Managing interagency approaches to safeguarding children

A case study of Local Safeguarding Children Boards

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy by

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Foreword...

'... While people are fairly young, and the musical composition of their lives is still in its opening bars, they can go about writing it together and exchange motifs, but if they meet when they are older (...) their musical compositions are more or less complete, and every motif, every object, every word means something different to each of them.'

(Milan Kundera, 'The Unbearable Lightness of Being', 1984, p. 84)

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Abstract

Over the years, reports into deaths of children as a result of undetected abuse abounded and miscommunication between professionals who are expected to detect such abuse kept identified as a key issue. Consequently, statutory partnerships were introduced in 2004 with the view to create an integrated workforce able to detect the early signs of harm. Yet in the wake of the 'Baby P' crisis in November 2008, it has become apparent that the issues are persistent. The research problem addressed in this research is the need to understand how the effectiveness of service provider network partnerships might be improved, in order to reduce the potential for implementation failure of social policies concerning children.

The research strategy chosen to unravel issues that could enable such understanding is a case study of partnership working in a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The empirical research techniques used were directed at answering three specific research questions:

- How are lessons from adverse events learned by human service professionals?
- How might integrated work be improved?
- How does the context in which the LSCBs are embedded shape the barriers and the motivators of integrated work?

These questions were derived from a rigorous, multi-disciplinary review of the literature areas with relevance to the research problem. The case study has revealed that every partnership member is shaped by, and loyal to, three sets of influences: those from their upbringing and psychological effects of their work, those from their professional education and those from their organisational environment. In partnership interactions, these three levels interact dynamically first within each of the partnership members, and then, indirectly, across the partnership structure.

The issue of improving partnership working then becomes reduced to striking a balance between the issues that could constitute barriers to collaboration and those which could become catalysts of integrated work, across each and all of the three levels of analysis. A number of factors were identified in the case study as potentially constituting either obstacles or motivators in collaborations. These issues were then discussed into the wider context of the public sector work and the need for 'safer' practices in children and young people's policy area.

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List of figures and tables

Acronyms

CAFCASS - Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CF – Children's Fund

CSA – Children's Services Authority

CT – Children's Trust

CVS –Council for Voluntary Service

CYPP – Children and Young People Plan

CYPTG –Children and Young People Thematic Group

LSCB –Local Safeguarding Children Board

MBC –Metropolitan Borough Council

NPM – New Public Management

BBP –Brempton Borough Partnership

TSO –Third Sector Organisations

VCSO – Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

YOT –Youth Offending Team

Key definitions and terms

Children

This thesis takes follows the definition of a 'child' given in Children Acts 1989 and 2004. Thus, a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout.

Safeguarding children

For the purposes of this thesis, this term will be considered to be synonym with *safeguarding children and promoting their welfare*. This is defined according to the Working Together departmental guidance (HM Government 2006) as encompassing:

• protecting children from maltreatment;
• preventing impairment of children's health or development; and
• ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;

All these three aspects are cumulative and contribute to enabling those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Child protection

This is a part of safeguarding children aim. According to HM Government 2006, it refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm.

Chapter One

Introduction and background

Management has traditionally focused on organisations, while the relationships between these have been conceptualised as being chiefly competitive in nature (e.g. Huxham and Macdonald 1992). More recently, as alliances between organisations have stabilised and focused on joint strategies around shared goals, management theories entered a relatively new territory: that of inter-organisational relations (Cropper et al. 2008). The term 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham and Macdonald 1992) has started to be used alongside the more widely known 'competitive advantage' to emphasize the numerous benefits of building enduring collaborative structures of organisations with common interests, or with common client groups whose interests are better served if they work in collaboration than if they work independently.

In the public sector, the object of public agencies' work (for example 'crime reduction', 'regeneration', or 'child protection') is often loosely defined and usually cross-disciplinary in nature (Gray 1989, Huxham 2000). To successfully tackle such 'meta-strategies' (Huxham and Macdonald 1992), the need to engage in inter-organisational relationships is paramount, for a number of reasons. First, societal problems are especially complex in nature and our knowledge about these complex issues is limited (e.g. Turner 1976, Allen 2002), hence only combining perspectives makes it possible to come close to knowledge of the whole picture of reality. Secondly, the risks to which client groups are exposed are clear yet not supported by evidence (for example the multiple risks faced by children). This makes decision-making around best courses of action dependent on personal interpretations of the risk scale involved. Here, multiple professional instincts rather than one are likely to inform better decisions. Finally, the level of public scrutiny under which administrators work is considerable (Lawton and Rose 1994) and that affects imposed upon staff working in the sector.

In the recent years, especially under the Third Way politics of the New Labour Government (Giddens 2000), there have been of praetorian of alliances in the public sector in Britain, bearing various labels ranging from 'forums' to 'partnerships' and 'networks'. Most of these emerged from a the voluntary will of the partners agencies who recognised shared interests. Others are 'mandated', that is there is a statutory duty for organisations to commit to shared programmes. One such instance is in the policy area of children and young people, where the latest Children Act (2004) made statutory the partnership between local agencies with stakes in safeguarding children. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) are mandatory partnerships with the role of monitoring the commitment of each of the agencies which find themselves under such statutory duty (HM Government 2006). Their role of 'challenging' current professional and organisational practices while emphasising the importance of integrated work is extremely revealing for any inquiry into partnership working in policy and government contexts in general, and in the policy area of children and young people in particular.

Such an inquiry is indeed timely after thirty years experience of broken communication between professionals with responsibilities for children's welfare (e.g. Reder and Duncan 2003, Laming 2003). The acknowledgement of this problem reached a peak in 2003, with the publication of the Inquiry Report into the Death of Victoria Clibmié (Laming 2003). After government measures were taken to address this problem, a new peak was reached with the 'Baby P' crisis (Guardian 2008) which brought the issue straight back onto the spotlight. Communication failures can be accounted to wider issues of the inherent inability of both these professions and the organisations regulating their work to coordinate their 'mindsets' (White and Featherstone 2005) and their different 'frameworks of knowledge' (Herriott and Pemberton 1995).

This inquiry has been employed to unravel these issues and it does this using a case study methodology, of the LSCB in Brempton Metropolitan Borough in North West England.

1. 1. Research problem

The research problem investigated in this thesis is the inherent ability of the organisations in place to protect children to communicate effectively with each other. The nature of this problem is two-fold. On the one hand, there is a need to understand how the effectiveness of service provider network partnerships might be improved, in order to reduce the potential for implementation failure of social policies concerning children. On the other hand, this need is located within a wider one regarding the shared agreement (or lack of it) about the nature of risk involved in child protection. The aim of minimising the risk to which children are exposed led to the expertise-based decision to resort to statutory partnerships between local agencies with responsibility for this client group. The same aim informs inter-professional behaviour at local levels in LSCBs, as well as in wider partnership arrangements in which LSCB partners are involved.

This research tackles the two facets of the problem, by means of exploring the motifs and rationalities behind the 'modus operandi' of human services organisations and professions in LSCBs in the context of policy change undertaken in response to 'high risk – low probability' type of risk which shaped subsequent policies in this policy field.

1. 2. Policy Background

1.2.1. 'Every Child Matters'

The LSCBs were introduced by the Children Act 2004, but find their roots in a wider background: the 'Every Child Matters' policy (DfES 2004) in place to tackle child protection and promotion of their welfare in England. The policy came about after the publication of Lord Laming's report into the death of Victoria Climbié (Laming 2003), a high profile case of a chid who had fallen through the close knit of welfare services that she had been in contact with and under the responsibility of:

"Eight-year-old Victoria died in February 2000 from hypothermia, malnutrition and physical abuse suffered at the hands of her carers (...). Over a 10-month period, Victoria has been known to the social services of four local authorities, and two police child protection teams, as well as admitted with non-accidental injuries to the paediatric wards of two different hospitals within the space of 10 days." (Lord Laming, 2003, press release on the launch of the Inquiry Report –Laming 2003)

The Victoria Climbié crisis brought about profound public distrust in governmental arrangements in place to keep children safe (e.g. The Observer 2001, Guardian 2003, Pattison and Evans 2006), prompting for the current arrangements to change in a radical ways, proportionately with the level of public concern (see Stanley and Manthorpe 2004). An ideational turn followed the crisis, by which 'child protection' has become complemented by proactive 'safeguarding'. Although the policy change occurred in the crisis aftermath, there is evidence to suggest that the policy was articulated long before the outset of the crisis (Parton 2006) and that the findings of the inquiry report (Laming 2003) only provided an opportunity to push the drafted proposals into the public arena (e.g. Smith 1990, Parton 2006).

The policy marks the emergence of the child as one of the central subjects of New Labour's social policy (Williams 2004). Children are at the centre of it due to the fact that 'they are twenty percent of the population but (...) a hundred per cent of the future' (Blair 1999, p.16). Indeed, under New Labour, children have been conceptualised as future citizens requiring early investment to maximise their opportunities later on in life and, in a pragmatic note, their contribution to the knowledge economy (Blair 1999, p.16). The notion of 'social investment for the future' (Parton 2006) is based on research which revealed that early intervention in a number of areas saves higher amounts of money and effort being spent later in life, hence leading to a significant long-term gain for the Exchequer (Glass 1999, HM Treasury 2002).

Essentially, 'Every Child Matters' argues for a more universal approach to children than taken before in social policy: away from targeted problems and towards early prevention and intervention before the problems become as acute as to fall within the remits of specialised services (Williams 2004). In this respect, the policy shifted 'specialist' and 'targeted' services onto the realms of 'universal' provision. The following diagram illustrates what is meant by each of these categories.
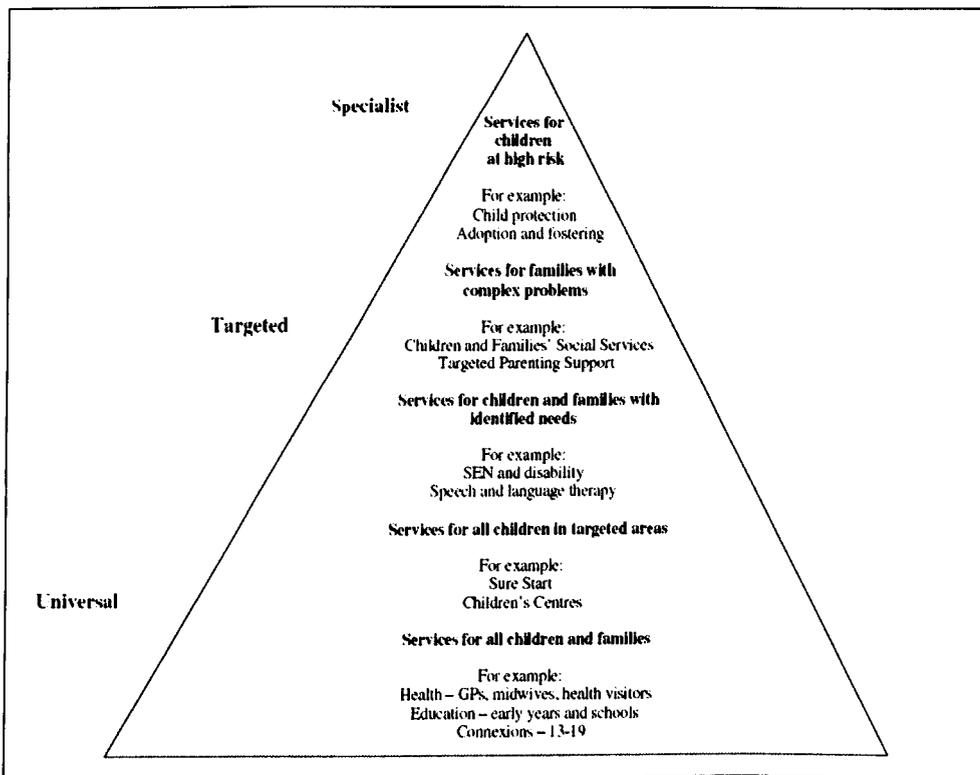
Figure 1: A pyramid of services   Source: Parton 2006

The proposals included in the Green Paper (DfES 2003) and, one year later, adopted in the White Paper (DfES 2004), are framed within five key outcomes for children and young people:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

At the local level, local authorities must coordinate their efforts with partner agencies to achieve these outcomes for children in their areas. These outcomes are to be pursued in a comprehensive manner, proactively tackling all aspects of children's lives, in tune with the overall aim of 'safeguarding'.

1.2.2. From child protection to safeguarding children

'Safeguarding children' is a term getting centrality in this policy field, alongside that of 'child protection'. It refers not only to critical cases (like 'child protection' does), but also to longer-term strategic preventive measures to protect children's safety. The new terminology was signalled in a Department of Health's Safeguarding Children strategy document (DoH 2002) and signalled a paradigm change (from *reacting* to *acting whilst preventing*) that, in turn, has triggered some significant practical implications, the overarching one being that, when prevention is at stake, more stakeholders can be identified than when the goal is protection. When the aim is sustainable avoidance of risk of children's harm, the list of stakeholders is far wider than social services, health authorities and the police -the principal (and often the only) actors involved in child protection. Hence, the number of agencies in LSCBs has been raised significantly from that of those in Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs), the predecessors of LSCBs. The high number of partner agencies in LSCBs poses challenges to the scope of collaborative activity that these agencies are used to and, arguably, capable of.

1.2.3. Children Act 2004

The Act replaces the previous Children Act 1989 and introduces provisions which can be summarised under 10 main headings:

- children's commissioner
- duty to cooperate and make partnership arrangements

- safeguarding arrangements
- information databases
- director of children's services
- lead member for children's services
- integration of reviews and inspections
- intervention
- duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children
- private fostering

For the purpose of this research, the essential provision of the act is to make partnerships between agencies with responsibilities around children statutory duty, as opposed to an encouragement to cooperate, as the case was before. Then, the number of agencies seen to have a role in safeguarding children has increased from those seen to have a role in child protection. Hence, LSCBs were to replace ACPCs and a whole new praetorian of agencies were added to those represented in ACPCs. The responsibility for making these arrangements locally falls on the local authorities, Children's Services Authorities as are now named those local authorities with responsibilities for children in their areas.

The keyword of the Children Act 2004 appears to be 'integration'. This is envisaged to take place both strategically, via the Children's Commissioner, joint inspections and locally, via information databases (these were recommended at a national scale by the Lamming Report (2003), yet were translated into policy (DfES 2004) as a local endeavour) the Lead Member for Children's Services in local councils, the Director of Children's Services and local statutory partnerships.

1.2.4. From ACPCs to LSCBs

The replacement of ACPCs with LSCBs, prescribed by the 2004 legislation to come into force in April 2006, reflected the change in policy-making paradigm for children and families, from *child protection* to *safeguarding children*. The ACPCs had proven to be ineffective in knitting a safety net

that would be sturdy enough not to let anyone slip through. More recently, the 'Baby P' crisis (Guardian 2008) raises questions as to the fitness for purpose of the LSCBs.

ACPCs were partnerships introduced by the Children's Act 1989, which acted as local forums through which a number of agencies (the same ones as in the LSCBs, minus CAFCASS, YOTs, and including the NSPCC) with stakes in child protection merely kept each other informed of their activities where they were likely to impact on the welfare of vulnerable children.

One of the main departures of LSCBs from previous arrangements under the ACPCs was the shift from the agencies finding themselves under an 'encouragement' to cooperate to having a 'duty' to collaborate. Indeed, governmental policy guidance on working together calls the ACPC 'an interagency forum' (HM Government 1999), while the LSCB is designated to be 'the key statutory mechanism' (HM Government 2006). The concept of 'forum' implies that the agencies in the ACPCs merely kept each other informed of their actions, whereas the aim in LSCBs is much higher than that, aiming towards collaborations on a number of levels, including mindsets (reflected in Workforce Reform, a correlate of the 'Every Child Matters' policy aiming to create an integrated workforce for children). The initiatives taking place locally around the LSCBs –for example local Children's Workforce Reform initiatives- strengthen this point of holistic action and ethos across professional boundaries.

Derived from their statutory nature, the provisions laid down in the relevant policy guidance for LSCBs (HM Government 2006) is considerably more detailed under the activities of financing and accountability than they were for the ACPCs (HM Government 1999). Where accountability is concerned, the links of the ACPCs with the organisations sitting in them is very clearly drawn, whereas in the case of the LSCBs, this is overlooked and replaced by wider accounts of accountability lines, for example with the government. The activities that the LSCBs are meant to undertake include a large variety of issues, essentially covering, in general terms, pretty much anything that might be involved in the promotion of children's welfare. This reiterates the

point according to which the LSCBs are in place to build collaborative capabilities for future foreseeable or unforeseeable situations involving children, more than to undertake operational work, although some operational tasks are included in their activities (the same three tasks that the ACPCs were designed to do). Arrangements for the pooled budget of the LSCBs are more detailed, though still relatively vague, than in the case of the ACPCs, for example by designating the 'core' contributors: the Children's Services authorities, the police and the health authorities. This is an answer to numerous concerns about the lack of ability for ACPC partners to commit to a common budget (Sanders 1999).

Based on these observations, but also from the different rhetoric lines leading to the set up of these two partnership bodies ('child protection' vs. 'safeguarding children'), it is fair to conclude that the ACPCs and the LSCBs were meant to serve different aims, one being concerned with keeping children safe from abuse which is was identified, and the other taking a proactive view of professional work aimed to keep children safe from unidentified threat. In a sense, it could be argued that, while the ACPCs focus their efforts on vulnerable clients groups, the LSCBs invest resources in promoting such integrated systems and work patters as to provide a safety net for children not to fall in the gaps that might exist in inter-professional work.

Despite the LSCBs being essentially different from the ACPCs, there are in fact many similarities, too, some intended, but many unintended and even unhelpful in attaining a true change in how policy outcomes for children are being delivered. The most essential similarity between the old and the new lies in the membership of the two partnership structures. The agencies sitting in the LSCBs are almost the same as those which used to sit in the ACPCs. The chair of the LSCB is still typically someone from the social services department of the Children's Services authorities (DfES 2008). This is usually the person who drives the agenda for the meetings, and this raises a number of potential issues about the power imbalance between the professional groups represented in LSCBs. It also raises possible problems

around the perceived impartiality that this person can display in times of tension between partnership members.

Operationalising a new idea by using existing structures that were put in place to deliver old policy paradigms can pose a number of significant challenges to the enforcement of the policy in practice. In the case of childrens' services, these issues concern the mindsets of the agencies involved and their acceptance of the new policy paradigm, the manner in which the agencies are represented on the 'new' committees and the power that they have to shape decisions, and the manner in which inter-agency working can impact on the process. In the case of this thesis, these carryovers from previous policy paradigms in the sense that are likely to affect the implementation of the 'Every Child Matters' policy. The next sub-section will elaborate on the enduring characteristics of previous paradigms which interfere with the establishment of those characteristic to the 'third way'.

1.2.5. 'Every Child Matters' in context: paradigms of service design and delivery

The history of UK policy paradigms in the design and delivery of social policies is essentially one relating to the degrees of state intervention that are found to be acceptable in different time periods and under different governments. Over the past thirty years in Britain, there have been three such important periods. The first was one of strong state involvement and spending, ranging from the end of the World War II running up until the late 1970s. The second was represented by so-called 'Thatcherism' which was marked by major state roll back and cost cutting of public services. This period could be seen as operating from 1979 until 1997s. Finally, the period from 1997 to the present – the policies enacted by New Labour under the so-called a 'third way' – which was seen by some as a means of reconciling the previous two positions while aiming for community involvement into the business of the state (see Giddens 2000). This categorisation is done for analytic purposes alone, for in reality these divides where nowhere as clear-

cut as theory suggests and also, there are elements of each persisting in the others (e.g. Thompson 2003). In terms of 'philosophy of the day', however, the argument remains that there are three such paradigmatic orientations in Britain of the last thirty years, linked with periods of party dominance in successive government offices: Labour, New Right and New Labour.

The first paradigm of state intervention by means of service design and delivery has its basis in Weber's theory of bureaucracy and bureaucrats. Since Weber's theory of bureaucracy is, essentially, a method of rational organisation where 'obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order' (Lawton and Rose, 1994, pp.30), the ethos of traditional public administration focuses around principles such as: legality, due processes, accountability, hierarchy, expertise, impartiality, and equality. The ethos characterised by these features help the bureaucratic system fulfil its purpose: providing services equally to all those entitled to them, regardless of their differences (e.g. Chapman 1993, Peters 2001). However, despite the fact that, in a bureaucracy, the state seems to meet the citizens' needs in the most equitable and impartial way possible, the system has the inherent tendency towards inflexibility, alienation and red tape. Indeed, Virginia School thinkers (see Tullock 1965, 1993, Niskanen 1971, Dunleavy 1991) claim that if, in the private sector, competition and the profit motive constrains the extent of bureaucracy, in the public sector such a constraint is inexistent. Moreover, in the absence of competition, there is an impetuous need within bureaucracies to increase their powers and maximise their budget, justifying these with the need to answer the service users' needs (see for example Parton 2006). These bureaucratic tendencies align well with those of the politicians who have an interest in offering more services, to improve their prospects of re-election (see Downs 1957). Therefore, the political economists' critique concludes that bureaucracies are inherently inefficient. The solution to this inefficiency was found in introducing market or quasi-market forces to bureaucracies in order to make them serve the customers for which benefit it supposedly exists, rather than serve the convenience of the bureaucrats (e.g. Beetham, 1996).

In the UK, the introduction of competition in the public sector was a very influential idea in the Conservative reform agenda of the 1980s. The *New Public Management*, associated with the Thatcher government. created a major shift in paradigm in the public administration realm, importing the business rhetoric and procedures into the public sector, in an endeavour to make the sector more economic, efficient and effective. (Lawton and Rose 1994, Flynn 2001, Peters 2001, Owen 2003, Hudson 2004).

The public management techniques translated into the practice of the traditional public administration led to a complex, fragmented configuration of the public sector (Klijn 2005). Moreover,

> 'the break-up of bureaucracies (...) introduced more players into the policy arena, making coordination and a holistic approach to service delivery more difficult' (Hudson 2004, p.77).

Dense and complicated communication networks amongst a plurality of actors make the management of risk particularly difficult (Marais et al. 2004). It can be argued that, while striving for market values such as economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the practices of public management have contributed to the creation of vulnerable tightly-coupled system (Weick 1969) system, somewhat helping to create the conditions for crises (Smith 2006a) that seem to occur, in the recent years, in a higher number in than ever before (Smith 2005b). This arguably inflicts crisis-proneness (e.g. Milward 1982) into the sector. A particularly crisis-prone feature of public management is the focus on economy and efficiency at the expense of service effectiveness (Smith 2006a). Indeed,

> 'some authors find a tension between the need to tender service delivery to acquire and maintain incentives for cost efficiency and the need to promote interaction and learning processes between organisations to promote better service delivery (Klijn 2005, p.263).

At the end of the day, poor delivery of welfare services in children's services can, in practice, translate into delivery collapse, which might lead to injury or death (see, for example, Lord Laming's Inquiry Report into the

death of Victoria Climbié: Laming 2003). Although it is agreed that the services should be both efficient and effective, in reality resources are scarce therefore the former often leads the latter. However it is not only a matter of resources, for effectiveness can be facilitated by a number of other aspects beyond throwing resources at every single case in need. Among the issues that have an impact on public policies' effectiveness is the inter-agency networking (Hudson 2004, Proven and Milward 1995, Smith 2006a).

Indeed, almost any policy problem these days requires the involvement of more than one agency: 'wicked policy problems (...) make coordination and joint working a key for all agencies and managers working in the public domain' (Loffler 2004, p.163). The rhetoric of the UK Labour Government's Third Way (see Giddens 2000) supports this reaction to the complexity of policy problems (Kickert et al. 1997, Loffler 2004, Hudson 2004, Klijn 2005, Head 2008) yielding another shift in paradigm: from government to governance (Rhodes 1997), where networks replace markets (Hudson 2004, Loffler 2004). This is by no means a unique British development, rather it is the consequence of a whole series of global societal transformations, among which is the rise of the 'network society' (Castells 2004) due, on the one hand, to individualization, and, on the other hand, to the decreased importance of traditional social relations (Klijn 2005, p.259).

1.2.6. Enduring features across paradigms

The theory of new institutionalism makes a contribution to the conceptualisation of the history of paradigms in social policy. Operationalising an idea using structures in place to deliver old paradigms is a difficult venture. This is due to the fact that ideational turns as a result of system failures tend to happen at a faster pace than the change of the system itself. Indeed, according to new institutionalism scholars (for example March and Olsen 2006), institutions (conceptualised loosely as any enduring settlement, be it an organisation or a paradigm) are durable, stable systems of operations, values and core beliefs. They tend to be that stable, that it

takes time for change –'critical junctures', in new institutionalism jargon- to be internalised. Powell & DiMaggio (1991) refer to this as the process of institutional diffusion, by which new ideas, values and goals will be translated in new procedures, norms and practices. In the 'transition' period when this 'diffusion' occurs, old and new features of successive paradigms conflict with each other, essentially posing resistance for the novel situation to establish itself.

There are a number of examples to support this hypothesis in contemporary public administration. Although the 'rhetoric of the day' is the 'third way' described earlier in this section, many 'hangovers' from previous paradigms persist, endangering full internalisation of this philosophy into the system.

One tension between 'old' and 'new' lies in the task demands on administrators and on the way they work. If, under the bureaucracy ethos, impartiality of bureaucrats and expertise-led decisions were of paramount importance, the 'third way' paradigm encourages involvement of multiple sources of knowledge in decision-making precisely because it has been established that nobody has exclusive or privileged access to reliable and exhaustive expertise (see for example Delanty 2001, Hall 2006), partly because there is no such thing as genuine impartiality (e.g. Burr 1995, Mason 1996, Seale 1999).

From this, administrators today must be creative and take charge of the complex task demands on their hands, rather than applying the letter of the law in a bureaucratic fashion. There have been calls in literature for transformational leadership as an important tool to use by administrators (Elcock 2000), especially in their work across organisational boundaries (Newman 2005).

Another tension lies around issues of 'trust'. Many scholars with an interest in partnerships and collaborations, key mechanisms of policy design and delivery, found the erosion of 'trust' to be a significant barrier in implementing the current paradigm effectively. Hudson (2004) elaborates on this erosion, blaming the new right reforms for it: 'the "contracts culture"

has promoted self-interested behaviour rather than the public interest, and low trust rather than high trust relationships' (Hudson 2004, p.77).

Fourthly, the ethos of 'equality' that traditionally led the work of bureaucrats in providing services to all members of the public equally (e.g. Lawton and Rose 1994), regardless of their differences, is in conflict with current demands for 'personalisation' of services and hence for attention to individual needs (e.g. Coyle and Williams 2001, Leadbeater 2004, Foster et al. 2006).

Finally, it is significant that largely the same agencies found to interact in ACPCs, a partnership traditionally focused on child protection, now sit in LSCBs which is a different type of partnership altogether.

This account of tensions is by no means exhaustive, but it identifies the most relevant ones to this research.

1.3. Mapping the journey: an outline of the thesis

As stated earlier, the main aim of this thesis is to understand how the effectiveness of service provider network partnerships might be improved, in order to reduce the potential for implementation failure of social policies concerning children. In order to allow for the development of this discussion, the various chapters seek to set out the key building blocks of the research. Chapter One has provided a contextualisation of the research problem in the policy background: essentially the 'Every Child Matters' philosophy of joint-up delivery of services aimed at protecting children while promoting their welfare.

Chapter Two seeks to illustrate ways in which different communities of knowledge tackled the research problem from their own specific theoretical angles. There are four broad 'pillars' considered here:

1. risk and crisis management in policy-making (in essence synthesising two bodies of literature),

2. networks (incorporating the literature on partnerships),

3. interactive identities in safeguarding children network partnerships (uniting three bodies of literature: sociology of professions, of organisations and of the individual both as independent entity and as part of groups), and

4. communication within and beyond inter-organisational settings (synthesising communication studies with complexity and system theories).

The extent to which these four 'pillars' address the research problem at the core of this doctoral thesis yields specific research questions.

