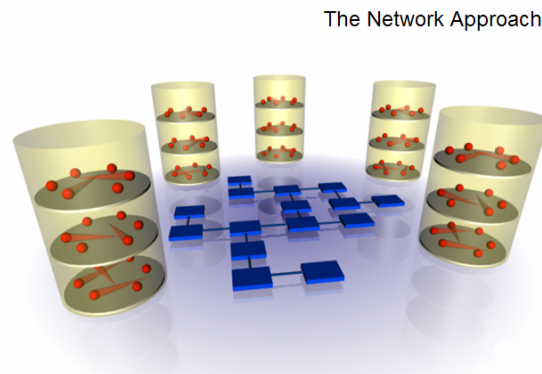


Children & Young People 'Big Idea'

Virtual Network Analysis

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) were set up to encourage better co-operation not just between public agencies but also with the private and voluntary sectors.

The *virtual organisations* tackling the various themes and priorities of the LSP (the blue flow-chart in the diagram) will typically comprise 30 or 40 separate organisations (the columns in the diagram) and many hundreds of individuals (the red dots in the columns). The consultative network for the LSP therefore runs into hundreds of people. But these virtual organisations are largely invisible, not only to the public but also to some of the people most closely involved.



What is Virtual Network Analysis and what does it do?

The starting point for working better in these partnerships is less to do with the world of authority, the formal rules and bureaucratic procedures, and more to do with networks of trust and creating the opportunities for inter-agency informal understandings to blossom and grow.

Virtual network analysis (VNA) is designed to help achieve this. In particular it helps managers understand the importance and value of the networks of trust that exist within and between their organisations. It also shows that they can be an aid, rather than a barrier, to the delivery of their own targets and objectives as well as shared 'partnership' priorities.

This piece of work aims to increase this understanding in respect of services supporting children and young people. It is a way of identifying who our key partners are and how we work together. We can then identify how we can improve our partnership working – in other words, how we can break down the barriers preventing effective collaborative working. The outcome from this will work will be a clear improvement plan.

Methodology

A survey population is identified containing the names of all the people who work in a particular area or theme. They are then given access to a website where they answer questions along the lines of the following, taken from work with a Leicestershire sports partnership:

These 5 questions represent different knowledge seeking strategies everyone uses when obtaining information to get things done.

- 1. Who do you go to or talk to, to help you get day to day work done around sport and physical activity?**
- 2. Who do you go to or talk to when you need a decision relating to work around sport and physical activity?**
- 3. Who do you go to or who do you talk to when you need expert advice relating to work around sport and physical activity?**
- 4. Who do you go to or who do you talk to when exploring new ideas or new ways of working around sport and physical activity?**
- 5. Who do you make contact with to keep up to date with what's going on in the world of sport and physical activity?**

'Children & young people' is a lot broader subject area than the example above, and it would be difficult to narrow the list of names down enough to make a meaningful survey. It may therefore be appropriate to focus the survey around one of the partnership's emerging priorities.

For example, rather than ask 'Who do you go to or talk to, to help you get your day-to-day work done around children & young people' it would be more beneficial to ask 'Who do you go to or talk to, to help you get your day-to-day work done around 'looked after children?', 'the common assessment framework?' or 'early interventions for children?'.

Project Plan

To compile a list of service providers who cover the age range 0-5 years, ask the survey population to check for completeness and prepared the website, so that we can raise the profile of the work. Once complete the information is sent directly to the United States where it will be analysed (there are complicated mathematical algorithms and modelling involved!) and the final report will be produced. From this we will be able to begin the process of analysis our partnership working and developing an improvement plan.

The cost of this work is met from the West Norfolk Partnership's Children & Young People's 'Big Idea' funding and will be project managed by Ian Burbidge at the Borough Council, in consultation with David Lennard-Jones.

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