Data Protection Rule 2: Extract from 'A Guide for Data Controllers'

2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes

You may only keep data for a purpose(s) that are specific, lawful and clearly stated and the data should only be processed in a manner compatible with that purpose(s). An individual has a right to question the purpose for which you hold his/her data and you must be able to identify that purpose.

To comply with this rule:

- in general a person should know the reason/s why you are collecting and retaining their data;

- the purpose for which the data is being collected should be a lawful one;

- you should be aware of the different sets of data which you keep and specific purpose of each.

Source: Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 A Guide For Data Controllers, Data Protection Commissioner

Data Protection Rule 3

Data Protection Rule 3: Overview

Use and further processing of personal information
'the data shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes'
– **section 2(1)(c)(ii) of the Act**

If you obtain personal information for a particular purpose, you may not use the data for any other purpose, and you may not divulge the personal data to a third party, except in ways that are 'compatible' with the specified purpose. A key test of compatibility is whether you use and disclose the data in a way in which those who supplied the information would expect it to be used and disclosed.

Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website

Data Protection Rule 3: Some Key Questions re Use and Disclosure

You should be able to answer YES to the following questions:

1. Do you use the data only in ways consistent with the purpose or purposes for which they are kept?

2. Do you disclose the data only in ways consistent with that purpose or purposes?

Source: Data Protection Commissioner, Website

Data Protection Rule 3: Extract from 'A Guide for Data Controllers'

2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes

You may only keep data for a purpose(s) that are specific, lawful and clearly stated and the data should only be processed in a manner compatible with that purpose(s). An individual has a right to question the purpose for which you hold his/her data and you must be able to identify that purpose.

To comply with this rule:

- in general a person should know the reason/s why you are collecting and retaining their data;

- the purpose for which the data is being collected should be a lawful one;

- you should be aware of the different sets of data which you keep and specific purpose of each.

Source: Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 A Guide For Data Controllers, Data Protection Commissioner

B.4 What Resources are Available to Help?

The Data Protection Commissioner is responsible for upholding the rights of individuals as set out in the Acts, and enforcing the obligations upon data controllers. The Commissioner is appointed by Government and is independent in the exercise of his or her functions. The website of the Data Protection Commissioner (http://www.dataprotection.ie) provides a range of useful resources in relation to data protection and encourages contact from the public and service providers where they have queries or require assistance.

A Guide for Data Controllers

A booklet intended as an introductory guide to those persons/bodies who are data controllers outlining the eight fundamental rules of data protection and presents them in a user friendly format. It is intended as a non-technical guide for data controllers.
http://www.dataprotection.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=673&Catid=49&StartDate=1+January+2009&m=p

Training Video - My Data - Your Business?

A brief dramatised introduction to the eight principles of data protection. It is intended for use as part of a staff training and awareness programme, which will assist organisations in meeting their compliance requirements.
http://www.dataprotection.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=673&Catid=49&StartDate=1+January+2009&m=p

Self Assessment Checklist

A self-help questionnaire designed to help you met your legal responsibilities by specifically examining, in a structured manner, how you are addressing legal requirements and converting the results of that examination into a clear policy position on data protection. The website stresses 'If you require any assistance, the Data Protection Commissioner will be glad to help.'
http://www.dataprotection.ie/viewdoc.asp?m=y&fn=/documents/responsibilities/3k.htm

A Guide to Your Rights

A short guide for individuals on their data protection rights and on the data protection obligations of those who hold and process personal information.
http://www.dataprotection.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=671&Catid=49&StartDate=1+January+2009&m=p

Case Studies

Case studies providing an insight into some of the issues that this Office investigates on a day to day basis can be assessed on the Office's website. Case studies are indexed by year and by category.
http://www.dataprotection.ie/ViewDoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Fcasestudies%2FCategoryCS%2Ehtm&CatID=10&m=c

Contact details

Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. Canal House, Station Road, Portarlington, Co. Laois, Ireland.
LoCall 1890 25 22 31 - Phone 00353 57 868 4800 - Fax 00353 57 868 4757
E-mail: info@dataprotection.ie Website: http://www.dataprotection.ie

Appendix C: Other Guidance and Resources

C.1 Appendix Introduction

This Appendix presents a brief guide to other guidance and resources that provide practical help undertake inter-agency work. This is not an exhaustive list; the focus is on providing access to resources which are of practical use to those involved in inter-agency work.