Chapter Three moves on to explain the methodological approaches taken to conduct the empirical component of this research, starting from the research questions that are to the addressed. Chapter Four illustrates how the 'Every Child Matters' policy has been applied to the local authority area in the case study undertaken. Then, Chapter Five reveals how the findings of the empirical investigation answer the key research questions. Chapter Six addresses the two more complex research questions by interpreting the findings in the wider context of the 'Every Child Matters' policy in Britain and indeed in the wider context of collaborations in the public sector. The thesis summarises the discussion in Chapter Seven, where it concludes with the contributions and limitations of the study, and indicates avenues for further research.

Chapter Two

Theoretical approaches

In an attempt to deal with the complexity that surrounds the development of a child-centred policies in the UK, this thesis has sought to explore the problem as conceptualised within four important bodies of literature. The first of these pillars is represented by the theoretical area of risk and crisis management. The logic of this literature as a starting point for the research is that failures within the supporting systems established by previous policies have led the government to this point. An understanding of the nature of those failures and the learning that emerged from them is therefore seen as an essential component of the research. A common assumption, for example, is that the policy change around children and young people is being linked with the high profile crisis of Victoria Climbié's death (Lamming 2003), with the view to highlight the benefits and pitfalls of accelerated decision-making aimed at reducing risk for children. Through policy networks and complex decision-making, this pillar is connected to the second one, that of networks.

The literature in networks is relatively new in social sciences. However the developments are rather significant, this theory having spread to every imaginable area of social study. For the purposes of this research, network theories help draw an analytical framework for the Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

The third pillar of literature is represented by the aggregated area of organisational and professional studies together with studies around the psychodynamics of individuals both as separate entities and as group members. These three dimensions stand for 'identities' that are found to interact in partnerships of the type that interests this research.

Finally, the fourth thread of literature that lead to the point from where this study departs is that of communication within and beyond networks, which draws the wider context for this study, such as national legislation and the guiding philosophy behind public service design and delivery.

This section will show how the research problem for this project has been addressed by these distinct threads of literature. It will conclude with an account of the overlaps between these knowledge fields, and of the 'golden thread' represented by extant research of relevance to the research problem tackled here. This will then link with the next section of the thesis which, based on the 'spaces' left uncovered by literature, will reveal research questions for the empirical part of this study.

2.1. Risk Management in Policy-Making

This section illustrates how the research problem has been tackled by the risk and crisis literature around decision-making before, during and after crises occur. This is seen in close relation to decisions taken at various stages of policy-making. Consequently, the issues at the heart of this section are: risk, policy learning and the use of knowledge in decision-making processes around these issues.

2.1.1. Risk and crisis management

A first important notion for the purpose of the investigation undertaken in this thesis is that of 'risk'. The perception of the contemporary society as a 'risk society' (Beck 1992, Giddens 1990) is one that is widely accepted nowadays. Indeed, it has been observed that modern societies are risk prone to a scale that is far greater than those faced by people in the past (Beck 1992). Beck (1992) distinguishes the risks we are facing today from those of the past not only through their scale, but also through their nature: today's hazards are by in large man-made, rather than caused by nature. As people sought to gain control over their environments, they added more complexity and dangers to their world, and are, as a result, more vulnerable than ever. Hence the pursuit of happiness or wealth has been replaced by the pursuit of security (ibid.). Often, states are called to account for not offering their citizens enough stability. Glassner (1990), too, has explained how uncertainties of today's society have generated fear amongst large sections of society (Smith 2006b).

Risk is defined in many ways depending on the ways in which the definition is utilised. Closest to the remits of this study is the broad definition advanced by Johnson and Petrie (2004): 'the likelihood that a decision or course of action will result in a negative or adverse outcome' (p.184). It

follows then that risk management is about determining the risks faced by organisations 'to enable this knowledge to be used in decision-making processes' (ibid.). This conceptualisation is in full accordance to the more 'mainstream' definitions of risk given in the crisis management field (Smith 2006b). The importance of tackling risks as soon as they occur or as soon as they become visible is linked to the need to avoid them developing into crises (ibid.). It becomes problematic, however, to identify how much knowledge of the risk is enough to justify acting on it (Drennan and McConnell 2007), given resource scarcity (seen in terms of both time and funds) that decision makers work with. In other words, it is problematic to specify the type of evidence, and just how much of it, is necessary before acting on a 'risky' situation. Such evidence can provide clues about the existence of risk, but often less so (if at all) about the probability of it developing into a crisis, nor about the potential consequences of such an event. The most problematic of situations for decision makers is that where there is little probability of the risk actualising itself but there could be serious consequences if it does occur.

Probability

RISK	High	Medium	Low
High			
Medium			
Low			

Consequences

Figure 2: 'Risk' as function of   After Slovic 1992
'consequences' and 'probability'

The coloured area of the diagram represents that type of situation where the risk has been identified but there is nothing in the way of evidence (for example a precedent, or a critical mass of scientific findings drawing

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attention to the risk) that could justify formal action to attempt to neutralise the risk. If policy change could be easily justified in the case of high probability of occurrence, it is harder to make the case for events with low odds of happening (Drennan and McConnell 2007), particularly when public funds are involved and hence, an explanation for the chosen course of action to the stakeholders and, indeed, the public, is necessary. However, when something wrong does happen and this is emphasised loudly enough, then the public becomes sensitive to the issue and the move to change, legitimised (e.g. Birkland 2006).

The problem of 'how' risk is defined in context and 'by whom' is extremely relevant here. The 'Every Child Matters' policy is the result of expert conceptualisation of risk. The shift from a system focus on protection to one on prevention was based on research findings commissioned by the Treasury about sources of 'risk' to children's development which, if actualised, would cost the government much more to address than if they were tackled early (Glass 1999, HM Treasury 2002). More research commissioned by other government departments revealed similar factors of 'risk' to children's development (DoH 1995, SEU 2000, CYPU 2002). Overall, the research produced causal links between poor outcomes for children and issues such as:

- low income and parental unemployment,
- homelessness,
- poor parenting,
- poor schooling,
- postnatal depression amongst mothers,
- low birth weight,
- substance misuse,
- individual characteristics,
- community factors such as disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Parton 2006).

These links were not detailed on systematically by the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper but were clearly suggested in a number of instances, for example:

> '... parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational attainment at age ten, which in turn is strongly associated with achievement later in life. Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers' (DfES 2003, p.18)

There are two key assumptions behind such assertions in both the Green and the White Papers (Parton 2006). One is that we have access to knowledge that clarifies the complexities of the risk society we live in and it is in the light of this knowledge that we should act early to neutralise potential risks to children's lives. Precautions related to the fact that people's knowledge is on the one hand, limited, and on the other hand, cannot illustrate through causal links all complex relations between the different factors in a way in which these can really be neutralised, have been raised (see also Turner 1976) by scholars. This draws attention to the second key assumption: that there is a causal link between negative outcomes and mistakes or 'fractures' in normal work processes.

Especially in relation to public inquiries, these give out a false impression of clarity of association between a set of causes and a negative outcome (Stanley and Manthorpe. 2004, Fortune and Peters 1994). Yet in reality, as Fortune and Peters (1994) warn,

> '... failures do not commonly arise from simple unforeseen causes. They arise out of extremely complicated contexts and are usually outputs of complex processes.' (p.181)

Things do not happen in as clear-cut manner as public inquiries suggest. This is because, in reality, information is fragmented (e.g. Allen 2002) hence not as easily available as public inquiries suggest it is. Furthermore, it is only very rarely that all failures converge into a crisis (e.g. Drennan and McConnell 2007).

While the Laming's Inquiry Report into the death of Victoria Climbié's (Laming 2003), like others before (DoH 1991, DoHS 1974), addresses the first assumption quite explicitly, it largely overlooks the second, for that is a much more complex issue to address. However, poor decisions around the nature and the probability of its occurrence by professionals involved in policy implementation for children are often precursors of crises. The literature on crisis management reveals how decisions are often taken in conditions of high uncertainty when assessment must be undertaken as part of professionals' every day work processes (e.g. Turner 1976, 1978, Parton 2004). To be able to do that within time constraints, decision makers often resort to habitual patterns or rituals which, in essence, are devices providing the -often false- certainty needed to act (Turner 1976).

An example of a poor expert decision in Victoria Climbié's case was the diagnosis of scabies received in one of the hospitals in which she was admitted. After another high profile crisis which happened thirty years before Climbié (DoHS 1974), medical diagnosis became a key part of the clinical procedures. In Victoria's case, this was undertaken but, due to a mistake in diagnosis -unchallenged by the other professionals-, it contributed to the crisis escalation into a catastrophic failure. The following extract from the inquiry report illustrates the issue:

> 'Dr Dempster duly faxed a letter across to the duty team on 15 July 1999, the content of which Dr Schwartz was subsequently to describe as "very superficial". The key passage that was to have such an impact on how Victoria's case was handled not only by Brent Social Services but also by Haringey Social Services thereafter reads as follows: "She (Victoria) was admitted to the ward last night with concerns re possible NAI (non-accidental injury). She had, however, been assessed by the consultant, Dr Schwartz, and it has been decided that her scratch marks are all due to scabies thus it is no longer a child protection issue." ' (Laming 2003, para 5.147)

In this case, the risk of the diagnosis being wrong was either not taken into account by others, or simply left unchallenged due to common perceptions such as doctors' infallibility. The need to challenge professional expertise

has been raised numerous times by scholars (for example Smith 2002, Smith and Toft 2005), yet its application to practice is still limited (see Laming 2003).

The above illustrations come to prove that the current child protection system is built around what Houston and Griffiths (2000) call 'objectivist' paradigm of risk, whereby 'risk' is calculable and decisions (both at the policy and at the implementation levels) must be taken in the light of all dimensions of this 'predictable' risk. The two theorists advance an alternative to this paradigm. The 'subjectivist' theory of risk promotes the idea according to which it is beneficial and commendable to act upon early risks, even in absence of hard evidence about their existence, on the basis of a trained professional instinct (Houston and Griffiths 2000).

Copper (2005) has a similar take on this issue and, in arguing for 'substance' rather than 'surface' in child protection work, calls for a new type of policy-making: one attending to the 'connection between the instruments which organise the surface of child protection work (...) and the processes of deep engagement' (Cooper 2005, p.9). What is advocated here is that professionals working with children would treat their clients as 'subjects' rather than 'objects' of their work and would exercise their professional judgement in any way they find fit to address what they alone – not legislation or findings of various research inquiries- find to be the risks to which children are exposed.

In the social care system, what is emphasised is a dimension of risk that goes alongside the better researched organisational risk: the risk that service clients are exposed to if the organisations fail to cover for it (see Johnson and Petrie 2004). Indeed, risks of abuse, neglect, bullying, racism and denial of rights and so on are well documented in this body of literature (see for example Blewett et al. 2007). By attending to this type of risk, however, based on a 'precautionary principle' (e.g. Majone 2002) according to which action is justified even in the absence of evidence suggesting the need for it, other issues arise, as related to the need for the state and indeed public sector agencies to limit their interventions in society to a point in which they

cannot be accused of excessive 'nannying', nor of exceeding their resources (Parton 2006).

One way to reconcile the need for tackling organisational risk with that to clients' welfare is promoting a 'safety culture' in the child protection system. 'Safety culture' has been proven a useful concept and indeed an organisational feature in private organisations where its promotion has been proven in the crisis management literature to be directly linked with low accident rates (Donald and Canter 1993, Zohar 2000). The concept of safety culture has been arguably incorporated by the 'Every Child Matters' (DfES 2004) through the 'safeguarding' approach to child protection. This could be strengthened, however, through measures directed at delaying the incubation of new 'fractures' within the system.

2.1.2. Two sides to prevention: incubation and learning

The literature on crisis management asserts that effective management of crisis starts before the event occurs and should really focus on prevention (e.g. Smith 1990). Conversely, once a crisis does occur, learning from it should be geared towards impending new adverse events from incubating. Hence prevention has two sides: one concerns the ways in which past incidents were resolved and the lessons that were drawn from them. The other is linked to the ways in which inherent crisis-proneness and early signs of crisis are acted upon before they have the opportunity to develop into full-blown tragedies. Both sides of crisis prevention can be contextualised using Smith's (1990) three-phased model of crisis management:
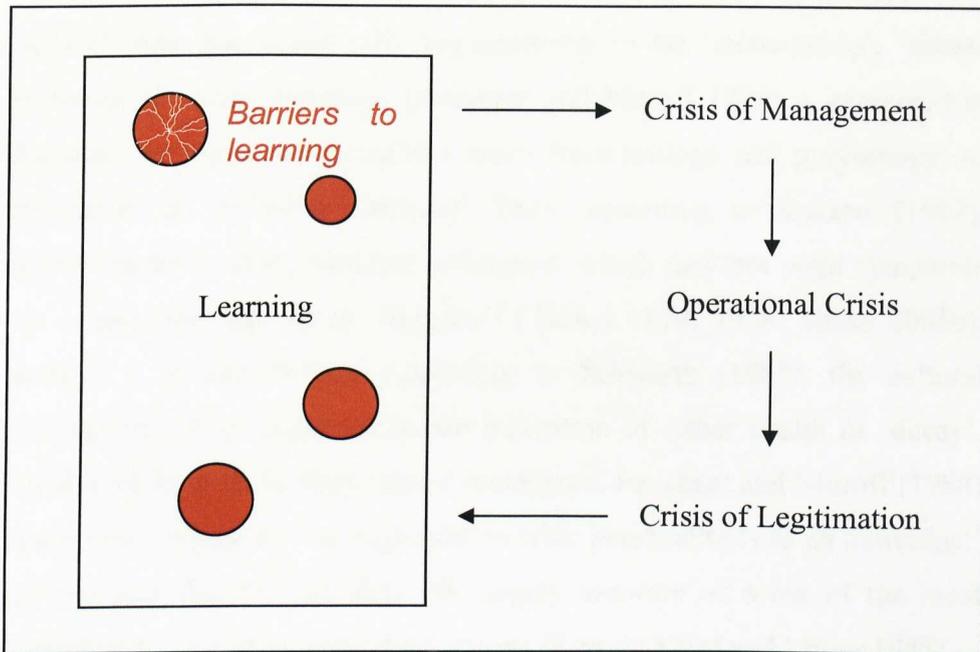
Figure 3: The crisis management cycle   Adapted from Smith (1990)

The 'crisis of management' stage is, according to Smith (1990, 1995), the most significant phase of a crisis, for it is here where the *crisis incubation* (Turner 1976, 1978) occurs. An important notion in this stage is that of vulnerability. The system is vulnerable to certain issues before it develops the pre-conditions for crisis. The significance of this development is enhanced by the fact that it is largely invisible: the incubation of crisis results from the routine process of work, from the ways things are regularly done in every organisation:

> 'Many of those working within the organisation fail
> to see the significance of the ways in which they do
> things in terms of their impact on crisis generation;
> and the routine of the processes at work are often
> also invisible to those outside of the organisation
> due to lack of information.' (Smith 2005b, p.312)

Connected to the fact that crisis incubation is an invisible process is the fact that culture is at its core: cultural assumptions shape the ways in which organisations work (Schein 1985, Mitroff et al 1989, Smith 1990) and construct crisis scenarios to which they associate precautionary norms (Turner 1976, 1978). The concepts of risk and what represents acceptable

risk in a society at a given time and place is a result of its culture. This cultural bias that could rend organisations to be 'crisis-prone', 'crisis-prepared' or 'crisis-avoiding' (Pauchant and Mitroff 1988) is explained in literature by means of metaphors taken from biology and psychology, to emphasise its invisible character. Thus, according to Reason (1987), organisations incubate 'resident pathogens' which may not yield symptoms for a long time but, when 'triggered' (Turner 1976, 1978; Smith 2006b), produce a system failure. According to Schwartz (1987), the cultural assumptions of an organisation are indicators of either health or 'decay'. Moving away from biology-related metaphors, Pauchant and Mitroff (1988) assert that 'culture is to an organisation what personality is to an individual' (p.136) and, due to that, they are largely unaware of some of the most important forces influencing their actions (Kets de Vries and Miller 1985).

These metaphors are encompassed by Smith's (2000) 'paths to vulnerability'. Organisations walk on these without realising it. Indeed, given that the managers' cognitive schema has a central role in framing and interpreting events (Smith 2005b), sense making, that is noticing the early signs, is problematic in organisations because 'people enact the environments which constrain them' (Weick 1988, Smith 2000). The 'crisis of management' phase owes its label to the fact that, here, 'disastrous events arise as by-products of normal functioning of larger managerial (...) systems' (Turner 1994); or, as Smith put it, 'the regular processes of management, especially around decision making, generate the conditions in which controls are by-passed and the conditions for incubation are established.' (Smith 2005b, p.11).

The next stage of the crisis management cycle, the 'operational crisis', builds its symptoms on the previous stage, and makes the connection between the crisis of management and that of legitimation. Therefore, it can be regarded as a link between these two phases, rather than as a stage in itself. It is, however, easy to explore due to its visibility (Smith 1990). It is a period of intense activity and confusion where 'fire-fighting' mechanisms are often employed in an attempt to recover as many organisational aspects

as possible. In the case investigated in this doctoral thesis, this stage is evident when the adverse incident goes public both via the process of official forensic investigation and via mass-media.

The 'crisis of legitimation' is also visible in its manifestations and often attracts considerable attention and media coverage (Smith 1990, 1995, 2002, 2005; Smith and Sipika 1993; Sipika and Smith 1993; Rosenthal 2003). It is here that the phenomenon of 'scapegoating' (e.g. Smith 1990) takes place: blames are being shared, culpability is being searched, and extensive public inquiries are commissioned. The most important element of this stage of a crisis, however, at least in terms of relevance to the present thesis, is that *learning* from a crisis usually starts here. Organisations seek to learn but also to show that they have learned lessons from the crisis that their past decisions, policies and procedures generated. Learning can be regarded, within the framework of the three-phased process of crisis management, as the link between 'crisis of management' and 'crisis of legitimation'. It is the element that gives a cyclical dimension to Smith's (1990) model of crisis management.

2.1.3. Learning from crises

In crisis aftermaths, organisations take measures that can make the difference between success and failure (Smith and Toft 2005). Learning has been identified as important by all crisis theorists as far back as the late 1950s (Easterby-Smith et al. 1998); however, in the recent years, organisational learning has become the central focus of academic studies on crisis management.

The concept of organisational learning has been defined by many (Senge 1992, Dogdson 1993, Davies and Nutley 2000, Common 2004) in various ways. Theorists agree, however, that learning is an achievement that can be either fostered or inhibited by organisational arrangements. Learning is seen as having occurred when organisations perform in improved, more efficient ways, usually as a result of requirements to adapt and improve efficiency in

times of change (Dodgson, 1993). In the field's literature, such organisations are called 'learning organisations'. On the other hand, however, where the organisation chooses to ignore past lessons, it may continuously 'reinvent the wheel', by repeating the same mistakes that led them to failure in the past (Kripendorf 1975).

Learning organisations can implement learning either incrementally -known in the literature as 'single-loop learning'- or radically -known as 'double-loop learning' (Easterby-Smith et al. 1998, Davies and Nutley 2001). The key difference between the two is that the latter involves a change in the initial assumptions. Thus, the former seems to be more 'at hand' to most organisations than the latter and this is especially true in the case of public sector institutions where bureaucratic and rigid processes together with short political mandates tend to impede radical changes (Common 2004, p. 38). In some cases, however, governments are constrained to employ the double-loop type of learning (Birkland 1997, 2006).

Learning in crisis aftermaths in the public sector often begins with a public inquiry into the incident, chaired by an independent consultant, often an academic or someone not directly involved with any of the interested parts. Public inquiries are extremely powerful in prompting policy change and they are, in fact, commissioned by governments with this exact purpose in mind. In their analysis of inquiry reports into incidents of welfare service delivery in the 1990s, Stanley and Manthorpe (2004) compare public inquiries to Janus, the god of the new year, in that they present the public with a double vision (backwards to what went wrong and forward to what could be done to avoid similar failings in the future) of catastrophic events. This has two main effects: on the one hand, inquiries offer detailed and explicit evidence of policy failures and, on the other hand, they appeal to people's emotions about the case incurring a sense of urgency in dealing with the case by means of designing safer systems.

While explaining the factors that led to failure, they emphasise that this is really a system failure rather than one that can be attributed to one person or another (although, increasingly, some individuals, too, get blamed directly)

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(Houston and Griffiths 2000, Laming 2003, Fortune and Peters 1994). They suggest that, although causal links between events in the overall incident exist, the outcome is not the result of a clear chain of 'causes'; rather it is a system failure to which a number of factors may have contributed, but not in a simple, causal way. Thus, they emphasise that this is really a system failure. This has been suggested not only by Laming (2003):

> 'The accurate and efficient recording of information cannot be left to the individual diligence of the doctors and nurses concerned. They must be supported by a clear system that minimises the risks of mistakes and provides a mechanism for recognising mistakes when they occur. The greater the pressures are on staff, the greater the need for a system to support them. The busier the organisation, the more important it is to have a system that ensures agreed actions are recorded and completed.' (para 11.36)

but also, nearly thirty years before that, by the DoHS (1974) inquiring into the death of Maria Colwell:

> 'There are few, if any situations of the kind in which Maria was involved which are "black and white"... there are very few situations in which choices are clear cut and outcomes predictable.' (par 316)

Clear lines of consequence are being drawn in these inquiries simply to make sense of the existing complexity of the cases involved and the interaction with environments which are equally complex. It is, in other words, an attempt to facilitate understanding of the event, rather than a full explanatory account of it (Turner 1976). Such understanding is necessary for future action, however this is often rushed by the public's desire to see something being done (Stanley and Manthorpe 2004, Birkland 2006).

It is the 'collision of the horrific with the 'ordinary' or 'innocent' status of the victim which provokes high emotional responses from the public' (Stanley and Manthorpe 2004) which, in turn, urges the government to take a stand and change the current state of things. The emotional reaction of people can be explained by the concept of the 'survivor's syndrome'

developed by Menzies Lyth (1989). This is the 'guilt' felt by people for having been close to the incident without having noticed its incubation. Where there had been warning signs of the disaster and the process continued to a full-blown crisis, the guilt is exacerbated and the survivor needs a new identity and new ways of coping (Menzies Lyth 1989, p.254). What seems to follow this guilt is 'constructive paranoia: a highly developed awareness and alertness, a view of the world as highly dangerous (Menzes Lyth 1989, p.255). Given the high number of high-profile incidents people are confronted with recently, the concept of a 'risk society' (Beck 1992) becomes highly relevant and offers indications about just how unsafe people feel when prompted with new crises everyday.

It is often the government's job to react to such emotional reactions from their populations and initiate policy change which, sometimes, can be quite transformative, generating a shift in culture alongside new provisions. Before considering the scope for effective learning by governments, a review of the policy-making processes is necessary.

2.1.4. The policy cycle between analysis and learning

The mechanisms that help learning within the public policy-making are policy analysis and policy evaluation, in the policy cycle model advocated, amongst others, by Hogwood (1992). This model comprises of the following stages: policy analysis, initiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation. The exact terminology associated to each stage varies from one theorist to another (Hogwood 1992, James 1997, Hague et al. 1998, Sabatier 1999), yet all authors follow the same logic as the rational model of decision making: making sense of a problem is followed by considering alternative solutions, a decision is taken, implemented and, finally, evaluated against the original aims of the policy. Bounded rationality and time constraints affect decision-making while various political bargain over their stakes at each and every stage in this process.

'Policy analysis' consists of identifying ways to answer public needs in a particular area. Here, amendments to past policies are analysed and new ideas are fostered. Decision-makers rely largely on predicaments and past evidence in their analysis (Smith 2005b). Expert knowledge is called here to confer 'objectivity' to the process (Davies et al. 2000, Delanty 2001). Here, government-commissioned research is called to collect independent expertise (primarily localised in think tanks and universities) on issues of concern. For example, the analysis undertaken for the 'Every Child Matters' policy started with a research into environment influences on child development (Parton 2006).

The 'policy initiation' stage of the policy-making process illustrates the ways in which issues float to the top of the government's policy agenda. It emerges from *agenda setting,* which is central to the understanding of how a 'problem' becomes an 'issue' (see Howlett and Ramesh 2003). James (1997) gives a detailed account of the ways policy agendas are set and of the policy actors involved at this stage. Amongst the influences upon agenda setting that James identifies, the following should be retained, for the purpose of this thesis:

- Political sources. These usually refer to the specific political party's agenda upon which they win the election. This is especially true in Britain, where the 'shadow cabinet' practice makes for each of the two main parties in the UK to have a policy agenda prepared from before coming into power, as an alternative (often coming from the party's political beliefs) plan to that of the government in office. Some issues on agenda become associated with the political ideology of the party in question, therefore they are given top priority once the party is being elected, other issues, perhaps more important, objectively speaking, being neglected or at least postponed.

- Interest groups. In an inherently political arena, as is that of public administration, the balance of power between those interested parts often count more than the merits of the issues they raised. Often

governments get to follow the most 'popular' path than the one in most need for action.

- Force majeure. This influence is of most relevance to the present thesis. Adverse events that can push an issue straight to the top of the policy agenda can range from strikes, riots and natural disasters to catastrophic failures in policy making, such as illustrated by serious case reviews where children are injured or killed.

In the case of the 'Every Child Matters' policy, the 'force majeure' was represented by Victoria Climbié's death as a result of poor use of communication channels by the professionals who were supposed to safeguard her. The child's death had a strong impact on the population, who demanded that the government take a stand and initiate a change in the existing policy for children. This is where the government in office, upon publication of the Laming's inquiry into the case (Laming 2003), advanced a policy initiative (DfES 2003). The proposals were based on the 'third way' political ideology of the New Labour, as well as on earlier research findings suggesting the importance of early intervention in the lives of children to avoid future problems (Parton 2006).

Normally, political bargaining between different political factions over the need for policy change in one direction or another takes time and effort. Indeed it involves numerous and often conflicting value judgements over these issues. In contrast, adverse events urge action and so justify policy change in the direction consistent with the direction or the philosophy which is favoured by the government in office (e.g. Drennan and McConnell 2007).

Once some issues reach the top of the agenda and are decided to be gone ahead with, the 'policy formulation' stage begins: a plan for action is being drawn and policy alternatives are being identified. Here is where 'policy discourse' is justifying the policy choices on the government's political beliefs, as exposed in political speeches, manifestos and position papers (Hague et al 1998, p.263). It is also where the lessons learned from policy

failure (such as those brought about by adverse events) are applied in new provisions. The influence of the policy actors is apparent in this stage as much as it is in the agenda setting. In the context of this research, it is at this stage that the 'Every Child Matters' White Paper (DfES 2004) was issued, followed by Children Act (2004) and by the Working Together governmental guidance (HM Government 2006) on the key provision of the new policy: statutory collaboration of agencies.

If the policy design seems plausible up to this point, the policy can still fail in implementation. Here is the real test that a policy is effective. Often, mistakes in implementation compromise policies, governments and even human lives (see for example DoH 1991). Human error, personal interpretation of general directions, personal interests (again, the influence of the policy actors is obvious), all may contribute to failure in implementation, hence failure of the policy. This stage of policy-making is one of the least researched (Lupton et al. 2001), although it is likely that this is the critical point where things can go wrong, rather than in previous stages. For example, Victoria Climbié was let down by poor implementation of existing policies (see Laming 2003). Namely, encouragement for agencies to coordinate their knowledge bases, and operations to obtain holistic views of the risks to which children are exposed was poorly implemented. The agencies in question were too concerned with internal problems (such as staffing, hierarchy and budgets) to step outside this mindset and tackle issues collaboratively. Consequently, government sought necessary to strengthen existing policy in order to make it harder for such insular choices to lead to crises. It is with this view that partnerships in LSCBs have become statutory in the UK.

To realise whether a policy has achieved its goals and whether the initial *analysis* was correct, *evaluations* are being conducted by a variety of actors (either in government, or in opposition), in order to prove either that that the policy works, or that it does not, whichever best fits the evaluators' purposes. There are multiple sources of subjectivity when evaluating policies, and they may be: indicators, measurement, personal interpretation

of vague objectives, and supporting arguments with examples of either successful or poor implementation (Carter et al 1992, Pawson and Tilley 1997). In the case that makes the focus of this research, it was the public inquiry that contributed the most to the evaluation of the existing policy around children and that prompted the fundamental shift towards prevention and early intervention by means of statutory partnerships between all those in the position to prevent bad outcomes for children.

