

From Interagency Work to Joined up Solutions

Outline

Who we are

Context: Early years story

What is some the literature
telling us

Our experience of partnership

Who we are?

- ***Barbara Wellesley, Good Beginnings:***
Ben Soc, Lifeline; State, Territory, Federal & local govt, CCCH Vic, Anglicare, Salvation Army, Smith Family
- ***Maree Walk, The Benevolent Society***
Good Beginnings, KU Children's Services, State & local governments; Social Ventures Australia



Background to the Early Years Story

- Prof G Vimpani – Brain Research
- Support from National Community Child Health Council
- ACT meeting to discuss brain research
- NIFTeY formed – now has 700 people on the list server
- Commonwealth politicians re Early Years

The Early Years Story

- Fraser Mustard visit – Canadian Early Years Report
- Other International initiatives -Sure Start UK, Prop Ten, California
- Professional interest
- State/Territory initiatives (Families First, Best Start, etc)
- Commonwealth Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

The Early Years Story

- Minister for Children appointed
- Australian Council for Children and Parenting (ACCAP) appointed to advise the Minister
- Professor Fiona Stanley presented the Early Years research to the Prime Minister's Science Council – PM enthusiastic
- Early Years Agenda endorsed by Cabinet

The Early Years Story

- Professor Fiona Stanley Australian of the Year
- All state/territory governments have an early years policy with some funding attached
- More collaborative policy direction – Health, Welfare, Education and Justice
- Partnerships moving from rhetoric to practice
- Capacity building (strengths based practice recognised as best practice)



Interagency, Collaborations & Partnerships: what are eggs, & what is the literature telling us?

- Background: interagency collaboration: information, networks, collaborative mechanisms;
- Examples of partnerships between agencies: govt's VAW, JIT, OASIS,
- Our own eggs: co-locations; MOU's; partners in newly constituted organisations: (eg KFF)

Some ideas that may assist:

- The 7 'C's:
 - Connection – how real is this? How deep does it have to be?
 - Clarity of purpose – clients? Method of working?
 - Congruency - Philosophical approach?
 - Creation of value – will anyone benefit? Should just one agency do this?

- Communication – dialogue, fierce conversations,
- Continual learning – start with the end in mind: how will you learn in this.

Partnerships:

- make time to build
- need to be built at all levels (community, bureaucratic and political)
- need maintaining
- Should be rewarded – celebrations

Collaboration in a competitive environment

- Do what not many industries have to do: collaborate whilst we compete; partner and plan together re clients and communities: then compete.
- Compete for funds with sensitivity (42% said that competitive tendering means less sharing intellectual property)
- Collaborate with partners on service delivery
- Only partner when service quality standards and financial probity standards are met
- Enjoy the journey

The mechanism we used:

1. Joint writing of tender document:

‘We’ll show me you ours if you show us yours’: actually working together: environment builds trust, openness, have to be honest.

2. Joint tender presentation:

‘Is that what you really think?’

Development of Venture Agreement :

3. Venture agreement

- Enables some discussion of practice issues and philosophical differences
- Very clear on accounting and financial responsibilities
- Budgets – these may be different, but
- Dispute resolution processes – very clear on roles and responsibilities if you disagree

Venture agreement – 2

- Reporting and evaluation processes
- Indemnity
- Possibility of withdrawal of a partner
- Outline working in the worst possible scenario
- Management committee structures/project leadership

Ongoing mechanisms:

- Recruitment
 - common joint description, joint advertising and interviews
 - Agreement on 'who got whom'
 - Joint orientation
 - Joint workshops: - boundaries, working relationships, data collection
 - Evaluation processes – emergence of the new

Outcomes

- Shared intellectual property – really moved us forward in this project
- Strong relationships between workers: leaders emerge
- Sensitive issues can be dealt with in strength-based ways
- Modelling strong organisational connections and trust helps in your own organisations.

Concluding: some questions

- What is the best form of partnership for the situation?
- What about some of the agency differences? Eg very different size organisations; different experiences 'doing the business;' different structures; different trajectories.

Good Beginnings Learnings over the 5 years

Networks

- Seek opportunities to meet with like agencies
- Develop partnerships with agencies with different expertise
- Share information
- Apply for joint funding

Good Beginnings Learnings over the 5 years

- Encourage and believe in others
- Keep away from negative people
- Don't fear change
- Try lateral thinking – it can be fun
- Passion and belief - Don't be afraid to show your passion – it is your most powerful weapon

Good Beginnings Learnings over the 5 years

Research

- Keep abreast with latest research
- Seek opportunities to be involved in research
- Always evaluate services – seek assistance to develop indicators (partners)