The following references comprise guidance and related documents (Section C.2) and web-based resources (Section C.3). Many of the tools referenced here contain links to further tools and sources of knowledge.

C.2 Related Guidance and Other Documents

Children's Services Committees, Toolkit for the Development of a Committee
Sector: services for children
Format: document
Key purpose: the toolkit was prepared to assist in the establishment of children's services committees. It outlines a staged approach to establishing and operating an inter-agency committee.
Structure and content: the toolkit covers: ■ pre-implementation planning to reflect upon and agree an approach to the key constructs and concepts; ■ needs analysis: establishing the evidence base and collation of current and existing children's services and analysing the findings; ■ clarify broad outcomes and specific indicators to assess progress; ■ develop a work plan; ■ develop children, young people and family participation strategy; ■ develop monitoring, feedback and evaluation plans; ■ an appendix containing useful resources and reference material.
Produced by: the Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health and Children.
Available from: the Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs +353 1 635 4000

Working in Partnership
Sector: health and welfare
Format: document
Key purpose: ■ To examine and present the national and international policy context for working in partnership to address the broader determinants of health.   ■ To examine the practice of working in partnership and provide an overview of the nature and levels of partnership and the challenges of working in partnership.   ■ To provide a practical toolkit that can be used by health professionals to inform and improve their practice when working in partnership.

Structure and content: the document is presented in three distinct sections as follows:
 ■ Section 1: the policy context for working in partnership;
 ■ Section 2: an understanding of the nature and levels of partnership;
 ■ Section 3: practical toolkit provides guidance on:
    – deciding to work with or without a partner;
    – identifying the best partners and assessing their interests;
    – terms of reference, structures, roles and responsibilities;
    – planning, resources, budgeting and monitoring;
    – managing the partnership – processes and operations;
    – evaluation, review and evaluation tools.

Produced by: Health Promotion, Population Health Directorate, HSE and Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children.
Available from: Department of Health and Children +353 1 635 4000

Blanchardstown Equal Inter-Agency Initiative: 'Making Inter-Agency Protocols Work' and 'Protocol Pack'

Sector: drug users

Format: documents

Key purpose: eight agencies were involved in this inter-agency initiative to develop formal 'Common Inter-agency Protocols' to assist former drug users to find employment. The Protocol Pack aims to assist agencies in improving co-ordination of service delivery, decreasing duplication of services and eliminating gaps in services.

Structure and content: Making Inter-Agency Protocols Work – 'The Development of Common Protocols by Agencies working with Current or Former Drug Users: A Model of Good Practice' include:

- process and method;
- setting up a process for success;
- creating a common understanding and a way of working together;
- information and resources;
- strategy and work plan;
- putting plans into action;
- evaluating the process and outcomes;
- learning and recommendations;
- further development, dissemination and replication;
- conclusion, and appendices.

The Protocol Pack includes:
- protocol on lead agency working;
- confidentiality policy;
- release of information form;
- referral form;
- referral criteria;
- guidelines for multi-agency meetings with a client;
- protocol on lead agency working;
- multi-agency individual care plan.