It has been argued earlier in this section that, while public inquiries do reveal factors which led to system failure, these cannot be considered to be exhaustive accounts of the 'causes' for disasters. The reasons behind this are related to the simplifications necessary in producing the analysis (Turner 1976), as well as to the pressure for 'scapegoating' that surrounds the investigation (Smith 1990). It is therefore questionable whether inquiries' recommendations provide valuable learning points for future policies. It is also somewhat surprising that these are often in tune with findings of earlier government-commissioned research in the same policy areas.

Although the evaluation can easily be corrupted by various group interests, it however provides valuable information for future policies: policy learning is a very important aspect of policy-making (Hague et al. 1998). Policy evaluation normally stays at the roots of the analysis that is being made for new policies. The two 'ends' of the policy cycle therefore blend in each other conferring policy-making its cyclic nature, from a theoretical point of view, and encouraging learning.

2.1.5. Policy learning from crises

There is an intimate link between crises and policy change (Birkland 1997, 2006) and that makes the unification of the two theoretical threads useful, especially in the context of this doctoral thesis.
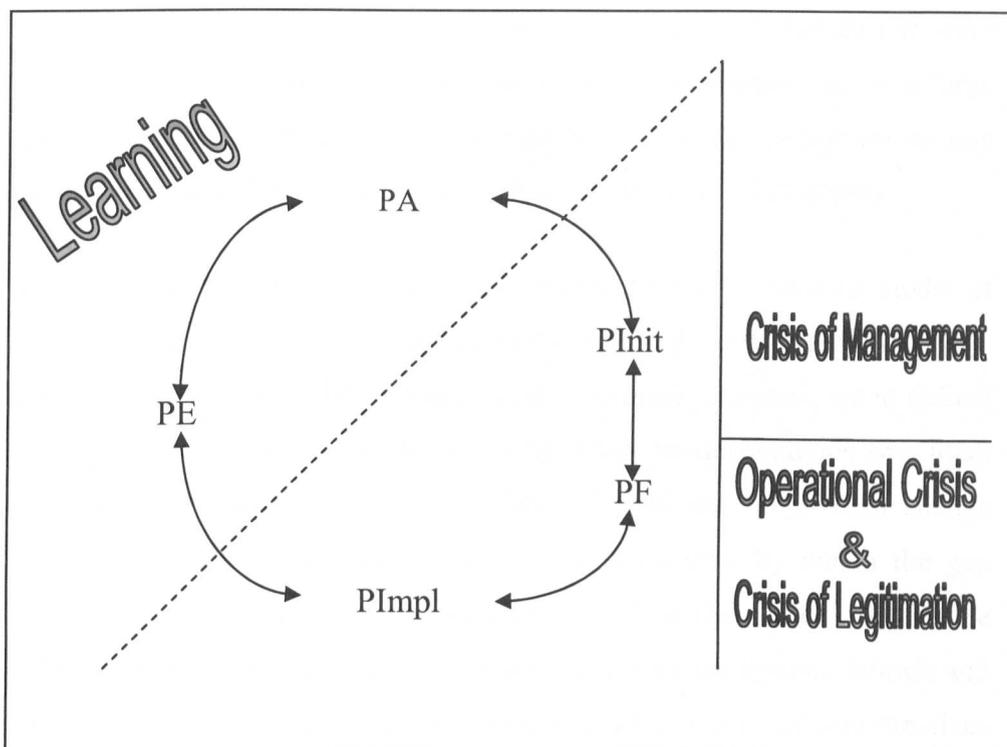
Figure 4: The compounded model of effective policy-making   Source: Author's own

The focus of this research is to follow how policies in the safeguarding children realm are implemented and what the specific challenges are in their implementation. The ultimate aim is to unravel how incubation of new crises could be avoided. More to the point, it is important to find out how the measures taken in the aftermath of the 'Climbié' crisis (an integrated system via partnerships) could be made more effective in providing a 'safer' welfare system for children and young people.

A few theoretical dimensions are important here: one is of policy change and the other, of the role of focusing events in determining policy change. Finally, a few concluding arguments about policy learning will round up the section.

Policy change

Policy change occurs when the coalitions in support of change win over those in favour of the status quo. Since policy evaluation is, to a large degree, politicised, so can be the reaction to it. The way things are usually carries more weight than the need for change (Birkland 1997, 2006).

From an institutionalist perspective, March and Olsen's standard model of punctuated equilibrium presupposes long periods of institutional continuity, adaptation and stability being punctuated by critical junctures, when radical change occurs (March and Olsen, 2006). Their model assumes two main conditions for change. One sees the internal pressures for gradual change and adaptation of norms and procedures as the means by which the gap between institutional ideals and practices is filled (Broderick 1970). The other condition for change is the massive failure of the system (March and Olsen 2006). Hence both a clash between institutional goals and practices and external factors push for a rapid functional re-orientation of the institution.

The need for institutional change is often brought about by what Flockhart (2005) calls 'dramatic ideational change', yet there is likely to be a delay between this and the change it triggers in institutional norms. Marcussen's ideational life-cycle suggests that a 'common destabilising shock' may change even the most deeply institutionalised ideas, leaving the institution in an ideational vacuum that can facilitate the emergence of competing ideas, new values and visions for the institutional existence (Marcussen 2000). The winning set of ideas, must then be internalised and accepted by the institution. Powell and DiMaggio (1991) refer to this as the process of institutional diffusion, by which new ideas, values and goals will be translated in new procedures, norms and practices. This diffusion is essential for the democratic process, since the 'institutionalisation, acceptance and internalisation of new ideas set will be a prerequisite for the proper political functioning of the policies flowing from the new norm set' (Flockhart 2005, p. 259).

Adverse events constitute triggers for such 'dramatic ideational change'. 'Focusing events' have the ability to push policy problems up onto the

policy agenda, triggering policy change. The term 'focusing events' has been introduced by Kingdon (1984) with reference to those events driving agenda change. They are what Cobb and Elder (1983) call 'circumstantial reactors', essentially sudden, dramatic incidents that are powerful enough, or visible enough, to drive a change in policy. Birkland (1997) departed from these initial theories on policy change and developed a whole theory of 'potential focal events' which present the analytical advantage that they encompass not only events that have happened, but also events that might happen, hence adding the idea of risk to that of crisis. The definition he proposes for the term is

> '...an event that is sudden, relatively rare, can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms, inflicts harms or suggest potential harms that are or could be concentrated on a definable geographical area or community of interest, and that is known to policy makers and the public virtually simultaneously.' (Birkland 1997, p.22).

In the policy area of children and young people, adverse events happen with some degree of regularity (DoH 1991), however they surprise every time with the different circumstances that led to their occurrence. They are not exactly rare, but they are rare enough to shock. Naturally, the fact that the victims are children or young people contributes to them shocking the public without fail even though they are not as rare as other types of 'focusing events'. Public opinion automatically sympathises with the victim (Stanley and Manthorpe 2004) and is also inclined to feel for all the quiet victims, those which do not get under public focus, as well as for the potential future victims (Menzies Lyth 1989, Birkland 1997). Adverse events concerning children and young people receive immediate media attention, and if the information does not reach the press immediately, then it surely does if an inquiry is conducted into the matter.

Public sensitivity triggers policy change, silencing the advocates of incrementalism and offering windows of opportunities to those in favour of more sudden change. This change is often accompanied by an ideological

shift and then gradually 'institutionalised'. Sometimes, the ideological shift has already happened and it is simply imported in the area where another one seemingly failed. In the aftermath of the 'Victoria Climbié' crisis (Laming 2003) the decision of policy change was taken in accordance with the political views of the moment: 'joined-up government'. The failure of previous policies made room for strengthening of the novel rhetoric, and so agencies with responsibilities in delivering policy outcomes for children and young people are now no longer *encouraged* to cooperate closely with each other, but *obliged* to do so by statutory provisions. Of course, this course of events makes the idea of policy learning problematic.

Policy learning

One of the first significant definitions of policy oriented learning is that by Heclo (1974, p.306): 'relatively enduring changes in thought resulting from experience and directed at revision of policy objectives'.

Applying the concept of organisational learning to the public sector is not an easy task (Common 2004). If, in the private sector, organisations are willing to learn from past mistakes in order to remain competitive on the market, the reason why governments would want to engage in organisational learning is often obscure. Moreover, if there are reasons for a government to learn (such as the wish to stay in power by delivering effective public policies), these are likely to be in conflict with a number of features that are inherent to a number of features of the public sector ethos. Common (Common 2004, p. 37-38) exemplifies such features as:

- the multiplicity of policy actors,
- the NPM paradigm, the bureaucratic characteristics, and
- the strong departmental culture.

To these, Smith (Smith and Toft 2005, p.126) adds the following:

- the phenomena of projection and denial,

- the relation between control, on the one hand, and system's complexity, on the other hand,

- the rigidity of core beliefs values and assumptions (derived from the bureaucratic characteristics), and

- communication through expert language.

One may conclude, in the light of the arguments presented, that 'the political environment will always compromise the application of the organisational learning in government' (Common 2004, p.35). On the other hand, however limited the application of the concept of learning can be to public institutions, 'it is vital for governments to learn effectively' (Common 2004, p.35). The UK Government agreed with this necessity and, following the 'Modernising Government' White Paper (Cabinet Office 1999), mechanisms of improving policy-making and management have been set up, among which are the Centre for Management and Policy Studies and the Strategy Unit under the Prime Minister.

2.1.6. Gaps in literature and researchable proposition

Upon review of these two bodies of literature, it seems obvious that, in the context of this doctoral thesis, they should be integrated into one. From these combined sets of lenses, the research problem becomes:

> ... *system vulnerabilities are being built in the way in which expert knowledge applies to, first, policy change and, secondly, policy implementation. In the first instance, it is the notion of risk and learning from previous failures that such knowledge relates to and, in the second, it is the use of professional expertise to coordinate efforts accordingly.*

This is how this community of knowledge would regard the research problem that this thesis addresses. There are, however, numerous gaps in this literature that makes for the research problem not to be addressed

exhaustively. First of all, other than the work of Birkland (1997, 2006), there are no notable contributions in literature which focus in depth on policy lessons after disasters; hence not enough of a critical perspective can be obtained on this topic.

Then, scholars have repeatedly raised the need to study the incubation of crises as they happen, rather than retrospectively, after the disasters have produced (Birkland 1997, 2006; Smith 2005b). Furthermore, in policy studies, the policy implementation phase of the policy cycle is one of the least researched (Lupton et al. 2001), although it is here where early signals of failure occur and develop (Smith 1990), hence a study of how disasters are incubated should start where policies are being delivered to those for whom they were designed. In this respect, this doctoral study will look at the LSCB members and at the ways in which they relate to each other with the view that there must be something inherently crisis-prone about either of these two dimensions that may hinder effective collaboration. Indeed, this is one of the very few policy areas where partnerships are statutory, hence the implication of crisis-proneness of either the sector or the key actors involved in it.

2.2. Networks

The latest policy change in the area of children and young people makes statutory the partnership between the agencies seen (largely based on past experience, but also in the light of some research findings -see for example DoH 1995, SEU 2000, CYPU 2002) to play a key role in delivering outcomes for this client group. Partnerships have been explored intensively under the network paradigm which recently entered public management and administration debate, with the rise of the governance paradigm in the public sector (as illustrated in Chapter One -see section 1.2.4).

In this research, networks theory facilitates the understanding of how the agencies involved in the policy area of safeguarding children interact with each other in LSCBs.

2.2.1. Network society

There is an intimate connection between the risk society that Beck (1992) referred to and the network society studied extensively by Castells (2000). Beck introduced the idea that, in today's society, people have sought to gain control over their own lives so much that they have added man-made dangers to the already existing natural ones, but also have broken the social structures (for example the family, community, church or social classes) in place to grant them a sense of identity and belonging (Beck 1992, Putnam 1995, Castells 2000). This is a society where the individual is freer, but also more vulnerable than ever before. Based on that, Castells (2000) introduced the idea of a network society, where individuals continuously seek other individuals to form links with, given that the more natural links are no longer there or, where they are, they are significantly corroded.

Very much in tune with the latest societal developments, the theme of 'networks' has permeated virtually all disciplines and theoretical foundations. It is both a metaphor referring to clusters of actors interacting

in a complex policy-making arena and an analytic concept to help understand complex systems (e.g. Klijn 2005). There is an intimate connection between the two concepts: complexity offers the context for networks and the latter illustrates and helps analyse the former. Hence, the theory of networks goes hand in hand with that of complexity.

There are many theories falling under the umbrella of what is coined to be a 'complex systems theory'. For the purpose of this study, some features must be emphasised at the expense of others. The key characteristic is that the theory departs from the view according to which the world can be explained through causal relationships between its various elements (Byrne 1998). Indeed, while these components are largely related to each other, and some causal links do exist, many outcomes of interactions 'emerge', rather than being 'caused' (Kauffman 1996). Since a result cannot necessarily or exclusively be accounted for by a cause or a combination of causes, regulating complex systems is not a task that is attainable. Turner (1976) explains this in terms of the human-bounded rationality, whereby people need to simplify complexity by resorting to causal links in order to both make sense of reality and to decide on how to direct their actions in ways that would be most beneficial to their aims.

The notion of 'complexity', in the context of this research, applies to three important aspects. First, there has been an ever growing complexity of the public issues that governments have to manage. Secondly, there is also a complexity of approaches through which these 'wicked issues' (Rittel and Weber 1973, Clarke and Stewart 1997) are tackled. This can be analysed by focusing on the policy networks in general and, more specifically, on the inter-organisational links between the agencies with a role in delivering policies to address such complex problems. Finally, policy-makers' decisions are bounded by their understanding of these issues combined with the time constraint in which they need to define this understanding and advance ways of action.

2.2.2. Network theory... definition in context

The literature on networks, although relatively new, has experienced a considerable boom in the past few years but, despite the theory being employed in a variety of contexts, it still lacks a clear definition. A very broad conceptualisation comes from Benson (1975, p.230): 'a number of distinguishable organisations having a significant amount of interactions with each other' and which interact dynamically in specific policy sectors (such as health, education) -such as in partnerships. This is the inter-organisational perspective of networks.

Before embarking into an analysis of how the concept got into the study of public administration and management, it should be noted at this point that 'networks' in this realm entails a different meaning to that of the more classic 'theory of networks'. The latter, derived from the discipline of physics, theorises 'networks' as spontaneous, un-regulated structures. Randomness and serendipity are identified to be essential characteristics of networks (Watts and Strogatz 1998). The outcomes of such serendipitous interactions are largely unpredictable, which invalidates the more traditional beliefs in causality and determinism according to which a certain input would necessarily lead to a certain result. This is not to say that all causal, linear relations are invalid, however, the combination of various causal links may not be itself causal. Otherwise said, while there are clear lines of behaviour of certain entities in certain contexts, their collective acquires emergent properties that make the outcomes of their joint action unpredictable (Kauffman 1996, Smith and Toft 1998, Rhodes and MacKechnie 2003). An example of how this works in reality is the cellular automata: each cell has a given initial position and a rule of advancing in relation to other cells; however, the resulting positioning of the collective of cells varies every time. Other features of networks include the informal relations between network components, egalitarian means of coordination, network hubs and power laws (e.g. Rheingold 2002, Hudson 2004).

Referring to how the transferring of the networks theory from natural sciences to social sciences, Barabasi (2002) writes:

'The diversity of networks in business and the economy is mind-boggling. There are policy networks, ownership networks, collaboration networks, organisational networks, network marketing -you name it. It would be impossible to integrate all these diverse interaction into a single all-encompassing web. Yet no matter what organisational level we look at, the same robust and universal laws that govern nature's webs seem to greet us.' (Barabasi 2002, p. 73)

When applying the larger network theory to the social world, the approach taken in this study is that of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (see for example Law 1992). ANT is an approach to social theory, essentially analysing individuals' contributions to the networks of which they are part. The theory has gained great popularity in the recent years, having been applied to many disciplines, from medicine (e.g. Strand et al. 2005) to economics (e.g. Williamson 1985), sociology (e.g. Castells 2000, 2004), organisations studies (e.g. Thompson et al. 1991) and public administration (e.g. Kickert et al 1997). In the public administration realm, however, the concept has undergone major modifications, in that the structures -cross organisational, often cross-sectoral partnerships- are not spontaneous, but are regulated by legal frameworks. Nevertheless, they maintain some commonalities with the 'original' etymology of networks in areas such as: the benefits of collaboration on policy areas, connectedness, clustering, dynamics and emergence of outcomes that are often different from the desired outputs and also different from what the actions of each of the actors involved would have produced on their own (outside the network structure).

Networks in public administration and management have occurred as 'inter-organisational innovations' (Mandell and Steelman 2003) in the context of a growing difficulty to deal with the 'messiness' (Ackoff 1974), or the 'wickedness' (Rittle and Weber 1973, Clarke and Stewart 1997) of complex policy problems (Klijn 2005, Kickert et al 1997, Rhodes 1997, Agranoff and McGuire 2003). Complex policy problems differ from merely complicated problems in that they have a tendency to be cross-cutting (Clarke and Stewart 1997, Keast et al. 2007) and often need a cross-sectoral effort to yield sustainable, non-duplicating (Huxham 2000, Huxham and Vangen

2000) or simply interesting solutions (Klijn 2005). In pursuing 'meta-strategies' (Huxham and Mscdonald 1992) such as 'safeguarding children', 'cutting crime' or 'sustainable development', policy makers must be able to collaborate across departmental boundaries. The 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham and Macdonald 1992) -expressed in these words to contrast with the wider known 'competitive advantage'- refers to the advantageous situation by which a number of agencies, working in partnership, achieve more than they might do separately. When agencies working in partnership reach a certain synergy of operations, strategies and mindsets, the whole produces better outcomes than any single one in isolation. Sometimes the action required is very close-knit integration of services, but other times, mere coordination of actions or of information only is enough.

2.2.3. Network governance as a paradigm for public service delivery

The application of networks in public sector management is evident in the 'governance' paradigm which has followed and, to a large degree, replaced the earlier rhetoric of the 'new public management'. The two paradigms offer very different views on management (Loffler 2004, Klijn 2005). The new public management is about management of organisations only linked with each other for economy purposes (such as in public-private partnerships). Network governance is essentially about horizontal links between various organisations whose work overlap in a number of key points. The focus in the latter paradigm is no longer on economy and efficiency but, rather, on effectiveness of work in the public sector, via client-centred policies. It has been raised before that the new public management lost sight of the third 'e' in its underlining philosophy (Smith 2006a) -economy, efficiency, effectiveness- as evident in the large number of cases identified as having slipped through the locus of responsibility between the agencies that only dealt with very limited areas of the overall problems of their clients. To address that, a new way of organising service design and delivery was deemed necessary (ibid.).

Governance has become the new rhetoric of public administration and partnerships, the tools through which this philosophy is put into practice. As a way to theorise both the philosophy and the practice of working across organisational and sectoral boundaries, network theory has stepped into this new context of the 'third way'. In the policy-making of a 'third way',

> 'policy formation and policy implementation are inevitably the result of interaction among a plurality of separate actors with separate interests, goals and strategies' (Scharpf 1978, p.346)

The legacy of previous public administration paradigms, however, raises a number of problems in implementation of partnership working across the public sector today. This legacy is evident in, for example, the erosion of trust of the partnership members in each other, brought about by the contracts' culture encouraged under the new public management regime (Hudson 2004). Another instance is that qualities which administrators could use in partnerships, such as creativity or leadership have been undermined (Elcock 2000, Dudau forthcoming) by, on the one hand, the impersonality (Weber 1971) and the lack of personal enthusiasm (Newman 2005) of administrators and, on the other hand, by the 'goldfish bowl of public scrutiny and accountability' within which public sector managers operate (Lawton and Rose 1994, p.28) as a result of the raise in performance measurement reforms under the New Right.

The characteristics of the public sector today need to be questioned in an attempt to find ways in which barriers to collaboration under the network governance paradigm can be removed. In order to help an effective operationalisation of the networks paradigm into the public sector, there have also been calls for departing from the 'one size fits all' approach and categorising the types of partnerships and the degree of connectedness in these partnerships.

2.2.4. Types of network partnership arrangements by degree of cooperation

Some theorists refer to multi-agency work in general terms, having in mind all types of inter-agency work (Huxham 2000), whereas others make a strong case for defining the remits of theory to cooperation, coordination or collaboration (Keast et al. 2007); intermittent coordination, task force, permanent coordination, coalition or network structure (Mandell and Steelman 2003); networking, networks or network structures (Keast et al. 2004). These distinctions are about inter-agency work in a system that ranges from being loosely coupled (for coordination, or networking) to very closely-knit arrangements (such as collaborations or network structures). In Keast et al. 2007, the authors advance a framework of 'horizontal integration continuum' where inter-agency work can be placed: from coordination to collaboration, suggesting that there may be a progression of partnership arrangements from one stage to another, but also that these forms of integration are not as mutually-excluding categories and that, in reality, partnerships are often in between these categories. To help analysis, however, the key features of each of the categories are presented here briefly.

Networking (Keast et al. 2004) occurs when people exchange information about each other's activities, often in informal settings. Equally loosely-coupled, cooperation (Keast et al 2007) occurs when there is not a strong connection between actors and when the exchange occurs with minimum effort and risks, for it does not require any change in current organisational practices, often in the form of information trade. A network is a more integrated entity, similar to what other theorists call coordination (Keast et al. 2007), where the information exchange is supplemented by joint planning and joint funding, although organisations retain their autonomy. This type of inter-organisational commitment is often formalised and requires considerably more effort and risk taking than previously discussed. Finally, network structures and collaborations stand for the most integrated interagency arrangements, where the benefits of integrated work are potentially the highest, although the risks of failure are considerable, too.

Here trust is paramount and sustainable, and long-term relationships between the network members are essential to buying into the same mission in order to build total commitment to the network goals. Organisations retain their formal autonomy; however, they see each other as inter-dependent. Collaborations/network structures are considered to work best in complex, crisis-prone policy areas (e.g. Cigler 2001).

In the case of inter-organisational arrangements between public agencies, due to the fact that often they are 'mandated partnerships' (Hudson 2004) within traditional accountability boundaries, it is often hard to place them in the third category discussed in the typology advanced by networks theorists. Traditional ways of working (more notably, of accountability -see Klijn 2008) get in the way of complete integration of services, the most ambitious attempts (such as the LSCBs) often hanging between the second and the third stage of the integration continuum.

2.2.5. Types of partnership arrangements by level of decision-making

Based on whether the networks are used to design or implement public policies, there are two categories of networks in the two broad public administration literature areas: policy networks and implementation networks (Hudson 2004). This research focuses on the latter category. Indeed, Benson (1975) argues that the provider networks are underpinned by 'deeper and more fundamental processes' (Hudson 2004, p.231) that inform the behaviour of member organisations (Hudson 2004, p.91) that are, in their turn, participating in policy networks.

In his review of policy and implementation networks, Klijn (2008) distinguishes between three types of research, rooted in different theoretical traditions, focusing on these types of networks. The three different theoretical standpoints from where one can look at policy and implementation networks are:

1. research on policy networks –based on a political science tradition

2. research on inter-organisational service delivery and implementation of policy –based on inter-organisational studies

3. research on governance networks –theorised from a public administration perspective around complexity of decision making to achieve policy outcomes

The present inquiry undoubtedly belongs to the third category, although research from implementation studies is also used in the micro-analysis of the network partnerships of concern here.

2.2.6. Communication networks

What theorists have found as specific to the study of networks in public administration (though still in its infancy) is the relationships between the interacting actors: the network ties (Provan and Milward 2001, Hudson 2004). This highlights the issue of communication in network partnerships. Poor communication between organisations and professions with stakes and responsibilities in delivering positive outcomes for children has, indeed, been raised to be a constant area of failure by all public inquiries into death of children in the UK (DoH 1991; Reder and Duncan 2003, 2004). The following paragraph extracted from the Inquiry Report into the case of Victoria Climbié serves as an illustration of some of the issues which might have contributed to what Reder and Duncan (2003) call 'lack of communication mindset' in the policy area concerning children:

> The Victoria Climbié Inquiry heard that paediatricians and police had difficulty working with an 'aggressive' social services unit, whose manager gave the impression that 'social services knew best'. They felt that their views about the cases were not respected, they could not get through to them to explain their concerns, or that their role was 'blocked or frustrated'. (Lord Laming 2003, para 6.24)

Such dissonance is to a great extent produced by the 'contrasting backgrounds, terms of reference and operational practices between different

agencies' (Reder and Duncan 2003). Professionals' ability or indeed inability to communicate, hence cooperate, effectively due to ways in which professional identities are formed and performed (White and Featherstone 2005) is also an important factor that has contributed to this history of 'disagreement'. Finally, Reder ad Duncan regard the basic communication occurring between individuals as being core to the other types which provide contexts -'domains of influence'- impacting on any to inter-personal communication episode (Reder and Duncan 2003). In the context of the previous typology of network closeness, basic communication can be placed at the core of cooperation, the first on the integration continuum advanced by Keast (2007).

2.2.7. Evaluating partnerships: network evaluation frameworks

This area of literature breaks down the analytical components of networks. The scholars who were interested in delimitating these levels of analysis in networks were primarily those aiming to evaluate networks' performance.

Table 1: Levels of analysis in network evaluations

Theorists	Levels of analysis in network evaluations
Benson 1975	Network members Parent organisations
Provan and Milward 2001	Organisations as network members Network Community around the network
Lupton et al. 2001	Professions as network members People as representatives in networks

Source: Author's own

Benson (1975) conceptualised the first comprehensive framework of analysis for diagnosing the effectiveness of network partnerships. The latter is defined in terms of equilibrium across four dimensions: domain consensus (agreement on the role and scope of each agency in a network

partnership), 'ideological consensus' (agreement as to the nature of the problems to tackle in partnership), 'positive evaluation' (of each other's work) and 'work co-ordination' (the alignment of working patterns under one cultural mindset). The equilibrium across these elements of an operational network is being influenced by policy networks, i.e. the network participants' own organisations, on other four levels: 'the fulfilment of programme requirements', 'the maintenance of a clear domain of high social importance', 'the maintenance of orderly, reliable patterns of resource flow' and 'the application and defence of the organisation's paradigm'. Hudson (2004) makes a case for the necessity of applying this framework to empirical studies in order to see it work in specific contexts, before concluding about specific conditions in which effectiveness of operational partnerships can be improved.

If Benson (2004) examined the network members and their parent organisations, leaving it up to interpretation whether the former refers to individuals or organisations in networks, Provan and Milward (2001) referred specifically to organisations as network members, and then looked at their relations with the other agencies in networks and at networks' impact on community. The three levels of analysis -'community', 'network' and 'organisation'- are, like in Benson's case, part of a framework for network evaluation. At each of the three levels, key stakeholders are identified and effectiveness criteria are drawn. The stakeholders are categorised into 'principals' (monitors and founders of networks), 'agents' (both administrators and service-level professionals) and 'clients' (service consumers). At the community level, the key stakeholders are principals and clients and the effectiveness criteria are: 'the cost to community', 'building social capital', 'positive public perception', 'changes in the incidence of the problem' and 'aggregate indicators of client well-being'. At the network level, stakeholders are principals and agents and effectiveness criteria are 'network membership growth', 'services provided', 'absence of service duplication', 'relationship strength', 'creation and maintenance of network administrative organisation', 'integration of services', 'cost of network maintenance', and 'member commitment to network goals'. At the

organisation/participant level, stakeholders are mainly agents and clients and they function around the following effectiveness criteria: 'agency survival', 'enhanced legitimacy', 'resource acquisition', 'cost of services', 'service access', 'client outcomes', and 'minimum conflict for multi-program agencies across multiple networks'. While this framework is remarkably complex and appropriate for the level of complexity that lies in partnerships of the type this study is concerned with, it appears to be identifying the participant to the partnership with the organisational level of analysis. This view obstructs the individual, however.

