

**ACWA Conference “Knowledge into Action”
2 - 4 August 2004**

**The rules of the game
and how to play -**

successfully, or not!



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Translating knowledge into action -



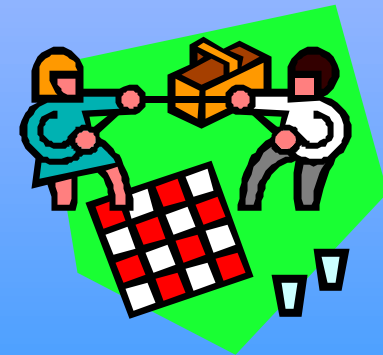
*What are the
dynamics of
agencies working
together?*





Non-government welfare agencies most commonly work with government welfare departments (eg. NSW Department of Community Services)

What happens when the interagency relationship has a welfare/non welfare interface?



Ways of interpreting the phenomenon called Collaborative Practice

- Natural Affiliations
- Middle of the Road Collaborations
- Dastardly Feeling Collaborations

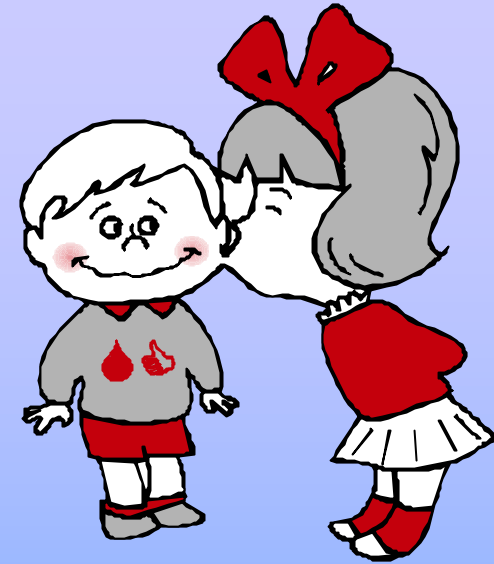
Collaborative Practice (1)



Natural Affiliations:

- where organisations or agencies have
 - the same or similar core business and practice base
 - a history of successful multidisciplinary practice or service networking, leading to established practices and positive cultures of interagency work
 - compatible client bases leading to common understandings of client / community need

Natural Affiliations



Don't feel painful or seem to require a great deal of work or "unpacking", because agencies "fit together" smoothly

Collaborative Practice (2)



Middle of the Road Collaborations

- where organisations may have some common ground, but lack complete compatibility due to differences in
 - core business
 - practice base
 - usual target groups
 - perceptions of the target groups
 - histories of service networking and interagency relationships

Middle of the Road Collaborations



- May have some things in common which provide the platform for successful collaboration - for example, their commitment to and understanding of the target group
- Experience highs and lows and don't feel painless all the time - there are positives and negatives
- Require effort to be on top of the partnership - evaluating and reworking what isn't working on a continuing basis
- Generally characterised by goodwill of staff at all levels (direct workers and managers) in each agency

Collaborative Practice (3)

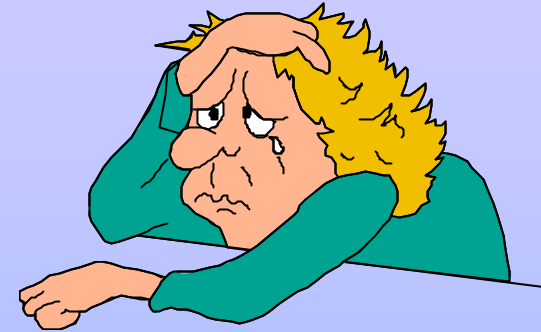


Dastardly Feeling Collaborations

Where organisations don't seem to have anything in common due to marked differences in

- practice base
- core business
- perceptions of the target group
- experience in service/interagency networking and multidisciplinary activities

Dastardly Feeling Collaborations



- **Can feel as if you are pulling teeth!**
- **Generally feel awful for all agency partners (and the staff involved!)**
- **Experience little common ground in communication processes**
- **Require large amounts of time spent on forward planning to make them work**

Dastardly Feeling Collaborations

Need to sit down and unpack:

- readiness to **partner** with each other at all levels not just management
- who and what the **target group** or community is – reach a common understanding
- what are the **different practice bases and philosophies** of the agencies-what will lead to conflict (how will it be sorted) and what is compatible
- What are the agencies experiences and practices on **service collaboration** – do they have any?
What practice and policy frameworks need to be developed



South Coast Primary Connect:

A Dastardly Feeling Collaboration between Barnardos South Coast and NSW Department of Education

- **Pilot cross government project of Cabinet Office for 2 years duration, with additional 18 months of development of project via Steering Committee prior to funding**
- **Target group - children at risk of disconnecting from school, family and community**
- **Service model - community development staff placed in selected South Coast primary schools**

South Coast Primary Connect

- **Barnardos South Coast was the only NGO pilot against 4 departmental models**
- **NSW Department of Education was the provider of its own pilot services in the project, in addition to being the purchaser of the Barnardos' service**
- **Part of the overall Primary Connect brief was a comparison of Government and NGO models, to be undertaken by NSW Cabinet office**

Why did the Barnardos South Coast Primary Connect Collaboration Fail?