Produced by: Blanchardstown EQUAL Initiative

Available from: Blanchardstown Area Partnership at: http://www.bap.ie/equal_reports.html and Protocol Pack at http://www.bap.ie/dloads/equal_inter_angency_protocols_docs.pdf

Framework for Integrated Planning for Outcomes for Children and Families
Sector: children's sector
Format: document
Key purpose: the document outlines how to implement integrated planning that focuses on outcomes for children and families.
Structure and content: it includes four parts as follows: ■ Part 1: framework context and purpose; ■ Part 2: core framework components; ■ Part 3: doing Integrated planning for outcomes for children; ■ Part 4: monitoring and evaluation.
Produced by: CAWT – Co-operation and Working Together.
Available from: CAWT website at: http://www.cawt.com/

C.3 Other Resources

Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB)
Sector: children's services
Format: website
Key purpose: the Children Acts Advisory Board is an independent Irish statutory board, advising the government on policy relating to the co-ordinated delivery of services to children.

Structure and content: the website provides the following useful resources:
 	
■ **guidance document:** Guidance to Support Effective Inter-agency Working Across Irish Children's Services (i.e. this document);
 	
■ **online videos:** the website includes video footage of presentations made at various CAAB events and conferences. Material in relation to inter-agency work is available as follows:
 	
  – **Inter-agency Co-operation in Children's Services in Ireland: The Views of Some Stakeholders.** Robert Murphy, Head of Research and Information, CAAB. http://www.caab.ie/Events/
 	
  – **Data Protection in the Context of Inter-agency Working.** Gary Davis, Deputy Commissioner, Data Protection Commission. http://www.caab.ie/Events/.
 	
■ **other relevant research topics:** presentations on child protection and family support (DRM different response model), assessment, repairing harm and restoring relationships (restorative practices) and inter-agency practices
 	
■ **research reports:** Inter-agency Work in Irish Children's Services: The Views of Some Stakeholders; a Literature Review of Inter-agency Work with a Particular Focus on Children's Services; Organisational Case Studies of Inter-agency Co-operation in the Delivery of   Children's Services
 	
■ **online database relating to inter-agency children's services work:** an inventory with over 140 Irish and international publications in relation to inter-agency work. These may be viewed under the categories of 'reviews of reviews', 'Irish public policy initiatives with inter-agency co-operation' and 'individual reports from Irish children's services'. The database may also be searched using 'key word' searches or under different headings including - sector, publisher, author, year, type of publication and topic.

Produced by: Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB)
Available from: http://www.caab.ie

Every Child Matters
Sector: child welfare
Format: website
Key purpose: Every Child Matters is a UK government programme for a national framework to support the 'joining up' of children's services - education, culture, health, social care, and justice. The programme is a new approach, by the UK government, to the wellbeing of children and young people from birth to age 19.
Structure and content: the website provides a wide variety of resources to assist with child care. It contains publications, worksheets, glossary of terms and advice. It has a section dedicated to integrated working containing advice on inter-agency training, examples, starting up and information sharing. Some of the key sections relate to: ■ Change for Children programme: Contains advice and tools to support work to ensure that children achieve better outcomes and have a better experience of services through the provision of integrated support.   ■ Multi-agency working: this section covers the required skills and knowledge needed to ensure that inter-agency projects are successful.   ■ Setting up multi-agency services: information on organising for services using structures including panels and teams and achieving quality service delivery.   There are many more tools and resources available on the website.
Produced by: UK government site, managed by Every Child Matters.
Available from: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

The Children and Young People's Workforce
Sector: child welfare
Format: website
Key purpose: this website contains advice, reports, methodologies and tools to assist in integrated working. It also contains evaluations of integrated working in 2007 and 2008. There are links to the Every Child Matters website and other sites for further information on different aspects of the work.
Structure and content: CWDC provides an overview of integrated working and links to resources to support each stage of the process. There are documents relating to: ■ core skills; ■ lead professionals; ■ information sharing; ■ multi-agency working; ■ assessment; ■ leadership and management. The website also contains articles, news, information on events and other related material.
Produced by: Children's Workforce Development Council.
Available from: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/ Section on integrated working at: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/integrated-working-explained

Notes