Lupton et al. (2001) add to these levels two others: inter-professional (status and power) and inter-personal (sex, race, age and class) when looking at problems in collaborations in child protection networks. While this account does not come from the implementation studies sphere of knowledge, it is a reminder that the networks are more than inter-organisational structures. It points out that both professionals and individuals themselves, too, belong to the network. However, there are no notable other scholars to add to this attempt. There has not been much interest in the literature in the individual components of networks and how they influence outcomes of integrated work. The individual is left, somehow intentionally, to the rational choice theories (Hudson 2004), rather than integrating this subject into the networks literature.

2.2.8. Improving partnerships: inhibitors and motivators

Evaluations of partnerships are being undertaken with the implicit aim of improving what may not work successfully, or what may hinder effectiveness of collaborative work. Such evaluation efforts may focus on blocking inhibitors and developing the incentives that partners feel they experience in working with each other (Gray 2008). Inhibitors could be associated with 'risk factors' (Johnson and Petrie 2004) which, when unravelled, could be neutralised before developing into crises.

There is a diverse literature on problems that arise from interaction in partnerships. This is more than can be said about motivators, however, where the fields of networks, collaborations and partnerships rarely advance pointers in this direction. Nevertheless, different literature areas -notably, leaderships, group psychology, and culture studies- offer, however, some insights about issues that might improve collaborations.

Academic contributions to debates around problems in public sector collaborations come from various policy contexts (such as health) or some more general topics (such as inter-professional working). There is considerable scope for generalisation across these sectors, given that they all include human service professions.

Discrimination, be it on the basis of gender or age, but also on the basis of difference in training or ethos is accounted for as being one big problem in inter-professional work (Leathard 1994, Kneale 1994, Lupton et al 2001). Other factors influencing inter-personal relations between the partnership members are anxiety and stress, affective challenges and bonding processes (Sutherland 1980).

Professional baggage, tribalism, influence of medical power structures, collusion, structures and hierarchies are problems arising from the interaction between health professionals (Leathard 1994). To these, Lethbridge (1989) adds professional ambition and competition, territoriality and protectionism, reluctance to share information and different uses of terminology and professional jargon. At a more inter-organisational level, disparities in organisational arrangements can also lead to poor levels of cooperation in partnerships (Neghandi 1980, Dennis 1990, Wood and Gray 1991).

Conversely, some encouragement for professionals to make the efforts towards acquiring 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham and Macdonald 1992) could be acquired via diversity management (Schruijer 2008, Dudau and McAllister 2009), development of transformational leadership qualities in

public servants (Elcock 2002, Newman 2005), and the cultivation of trust between professionals (Zaheer et al. 1998, Hudson 2004).

2.2.9. Gaps in the literature and researchable proposition

The review of the rather vast literature on networks has yielded interesting resolutions on the research problem addressed in this thesis. These are summarised below:

> *In order to work effectively, partnerships should strive to a level of integration that is characteristic to 'networks'. There are inherent issues which impede them to reach this level of connectedness and these are to be sought first, in the partnership members themselves and, then, in the communication links between them. Basic inter-personal communication stays at the core of cooperation (and of collaboration in networks) both between professionals and between their 'parent' organisations.*

LSCBs fit neatly within the provider networks category that Hudson (2004) regards as under-researched. The focus however will depart from 'network ties', which is currently the most widely used unit of analysis (for example Hudson 2004, Provan and Milward 1995, Milward 1982). The rationale here is that, whereas network ties may be a useful unit of analysis in principle, where there is a long history of development for the network members prior to their membership to the same partnership structure, the 'baggage' is likely to have a more significant impact on the work undertaken by the 'collective' of such organisations than the links between them. This is not to ignore those links, however, given that time and time again, faulty communication appears to be the chief reason for failure in this policy area (Reder and Duncan 2003). The stand that this thesis takes is that the 'baggage' of the partnership members impacts on the ways in which communication paths between them are designed and implemented.

Then, the literature merely touches upon, but does not explore in detail, the issues that are important under the network governance paradigm in the public sector and which have been eroded under the previous paradigms. An attempt to provide a full analysis of those will be undertaken here. In a recent overview of the literature on policy and implementation networks, Klijn (2008) mentions, for example, the need to adapt the traditional debate on accountability to the new paradigm. Similarly, Huxham and Vangen (2000), alongside some leadership scholars (e.g. Hartley and Allison 2000), advocate an adaptation of leadership theories to apply to collaborations.

Finally, the network literature fails to provide a comprehensive framework of who the network members are. Since networks have found applications in a large number of literature areas, each of these theoretical threads deals with various 'entities' that they call 'network members': organisations for organisational studies, professions for the sociologists of professions and individuals for psychologists and leadership scholars. The network literature itself does not offer a resolution on this point.

2.3. Interacting Identities in Human Service Partnerships

One of the key measures taken by the government in the aftermath of the Climbié crisis, with a view to avoid future neglect leading to similar tragedies, was to make statutory the partnership between agencies with a stake in children's services and aiming towards an integrated system of service delivery for children and young people. It is important to see how these structures have been implemented at a local level, yet a few concepts need clarifying before embarking on such a task. First, it is important to see who is interacting in these partnerships, for surely although the legislation places a duty on agencies, there is more than the organisational boundaries that needs analysing.

If the network theorists such as Hudson (2004), argue that the critical issue for network effectiveness is the network itself (Hudson 2004, p.91), others see different key analytical levels in network partnerships. Organisational theorists (e.g. Provan and Milward 1995) of course refer to organisations as being the key identities in interaction. Researchers of the professions (e.g. Leathard 1994) see some merit in looking at the partnerships as inter-professional endeavours. Finally, leadership studies find an interest in how individuals convey messages and vision from the partnership table into their organisations and the other way around (Hartley and Allison 2000, Huxham and Vangen 2000).

The cultural discrepancies between those interacting in child-care settings have been extensively explored. The literature has focused on communication deficits between health professionals (Carpenter 1995), between nurses and medics (Allen 1997), between social workers and nurses (Mullaney and Liston 1974) and between social services, police and health occupations (Reder and Duncan 2003). The barriers to them working together effectively (see subsection 2.2.8) have been identified to be around three key levels: issues that have to do with inter-personal contact (such as

anxiety or bonding processes), issues related to inter-professional communication (such as territoriality or the use of professional jargon) and those around disparities in organisational arrangements (such as different performance indicators or organisational cultures). Deconstructing the elements of misalignment between these categories, there are three dimensions that are of relevance: organisations that are statutory members of partnerships, the individuals that represent these organisations and the professions that they belong to and that shape some of their values.

More recently, Smith and Fischbacher (forthcoming) made the distinction between these three analytical levels explicit in the three types of networks that they revealed as existing in partnerships: human, professional and organisational networks. These networks are said to coexist in a 'network space':
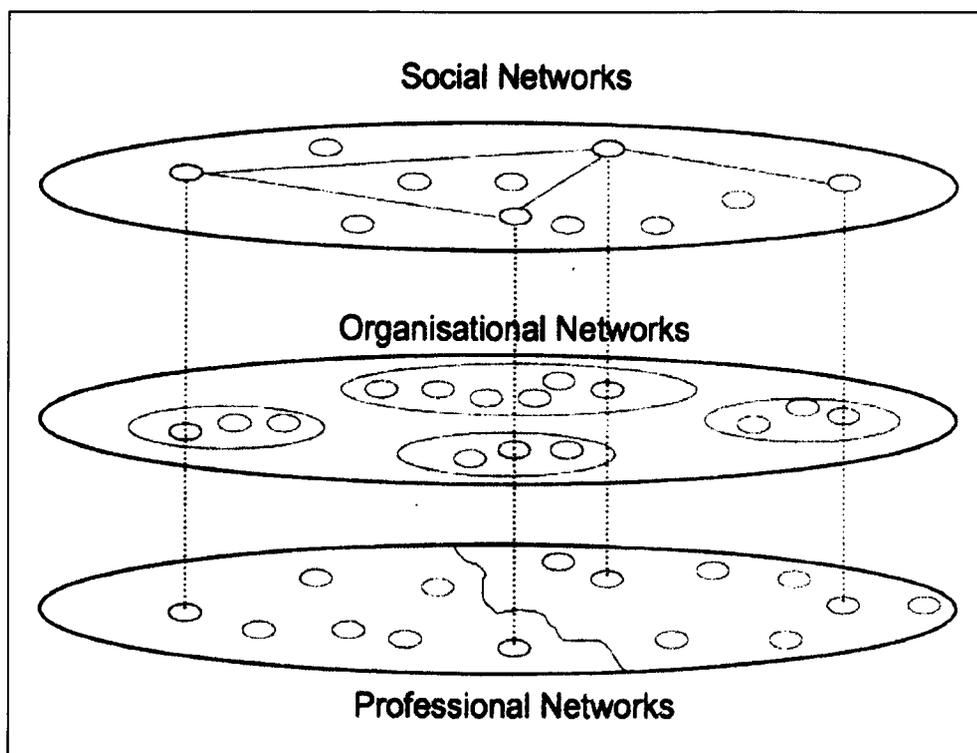
Figure 5: Human (social, organisational and professional) networks

Source: Smith and Fischbacher, forthcoming

Next subsections will analyse these three 'identities' in turn, by reviewing the literature concerning each of them separately. Where applicable, the literature will also highlight what is specific to the organisations and the professions in the LSCB.

2.3.1. Human services organisations

Human services organisations (HSOs) are organisations that deliver welfare services to communities. Examples include health authorities, social service departments and educational establishments. The core organisations in LSCBs are: the local authority, social services, education, health authorities, police, youth offending teams, local probation boards, the Connexions service, prisons, Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), third sector organisations. These agencies have significant development histories before entering into close contact through collaboration. Since this is likely to impact on their joint work, a brief outline of the key points in their more recent development, as well as of their stake in children related issues, is thought to be useful at this point. On a general note, the most important influence on all these agencies' operational structures is represented by the New Right reforms of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. These reforms had one major similarity: the introduction of 'quasi-markets' into the delivery of welfare services, with serious consequences amongst which fragmentation of services, separation of purchasers and providers, competition, and contract culture (see for example Le Grand 1991). These reforms were then followed by the New Labour's 'modernising services approach' (see for example Garrett 2008) which changed some of the above initiatives, but strengthened others, via the creation of a child-centred integrated service delivery.

Children's Services Authorities

These are local authorities with responsibilities for children, introduced by the Children Act (2004). The Act marked a radical overhaul of local services between 2004 and 2005, bringing together the social care group in the former social services department and the education services. The move was seen as a step forward towards integration of services (see Laming 2003), but was received with scepticism by many social workers and educationalists (e.g. BBC News, 2009).

More recently, the report into the progress of child protection services in the UK (Laming 2009) gave weight to these concerns. The report revealed that CSAs' performance is overall declining and in some cases rather steeply. Four councils went from a four-star rating to one-star for children's services, while their performances in other services were strong. This suggested that perhaps the integration of the two services into one tackling the problems of the same client group was not well thought through.

Health authorities

According to governmental guidance (HM Government 2006), the health authorities with responsibilities around children are:

- strategic health authorities (SHAs)
- primary care trusts (PCTs)
- NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts
- Ambulance Trusts and NHS Direct Trusts
- Independent sector (contracted by PCTs)

This relatively high number of health authorities is due to reforms in the 1980s and the 1990s (see for example Maynard 1991, Le Grand 1991) which were directed at making the health care system more efficient. The outcomes of this 'social experiment' (Maynard 1991) are still uncertain, for spill-over effects are still unravelling. The most obvious consequences are,

however, the fragmentation of the service and the conflict between the professional ethos and the market-like organisational structures.

Police authority

The primary functions of the policy are to protect the community and to bring offenders to justice (Sanders 1999). Children, like all citizens, have the right to the full protection offered by the criminal law, hence should be protected like all other citizens (HM Government 2006). In the light of evidence that sometimes, child abuse investigations are not of as high priority as other types of investigation that the police conducts, Lord (2003) argued that

> 'Child protection policing is no more or less than the investigation of crime. To treat it otherwise or to remove it from mainstream policing in either philosophy or operational practice is to do a grave disservice to the victims of such crime.' (para 15.1)

The primacy of the police role in child protection emerged over the past 30 years, with the relations between this agency and the social services departments being strained in the early days of their cooperation (1970s) (ibid.). Under the Children Act 2004, the involvement of the police authority for the safeguard of children is deeper than ever before.

The police department with closest involvement with the other agencies in joint work around safeguarding children is the child protection unit. It is from this department that police representation into the LSCB comes. Another relevant issue for the police's involvement in the LSCBs is the fact that police authorities are fewer than local authority areas, and therefore it often happens for this organisation to be represented by the same professional in more than one LSCB at the same time.

Youth Offending Teams

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) with the specific aim 'to prevent offending by children and young persons' aged 10 to 17 (Crime and Disorder Act 1998, s.37). The safeguarding element in this generic goal prompted the drive towards multi-agency policy delivery. By incorporating representatives from a wide range of services, YOTs were designed to respond in a comprehensible way to the needs of young people who had either offended or were at risk of doing so. This response takes the form of preventative measures, but also includes monitoring and reactive activities. First, YOTs tackle prevention through a range of targeted programmes. They then assess young people coming into the youth system in order to establish the circumstances and causes of their offending. They also deliver intervention programmes to tackle the causes for the young persons' offending and enable them to carry out some sort of reparation. Finally, they provide supervising officers for young people who are given community penalties orders by the Court and for those who receive custodial sentences.

The rationale behind the need to tackle youth offending by means of partnership (Home Office 1984) is the fact that children's and young people's offending is thought to arise from many social problems traditionally tackled by separate agencies. The 1998 Act introduced a holistic approach to crime reduction, by means of a partnership between the police, social services, education, probation, health and the Connexions service.

Since 2000, YOTs have started to function in all local authorities in England and Wales in an attempt to deal in a comprehensible manner with young people who have offended, or are at risk of doing so. Thus, they tackle a number of factors that are conducive to criminal behaviour amongst young people instead of concentrating on punishment alone. The agency combines welfare and punitive cultures in a 'melting pot of principles and ideologies' (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 2002; Pitts, 2001).

The Probation Service

According to departmental guidance (HM Government 2006), the role of probation is to supervise offenders, with the aim of reducing re-offending and protecting the public. By working with these people to improve their lifestyles and enabling them to change their behaviour, Offender Managers safeguard and promote the welfare of the children for whom the offenders have a responsibility.

As part of their main responsibility to supervise offenders in the community, offender managers will be in contact with, or supervising, a number of offenders who have been identified as presenting a risk, or potential risk, to children. They will also supervise supervising offenders who are parents or carers of children. The ultimate aim is to improve these people's lifestyles and behaviour in order to enable them to become better carers for their children.

Connexions

This is a youth support service established by the Department for Education and Employment in 2000 (DEE 2000). It does not appear as such in the Children Act's (2004) wording on the LSCB membership. Rather, it is disguised as 'Services provided under s114 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000'. The service is a partnership which centres on young persons and is aimed at offering them the best start in life (DEE 2000) by providing a comprehensive service to meet their needs for information, advice and support. Specifically, governmental guidance into their statutory involvement with children and young people gives the agency responsibilities in:

- identifying, keeping in touch with, and giving the necessary support to young people in their geographical area. A young person may receive any combination of the following according to their need:

information, advice, guidance, counselling, personal development opportunities, referral to specialist services and advocacy to enable them to access opportunities funding or other services.

- identifying young people who may be at risk from child protection issues and in these cases, for alerting the appropriate authority.

- minimising risk to the safety of young people on premises that they or their subcontractors are responsible for.

- minimising the risk that organisations that they signpost young people to, such as those providing employment and training opportunities, pose a threat to young people.

- ensuring that staff (including sub contractors), are aware of risks to the welfare of young people and can exercise their legal, ethical, operational and professional obligations to safeguard them.

The service was, until recently, funded directly by the government, whereas from April 2008, this comes via the local authorities, to help strengthen the integration of the local services working with and for children in the area.

CAFCASS

The Child and Family Court Advisory Service (CAFCASS) was established in April 2001. The body brings together the services that were previously provided by the Family Court Welfare Service, the Guardian ad Litem Services, and the Children's Division of the Official Solicitor. Its specific roles in the local safeguarding children arrangements (HM Government 2006) are:

• to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are the subject of family proceedings;

• to give advice to any court about any application made to it in such proceedings;

• to make provision for children to be represented in such proceedings and

• to provide information, advice and other support for children and families.

In fulfilling these roles, CAFCASS appoints an officer that then courts (either criminal or civil) assign as Children's Guardian. The main types of cases in which the courts ask CAFCASS to help are when parents are separating or divorcing and have not reached agreement on arrangements for the children; when children may be removed from their parents care for their own safety; and when children could be adopted.

Third Sector Organisations

Third sector organisations are not under a statutory duty to collaborate with others in LSCBs due to their essential 'independence' from the government. The wording of the Children Act 2004 and of the Working Together departmental guidance, however, indicates that they are key to LSCBs although they cannot be placed under a legal obligation to be part of these arrangements. Thus, the sector is included by law amongst the 'relevant partners' that the local authority can have in the region and that should consequently be involved. These relevant persons and bodies are 'persons and bodies of any nature exercising functions or engaged in activities relating to children in the area of the authority in question' (Children Act 2004, s. 13, par. 6). Working Together guidance (HM Government 2006) takes this one step further, actually listing the third sector (TS) amongst 'other members' that must be included in LSCB 'at a minimum', implying the high relevance of these organisations to the work undertaken at the local level to deliver policy outcomes for children. This is as close as TS can possibly get to a statutory role, given the fact that the sector is independent, and there are no means of democratic accountability that it could be controlled by.

The third sector organisations went a long way from being reliant on grants by local and central state agencies to contract relations and partnership working with the statutory sector in providing public services. Each of the three development stages is central to each of the paradigms of public service delivery. They are partners in policy-making under the 'Third Way' agenda of the New Labour (see Giddens 2000).

2.3.2. Professions in human services organisations

HSOs are inhabited by professional groups, such as doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers and police officers, that, over time, have acquired a strong social profile and have come to 'occupy specific, and often strategically powerful, enclaves within large organisations, within which they can be recognised as organisationally encapsulated quasi-organisations' (Ackroyd 1996, p.601). These are often long-established professions which have had time and historic opportunities to secure their quasi-separation from both lay people and other professional communities (Goode 1957, Ackroyd 1996). This 'occupational double closure' (Parkin 1972, Murphy 1988) is, in essence, a double ideological separation of professions from 'others', both inside and outside that organisation.

Professions are conceptualised to be occupations which have assumed a dominant and autonomous position in the division of labour (Freidson 1970). There are different levels of power (doctors being held in the highest esteem in most societies -see, for example, Ackroyd 1992, 1994) and different cultural viewpoints of professions (exemplified by the transatlantic divide of the sociology of professions -see Sciulli 2005). In the UK, professionals 'have a relatively narrow expertise and are serviced by other occupations, such as administrators in the public sector' (Ackroyd 1996, p.605). This points to the very important issue of professionals' monopoly on expertise which is protected by means of long socialisation processes (via for example training, internship periods and life-long education –see Goode 1957)

In an organisational context, professionals are usually surrounded by other occupational groups, that can be either professions or occupations that aspire to the status of professions (for instance, doctors work in the same organisation as nurses, but also alongside administrators and managers). There are often defensive discourses and territoriality expressed towards these other groups (Lupton 2001, Ackroyd 1996), as well as a hierarchy of

status (Abbott 1988). These relationships are informed by professional ethos: a collection of values by which the profession abides, which all professionals acquire though an adult socialisation process undertaken as students or trainees (Goode 1957).

In the policy area of children, failure of professionals to engage in effective and meaningful communication has been raised to have impacted, over the years, on many policy failures (Laming 2003, Reder and Duncan 2003, White and Featherstone 2005). There is therefore a need to understand 'how professional identities are formed and performed in ways which can both aid and block communication' (White and Featherstone 2005, p.213). In this way, professions become an important layer of context in which communication between their representatives in partnerships occurs (Reder and Duncan 2003, White and Featherstone 2005).

The professional groups represented in LSCBs are: social workers, health professions (dominated by nurses and doctors), police officers, and education professionals (teachers and educationalists). While they are all important and have key roles in safeguarding children, a more recent report (LGA 2009) likened these inter-professional arrangements to football where all professionals involved are players on the field and the social worker is the goalkeeper. Like in a football game, the social worker is the very last line of defence: when balls get through, it is the goalkeeper that gets blamed, regardless of how the rest of the team played.

Social workers

Social workers conduct their jobs in the various areas in social services departments, for example housing, adult services, youth services and children's services. The latter category is often referred to as social carers or children's social workers. If social work in general is a less popular career choice than it once way (see Harlow 2004), social care is found to be an even less popular speciality (Harlow and Shardlow 2006, LGA 2009).

Government guidance on working together (HM Government 2006) indicates that social carers should 'act as principal point of contact for children about whom there are welfare concerns' (HM Government 2006, p.42). Thus, as part of their daily work, social workers become containers of all emotions that arise from work with children, especially in child abuse cases: 'compassion, affection, dislike, disgust, fear, anxiety, confusion and conflict' (Valentine 1994, p.80). Other professions fear being close to the emotional labour that this sort of work implies and are therefore happy to allow the social carers take charge (Harlow and Shardlow 2006).

In the light of the radical overhaul of the children's services between 2004 and 2005, social workers became keen to differentiate their professional values from their professional tasks. This must be seen in the context of their work having become increasingly shaped by a context of increased managerialism and fragmentation of services (Garrett 2008). That the New Labour is 'tough' on social work (ibid.) is apparent in findings that social workers spend 80 percent of their daily work doing paperwork and only 20 percent on practical social work, making workload pile up (BBC News 2009b). It is also evident in many of the issues illustrated by Lord Laming in his latest report on child protection progress in the UK (Laming 2009), revealing in essence that more support and training is needed for social workers in undertaking their work. This is in tune with the Local Government's Association report (LGA 2009) on the recruitment and retention crisis in children's social work.

Health professions

The Working Together departmental guidance (HM Government 2006) indicates that the health professionals with responsibilities around safeguarding children are:

- Designated and named professionals (doctors and nurses)
- Paediatricians

- Dental practitioners

- Other health professionals, including: clinical psychologists; staff in genito-urinary medicine services; obstetric and gynecological staff; occupational therapists, physiotherapists; staff in sexual health services; speech and language therapists; optometrists; pharmacists; and other professions allied to medicine.

The traditional professional roots for these professions are medicine and nursing. The dichotomy between doctors and nurses is well documented in literature (see for example Friedson 1970, Allen 1997) as being rooted in issues such as gender segregation in the two professions (e.g. Acker 1998), the hierarchy of professional status (e.g. Ackroyd 1992, 1994), the belief in training versus belief in vocation as the foundation for choosing one of the two careers (Menzies Lyth 1989) and the loyalty of professionals to each of the two professional groups (Freund and Drach-Zahavy 2007). What is however common to health professionals is that they appear to have higher loyalty to their professions than they have to the organisations which employ them (ibid.).

Police officers

The dichotomy between police officers and social workers is central to the child protection literature (Sanders 1999, Garrett 2004). At the root of their differences stays the fundamental polarity between the therapeutic and investigative objectives of their work (Sanders 1999). More specific aspects of this conflict are 'different objectives, value and training' (Thomas 1994) and 'management structures and style, timescale, training, communication qualities and organisational decision-making' (Lardner 1992)

Police officers come the closest to the ethos promoted in social work in child protection units within the police force.

Education professionals

Within this compound professional group, teachers play a key role in safeguarding children, being the profession exposed to the longest contact with the child (at school) and also in charge with most of the child's daily schedule (via homework, for example) (Sanders 1999).

Other occupations in this professional family (for example child psychologists) have a similar professional ethos with teachers, some professed as teachers at one point or another in their careers and generally support teachers in their work with children. The issues that educationalists are most concerned with as part of their daily work are school attendance, school exclusion bullying and teenage pregnancy. They ways in which they tackle these aspects are all relevant to child protection. As profession, the education reform of the late 1980s introduced a significant administrative overload which subsequent reforms, including under the New Labour, enhanced even further.

Amongst the issues that constitute potential dilemmas for educationalists on safeguarding children issues is striking the balance between doing too little and doing too much referral of children for whom there are concerns (Sanders 1999). Doing too little would entail not reporting concerns on the basis of the latter not being considered to be significant, and reporting unnecessarily much. An extreme of the latter case happens when teachers engage in unauthorised investigative work to establish how founded their concerns are. Controversial as it seems to many other professionals involved (especially to police officers and to social workers), more or less extensive independent investigations by the teachers constitute one way for them to establish merit in a referral case before damaging relations with the parents (which would happen if children are referred)

*

Human services involve 'moral work' (Hasenfeld 1992): by the very nature of their job, professionals in HSOs intrude into their clients lives, passing

judgements of their clients' social worth. It follows then that human services professionals are implicitly accepted to be morally superior (Katz 1984), hence entitled to allocate resources on moral criteria. Indeed, practitioners of this type of work have considerable power over their clients. This aspect is often challenged publicly, however, in the light of cases where this power was perceived to have been abused (e.g. Smith 2002)

It is also a characteristic of human services that they are compartmentalised in areas of expertise, in order to be easier to manage by the central government (e.g. Hasenfeld 1992). Consequently, professionals take partial stakes of the overall problem, indeed 'meta-strategies' (Huxham and Macdonald 1992), that they are set to address collectively in interaction with others. These limited worldviews are informed both by their adherence to their profession and by their belonging to specific organisations whose operations only tackle 'parts' of the overall 'puzzle'. If the whole image that this puzzle builds is the safety and the welfare of the child, then the puzzle pieces as represented by professional and organisational worldviews appear to be as follows:
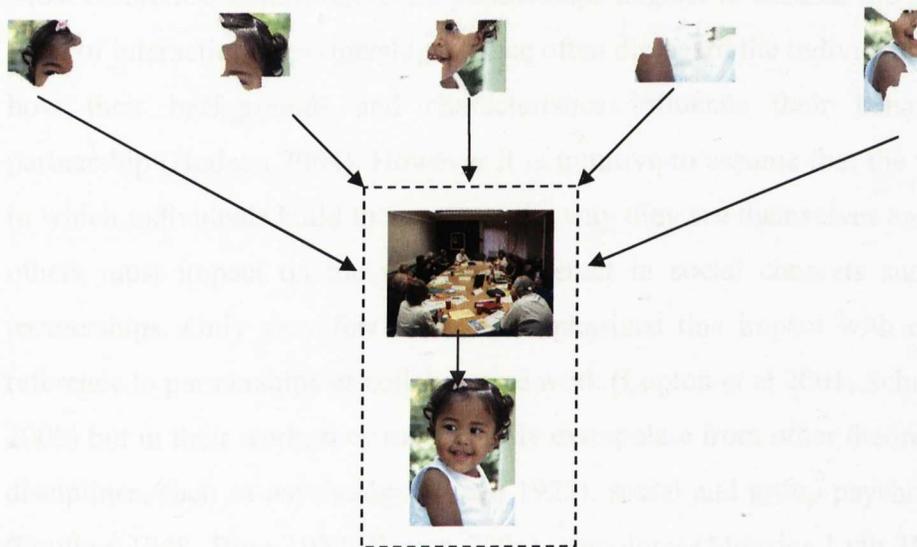
Figure 6: Fragmented stakes in children's welfare   Source: Author's own

These limited worldviews are informed both by individuals' adherence to their profession and by their belonging to specific organisations whose operations only tackle parts of the overall 'puzzle'. If the whole image that this puzzle builds is the safety and the welfare of the child, then the pieces of the puzzle as represented by professional and organisational worldviews appear as in the figure above. As this section of the thesis has revealed, traditionally, each of the professions with stakes in the policy area of children and families are primarily concerned with no more than micro aspects of the overall risks to which children are exposed. Thus, doctors and nurses are mainly concerned with children's health, teachers with school attendance, school bullying and teenage pregnancy, police officers with investigating incidents with child victims, while social workers are concerned with the social context in which children develop. Across these fragmented worldviews, individuals occasionally span boundaries able to capture more than what their organisations can. The next subsection illustrates how individuals work in partnerships.