FAILURE IN THE "GETTING STARTED" PHASE -

- Poor assessment of the readiness of Dept of Education for implementation of a collaborative model
- Differing perspective on the needs of target children, families and communities
- Differing views of the nature of "prevention"
- Differing experiences in collaborative efforts/interagency collaborations
- Differing views of effective prevention technology

ONGOING ISSUES IN THE GOVERNMENT/NGO PARTNERSHIP (1)

- **There were no previous/existing models within the Dept of Education to enable work with welfare NGO's**
- **Inability to bring the local school workers along with the model - key importance of clearly specified responsibility for training**
- **Partnership was perceived by NSW Department of Education as being enforced, rather than as a cooperative “working together” arrangement**

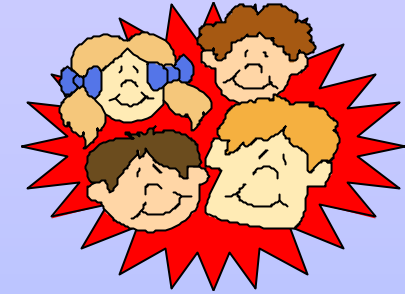
ONGOING ISSUES IN THE GOVERNMENT/NGO PARTNERSHIP (2)

- **Mainstreamed pilots in other sites - management and financial control held internally and within the one organisation, as opposed to the Barnardos South Coast model**
- **There was no shift in internal communications processes within the Department of Education to cater for an outside NGO - Barnardos was “out of the loop”**

Redfern Waterloo Intensive Family Support Service - A Successful Government/NGO Partnership Collaboration

- 2 Year contract funding from NSW Premier's Department, via the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP)
- Funds administered via NSW Department of Community Services Grants Program (CSGP)
- \$1.03 million over 2 years
- Project brief: Emphasis on assertive outreach to vulnerable families caring for children and young people aged 0-17 years

Redfern Waterloo IFSS - Preparation Phase



Identification of potential problem areas:

- Maintaining independence as the NGO partner
- Clarity in interpretation of the Project Brief
- Being clear about priority areas for the IFSS project - ie direct service delivery to families
- Identifying the risks involved in serving two government “masters” (Premier’s Department and NSW Department of Community Services)

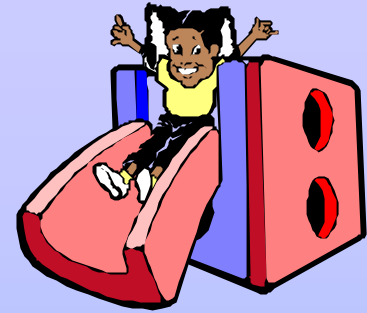
Redfern Waterloo IFSS



How has it worked?

- Ready availability to senior Premier's Department personnel on request
- Role of management in shielding frontline staff from government agency demands and requests -letting them get on with the work of assisting families
- Proactively attempting by "best efforts" to comply with all reasonable requests made by all government agencies involved with the IFSS project
- Never taking things personally - seeing the structural and organisational side of the equation

Redfern Waterloo IFSS

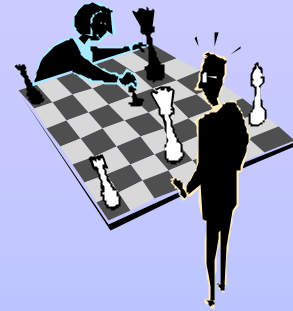


Measuring Success.....

- Service evaluation by independent consultant (UNSW)
- NGO Participation in the Redfern Waterloo Human Services Review
- Reports to Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project
- CSGP Annual Reports
- Role of the IFSS Steering Committee

The Rules of the Game

Stage 1 - Readiness Assessment:

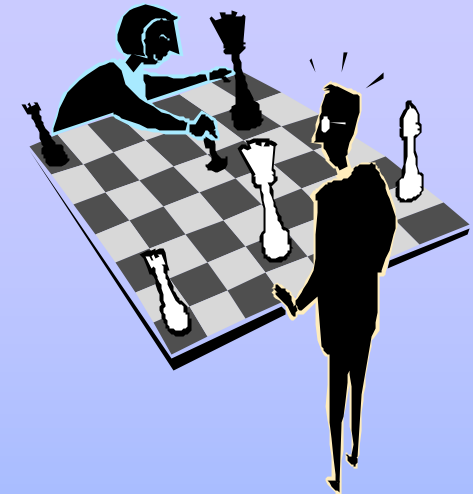


- What level of partnership is it going to be?
- Consider similarities and differences between the partner agencies
- Identify the diverse groups in the community
- Assess readiness within each group by understanding their:
 - > Perceptions of community problems and strengths
 - > View of the task at hand (preventative work with families, intensive family support, etc)
 - > Previous experience with collaborative efforts
 - > Experience with the target group

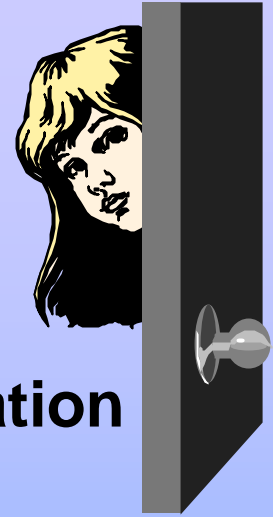
The Rules of the Game

Stage 2 - The Interagency Approach

- Clarify service vision, involving each partner/potential partner
- Adopt a proactive stance on referrals
- Identify key strategic personnel
- Clearly spell out formal and informal arrangements/agreements (eg Memorandums of Understanding, Working Agreements, etc)



The Rules of the Game



Stage 3 - Troubleshooting

- **Be ever alert and aware (even if the collaboration seems to be a “natural affiliation”)**
- **Maintain a positive approach - believe it can work until you are absolutely sure that it can't.....Know when to call it quits**
- **Look outside the boundaries of usual practices - welfare agencies don't necessarily have all the answers**
- **Be open and honest in all interactions about the priority areas for service delivery (keep the focus on the child and family.....)**

IN OTHER WORDS



- **What type of collaboration is it going to be?**
- **What do you have to do to assess it and make it work?**
- **Plan Plan Plan - Upfront and Ongoing**
- **Manage the surprises including knowing when to pull out**



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Thank you