2.3.3. Individuals in human services organisations and professions

Most theoretical contributions on partnerships neglect to assume the social level of interaction in partnerships, hence often disregard the individuals and how their backgrounds and characteristics influence their behaviour partnership (Hudson 2004). However it is intuitive to assume that the ways in which individuals build their values, the way they see themselves and the others must impact on the way they interact in social contexts such as partnerships. Only very few theorists emphasized this impact with direct reference to partnerships or collaborative work (Lupton et al 2001, Schruijer 2008) but in their work, they must largely extrapolate from other theoretical disciplines, such as psychology (Freud 1922), social and group psychology (Foulkes 1948, Bion 1952, Brown 2006), sociology (Menzies Lyth 1989), diversity (Larkey 1996, Kochan et al 2003, Bassett-Jones 2005), leadership (Hogan and Kaiser 1994, Judge et al. 2002) and organisational psychology (Katz and Kahn 1978, Weick 1979). These scholars have long been

concerned with how people's core beliefs are at the root of all their actions. Some of these beliefs may come from widely accepted values in society at a given time, others may come from upbringing, and others from education and professional training. As Hofstede (2001) put it, 'people carry "mental programmes" which are developed in the family in early childhood, are reinforced in schools and organisations' (Hofstede 2001, p.11). Therefore individuals can be conceptualised as essentially bearers of the contexts that surround them (be it the society overall, or their profession) and that shape their personal features and opinions, according to which they relate to others.

Previous efforts of attributing micro (individual) motivations and behaviour to macro (organisations) have been condemned on the basis of them representing 'cross-level fallacies' (Rousseau 1985), yet a way to overcome 'anthropomorphising' the organisation is done by introducing a link between the micro and the macro levels. This link is represented by individuals' behaviour in groups (Zaheer et al. 1998).

It has been observed that

> 'the group consists of two aspects of the individual.
> The fist set comprises those aspects of the individual
> which he is aware of and acknowledges; the second
> the unacknowledged aspects which are implicitly
> contributed to a pool...' (Menzies Lyth 1989, p. 4)

This 'pool' is sometimes called 'group mentality' (Bion 1952), and other times, 'social and interpersonal unconscious' (Foulkes 1948).

Some theorists go beyond individuals in groups and look at how they behave in institutions. A valuable input on this is Fenichel's (1946) idea that institutions arise of human beings' efforts to satisfy their needs, but once formed, are difficult to change and influence the personality structures of their members. It is in this context that Menzies Lyth (1989) asserts that in order 'to change the members one may first need to change the institution' (p.26).

Bion (1961) brings an invaluable early contribution to the present discussion. Namely, he emphasizes how, on the one hand, people are group animals and cannot live in isolation from others and, on the other hand, they cannot get on very well with others, despite seeing the benefits of collaboration. Menzies Lyn (1989) regards this dilemma as essential in understanding of groups and institutions. The argument can arguably be extended in that the same dilemma applies to inter-organisational settings where people find themselves in on-going collaborative contact.

Individual features of actors in networks: lessons on diversity

In a recent overview of the literature contributing to a social psychology dimension of inter-organisational relations, Schruijer (2008, p.432) asserts that 'working with diversity is key to successful collaboration'. This is justified in terms of the inevitability of differences between working parties and the need to address rather than suppress these variations. Such differences have been generically referred to in relation to 'ideas, identities and interests' (ibid.), as well as to 'emotional realities, different systems of meaning and different types of bias' (Morrison 1996, p.130).

Diversity is conceptualised here as 'differences in worldviews or subjective culture, resulting in potential behavioural differences between cultural groups' (Larkey's 1996, p.465). Cultural groups are, in turn, defined by Willcoxson and Milett (2000) to be historically developed groups with own recognised identity, sharing the same beliefs and patterns of behaviour that seem 'effective in helping them interpret and interact with the world in which they find themselves' (pp.92). It is important to note that cultural groups usually 'give people a sense of belonging through collective identity' (ibid.), and that acknowledging the differences that they embrace makes people feel valued and allow their talents to be fully utilised. Kandola and Fullerton (1998, pp.8) indicate that the differences that remain at the root of culture group formation in organisations are around sex, age, background, race, disability, personality and work style. To these, other theorists (for

example, Bissett 2004, Fischer 2007) add sexual orientation, religion, values and beliefs, while Herriott and Pemberton (1995) refer to these as 'different frameworks of knowledge'.

Some of these 'frameworks', most notably, gender, race, class and age have often been referred to in literature as potentially important shapers of dynamics in partnerships (for example Lupton et al 2001). Public inquiries, too, revealed poor communication to be at the root of the problem for failures of multi-agency work, and, at its turn, communication has often been linked to issues such as distrust and negative attitudes due to stereotyping of professionals towards each other. Apart from stereotyping on the basis of people's identification with close professional groups with which they come to identify (through in-group belief congruence and generalisation about out-group beliefs –see Schruijer 2008), gender and race have also been highlighted as particularly major sources of discrimination (Kneale 1994, Leathard 1994, Anker 1998, Hall et al. 2007).

Gender is here conceptualised to be a learned difference between men and women that is determined by social and cultural values (Anker 1998). It is not a fixed, biological characteristic of people, but essentially a practice of improvisation under constraint (Hall et al 2007). More famously, it has been referred to as situated, embodied communicative praxis (Schrag 1986) enacted in a complex field of discursive and non-discursive relations of power, accommodation and resistance (Jermier et al. 1994).

Gender shapes organisational beliefs (Eagly 1987, Newman 1995, Evetts 2000, Martin 1999, Perrott 2002) and, at its turn, is reproduced both at a cultural and at a structural level. Thus, culturally-embedded gender stereotypes reinforce gender roles (Eagly 1987), whereby some jobs require supposedly 'feminine' personal or individual traits (such as nurturing in social or child care), whereas others require more 'masculine' attributes (such as physical strength in police law enforcement). Equally, internal and external organisational processes such as HR procedures – job advertisements, role descriptions, interviews, appraisal and training can subtly (as this is usually formally outlawed) frame certain jobs are being

more suitable for one sex (Anker 1998, Perrott 2002).

The issue to gender is often related to that of race for 'sexism cannot be understood in isolation from racism' (CCETSW 1992 in Leathard 1994). In inter-professional teams, the fact that the professions involved perpetuate gender and race biased cultures can contribute to the difficulties in communication, for example in agreeing on common goals and perspectives.

Gender and race also become relevant when people in a gender or/and race biased profession assume their professional identity. Dombeck (2003) explains how a person's identity while exercising their profession can be affected by whether they 'fit the profile' of the most common worker in that profession. Taking the example of nursing, the most common representation of the profession is 'white middle-aged woman'. A nurse who does not fit this description can experience problems of self-identification, for people identify themselves at the same time as they show themselves to others (Fortes 1983 in Dombeck 2003). This effectively keeps professionals that are unlike the 'norm' on the edge on their profession, leading to discrimination. Discrimination can be a hidden barrier to development of inter-professional care (Kneale 1994) because

> 'the development of inter-professional practice is dependent on an environment (...) which includes a flattened hierarchy and equality between professionals. This may be viewed as a threat to traditional power base and discrimination may occur by those who seek to retain the status quo' (Kneale 1994).

Navarro (1986) and Williams (1989) argue along the same lines that, in human services inter-professional arrangements, discrimination is motivated by fear, control and power.

Personality of individuals who represent their 'parent' agencies is relevant in the context of the present discussion, in that it is partly influenced by the degree of the person's integration into their institutions, be them professional groups or organisations.

It has been argued before that membership to an institution changes the structure of the personality (Fenichel 1946). Put differently, belonging to an institution determines a resemblance of the individuals with them. Menzies Lyth (1989) explains the process by which this happens:

> 'Members become like the institution in significant ways –by introjecting and operating its characteristic defence mechanisms, sharing common attitudes, carrying on traditional types of relationships. If an individual cannot achieve this identity, it is unlikely to remain a member. If he remains too different, he is likely to be rejected by the institution because he does not 'fit'. If he tries to conform to something which is too foreign to him, he may find it too stressful and leave' (Menzies Lyth 1989, p.42).

Other theorists refer to this effect of effort, or indeed failure, to integrate in institutions to which they belong as to 'emotional labour' (e.g. Martin 1999, Cooper 2005).

Personality also becomes relevant to individuals' behaviour in organisations in general, and in inter-organisational settings in particular, in relation to whether or not people display autonomy in their work and take charge of the tasks to undertake in order to contribute to the aims of their work. This issue has been touched upon by the leadership literature.

One relation thread between personality and leadership has been highlighted in relation to the five-factor model (Tupes and Christal 1961). The model refers to a comprehensive taxonomy of generic personality traits, generally accepted across a variety of contexts and cultures (Judge and Bono 2000). The 'big' five traits involved are: 'extraversion', 'agreeableness', 'conscientiousness', 'emotional adjustment' (sometimes labelled via its

negative, 'neuroticism') and 'openness to experience'. The argument goes that the way a person scores on these five characteristics is a prerequisite of leadership (Judge et al. 2002). Although the five-factor model has been deemed to be the most exhaustive taxonomy of personality traits so far (ibid.), some argue that it could be considered as precondition for leadership only in work contexts specific to Western Europe and North America (Silverthorne 2001). Moreover, more recently, proactive personality has been found to account for variance in managers' charismatic leadership more than any of the five traits in the 'five-factor model' (Crant and Bateman 2000).

Leadership is a characteristic in people that can be significant in partnership working, when conceptualised as the amount of autonomy that individuals enjoy when they take decisions in conjunction with others from other organisations. If in the traditional bureaucracy paradigm of public administration leadership qualities were not necessarily desirable in public administrators, they become more significant in the light of work in cross-organisational arrangements (Newman 2005). In the context of the research problem that this investigation tackles, representatives of organisations in partnerships can be conceptualised as leaders in the sense of 'channels' of their organisations' resources and commitment to the common goal of the partnership as well as of the partnerships' commitments back into their parent organisations (Huxham and Vangen 2000, Hartley and Allison 2000).

Leadership in the sense of autonomy of individuals in their decision making can be especially hard to perform in the public sector, despite the fact that this is where it would perhaps make a most remarkable difference to people (Menzies Lyth 1989, Elcock 2000). Public administrators find themselves operating 'within the goldfish bowl of public scrutiny and accountability' (Lawton and Rose 1994, pp.28). In the attempt to conform and not fall victim to the 'witch hunt' that follows virtually every crisis in the country, public servants may have just gone back to embracing more traditional discretion limits, as prescribed by Weber (1971). One of Weber's basic features of a bureaucratic system is 'impersonality'. Lawton and Rose

(1994) describe this as occurring when 'the work is conducted according to prescribed rules, without arbitrariness or favouritism' (pp.30). There is little to no personal interference and personal responsibility when the goal is 'no arbitrariness'. Creativity is lost and risk is minimised to a level to which there seems to be no point in making the effort to raise above the game for public managers. Indeed, as Newman (2005) observes,

> 'The bureaucratic principle of the separation of office from personal preference that underpinned the development of the public sector calls for an absence of personal enthusiasm. This is the antithesis of leadership discourse, a discourse that is predicated on the visibility of the leader's embodiment of characteristics such as integrity, vision and charisma. Strong values are viewed as an asset that transformational leaders deploy fostering cultural change.' (Newman 2005, pp.720)

It is the transformational type of leadership that Newman advocates here. Elcock (2000), too, opts for transformational leaders in local government at the expense of transactional type, 'negotiating marginal changes in policy and resource allocation' (Elcock 2000, pp.25). Rather, transformational leaders are needed 'to revitalise local democracy and inspire citizens, councillors and officers with new visions' (ibid.).

However, it is not an easy task for public agencies to allow leadership behaviour to be demonstrated, nor is it for public servants to take any risks. Although the private sector's ethos has entered public sector to some degree, there are still elements of the latter than have not been –and cannot be- challenged significantly. Thus, the sector is still legalistic, process led and heavily reliant on government regulations (e.g. Thompson 2003, Hughes 1994).

If public servants are reluctant to put forward personal resolutions to complex policy problems for fear of the responsibility that would arise from such personal commitment, the scope for leadership activities remains rather limited. A middle ground between this need to take a personal stance and still respecting organisational accountability lines has been found in the

'active accountability' advanced by Bovens (1998) as well as in the 'moral or ethical obligation' of administrators, as suggested by Newman (2004). It is however yet to be explored whether these 'novel' types of accountability can really be integrated into the mainstream accountability debate or will it always be at odds with the more traditional types: organisational, political, to stakeholders, to consumers, and so on. It could be argued that the apparent incongruity between the various types of accountability to which public servants are subjected can become a threat to successful multi-agency working in the public sector and, for the purposes of the present investigation, to the 'Every Child Matters' safeguarding children agenda.

Individuals in groups

If it has been established that groups experience dynamics that go beyond the sum of individual behaviour. A particular relevant aspect of this is the permeability of group boundaries' –to what extent one can deal with conflicts of group membership, for example when they belong to groups with conflicting aims or remits.

If a group consists of 'individuals who influence one another through social interaction' (Forsyth 1990, p.7), the concept of inter-group relations then refers to 'relations between two or more groups and their respective members' (Sherif 1967, p.12). The inter-group behaviour is evident in the interaction between individuals on the basis of their group membership (Schruijer 2008). Social identity theorists explain that in terms of individuals' identification with the groups they are part of. Social identity is defined by these scholars as

> 'that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership to a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership' (Tajfel 1981, p.225).

Conflict between groups can also be explained on the basis of social identification, but also on that of self-categorisation —as belonging to a group or another (Turner et al. 1987, Hogg and Abrams 1988) —groups perceive negatively what is different than the norms generally accepted as valid within their group. In this regards, the concept of 'in-group' refers to homogeneity in groups, hence similarity amongst group members, while 'out-group' refers to what is perceived as being different. Solutions to inter-group conflicts have been advanced by the theorists of group psychology (Schruijer 2008) as follows:

- crossing one category with another (Deschamps and Doise 1978)
- decreasing social categorisation, thus pushing interactions into a primarily interpersonal realm (Brewer and Miller 1984)
- creating 'superordinate identities' (Turner 1981), hence transforming inter-group relations into intra-group relations (Schruijer 2008)
- implementing 'social creativity' techniques, whereby 'groups may validate one another's superior position on two different dimensions (Schruijer 2008). This method has also been referred to as 'social cooperation' (Rijsman 1983), 'mutual intergroup differentiation' (Hewstone and Brown 1986) or even, though on a more negative tone, 'ingroup favouritism' (Mummendey and Simon 1989).

All these techniques have been applied in the context of joint governance paradigm in general, and in that of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda in particular. The creation of 'cross categories' (Deschamps and Doise 1978) is evident for example in newer professional roles such as 'youth offending officer' with a cross-ethos between social work (youth work, to be precise) and police work (Dudau and McAllister forthcoming).

Decreasing 'social categorisation' (Brewer and Miller 1984) was also evident in this example, as it is, too, in the Workforce Reform initiative according to which all professionals working for children must demonstrate, regardless of their training, one single set of 'core skills' (see DfES 2005). Some theorists also referred to this as 'de-skilling' (Pitts 2001).

'Superordinate identities' (Turner 981) were creates via partnerships such as the LSCB; the closer the partnership, the more inter-professional and inter-agency work resembles 'business as usual' within the traditional professional and organisational boundaries. Partnerships are also evidence of 'social cooperation' (Rijsman 1983) and managing diversity (Dudau and McAllister 2009) is, as illustrated earlier in this section, an important task demand in these forms of collective work.

Individuals in collaborations

The failures of interagency and inter-professional work where children were concerned have been attributed primarily to the lack of communication between these groups. In a detailed study of communication in this context, Reder and Duncan (2003) concluded that first, communication is key to collaboration and secondly, that in order to understand how communication could be improved at the collective level of the partnerships, it must be analysed starting from the micro-level of the interpersonal psychology of communication. By then mentioning 'wider' contexts of communication around this, central type, the authors visualise individuals –representatives of their 'parent' organisations- as sitting at the heart of collaborations. Miller (1992), too, places communication as 'discussions' at the heart of cooperation, when he asserts that 'discussion has the effect of turning a collection of separate individuals into a group who see one another as co-operators' (Miller 1992, p.62).

Agencies' representatives in collaborations find themselves in a delicate position, essentially acting as channels of communication between their 'parent' organisations and the partnership (Schuijer 2008, Hartley and Allison 2000, Huxham and Vangen 2000). If collaborations are strategies of mediating conflict between previously fully autonomous institutions by creating 'superordinate identities' (Turner 1981), hence of transforming inter-group relations into intra-group relations (Schruijer 2008), then it follows that individuals who represent their 'parent' organisations in the

partnership have dual group membership. Menzies Lyth (1989) raises the issue that 'multi-group membership in an institution raises question of primary belongingness and loyalty' (p. 12). She refers to small groups in institutions, but the argument could be extended to a family of institutions where they work in the same policy environment and where they are guided by the same legislative framework. This mix loyalty could be addressed via the same techniques listed in the previous sub-section, but it is a lengthy work that determines how the partnerships evolve (Vansina 1999).

2.3.4. Interacting identities

The working definition of identity here is 'the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations' (Woodward 1997, p.1). People embody different identities according to how the personal and the social circumstances interweave (Watson 2000). As they assume an identity, they then become sensitive to issues of self-recognition and recognition of others:

> 'We face problems of recognition because socially sustained discourses about who it is possible or appropriate or valuable to be inevitably shapes the way we look at and constitute ourselves with various degrees of agonism and tension.' (Calhoun 1994, p.20).

In partnerships, these theoretical constructs are relevant in drawing the boundaries between the different elements that interact.

The concept of boundary is understood here to be the invisible line that creates interiors (Halley 1998). It is what separates cultural communities (be them nations, tribes or occupations) from each other and what helps differentiating the outsiders from the insiders. An alternative to this concept is that of 'interface' (Weinberg 1975); this notion is especially useful when the aim is to focus less on the differences between the various cultural communities delimited by boundaries and more on the connection between them. For the present purposes of this research, boundary theory

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helps draw the context for boundary spanning (Halley 1998). Indeed, partnerships are loci of contact between various identities that are to work across their boundaries –that is, across their specific cultural differences.

In the case of identities defined via double sets of boundaries (organisational and professional, via the 'occupational double closure'), it is twice as difficult for professionals to surpass their differences and act as boundary-spanners. Add to this, the older the organisations are, the harder it is for them to unlearn their cultural traits (e.g. McAllister and Stirbu 2007) and embrace the synergy mindset conducive to effective collaborative behaviour.

There is a true complexity of interactions amongst the 'interiors' created by these boundaries. These interiors can represent the individual representatives and their cognitive schemes, the professions and their core values, the organisations with their cultures and operations, as well as various combinations of these three: organisational and professional boundaries, such is the case with the 'occupational double closure' (Parkin 1972, Murphy 1988) mentioned earlier in this chapter, but also other interactions.

The interaction between identities in partnerships can be mapped using Venn diagrams. For example, the partnership between health agencies, social services and the police could be represented as follows:
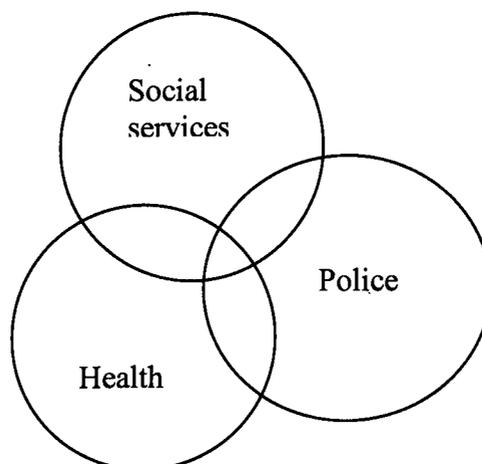
If however it is the relationship between these three agencies where social services commission part of their services to the voluntary and community sector (VCS), then the illustration becomes as follows:
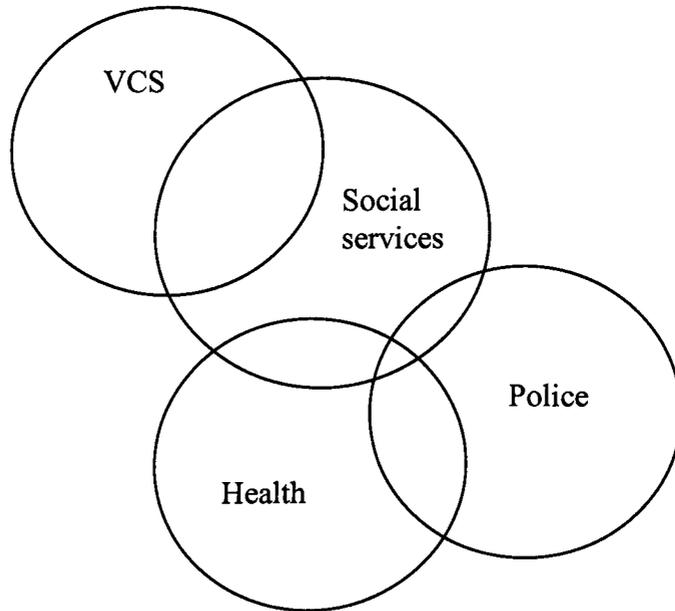
2.3.5. Gaps in literature and researchable proposition

In LSCBs, the identities found to interact are individuals, their professions and their organisations. These three components interact dynamically. The interaction is not between individuals, professionals and organisations across the network (as found by Smith and Fischbacher, forthcoming), but between the 'complex wholes' created in each of the network members by the interplay between cognitive, emotional and psychological characteristics of the individuals, their professional backgrounds and the organisational aspects structuring their work.

Hence, the research problem in the light of this review of the literature is conceptualised as follows:

The identities found to interact in LSCBs are individuals, professions and organisations. These

interact dynamically in each and every one of the partnership members. The key level of analysis out of the three is the inter-personal interaction, for individuals contain cultural traits both of the professional bodies they belong to by training and ethos and of the organisations that regulate their work. Hence, an investigation of how knowledge is used effectively in collaborative settings must include inter-personal dynamics.

There are a number of gaps in literature that prevents a full resolution to this problem. One is that the three dimensions of analysis, as exemplified in this section, have not been related to each other in this way before. Rather, different communities of knowledge conceptualised network members according to their own, specific, expertise base: organisational studies looked at multi-organisational settings, professions sociologists looked at inter-professional networks and psychologists, at individuals' behaviour in groups or teams. The only concentrated effort towards uniting these levels of analysis comes from evaluation theorists, but the field is still to be contributed to. In particular, the individual level of connectedness in partnerships is seriously under-researched and, as this literature review points up, there is evidence to suggest that interpersonal links are key to any investigation around network effectiveness.

2.4. System view: communication within and beyond networks

Time and time again, the literature areas reviewed until now signal the importance of looking at a problem in its context. This was evident in the risk and crisis management literature, where understanding of a failure was seen to be contingent on understanding the wider circumstances of its occurrence (for example Fortune and Peters 1994); It also came out of the network literature, where various influences on the network were identified (for example Benson 1975). Finally, people have been conceptualised as containing influences of their personality (Tupes and Christal 1961), but also of upbringing (Eagly 1987, Anker 1998), professional (Goode 1957) and organisational socialisation (Fenichel 1946, Menzies Lyth 1989). These contexts communicate with each other dynamically forming 'communication networks' (Fisher 1993, Monge and Contractor 2003).

These networks interact contributing to a fluid reality in which contexts change very often and in dynamic combinations that makes it difficult to predict effects from causes. However, people try to simplify reality as a mechanism of coping with information overload which, at its turn, leads to communication overload (Fisher 1993). While reductionism is important as it is conducive to action (Turner 1976), it is also important to point out that, if the aim is to avoid crises from occurring, then the relation between 'possible' causes must be followed against a theoretical bias of complexity where emergence -rooted in, rather than cased by, causal relationships- is often what drives the system towards failure.

Communication occurs at various levels in complex systems: between people, groups and organisations. It could take place alongside formal channels designed by organisations, but it could also be informal, bypassing organisational channels. It could be within entities (people, groups, organisations), or between them (inter-personal, inter-professional or inter-organisational communication). Finally, it could be conducive to creative decision-making in collaborations, or it can block it.

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2.4.1. Communication theories

Communication is key to the functioning of organisations (Fisher 1993). Whether effective or not, it takes place constantly between people, hence it is 'inseparable from and essential to everything that occurs in organisational life' (Fisher 1993, p.3).

In his influential textbook on communication, Fisher (1993) advanced a taxonomy of theoretical models of communication. One model is the one-to-one communication, similar to Aristotle's 'rhetoric', regarding the way in which messages are transmitted, but with little consideration about feedback. This is central to another model of communication, the interaction model. Here, messages are sent, received, interpreted and feedback is sent back to the other communicator. This model however considers communication a linear process and does not take into account the fact that in reality things happen at more instant pace and aspects of the communication process are at the same time cause and effect. These issues have been internalised in the development of the two-person relationship model, a more fluid account of the communication process. Once the communication between people has been conceptualised, the communication-in-context model raises awareness of the contexts in which communication takes place, for example group characteristics, organisational structure and culture, and task characteristics. Then, the strategic model of communication stresses the communication with parties that are outside of the system made of people and their immediate contexts (as identified in the previous model).

It appears, from this taxonomy, that the key level in communication is that between individuals. This is confirmed by Reder and Duncan's (2003, 2004) research findings which also places the basic communication at the inter-personal level of interaction. It follows that the ways in which messages are internalised by people are also important in communication. Indeed, although communication is about relationships (between people, groups,

organisations), this is affected in essential ways by intra-personal processes by which individuals make sense of the reality they are part of and about the others with whom they interact. Factors which can influence intrapersonal communication are: selective attention, self-concept, internal-external congruence and reflexivity. Thus, people tend to 'hear' what is consistent with the 'truth regime' by which they rule their lives and only when they are challenged in a critical manner by adverse evidence, they are willing to adapt what they believe to be true. The first of the four are limitations to messages being received in the exact same ways they were meant by the sender, whereas the forth is an instrument for adaptive behaviour by which individuals tune their understanding of messages they receive.

If we are to learn from crises, then serious case reviews involving children all suggest a lack of communication at their roots. Indeed, communication has often been placed at the heart of collaboration (Reder and Duncan 2003, 2004). While communication can be seen as the straight-forward act of passing accurate information from one agent to another (Reder and Duncan 2003), it also points out the wider issue of a communication mindset (White and Featherstone 2005). This has been coined as the difference between 'communication' and 'meta-communication' (White and Featherstone 2005).

While communication is unanimously seen to be the key issue in partnerships or networks of all kinds, the essential level at which failure to communicate occurs, with serious consequences in practice, is not as clear. Some scholars attribute it to communication between individuals. Turner (1976), for example, emphasises how wrong or misleading information is often due to interpersonal difficulties between particular individuals. But even in the best of circumstances, aka when there are no tensions between people as such, distorted information may still occur due to the fact that people belong to different contexts, have access to different sources of information and, as a consequence, 'tend to construct slightly different theories about what was happening and what needed to be done' (Turner 1976, p.383). Of a similar view, Reder and Duncan (2003) urge a focus on

interpersonal psychology of communication before considering wider contextual forms.

Some other scholars are of the opinion that professional socialisation is what establishes the strains in professionals working together effectively. Indeed, it has been illustrated earlier in this thesis how the aspirants to a profession, especially one that is long-established and holds certain status in society (such as many of those involved in work with and for children), are going through a process of internalisation of that professional culture, starting from education and training (Goode 1957). Then, this is further enforced via continuing education land marked by exams to move from one professional level to another (normally higher). It is enforced even more via professional bodies that these –now- professionals often join to enjoy the full benefits of their association. Finally, day to day practice of the profession according to the –now- internalised professional ethos determines a high loyalty of members of the same profession. This could be conceptualised to form a strong 'cultural framework', one that is arguably very hard to break when it comes to stepping outside the boundaries of that profession to interact with other, often radically different 'cultural frameworks'. A way of tackling the problem of communication between professionals involved in safeguarding children partnerships has been through training (Reder and Duncan 2004).

Finally, a number of theorists (particularly in organisational studies) place organisational culture at the heart of miscommunication between organisations in partnerships (for example Turner 1976, 1978).

It was raised before that attention must be paid to the contexts within which communication occurs (Reder and Duncan 2003, White and Featherstone 2005). The findings from the bodies of literature reviewed here suggest that these contexts are primarily three: individual, professional and organisational communication. In each of these three contexts, communication networks are formed out of 'the patterns of contact that are created by the flow of messages amongst communicators through time and space' (Monge and Contractor 2003, p.3). The concept of 'message' is

understood in its broader sense of 'data, information, knowledge, images, symbols and any other symbolic forms' (ibid.).

If communication networks of professions and organisations are rather intensively researched, this is not the case with communication between individuals outside institutional formal links (Monge and Contractor 2003). However, the argument that informal links may explain organisational behaviour better than formal communication channels has been raised (e.g. Krackhardt and Hanson 1993), as well as claims that research findings linking formal institutional structures to behaviour are inconclusive (Johnson 1992, McPhee and Poole 2001).

Hence, research on 'emergent networks' (Monge and Contractor 2003) has been employed to complement that on 'mandated networks' (Aldrich 1976). The latter are conceptualised to be the established channels between formal organisational roles on organisational charts. The former are spontaneous, inter-personal clusters based on personal affinity, and span across organisations unimpeded by formal structures. Most of the existent literature which examined both types of networks sees them as coexistent, where the informal ones either bypass (see Stevenson and Gilly's (1991) study of problem-solving delegation by managers) or augment the formal ones (see Eveland and Bikson's (1987) research on use of electronic mail in organisations). The findings, however, are in favour of the first hypothesis (informal ties undermining formal structures), since Rice (1994) and others (e.g. Hinds and Kiesler 1995) proved that the reinforcement of formal networks was only a temporary phenomenon and, in time, informality gains ground.

More recently, Monge and Contractor (2003) advance a resolution to this debate about formality and informality of communication networks by claiming that in the recent years, the distinction between formal and informal channels of communication has become increasingly irrelevant. This was due, on the one hand, to new information technologies and, on the other hand, to the rise of networks and of team-based forms of work structuring in organisations.

Communication, be it inter-personal, inter-professional or inter-organisational, often takes place across boundaries and is almost always affected by issues which occur outside the context in which they take place. This is why complexity theory becomes relevant to the discussion about communication.

2.4.2. Complexity theory

Complex systems theory becomes of use to the present research where it is important to consider the system where the communication channels occur. Surely, it is more to the LSCBs than the network itself and so it becomes important to see where else might influences impact on their joint work. These influences are, without a doubt, complex in nature.

It has been mentioned at different points in this section that the policy problems we experience nowadays are more 'messy' (Ackoff 1974) and pose more challenges to public administrators than ever before (Overman 1996). These challenges are related to a number of issues. One is seeking causal links between many factors that are connected to each other so dynamically that it is difficult to pin down which is the cause and which, the effect (Allen 2001). Another is coordinating the different 'frameworks of knowledge' (Herriott and Pemberton 1995) of various specialised professionals or departments in order to tackle these multi-faceted problems. Finally, planning for often unimaginable turns of events, which tend to happen more often than ever before (Smith 2005a), challenges the very core of public administration, for it requires administrators to think outside the box about risk and sometimes without evidential basis.

Complexity theory can help conceptualise many of the aspects involved in such a confusing state of things (Overman 1996, Cilliers 2002). Being a relatively new theory, it is yet to be established whether its contribution can go beyond offering mere 'metaphors' (for example Morgan 1997), hence abstract ontological models, to actually provide frameworks of analysis (for example Arndt and Bigelow 2000). Some authors reject its use in social

sciences altogether on the basis of it being derived from computer-based modelling, rather than from empirical research (see Burnes 2005). What few can deny, however, is that many of the assumptions about the world that complexity theorists have put forward are actually in tune –in that it makes intuitive sense (Byrne 1998)- with our crude observations of the world.

The overarching complexity theory is remarkably vast, for different scholars brought discrete contributions and although there is a logic of connectedness between them, they theory overall is still to be defined differently by each of them. Indeed, as Lissack (1999) notes, complexity is more of a collection of ideas than it is an organised, rigorous theory. Ten years after Lissack's observation, little has changed in this respect and hence what is generally labelled as 'complexity theory' is comprised of many 'islands' of complexity 'thought'. Some with most relevance to this research are illustrated here.

A key element of the theory is the phenomenon of 'emergence':

> 'Complexity theories are concerned with the emergence of order in dynamic non-linear systems operating at the edge of chaos' (Burnes 2005, p.77).

The systems Burnes makes reference to are 'complex adaptive systems'. These consist of a large number of agents behaving according to their own laws (for example Fitzgerald 2002). The system comprised of these agents appears to be spontaneously self-organising because the rules apply to individual behaviour of agents, rather than the interaction between them. The resultant is a 'complex whole' (Kauffman 1993) where outcomes 'emerge' rather than being 'caused' by such dynamic interactions or the properties of the agents themselves (ibid.). Thus, the issues that impact on a system can generate unpredictable outcomes where the whole is more than the sum represented by the added contribution of factors which might have contributed to the effect (Byrne 1998). Another key feature of complex systems is, therefore, that they are non-linear, that is they do not rely on cause and effect laws (for example Haigh 2002). Hence, the outcomes of their processes are seemingly unpredictable (Lorenz 1993) or, put

differently, cannot be accounted for, with reasonable certainty, by any limited number of causes. Finally, complex systems are made of components which undergo spontaneous self-organisation (Kauffman 1993), that is tend to transform a state of disorder into one of order. Put differently, they are 'governed by simple order-generating rules' (Burnes 2005, p.85).

The theory on complex adaptive systems has been deemed to be applicable to the context of organisations (Lewis 1994, Arndt and Bigelow 2000, Haigh 2002, Smith 2006c) in general and to government organisations, with particular relevance to the present research (Kiel 1994, Overman 1996).

First, the fundamental challenge that the complexity paradigm generates in organisations is the way they conceptualise and utilise knowledge. Complexity scholars raised the very pertinent point that the rejection of causality in favour of non-linearity challenges the very concept of 'knowable' (Prigogine 1997, Allen2001). Indeed, when one truth seen from one perspective is as good as any other seen from different standpoints, we seem to have stepped in the era of supreme relativism. Philosophers have always dealt with the issue of truth and people's ability to reach it (e.g. Kant 1781, Popper 1972) and now, it seems, social scientists and natural scientists have started to ask similar questions, for the answers to them can shutter the very foundations of scientific endeavours (e.g. Delanty 1997, 2001, 2005). Is truth one or several? If universal truth exists, are people equipped to reach it? And what is the use of knowledge of the truth anyway?

In organisational terms, these questions direct inquiring efforts towards the use of knowledge and expertise in organisations. In policy-making contexts, the issues that emerge are around ways to utilise reliable knowledge to inform policy formulation in ways that are most beneficial to the population and to ensure that professional expertise utilise their knowledge appropriately to implement these policies effectively. New questions emerge from that: can a planned state of things benefit all members of the society, or should we target 'most' rather than 'all' of them? How many services can become universal services while avoiding falling into a 'nanny' or 'police'

state situation? How many universal services can the state even afford to pay (Parton 2006)?

Although it is very reasonable to apply filters in deciding the desired outputs of policies, this does, however, pose questions around what happens to those vulnerable to being left out of these carefully crafted plans? In the literature around risk and crisis management, this question arises very often: how can crises be prevented, that is how can contingency plans be designed, in such ways as to include vulnerable and mainstream population alike (see for example Drennan and McConnell 2007)? The history of inquiry reports into deaths of vulnerable children in the UK (DoH 1991) reveals poor –or, put differently, not good enough- use of both knowledge and professional expertise in preventing these adverse events. Hence, it is essential to find out how multiple 'frameworks of knowledge' (Herriott and Pemberton 1995) could be fully utilised to transcend paradigmatic paralysis which may occur from habit, bounded rationality and others. Complexity theory suggests that indeed, our rationality is bounded by cause and effect logic which does not necessarily characterise the world we live in and we try to explain. If this is not particularly helpful in drawing paths for action, perhaps the need to encourage innovation by leaving room for self-organisation rather than central planning could indicate ways forward.

Secondly, organisations are dynamic and adapt to changing exterior conditions, hence the theories around complex adaptive systems can apply to them (Smith 2006c). Thirdly, organisations are heavily influenced by their environments, in which they are embedded (Checkland 1981). These two points suggest an application in the field of change management. Indeed, organisational change is the field where one of the most widespread application of complexity theory to organisation takes place (Burnes 2005). In order for organisations to survive in a continuously changing structure of contexts, they must continuously adapt to change. 'Lean organisations' have been found to be successful, according to Jenner (1998), due to the fact that 'their fundamental structure embodies many of the characteristics of 'self-

organising' dynamic systems' (Jenner 1998, p.397) and also because they are

> '... characterised by continual reorganisation, rapid
> new product development, and constant search for
> increased efficiency, all of which are the results of
> self-organisational processes.'

Organisations' approach to change is therefore deemed to be important for their survival, according to complex systems theory. There are many approaches to change and many ways of categorising them, but two are prevalent: the planned and the emerged approaches (for example Weick 2000; Burnes 2004b, 2005). The former originated with Kurt Lewin (1951) and explained change as a process consisting of three stages: unfreezing, changing and freezing. This was consistent with a linear and somewhat static view of organisations (Kanter et al 1992) and dominated until early 1980s when Peter and Waterman (1982) and others (for example Kanter 1983) opened up the debate of 'search for excellence', pointing out the importance of promoting flexible cultures in order for organisations to be better equipped to change with their environments instead of growing ossified structures, unresilient to change. Gradually, an agreement has produced, in many academic circles, that emergent change offered an explanation of the change processes that was closer to reality. Weick (2000, p. 237) provides an illustration of the theory:

> 'Emergent change occurs consists of ongoing
> accommodations, adaptations, and alterations that
> produce a fundamental change without a priori
> intentions to do so. (...) Much of this change goes
> unnoticed, because small alterations are lumped
> together as noise in otherwise uneventful inertia.'

The emergent type of change is very much consistent with an underpinning assumption that systems change continuously and unnoticeably, due to factors whose influence is largely left unspecified and very hard to pin down using causality.

This position of successful organisations, 'on the edge of chaos' (for example Burnes 2005, Smith 2006c) that is undergoing continuous change

in order to better adapt to ever changing conditions to avoid falling into chaos, seems to be a characteristic of 'lean organisations' (Jenner 1998). The edge of chaos points at the three types of systems' positions on the order-disorder continuum: order, complexity, chaos (Kauffman 1996). It has been asserted that organisations are best positioned on the edge between complexity and chaos (for example Smith 2006c). The implication of this is that an adverse event is enough to push the efficient, lean, organisation from the 'complex' to 'chaotic' state.

How does the public sector deal with uncertainty? Two options are available here: one is to intensify regulations and another, to learn to operate on the 'edge of chaos' by allowing for more flexible, flatter, autonomous and empowered foci of decision-making (see Burnes 2005). While the first option is a natural choice for Weberian bureaucracy, the latter is specific to the network governance. In the latter, influences on networks are as important as the dynamics of the networks themselves. Communication with the contexts to which networks belong can be conceptualised using Checkland's (1981) formal system paradigm.

2.4.3. Formal systems theory

The formal system paradigm was introduced by Checkland (1981) who advanced a theory about the interaction between a 'system' and the contexts in which this is nested. The paradigm unites most core concepts taken from systems theory, which at its turn, is an epistemological device to make sense of real-world complexity (Fortune and Peters 1994). For the purpose of this doctoral research, the formal system paradigm allows for a contextualised analysis of networks.
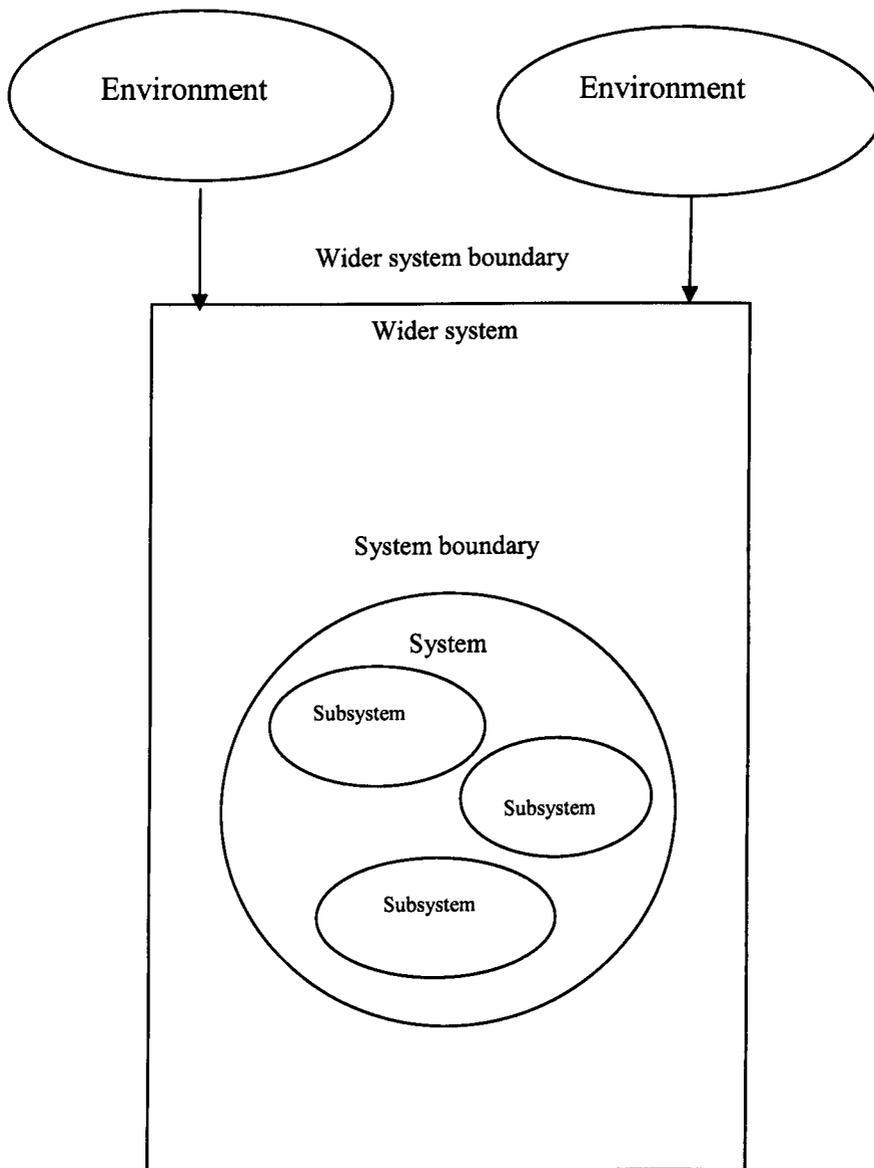
Figure 7: Formal system theory   Adapted from Fortune and Peters 1994

This illustration is to some degree applied to the research problem addressed
in this thesis, whereby the system is the LSCB, the subsystem is represented
by the interactions between individuals, professions and organisations in
LSCBs; then, the wider system is represented, first, by the local authority
area in the case study, secondly, by the other partnerships people in LSCBs
sit on, and, thirdly, by the 'Every Child Matters' national policy. Finally, the
environment in which these interactions take place is the dominant
paradigm of public service delivery.

2.4.4. Gaps in literature and researchable proposition

In the light of the theories illustrated in this section, the research problem is envisaged as follows:

> *To understand the processes existent in LSCBs, it is important to see them in their context. Hence, communication between the actors involved in LSCBs is an interaction between formal and informal channels, localised in a system of local and wider policy contexts.*

The influences that exist on the communication within this wider system are not to be regarded as 'causes' of outputs, but rather in a more dynamic manner, as 'prompts' for outcomes. The lessons taken on board for this research out of the literature around complexity are, first, that bounded rationality prevents reliable 'explanation' of facts and, secondly, that 'understanding' of issues can only be pursued by trying to look at it from a number of alternative conceptual lenses.

Since literature on complexity and systems is relatively new and ever-growing, opportunities for contribution are considerable. In the government and policy field of research, complexity theory is under-utilised and it can pose significant challenges to the way the role of government is understood by both the public and administrators, as well as to the way knowledge is attained and employed in both policy formulation and implementation.

2.5. The 'golden thread': a theoretical framework

All research takes place from a conceptual standpoint, whether acknowledged or not (Mason 1996). In qualitative research, it is particularly important to make this bias explicit, given the likelihood of interference with the analysis, given the centrality of the researcher in the process (Seale 2004, Delanty and Strydom 2003, Delanty 2005). Once acknowledged, this viewpoint can be utilised as set of lenses through which the research problem is examined. Thus it follows that the same research problem can be conceptualised very differently by different schools of thought and can therefore generate different questions, and, consequently, solutions. This is due to the fact that these perspectives generate different sets of concerns (Checkland 2003).

To add validity to qualitative research findings, it has been widely accepted that triangulating methods is a way of improving the internal validity of the findings (e.g. Eisenhardt 1989, Seale 1999). Once the conceptual lenses are acknowledged, the same purposeful process could be applied to improve understanding of a research problem by looking at it from different angles with the aim to obtain a more birds-eye view of the problem than if it were conceptualised, either implicitly or implicitly, from only one theoretical perspective. One of the first scholars who did that was Allison (1971) who was looking for novel explanations for the Cuban Missile Crisis. He realised that novel answers can only come from novel questions which, at their turn, arise from the interplay of alternative conceptual lenses. Allison (1971) essentially based his research on three models of government actions, any of which might have correctly explained what happened during the crisis. More recently, Checkland (2003) uses Allison's lenses in her research on primary care to urge not only for explicit acknowledgement of theoretical bias in research, but also for widening the pool of lenses through which we conceptualise problems. Looking at a research problem from alternative

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frameworks of knowledge improves our understanding of the multifaceted changes on complex systems (Checkland 2003).

The present research follows these principles of utilising alternative analytical frameworks in conceptualising the problem of difficulties that exist in harmonising professional expertise in such ways as to safeguard children effectively. This problem has been addressed continuously over the past thirty years by practitioners and scholars alike. Systems changed, but children continue to fall through the net of multi-agency work. The more recent Baby P crisis (Guardian 2008) is evidence of the fact that challenges persist and perhaps it is high time to start asking different questions.

The four literature pillars have been used to this end and, due to this interplay of various theoretical perspectives over the problem, different sets of questions have been generated. It is, therefore, a 'problem-centred' research.

Alternative perspectives on the research problem

Risk management in policy-making

Interactive identities: individuals, professions and organisations

Networks

System view: communication across networks
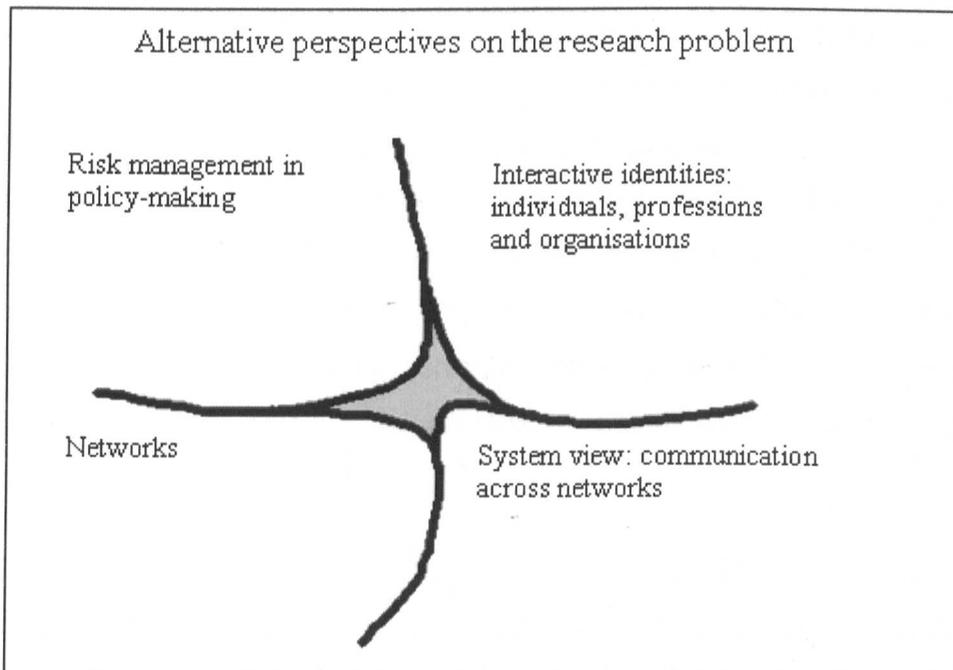
Figure 8: The centrality of the research problem from all four sets of theoretical lenses

Source: Author's own

The four bodies of literature have provided analytical frameworks which offered useful lenses through which to consider the issues faced at

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Brempton. These have been considered under each of the sections of this chapter. Moreover, in addition to these separate literatures, the overlaps between them create additional analytical 'spaces' which generate additional insights into the problems. The main overlaps here are issues around complexity and risk.

The underlying theme that runs through all four pillars of the literature reviewed here is that of 'risk'. Central to the research problem is the way risk is defined through the interaction between the LSCB members. Connected to this is the way risk is conceptualised in the 'Every Child Matters' policy (hence at the policy formulation stage).

It has been discussed earlier in this thesis (subsection 2.1.1.) that risk is identified so that it could be neutralised before developing into a crisis, which would entail obvious organisational and welfare-related costs. It follows that organisations' and indeed governments' aims are to address risk so that they could 'achieve a desired outcome with minimal adverse consequences' (Johnson and Petrie 2004). Yet most organisations run on fixed budgets. This is even more the case with public agencies which are often overspent and generally open to the public eye, for they are accountable to taxpayers for the ways in which they spend their funds (Lawton and Rose 1994). Corroborating this issue with that of calculating avoidance of adverse events, the problem becomes about establishing how much of a risk is acceptable (Drennan and McConnell 2007) to take to enable the run of efficient and effective operations without slipping into crisis.

Complexity theorists have related this issue with theories of 'fitness landscapes' (Smith 2006c): best fit organisations are so cold 'complex organisations' suspended on a point at which they run at maximum efficiency and effectiveness, yet right on the edge of 'chaos' –that is, very close to enabling a crisis to happen, but still successfully avoiding it (e.g. Smith 2006c). The precautionary principle (see, for example, Majone 2002, Drennan and McConnell 2007) can be employed here, which justifies all

possible means being taken to avoid a crisis, even when there is not enough evidence to prove the likelihood of adverse outcomes of certain actions.

In the policy area of children and young people, every failure carries extremely serious implications –children's lives but also serious erosion in the trust governments enjoy. In such a context, it is often the case that action is required even when the probability of risk occurrence is very low, such as in the case highlighted in the Figure 2 (see Chapter 2, page 32). The area highlighted in the diagram represents that type of situation in which the risk has been identified but there is nothing in the way of evidence (for example, a precedent, or a critical mass of scientific findings drawing attention to the risk) that could justify formal action. If policy change could be easily justified in the case of high probability of occurrence, it is harder to make the case for events with low likelihood (Drennan and McConnell 2007), particularly when public funds are involved. Hence, an extensive explanation for the chosen course of action to the stakeholders and, indeed, the public, is necessary. However, when something does go wrong and this information reaches the public, then the latter becomes sensitive to the issue (Stanley and Manthorpe 2004), thus legitimising the need for change (e.g. Birkland 2006).

While it is important to calculate the organisational risk in government operations, it is also important to take into consideration an aspect of risk that is not about organisations: the risk to which children are exposed. Johnson and Petrie (2004) made this distinction clear. Other theorists, too, see that in areas such as safeguarding children, the risk to children must be of higher concern than the risk to the organisations responsible with protecting them. For example, Cooper (2005) argued that, in trying to manage child protection, the essential issue, of minimising the risks for children, has been overlooked by predominant focus on organisational aspects. He associated the former aspect with 'substance' and the latter, with 'surface' in the work undertaken with children. Furthermore, Houston and Griffiths (2000) advocate a turn towards the 'subjectivism' paradigm of risk in child protection work. They compare and contrast this paradigm with the

currently used 'objectivist' approach which essentially advocates that 'risk' is calculable- and decisions (both at the policy and at the implementation levels) must be taken to address all dimensions of this 'predictable' risk. While this 'objectivist' approach essentially objectifies the clients of the work undertaken–children-the 'subjectivist' way puts them at the centre of decision making which can at times be performed with confidence even in the absence of 'evidence' for risk. Cooper (2005) has a similar take on this issue and calls for a new type of policy-making: one attending to the 'connection between the instruments which organise the surface of child protection work (...) and the processes of deep engagement' (Cooper 2005, p.9).

Indeed, many theorists signalled the need for professionals working in complex policy areas such as that of children and young people, where risks are many and often unpredictable, to engage in meaningful 'thought processes' (Reder and Duncan 2004) in their everyday work. Such thorough exercise is likely to involve significant emotional labour (Harlow and Shardlow 2006) and even something that Cooper (2005) labelled 'the pain of knowing'. This is likely to lead practitioners to hesitate to act while evaluating options. It has been said that certainty enables people to act (Turner 1976); conversely, uncertainty can be paralysing. Yet, according to Parton (1998), it is essential to child protection work. This is seen in terms of engaging personally with the subject of the work, rather than completing procedures given on the basis of existing 'evidence'. Where the aims of work are as diffuse as 'safeguarding children', no evidence can be reliable enough to dictate particular courses of action. Hence, decisions must be taken every step of the way by professionals and not all these decisions can be situated within strict procedural frameworks derived from what prior failure cases. This is consistent with the findings of Parton (2004) that, other than the ongoing theme of poor communication in inter-agency and inter-professional work, the issues revealed by various inquiry reports into adverse events are always surprising. This makes predicting and direct lesson learning a nearly impossible task.

The numerous inquiries over death of children in Britain signal the inherent difficulties faced by professionals involved in this policy area in their work. Some of the issues that are more difficult to tackle (see for example those 'long term' measures in Lord Laming's recommendations –Laming 2003) go beyond professional boundaries. Indeed, issues at the organisational and individual levels must be tackled alongside professional aspects. This has been signalled consistently in the synthesis of literature undertaken in each of the four 'pillars' of the literature review. Hence, this doctoral thesis comes close to Smith and Fischbacher's (forthcoming) contribution of 'human networks' but departs from it in that the interactions are seen as vertical, within the partnership membership, rather than horizontal, across partnerships. Namely, it is not argued here that individuals connect with individuals, professions with professions and organisations with organisations. Rather, individuals encapsulate the features of both the professions and of the organisations they belong to and the interaction between the three levels, for each of the partnership members, is one similar to the 'complex wholes' advanced by Kauffman (1996). These 'wholes' then go and interact with other similar compounds across the network:

Individual people
Profession
Organisation
'Complex whole'

Graphic representation of the multi-agency, inter-professional work in partnership settings

System
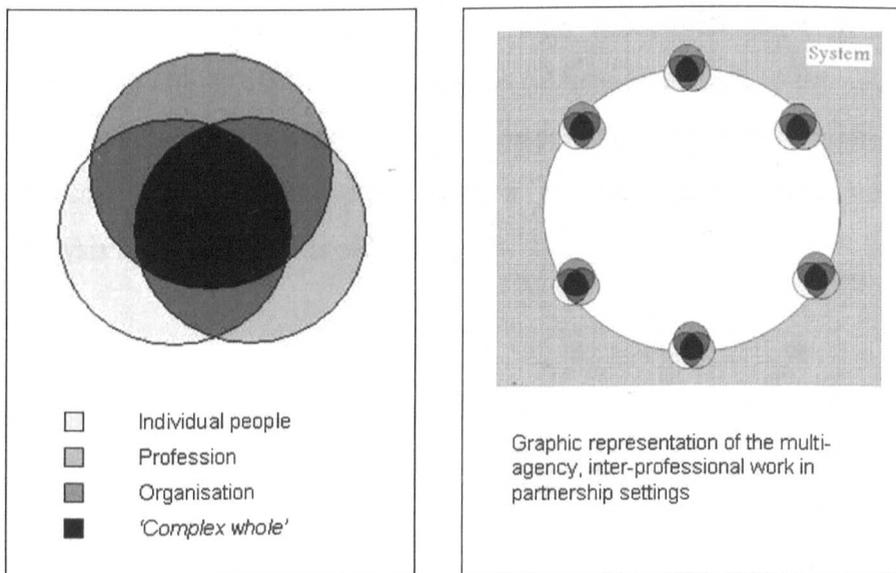
Figure 9: Interactive identities in human services partnerships: individuals, professions and organisations

Source: Author's own

This is the analytical framework that emerged from the review of the literature, based on common analytical points observed in each of the four

theoretical pillars. Thus, in the risk and crisis management literature, the theories of accident causation and those pointing at the crisis management cycle, individuals' assumptions are at the core of the organisational believes, hence inform the contingency plans that these design according to what they 'perceive' to be 'risky' (see Turner 1976, 1978; Reason 1990; Smith 1990). Then, evaluation studies of networks reveal, as analytical dimensions, professions, organisations and the environments that surround the latter (see Benson 1975, Provan and Milward 2001). Furthermore, communication studies place interpersonal communication at the core of all communication in organisations (see Fisher 1993, Reder and Duncan 2003). This 'basic' level of communication surrounded by inter-professional and inter-organisational interactions as 'domains of influence' (Reder and Duncan 2003). If this interaction of the three levels is to represent a 'system', then this is also influenced by 'intra-individuals' cognitive processes (Fisher 1994, Scruijer 2008) and by the 'wider system' and the 'environment' surrounding the system (see Checkland 1981, Fortune and Peters 1994).

While the analytical framework described here is based on common threads throughout the literature, there are also substantial gaps in the four theoretical angles explored. Those gaps (identified at each of the subsections in this chapter) gave way to a sum of research questions to be addressed via the case study at Brempton using a grounded-theory approach to the analysis of the data observed.

Chapter Three

Research design

3.1. Research questions

The four sets of theoretical lenses yielded on the one hand, four 'conceptualisations' of the research problem, and on the other hand, four sets of research questions deriving from gaps in extant research.

Indeed, the review of the literature served two purposes for this thesis. First, it offered a background for the issues contained by the research problem that this research has set out to solve. Secondly, it revealed the gaps in extant literature in terms either of relevant issues which have not been addressed at all or in sufficient detail, or of frameworks, typologies, classifications that should be refined in order to be applied to the research problem as defined here:

> *There is a need to understand how the effectiveness of service provider network partnerships might be improved, in order to reduce the potential for implementation failure of social policies regarding children. Such improvement is conceptualised in terms of reducing the risks to which children are exposed.*

This need is located within a wider one regarding the shared agreement (or lack of it) about the nature of risk involved in child protection. The aim of minimising the risk to which children are exposed led to the expertise-based decision to resort to statutory partnerships between local agencies with responsibility for this client group. The same aim also informs inter-professional behaviour at local levels in LSCBs, but also in wider partnership arrangements in which LSCB partners are involved.

Based on issues left uncovered by extant literature, four propositions and subsequent research questions have been derived.

1. Proposition derived from extant research on risk and crisis management in policy making:

   System vulnerabilities are being built in the way in which expert knowledge applies to first, policy change and, secondly, policy implementation. In the first instance, it is the notion of risk and learning from previous failures that such knowledge relates to and, in the second, it is the use of professional expertise to coordinate efforts accordingly.

   Research questions:

   - What might be learned from previous crises?
   - How can the lessons be learned in ways that would not incubate future crises?

2. Proposition derived from extant research on networks:

   In order to work effectively, partnerships should strive to a level of integration that is characteristic to 'networks'. There are inherent issues which impede them to reach this level of connectedness and these are to be sought first, in the partnership members themselves and, then, in the communication links between them. Basic inter-personal communication stays at the core of cooperation and hence, collaboration, between both professionals and their 'parent' organisations.

   Research question:

- What are the barriers to LSCBs acting as networks?

- What are the incentives that could determine a more integrated work in LSCBs?

3. Proposition derived from extant research on interactive identities in partnerships:

   The identities found to interact in LSCBs are individuals, professions and organisations. These interact dynamically in each and every one of the partnership members. The key level of analysis out of the three is the inter-personal interaction, for individuals contain cultural traits both of the professional bodies they belong to by training and ethos and of the organisations that regulate their work. Hence, an investigation of how knowledge is used effectively in collaborative settings must include inter-personal dynamics.

   Research question:

   - How do the three levels –individuals, professions and organisations- interact in LSCBs?

4. Proposition derived from extant research on communication within and across networks:

   To understand the processes existent in LSCBs, it is important to see them in their context. Hence, communication between the actors involved in LSCBs is an interaction between formal and informal

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channels, localised in a system of local and wider policy contexts.

Research questions:

- How does the LSCB network communicate with its wider context?
- How does this context influence the barriers and incentives to collaboration for LSCBs?

These questions are addressed via a research design drawing on the social constructionist tradition in social science research.

3.2. Ontological and epistemological foundations of the method

This study adopts an interdisciplinary standpoint and uses a case study as research strategy encompassing the use of a number of various qualitative research techniques, all geared to reveal various pictures of the complexity of working together across organisational and professional boundaries to elucidate the 'wicked issues' in a holistic policy area: safeguarding children. The theoretical bias held by the researcher throughout this investigation is rooted in the tradition of social constructionism (Burr 1995), by which reality is relational and experienced differently by different individuals who reach a level of knowledge that is neither accurate nor false, but rather *perspectival* (Geyer et al. 2005).

Together, people construct a reality out of their perceptions of it that is contingent on various dimensions of its context (for example, place or time). Hence, the views of the different informants involved in this study were considered as true, because it was important to draw on the professionals' experiences of inter-agency work (for example what constitutes good collaboration practice amongst professionals, and to what degree a professional should get involved in cross-organisational, cross-sectoral projects). The researcher refrained from deciding which 'truth regime' to

accept and which to discard, but rather attempted to build a jigsaw of everyone's views of reality. One important preliminary task in this project therefore was to understand how different personal, professional and organisational biases create meanings and values that, at their turn, generate different realities that evidently are often at odds with each other. This miscommunication of dissonant 'realities' in partnerships is precisely one of the fundamental problems that this doctoral thesis was set to tackle.

First, what the data collection strategy aimed to reveal was the non-stated 'rules' and assumptions that organisations draw on when they relate with each other in statutory partnerships. Then, the assumptions that organisations hold about the other organisations were also deemed important because, out of the many faces of value-led realities, this study is concerned with that which is perceived by those found to interact. The perceived organisational, professional or individual images are important because the barriers in communication occur not necessarily due to objective gaps in assumptions, but rather due to 'perceived' incompatibilities of values and beliefs, because people construct these interactions according to the beliefs that they build on perceptions about their environment. It is this clash of assumptions that was intended to be captured. In order to be able to detect the variety of assumptions of people in partnerships, the theoretical bias of social constructionism was indispensable.

Social constructionism (e.g. Burr 1995) entered the debate on social science philosophies as part of the interpretative paradigm in social sciences that sought to denounce positivistic theories and methods that had grown in popularity between the end of the 18th and mid 20th centuries. The positivist theoretical foundation of social sciences saw these sciences as importing the methods of the natural sciences into the social realm, hence sought to apply the same principles and methods used to research the natural world to the social world, in order to obtain reliable findings that were neutral, objective, and replicable (Eisenhardt 1989, Seale 1999, Halldorsson and Aastrup 2002). This was a safe method to produce knowledge based on a model that

was proven to work and lead to progress in natural sciences: the Newtonian idea of an orderly universe where immutable laws made the world predictable and controllable. Indeed, social sciences emerged as disciplines alongside natural sciences, based on the hypothesis that the social world, being part of nature, worked according to rules of behaviour that are as universal and predictable as the laws of nature. These disciplines, firmly structured to deal with distinct parts of the social, were confirmed in modern universities, promoters of 'disciplinarisation' in social sciences (Delanty 2005, Wallerstein 1996). Two assumptions are of significance here: that there is only one truth and that knowledge of it is attainable when pursued through 'scientific' methods. Clearly, before long, these assumptions were to be challenged.

The blind belief in human rationality, capable to produce knowledge that is certain and universal has been opposed by theorists who questioned this orderly, linear perspective of social sciences. These sceptics go as far back in the history of thought as the times of Plato and Aristotle who distrusted humans' ability to obtain pure knowledge of the exterior reality. However, their views only reached a critical mass in the 20th century with the beginning of the hermeneutical tradition in social sciences, promoted by Sigmund Freud (1865-1939) and Max Weber (1864-1920). The fundamental change in perspective was that social science cannot fully explain causality, due to the bounded rationality of human beings and to the importance of context in shaping the social interactions at a given time and in a given place. This shift in paradigm has imposed the use of more creative research methods, leading to a diversification of qualitative techniques (ethnography, case study, etc.) as complements and supplements of the widely accepted (then) quantitative methods of enquiry (such as surveys).

The ultimate level of relativism in researching the social was reached by post-modernists, who strongly undermined the strong knowledge claims assumed by positivists (modernists). Alongside their disbelief in the progressive thesis of acquiring knowledge, they dismissed the universal

truth in favour of views of 'truth regimes' that rise and fall over time (Foucault 1966).

The ontological standpoint taken in this doctoral thesis is that reality is shaped by 'perception' and, while there are 'truth regimes' that are prominent in given contexts, these represent nothing more than a critical mass of similar images of 'perception'. Truth regimes must be both acknowledged and challenged. In the context of this research, the truth regime in tackling 'wicked' policy issues is that it should be done in collaboration at all levels. While working within this conceptual boundary, there is value in challenging this 'truth regime' by addressing its facets, its implications as well as the assumptions underlining them.

The belief that reality is complex and that people are ill equipped to capture it and to develop reliable theories as to predictable lines of behaviour requires methodological pluralism. Thus, the aim of academic enquiry is to emphasize the various and inter-connected influences on particular phenomena, rather than explaining causality. In exploring these influences, a variety of theoretical lenses and research techniques should be used.

3.3. Research strategy

The research strategy pursued for the empirical component of this investigation is of a case study of a LSCB in Brempton Children's Services Authority, North West England.

The case study is a general method that can embrace qualitative, quantitative and hybrid data collection (Glaser 1978) but is mainly used as a strategy for qualitative research (Glaser 2001). This is the strategy that has been utilised in the present research for the purpose of observing how policies for network partnership formation are translated into practice and how the inter-agency dynamics occurs. However, the intention has been to not apply pre-designed theoretical constructs to the case. Since some theory development is said to be beneficial to collecting data in a case study

research (Yin 1994), this would have distorted true emergence of theory from observation of the field (see Glaser 1998). For the purpose of this enquiry, the grounded theory methodological principles drove the investigation. This prevalence is not to imply that the present enquiry aims to construct theories (for that would be against the ontological assertion that reality cannot be fully explained nor constructed through rational endeavour). Rather, it is to emphasize that it is not an attempt to 'test' theories, but to apply inductive logic to examine and analyse regularities and irregularities of behaviour in partnerships of the type of this case study, with the aim of enriching the literature that considers partnerships and networks in general and not specific to their context.

In his major contribution to social science theory and methodology, Eisenhardt (1989) identifies the strengths of using case study data to build theories:

1. Theory building from case studies is likely to produce novel theory, due to the 'creative insight' arising from 'juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence' (Eisenhardt 1989, p.546). The process of reconciling these contradictions involves constant cross-referencing of accounts, forcing the analyst to remove herself from the data and from the context in which it was gathered. Hence, the likehood of unbiased and creative theory building is enhanced.

2. The emergent theory 'is likely to be testable with constructs that can be readily measured and hypothesis that can be proven false' (Idem, p.547). Subsequent studies and test and expand the theory emerged through case study research.

3. The 'resultant theory is likely to be empirically valid' (Ibid.em), due to the closeness of the researcher to the object of study, which in turn leads to intimate knowledge of the culture existent in the case study, which then 'often

produces theory which often produces theory which closely mirrors reality (Ibid.em).

The case study has been defined as

> '... an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.' (Yin 1989, p.23).

The intent of this doctoral thesis is to understand the distinctiveness of the newer local safeguarding children partnership arrangements from other types of local partnerships (as identified in existing literature) and to observe the context in which they operate, as well as the inter-organisational and inter-professional dynamics nurtured by these partnerships.

Interviews have been used as the primary source of data generation, to uncover partners' own conceptualisation of their experience and interactions in partnerships. Methods resembling ethnographic tools such as participant and non-participant observation (Garfinkel 1960) were also used extensively. Alongside these data collection methods, however, some data about the context and about the 'values' promoted in partnership has been gathered via research of government policies and internal documents including the minutes of partnership regular meetings (LSCB, CYPTG, CT, SBP), but also through a questionnaire.

3.4. Data collection

The sources of evidence (Yin 1994) used in this research are: documents, passive and participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. This combination of methods contributed to answering the research questions and also proved useful in two principal ways. First, they allowed for complex phenomena to be approached through several methods in order to shed light over multiple facets. Secondly, the

data could be triangulated, allowing for a higher validity of findings. The continuum of methods employed is land marked by the various stages of the researcher's contact with the case study organisation, in which different roles (see Adler and Adler 1987) were assumed, ranging from 'novice' to 'independent consultant'.

At the outset of this research (October-December 2005), the researcher entered the field as a novice with only a vague idea as to the specific research questions. The first stage of the research consisted of studying documents and conducting three exploratory and repetitive interviews with key informants. Both methods were meant to gradually introduce the novice into the field of study and to clarify any issues arising from legislation and internal documents.

The second stage (February-July 2006) was marked by the beginning of observation of meetings and events, from a passive position. The meetings observed at this stage were LSCB regular meetings (every two months), Children's Services Workforce Development Day (May 11, 2006), the LSCB Launch Event (June 14, 2006) and the LSCB Away Day (April 2007). Observing multi-agency work 'in action' coexisted with documentary research and more interviews. This time the latter were more directed towards informing an enrichment of a theoretical framework. The theoretical strands that these interviews generated were then added to the original few provided by the literature that the researcher focused on at the very beginning, forming a more complex theoretical hypothesis framework.

The next stage (October 2006-July 2007) was marked by assuming a participant observer's role in the organisation. Thus, a project was handed to the researcher to manage and work with others from various agencies, aiming to extrapolate the training needs of the voluntary and community sector organisations that the local authority could cover. Alongside participant observation, passive observation continued in meetings (LSCB, CYPTG, Cabinet Meeting, Workforce Reform Meetings of the Children's Workforce Strategy Group), events (Brempton LSCB Development Day, June 5, 2007) and day-to-day behaviour of the people working close by.

Furthermore, unstructured and semi-structured interviews were conducted and a questionnaire was run amongst professionals who, as a significant part of their job, interacted often with other professionals. Documentary research, too, remained a constant part of the methodology, due to ever changing legislative and guiding frameworks in the field.

The final stage (January-March 2008) of fieldwork followed data analysis, and consisted in merely getting back to the interviewees with the conclusions of the study. In this stage, information gaps were covered and analysis, confirmed, by key respondents.

In this research, as in an increasing number of others (for example, Leeming 1998, Petrie 2007), data collection and data analysis occur in a repetitive, circular manner and they are by no means separate stages where one starts when the other ends. The individual research techniques used, too, are interconnected and embedded into each other, as appropriate to the data that needed to be collected. This resonates with the 'iterative process' that Glaser and Strauss (1967) find to be characteristic to grounded theory.

3.4.1. Documentary research

For academic literature, in accordance with the pluralistic ontology of the research, as well as a belief in multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural research, the author used 'Google Scholar' as search engine. The significance of using this tool as opposed to, for example, the university library or the traditional research via other research references (methods that were also utilised here), is that Google generates search results that are unlimited by geographical location or by the boundaries of knowledge communities. This helps research build on truly diverse interdisciplinary literature, in a way that was hardly possible before this tool was available.

For policy guidance documents, the official websites of certain organisations (e.g.: Every Child Matters, Department of Health) were visited regularly and relevant documents downloaded or ordered. Internal

documents were obtained from internal email lists where the researcher was included or, directly, via practitioners.

3.4.2. Passive and participant observation

This was undertaken in regular LSCB meetings, but also in Workforce Reform Group and CYPTG meetings, as well as in LSCB Away Days and Development Days. This part of the data collection developed as an ethnography of inter-agency and inter-professional work. Access to Brempton Children's Services was granted on the basis of a research relationship between the latter and the university. Hence, the permission to enter the field was granted by hierarchy, which had the obvious benefit of access, but also posed challenges (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002) of reluctance to cooperate from the part of some people in the organisation. A research protocol was agreed to (see Appendix Four) and then the research formally commenced.

The challenge, from the very beginning, was that, although the Children's Services were moderators of the partnership structure this research aimed to examine, there was little power in the sense of determining the other partners in the LSCB to collaborate with the researcher. Furthermore, since some of the partners regarded this research to be covertly commissioned by the Children's Services, they were sometimes suspicious as to what they thought the 'real' purpose of the study was. In time, this suspicion diluted for those people that were part of the LSCB for the whole duration of the study, but was raised again by those who joined the partnership later on.

In terms of the first contacts in organisations, theorists refer to 'professional stranger-handlers' and 'deviants' (Agar 1986) as to the people that are often either designated or simply willing to 'welcome' or merely 'tackle' strangers to the organisation. Indeed, the first contact at Brempton was someone with an important position in the organisation's hierarchy, but who was later revealed to be filling various places at the top of the hierarchy according to need, which then indicated the fragility of their position and

their high level of dependency on the director of Children's Services. From the same category of 'professional handlers' was someone one tier lower in the organisation's hierarchy who later was proven to have questionable legitimacy of role and, again, to be dependent on the organisation's director. As a 'handler' however, the person was very good in confusing the 'strangers' by directing them on various paths at once. Finally, the third 'first contact' was someone also at the top of the hierarchy who was somehow openly against the organisation's policies; this person can be categorised as a 'deviant' rather than a 'professional strangers' handler'. This person voluntarily offered to help the researcher with information and access to other people and, while this help was fruitfully utilised, it was thought useful to also look outside for more 'representativeness' of information. In order to obtain a more balanced account of things, it was sought appropriate to send out a questionnaire to a larger number of professionals than could be contacted for one to one encounters. Although the issue of 'representativeness' of information is more prominent under positivist research designs dependent on statistical analysis, it is no less important to qualitative, ethnography-like enquiries (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002), albeit for a very different rationale. Qualitative research is justified by a need to *understand*, rather than to *explain* a phenomenon. Capturing participants' perspectives of the phenomena of which they are part and to which they contribute is an essential part of acquiring such understanding. Since groups are not homogenous, listening to different such perspectives becomes instrumental to obtaining a rounded view of the issues involved (see Mead 1953, Johnson 1990).

When getting into a research field, the culture shock (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002) was considerable for the researcher. In this case, not only that there was little familiarity with the specific organisation, but there was also lack of familiarity with the policy area and with the public sector in practice in Britain. The researcher had some experience as a public servant, yet in another cultural environment. Despite the cultural shock, there were clear benefits of such a position. This was in terms of lack of professional bias in conducting this research, given that the focus had to be on the interaction of

a variety of professionals. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher –who chose an 'identity' (Adler and Adler 1987, Silverman 2001) of obvious novice in both the field and the culture- to ask questions that were basic enough to enable a deconstruction of the practitioners' 'ways of doing things'.

A rapport had been established in time with some of the professionals involved in the study, based on the growing familiarity of the researcher with the field of study and of the practitioners with having their practices examined. With some, a habit of debating practices over lunch or other breaks emerged. More often than not, work issues were taken into breaks and social networks were extensively explored, which was very useful indeed for the researcher to get access to the social dynamics of the organisation. In spite of some elements of closeness, a barrier remained between the researcher and the practitioners (a positive in terms of not 'going native'), helped by the fact that the researcher did not have a 9-5 routine at the office, nor was she there every day. It seemed to be clear to everyone that she was not a formal part of the organisation, but merely an independent consultant. In the third stage of the fieldwork, this role was explicitly assumed. The times for observation were varied: from occasional visits to intensive work at the office over long periods of time (weeks), all over a period of two years.

Participant observation has often been regarded as 'an oxymoron in action' (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p.102), as it is indeed a difficult task to strike that balance between observing and participating in the field. One should be as involved as to obtain enough interesting and relevant data from the field, yet not as involved as to 'go native' (Adler and Adler 1987). The degree of participation (Spradley 1980, p.58-62) and the roles researchers assume in the field (Adler and Adler 1987) impact on the collected data. There are diverse typologies of roles that can be adopted in the field. A popular one is that ranging from 'complete observer' through 'observer-as-participant' and 'participant-as-observer' to 'complete participant'. Factors that may determine the role adopted by the researcher in the organisation are:

personality, gender, age, class, nationality, ethnicity (Adler and Adler 1987). The fact that the participation of the researcher in the field depends on such variables indicates that different people may conduct the same research differently.

In this research, the researcher assumed 'episodic' participations in the organisation. At the beginning, most of the fieldwork was made of occasional conversation and a lot of 'hanging out' to gain some understanding of the field, but also to build trust relationships. In this role, the researcher was a mere observer of the field. Then, this role was gradually shaped into 'observation-by-participation' in the second stage of the fieldwork and 'participation-as-observation' in the third stage. In the third stage of data collection, the researcher was cast into the role of an independent consultant.

3.4.3. Interviews

The interviews were mainly open-ended and ranged from open conversations (especially in the first and forth stages of data collection) to self-administered questionnaires (in the third stage of data collection). The majority of the interviews, however, were semi-structured, following the interview structure in Appendix Five.

There were 27 interviews in total, as follows:

- 3 in first stage
- 7 in the observer-as-participant stage
- 15 in the participant-as-observer stage
- 2 in the final stage

These interviews provided enough depth of the theoretical explorations attempted in this thesis and their number capped when 'theoretical saturation' (Eisenhardt 1989, Guest et al. 2006) was reached.

The interviewees were professionals sitting in the Brempton LSCB, but also other professionals involved in some joint activities requiring coordination with others. Following theories of the three levels of social organisation: policy, management and practice (Parsons 1960, Waddock 1991), the interviewees were selected to reflect this structure, from amongst the highest hierarchical levels in the organisation (top managers with responsibility in internal policy making), from amongst the managers (middle management without substantial responsibilities in policy-making) and from amongst practitioners. Although the LSCB should, in theory (HM Government 2006), contain more representatives of the second category (middle management), in practice, however, it gathers more policy-makers and practitioners than middle managers. Hence, the interviewees selected in this study are more from the first category of social organisation (17/27) than from the second (6/27) and the third (4/27). A list of all interviewees (anonymised) is available in Appendix Six.

Interviewees were initially selected with the help of the first people the researcher got into contact at Brempton. Then, others were contacted via the LSCB email list as well as through the events in which the researcher participated as an observer or as a participant-observer. Since many of the interviewees were chosen based on an opportunistic rather than judgement sampling, some degree of information 'representativeness' was sought appropriate to pursue in designing a questionnaire containing similar questions with those asked to the 27 interviewees, in order to get a wider array of views that people held about multi-agency, inter-disciplinary working in this policy area. Moreover, the questionnaire was also a means to capture views that could not be obtained from interviews. For example, health professionals proved to be a particularly difficult professional category to interview, for research in healthcare settings usually requires special ethical clearance. Although this research did not involved divulgation of information about patients, this issue was raised nevertheless under the form of an inflexible 'regulation'. Health professionals' views were, however, captured, through questionnaires.

3.4.4. Questionnaires

In this study, the questionnaires were not concerned with any quantitative aspects. The questions (see Appendix Seven) were mainly open-ended and exploratory. What was mainly achieved through this research tool was a better 'representativeness of information', in the qualitative research sense given by Meade (1953), Johnson (1990) and Dewalt and Dewalt (2002).

The questionnaire was used for the same purpose as the interviews: to explore people's views about partnership working. Hence, it was not meant to enhance the validity of a statistical type of analysis. Rather, the results were used to generate novel ideas, further triangulated by other research techniques throughout this study. More research questions arose from the analysis of the data collected in this way. Glaser (1992) reinforced this position, that emergence of theory from data under the auspices of the grounded theory method is not restricted to qualitative methods of data collection.

The questionnaire was piloted with a number of key respondents (an educational psychologist, a social worker and a network broker) before being spread out to other professionals. It was then modified in order to address the target respondents better (for example, the options of answer for the question on hierarchical position in the organisation were modified to match the jargon that the professionals were used to).

3.5. Data analysis

The methods described were used to generate hypotheses about working together in the policy area of children and young people's welfare.

The overall strategy used to analyse the data collected through the aforementioned techniques resembles in many respects the classic grounded theory. This theory was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who

aimed to close the gap between theory and empirical research by developing contextualised theories that have a better chance of reflecting reality than pre-conceived theories emerging from other equally abstract theories. The method places emphasis on the participants' own accounts of events (Pidgeon 1996, p.76).

In grounded theory, what appears to be 'emergence' of theory (or hypothesis, such as in the present enquiry) is 'the constant inter-play between data and the researcher's developing conceptualisations' (Pidgeon 1996, p.82). Indeed, the data is only 'guiding' the theorising process, and the researcher plays a major part in constantly engaging with the data, by interpreting it. This confirms views of the contemporary social researcher as 'philosopher of science', more than a specialist in one discipline (Delanty and Strydom 2003, p.3). Reflexivity is an important component of grounded theory, without which this is reduced to mere 'content analysis' (Strauss and Corbin 1994, Stern 1994, Pidgeon 1996), a much more mechanical analysis process than desirable for this type of research.

A sub-category of grounded theory is the 'ethnographic content analysis'. This comes closest to the data analysis undertaken in this research. The method 'uses many of the content analysis procedures, but also the back-and-forth movement between concept development and data analysis, and the constant comparison that grounded theory applies' (Tesch 1990, p.64). If ethnography is

> '... a method or set of methods which (...) involves the ethnographer participating (...) in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of research' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p.1)

then ethnographic content analysis is be taken to represent a type of content analysis of documents that involves a great degree of interpretation of the textual units of analysis in accordance with the context of the culture that the ethnographer perceived during fieldwork. The aim of the ethnographic

content analysis is to produce hypothesis that can then be tested as theories regarding the assumptions, values and beliefs in a community or, as is the case of the author's research, in an organisational culture.

The similarity with content analysis is that is relies on coding and on categorizing, however it departs from it in that while content analysis operationalises with fixed categories for coding words and phrases, the ethnographic content analysis allows and expects them to emerge throughout the study (Altheide 1987, p.68, in Tesch 1985, p.88). In ethnographic content analysis, the observer 'stands at the heart of ethnography and of its open-ended nature' (Seale 2004, p.228), recommending this research strategy as *constructional* and *reflexive*.

The data collection techniques utilised in this study could have been used either independently, or in a cross-referencing fashion. The researcher opted for the latter. Thus, data was analysed progressively, and findings from one research method informed the use of another method. For example, gender bias in organisations was deduced from the interviews to be an important barrier to inter-agency working and alerted the researcher's attention as to this variable in her observation of the field.

3.6. Notes on caution: data quality and research integrity

The mix between social science and practitioners can be as beneficial as it can be dangerous for the social scientist with an interest in public management. An interesting account of the 'dilemmas' faced in ethnographic-type research in management settings is given by Ferdinand et al. (2007). Here, the ethical consequences of research strategies involving the emersion of the researcher in the field are given full consideration. Their overarching conclusion of the authors is that the solutions given by researchers to accommodate the ethical aspects arising from their fieldwork depend entirely on the contexts which generated them and cannot comprehensibly be addressed via standard canons of research ethics. Indeed, the problems encountered and the solutions found to each of these problems

in the present investigation were entirely 'situated' –that is, emerging from the field and requiring a resolution 'in context'.

A difficult dilemma during this research gravitated around the dissonance between, on the one hand, the need to look at the normative high interconnectivity of the organisations at the policy implementation level, and, on the other hand, the research relationship having been established with only one of these agencies (Brempton CSA). The outcomes of the collaborative project depended on the desire to cooperate in this research from the side of organisations partner with the 'sponsor' agency in the LSCB, and also on the personal ability of the researcher to persuade all professionals in the LSCB but not in the Children's Services Authority to volunteer some of their time for interviews. The researcher was, therefore, at times, representative of the Brempton Metropolitan Borough Council in relating with their partner agencies, alongside their more generic role of a 'student' in placement.

The increasing trend of cooperations between academia and industry -public administrators in this case- is marked by unprecedented complexity that gives way to a number of other dilemmas which are especially difficult to tackle by early-career researchers. Such are issues around the neutrality and objectivity of science versus the reliance on contexts and rather politicised contexts for that matter. They will have to be equipped with different skills (for example political astuteness, alertness to deep-rooted and invisible organisational assumptions) and manage their projects with more intuition than their predecessors might have. It is therefore fair to conclude that academic rigour has ceased to be enough to warrantee successful completion of research projects.

Some of these dilemmas will always remain there, as they are inevitable in research undertaken in close social proximity. Put differently, they arise from the very essence of social science research, which is the fact that the social is investigated by one of its members (Seale 1999, 2004). What can be done, however, to protect the integrity of the research, is to apply formal canons of ethics. This was undertaken here by means of anonymising both

the name of the local authority where the case study is based ('Brempton' is a pseudonym and so is 'Riverside') and the names of the people participating in the study. Furthermore, standard ethical procedures applied, such as a research protocol with Brempton CSA (Appendix Four), and the fact that interviewees and questionnaire respondents were reassured that the data would be treated confidentially and anonymously and that their participation to the study was voluntary (Appendixes Five and Seven).

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the findings of the study were read and analysed by a key informant from Brempton CSA, who verified the validity of the information provided as well as the general understanding of the issues around safeguarding children. It was important to have a respondent confirm the findings due to the lack of background of the researcher in any of the expertise areas involved in the policy area of children and young people. Given that the focus of the thesis is on management studies, not in social policy (the latter only providing the context for application of the management theories), the measure was instrumental in ensuring accuracy of the welfare policy aspects involved. The method is also recommended in case study research as a means of enhancing the construct validity of he study (Yin 1994). Indeed, much has been written about the criteria for judging qualitative research in general (see for example Eisenhard 1989, Halldorsson, A. and J. Aastrup 2002, Patton 2002, Trochim 2006) and case study research in particular (see Yin 1994). Although there are differences of terminology used by each of these authors, they agree nevertheless that the findings of a qualitative research must be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable (e.g. Trochim 2006). Measures have been taken to ensure that this study complies with each and every one of these criteria. One such measure was to ask a key informant from the organisation to check the validity of the findings, which contributes to enhancing the 'credibility' of the findings. Another measure was to lay out clearly the context and the assumptions of the research, to ensure 'transferability' and the 'dependability' of the results. Finally, a 'data audit' was undertaken whereby the researcher assumed a 'devil's advocate' role with respect to the results, to increase the 'confirmability' of the study.

Chapter Four

Policy in practice: every child matters in Brempton

4.1. Brempton Metropolitan Borough

Brempton is one of the five districts of the Riverside metropolitan area. The population is predominantly white British, much more so than the average for England (Brempton Council 2006b). The age profile of the borough is older than for the country as a whole, with a greater than average number of people over 50 living in the north of the borough (Brempton 2005b).

There are significant differences in the circumstances of those living in the north of the borough compared to those in the south. Nine of Brempton wards are in the top 10% most deprived in the country, with 27 percent of the population living in the worst conditions of deprivation (Brempton Council 2006b). Of those economically inactive people who say they want a job, over half live in the nine most deprived wards (ibid.). Given this geographical divide, the focus for local intervention is often on 'narrowing the gap'.

Overall the health, wealth and education of children and young people in Brempton is good in comparison both with the past situation in the borough as well as with other metropolitan boroughs (Brempton Council 2005a). Educational standards are good, particularly in relation to the number of 5 A*-C GCSE results gained (Brempton Council 2005a). Furthermore, Brempton has a higher percentage of school leavers staying on in further education aged 16-17 than the national average (Brempton Council 2006b).

However, Brempton is a borough of great contrasts, and children and young people living in those areas worst affected by deprivation do not enjoy the same quality of life as those in richer neighbouring areas. Narrowing the gap is where efforts are primarily being channelled and working in partnership

with all agencies which could contribute to the task is the way to address this challenging issue.

Community problems are being addressed with the aim of making Brempton 'a great place in which to live, work, learn, visit and do business' (Brempton Council 2005b). This has been coined the 'vision for Brempton'. With this in mind, the priorities for Brempton MBC include:

- Children and young people
- Economic development and sustainability
- Safer and stronger communities
- Healthy communities
- Improving the quality of council services

These priorities are constituted into 'thematic groups' within the wider Local Strategic Partnership –Brempton Borough Partnership, in charge with delivering locally the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (SEU 2001). This is a national initiative to deliver sustainable economic, social and physical regeneration, together with improved public services able to meet the needs of local communities.

4.2. Partnership Working in Brempton

4.2.1. Brempton Children's Services

Brempton's commitment to partnership well precedes the statutory obligation to cooperate imposed by the Children Act 2004. Brempton Children's Services was set up before this was a statutory duty throughout the country. This was due to an early recognition that education and social care should work on delivering the same policy outcomes, rather than work in isolation from each other. Hence, Brempton Children Services was formed in year 2000.

Brempton Children's Services Authority replaces the former Education Department and the Children & Families Division of Social Services. The

primary function of the resultant service is to provide the best quality of life for all children in Brempton.

The service focuses on the needs of all children in Brempton, supporting their families and the schools they attend. This is achieved by providing co-ordinated universal and targeted services that use and extend all the wide professional skills of the staff and work productively with the multitude of partners across the authority to meet the needs of the whole Brempton community.

4.2.2. Brempton Borough Partnership

Brempton Borough Partnership is the non-statutory Local Strategic Partnership in Brempton, carrying out the 'vision for Brempton' (Brempton Council 2005b). The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (SEU 2001) is the national programme directed at improving public services locally in ways that are more responsive to the specific needs of the people. It operates with help from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which offers grants to eligible areas for a number of issues, including narrowing the gap between deprived areas and groups and the rest. In practical terms, it is a 'network of networks' covering themes from children and young people and health to community safety and economic development. The thematic groups, more notably here the Children and Young People Thematic Group (CYPTG), entail other multi-agency sub-groups.
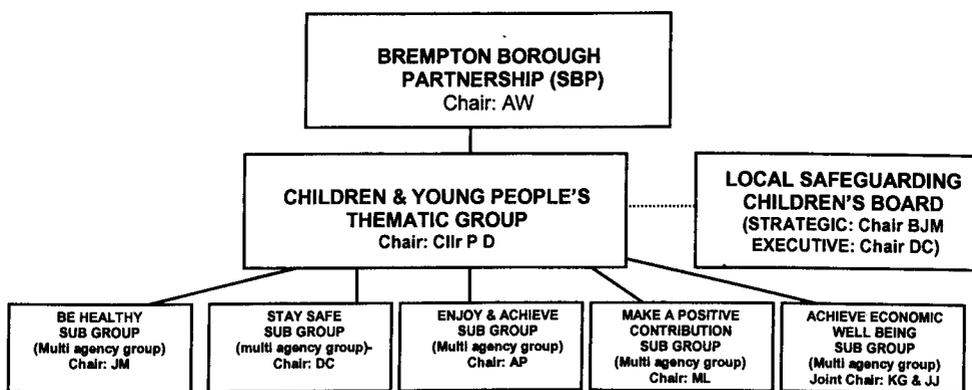

Figure 10: The links between Brempton Borough Partnership, the CYPTG and the LSCB

Source: Brempton Local Council 2007a

4.2.3. Brempton Children and Young People's Thematic Group

The Children and Young People's Thematic Group (CYPTG) was formally established in February 2005 as Brempton's 'statutory' partnership board for children and young people. The CYPTG operates as part of the Brempton Borough Partnership and is chaired by the Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services chairs the CYPTG. Membership to the group is decided in line with the 'named' partners in the Children Act 2004 plus significant contributions from the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

The CYPTG incorporates five multi-agency sub-groups, one for each of the outcomes that agencies are expected to deliver jointly: 'Be Healthy', 'Stay Safe', 'Enjoy and Achieve', 'Make a Positive Contribution', 'Achieve Economic Wellbeing'. These subgroups are chaired by representatives of only one agency, with one exception where the chair is shared between two partner organisations. Thus, the Be Healthy group is chaired by the representative of health agencies (nurse by training), Stay Safe, by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (trained as social worker), Enjoy and Achieve, by another Assistant Director of Children's Services (teacher by training), Make a Positive Contribution, by yet another Assistant Director Children's Services (youth worker by profession) and Achieve Economic Wellbeing, by both the Connexions representative and that of the Safeguarding Children department of Brempton CSA.

Apart from the five subgroups, the CYPTG also comprises areas of work such as that undertaken by the lead professional and that of the workforce reform, crossing a number, if not all, of the themed sub-group areas of responsibility. These 'work streams' are major change for children initiatives that cannot be managed via the sub-group structure. The work streams have developed their own multi-agency structures report regularly progress to the CYPTG and from which sub-group chairs take relevant information back to their membership.

As it stands now, the structure of the CYPTG enables joint working within the Council's overall partnership arrangements, particularly in respect of the Community Strategy. The structure also operates 'in sympathy' with the separately constituted Local Children's Safeguarding Board.

In accordance with the Children Act 2004, the Brempton Children and Young People's Thematic Group (CYPTG) was established by the Children's Services Authority to oversee the establishment children's trust arrangements. The Children's Trust came into being in April 2008. The investigation for this doctoral research has, however, not covered the period when the trust became operational.

4.2.4. Children's Workforce Strategy

Complementary to all these partnership structures geared at integrated work by which different expertise areas are harmonized, is an overarching effort to create a workforce for children that is able to work effectively across such expertise boundaries.

The Workforce Reform has been, since April 2006, complementary to the work undertaken in the partnership structures around children matters in Brempton. The strategy is meant to create a workforce that, although diverse in training and ethos, converge towards a commons set of skills identified as instrumental in any kind of work undertaken with and for children.

DfES initially launched the Children's Workforce Strategy in Spring 2005 and sets out the Government's vision for the Children's Workforce (DfES 2005). This vision of a world-class workforce has been revised recently and now entails the following attributes:

- ambitious for every child and young person
- excellent in their practice
- committed to partnership and integrated working
- respected and valued as professionals

(DfCSF 2008, p.19)

The Children's Workforce Strategy (DfCSF 2008) is designed to:

- improve skills and knowledge
- encourage the joining up of services
- support a focus on prevention
- encourage local partners to work together
- promote improved careers for those working with children and young people

In developing the Children's Workforce Strategy, an important matter for consideration is the common core skills and knowledge that professionals working for children are expected to possess.

The 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper (DfES 2003) strongly supported the proposition that everyone working with children, young people and families, should have a common core set of skills and knowledge. Following extensive national consultation, these were defined within the 'Common Core of Skills and Knowledge' (DfES 2005) which sets out the essential required knowledge and skills for every person working with children, young people and families. The Common Core determined requirements across six areas of expertise:

- Effective communication and engagement
- Child and young person development
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child
- Supporting transitions
- Multi-agency working
- Sharing information

The Common Core is to be used:

- in the design of induction and training
- as a tool for training needs analysis
- as a tool for workforce planning

The matrix at Appendix Three offers a full account of the underpinning skills which it is expected currently exist or will be developed in every member of the Children's Workforce. It is intended that joint training solutions are developed, wherever possible, to ensure Children's Workforce competency requirements are met.

Local authorities design and implement local variants of the national workforce strategy. The Children's Workforce Strategy for Brempton (Brempton 2007b) has identified the following challenges to successful implementation:

- recruitment of more people into the Children's Workforce, ensuring the work is attractive and promoting more flexible entry routes
- developing and retaining more people within the Children's Workforce, improving their skills by building on the 'Every Child Matters - Common Core of Skills and Knowledge' and creating a new qualifications framework
- strengthening inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working, linked to workforce remodelling
- promoting stronger leadership, management and supervision.

The development of the Children's Workforce across Brempton is taken forward by a Children's Workforce Strategy Group comprised of representatives of partner organisations. These representatives engage with key operational managers within their own services to jointly input to the development of a Children's Workforce Strategy and Plan. These must be both 'fit for purpose' across all organisations and also detail actions and requirements to develop the Workforce, which can be linked to a positive impact on outcomes for young people (Brempton Council 2006c). Partner organisations have been identified already in the CYPP and this group has been involved in development of the Children's Workforce Strategy and Plan from the outset. The group comprises representatives of the Health Service via Primary Care Trust (North and South), Strategic Health

Authority, Children's Services (Schools, Early Years and Childcare Networks and Partnerships Social Care, Youth Services), Youth Offending Team, Voluntary Sector *via* Brempton Council for Voluntary Services (Brempton CVS), Connexions, Learning Skills Council, Police Authority, Local Probation Board, Local Skills Council (joint commissioning of training and qualifications, Children, young people, parents and carers (via consultation), and the leisure services.

Additional potential partners include: other relevant areas of the local authority, networks of self employed childminders and nannies, Jobcentre Plus through the District Manager, voluntary and community Organisations, independent (private) sector representatives, CAFCASS, Play (Skills Active Playwork/Children's Play Council/4children/Kidsactive), Sport and Leisure *via Skills Active,* Private sector providers.

In order to achieve the goal of developing a holistic Children's Workforce, the following are considered to be needed (Brempton 2007b):

- the commitment of all partners
- the realisation of external support to Brempton
- appropriate resources in place, including appropriate staffing in all partner organisations and Brempton Children's Services, to fully develop and capitalise on this initiative.

The National Children's Workforce Strategy indicates that resources are already in place to improve outcomes for children and young people. It anticipates, however, that additional resources may be need. These could be obtained either through pooling of resources from partner agencies or through the funding provided by government to local authorities to support the development of children's trusts.

4.2.5. Brempton LSCB

Local Safeguarding Children Boards are established to raise the priority of safeguarding children across all services:

> 'The LSCB is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do'. (Working Together 2006 3.2)

The LSCB has a clear and distinct identity within the context of children's trust arrangements and has a unique role in challenging organisations, hence it is important that the body is independent.

The statutory membership of the LSCBs comes under the Children's Act 2004, Section13 (3) and is further elaborated by the Working Together Guidance (HM Government 2006). The latter document lists the members under three sections:

1. **Statutory members**: district councils, Police, Local Probation Board, Youth Offending Team, Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts, NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, Connexions Service, CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service), Secure Training Centres, Prisons, adult social and health services, designated doctors and nurses.

2. **Other members**: NSPCC, local organisations (faith groups, schools, colleges, children's centres, GPs, independent healthcare organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations) the armed forces, the Immigration Service, the National Asylum Support Service.

3. **Involvement of other agencies and groups**, for example the coronial service, dental health services, Domestic Violence Forums, drug and alcohol misuse services, Drug Action Teams, housing, culture and leisure services, housing providers, local authority legal services, local MAPPA, local sports bodies and services, local

Family Justice Council, local Criminal Justice Board, other health providers such as pharmacists.

There appears to be a hierarchy of these categories, ranging from statutory members (whose presence in the LSCB is required by law –the Children's Act 2004, Section 13 (3)) to other members that are relevant to the type of work that the LSCB does (such as local agencies with local knowledge), and to recommended further representation of some organisations or individuals who, although are represented in theory by other agencies (statutory board members), need to be engaged due to a particularly relevant role. Brempton MBC took this inferred hierarchy into account when they decided on their LSCB membership and structure. The structure of Brempton LSCB is now as follows:

```
                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │     LSCB     │
                    │  Strategic   │
                    │    Board     │
                    └──────┬───────┘
                           │
                    ┌──────┴───────┐
                    │     LSCB     │
                    │  Executive   │
                    │    Board     │
                    └──────┬───────┘
       ┌────────┬──────────┼──────────┬──────────┐
 ┌─────┴────┐┌──┴─────┐┌───┴────┐┌────┴─────┐┌────┴─────┐
 │Serious   ││Practice││Training││Performance││Participa-│
 │Case      ││and     ││Sub-    ││Management ││tion      │
 │Review    ││Procedu-││commi-  ││Information││Champions │
 │Screening ││res     ││ttee    ││Sub-      ││Sub-      │
 │Board     ││Sub-    ││        ││committee ││committee │
 │          ││commit- ││        ││          ││          │
 │          ││tee     ││        ││          ││          │
 └──────────┘└────────┘└────────┘└──────────┘└──────────┘
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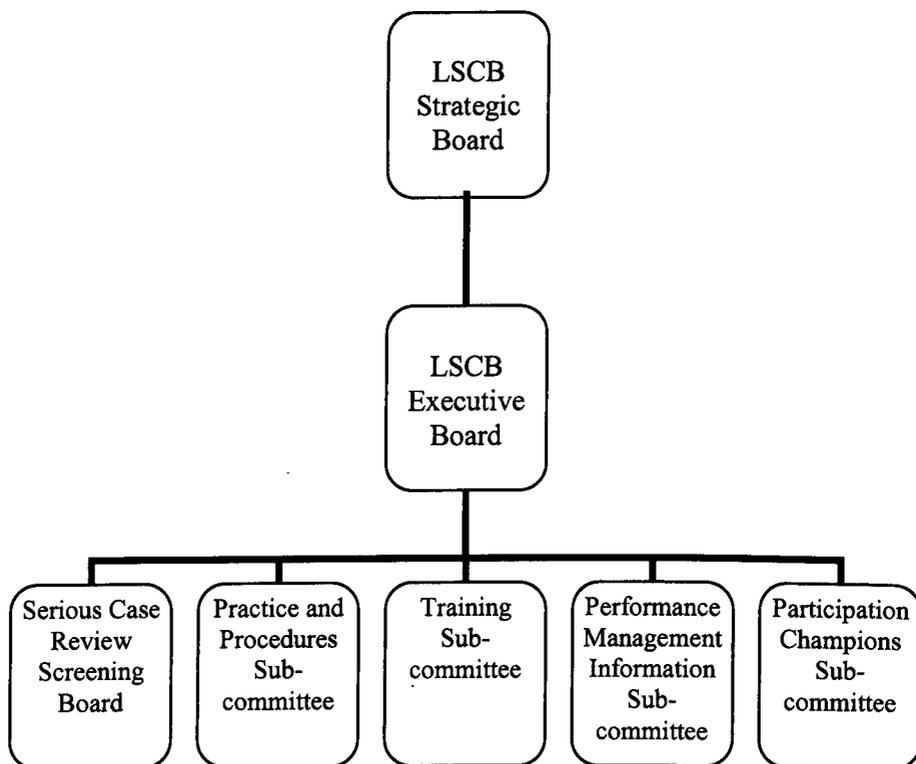
Figure 11: Current organisational   Source: Brempton Council 2007a
chart of Brempton LSCB

The LSCB structure is not statutory and differs with every LSCB in the UK. In Brempton, this structure is rooted in tradition and leadership (as it was unravelled at one of the LSCB development days –April 2006- by the participants). Namely, LSCB partners in Brempton revealed that the LSCB structure was designed by the first chair of the board and was based on the

classic administrative model of having the more strategic officers in an authority (strategic level) meet regularly to oversee the work of the middle and junior managers (executive level) involved in a matter on a more regular and often basis. This model was carried over from the Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) which the LSCB replaced.

The hierarchy of LSCB members, as suggested by the Working Together guidance document is only partly reflected in the hierarchy of strategic and executive board membership. According to the Business Plan 2007-2008 (Brempton Council 2007a), the members of board in Brempton MBC are:

- **Membership of Brempton Safeguarding Strategic Board**: Children's Services (Chair), Children's Services (Social Care), Children's Services (Social Care), Merseyside Police, Children's Services (Education), Children's Trust/NS PCT, Brempton CVS, Connexions, Children's Services (legal services),Merseyside Probation Service, Early Years/YOT/Youth, Voluntaries, Housing, Strategic Health Authority, Merseyside Transport Police, Acute Health Trust, Merseyside Fire Service.

- **Members of Brempton Safeguarding Executive Board**: Assistant Director, Children's Services (Chair), Children's Services, Safeguarding Children, Merseyside Police FCIU, Designated Doctor South Brempton, Designated Doctor North Brempton, Named Doctor North Brempton/ LMC lead, Specialist Nurse SS PCT, Designated Nurse South Brempton, CAHMS, Education CP Lead, Housing (same representative in the Strategic Board), Youth Offending Team YOT, Brempton Women's & Children's Aid SWACA (same representative in the Strategic Board), Named Nurse North Brempton, Drug ActionTeam DAT, Participation Officer, Ashworth Hospital, CAFCAS, Range High, Secondary School Heads, Cambridge Independent Primary/Children's Centre, St Elizabeth Primary, Primary School Heads,

Children's Services, Assessment & Family Support, Connexions, Legal Services Children's Services (same representative in the Strategic Board), Merseyside Probation, LSCB Training officer, Nugent Care Society, Adult Mental Health Services, Safeguarding Manager (jointly-funded post, characteristic to LSCB).

Comparing the data arising from Working Together with that of Brempton LSCB Business Plan (Brempton Council 2007), four points are worth analysing. First of all, three statutory partners –district council, Secure Training Centre, Prison which ordinarily detains children- are not represented at all in the Brempton Safeguarding Children's Board, for there are none of these in the local authority area. This leaves Brempton with 11 out of the 14 types of statutory board members.

Secondly, although Working Together suggests some degree of hierarchy between statutory and other relevant organisation, this doesn't seem to be reflected in the strategic and executive boards' membership. Thus, three of the statutory partners (Police, YOT, Connexions) are represented in both of the boards, yet by different people – the strategic board gathering more senior people in their organisations. It is not clear why these and only these three members were thought to be of relevance in both boards. Then, Housing and the Legal Services have each both a strategic and an executive voice (and the same individual representatives in both), although they only fall under the third category of board membership (see above). The fact that Brempton CVS (Council for Voluntary Services), listed as a second category member in Working Together can be explained by the extremely large number of voluntary and community sector organisations (more than 1,500, according to Brempton CVS) in the area.

Thirdly, some of the Brempton Safeguarding Children's Strategic Board members are not listed as potential members anywhere in the policy guidance. Under this category fall the Early Years (although it can be argued that they are part of Children's Services), Merseyside Fire Service

and Merseyside Transport Police. It is unclear why these agencies were preferred as strategic partners over others.

Finally, a few agencies have more than one voice in both the boards. To start with, although not explicitly listed in any legislation or policy document, Early Years is represented twice in the strategic board. Then, although there were two PCTs in the Brempton area (North Brempton PCT and South Brempton PCT) until 2007, it is still unclear why the PCT had no less than six representatives with no designated nurse for North Brempton PCT. In theory, there should be representatives of both designated doctors and nurses for each of the PCTs. In reality, there are representatives of both designated and named doctors in North Brempton PCT, of designated doctors in South Brempton PCT, of both designated and specialist nurses in South Brempton PCT and, of named nurses in North Brempton PCT no designated nurse from North Brempton PCT.

Some of the inconsistencies are the result of some agencies' historic membership to ACPCs. Some others have to do with personal links between representative of named agencies and those of non-named agencies (mostly based on positive experience of working together). Finally, there is a confusion amongst most LSCB members as to the fitness for purpose of the present organisational configuration of the board. Namely, the debates conducted during away days revealed that there was little support for the current strategic-executive distinction within the board. Moreover, there seemed to be a shared feeing amongst partners that the 'logical' and somewhat rigid structure of work (strategic board - executive board - subgroups) is not conducive to truly integrated work. Finally, the present organisational structure of the LSCB allows for the 'child protection' to take over the 'prevention' component of the 'safeguarding children' mission, in terms of talk time in meetings.

Consequently, there are talks at the moment of writing around changing the structure of the Brempton Children Safeguarding Board. Indeed, this idea came up at a LSCB development day (April 2007) when it was concluded that the board as it stand now is not fit for purpose. Two options of

alternative structures were advanced at the following LSCB Development Day (June 2007), as follows:
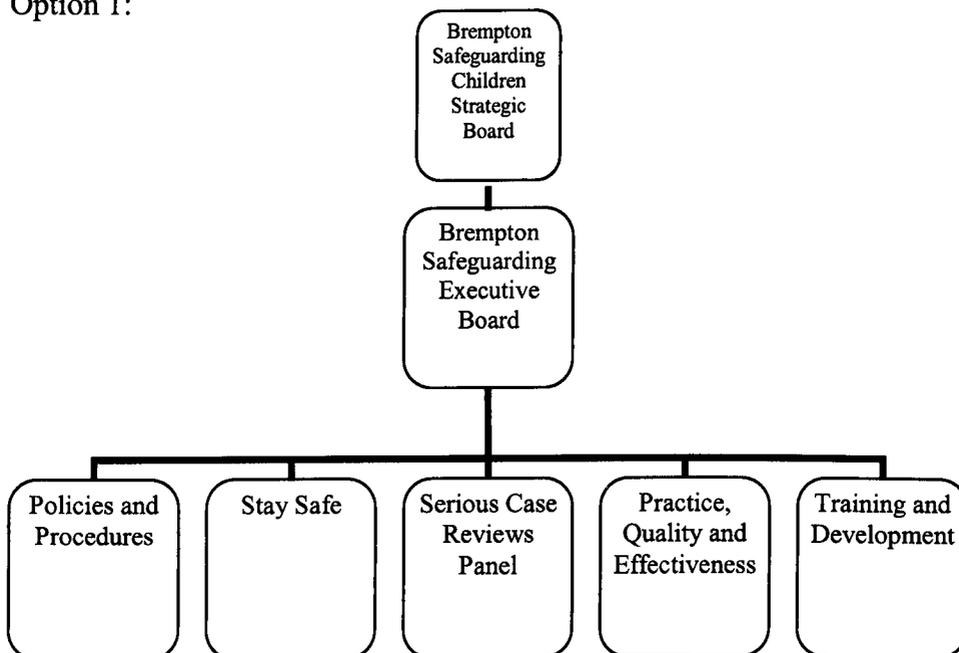
Option 1:

Figure 12: Proposal of an organisational chart for Brempton LSCB

Source: Informal internal documents circulated at the LSCB Away Day in June 2007
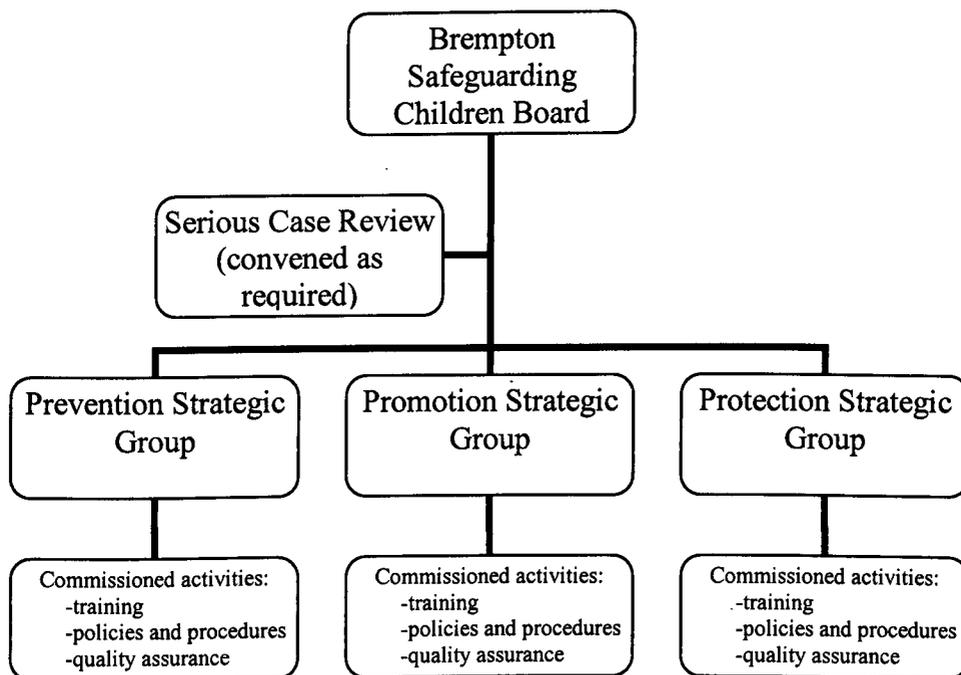
Option 2:

Figure 13: Proposal of an organisational chart for Brempton LSCB

Source: Informal internal documents circulated at the LSCB Away Day in June 2007

At this event, the board members worked in groups and the model that came closest to most of the groups' contributions is the following:
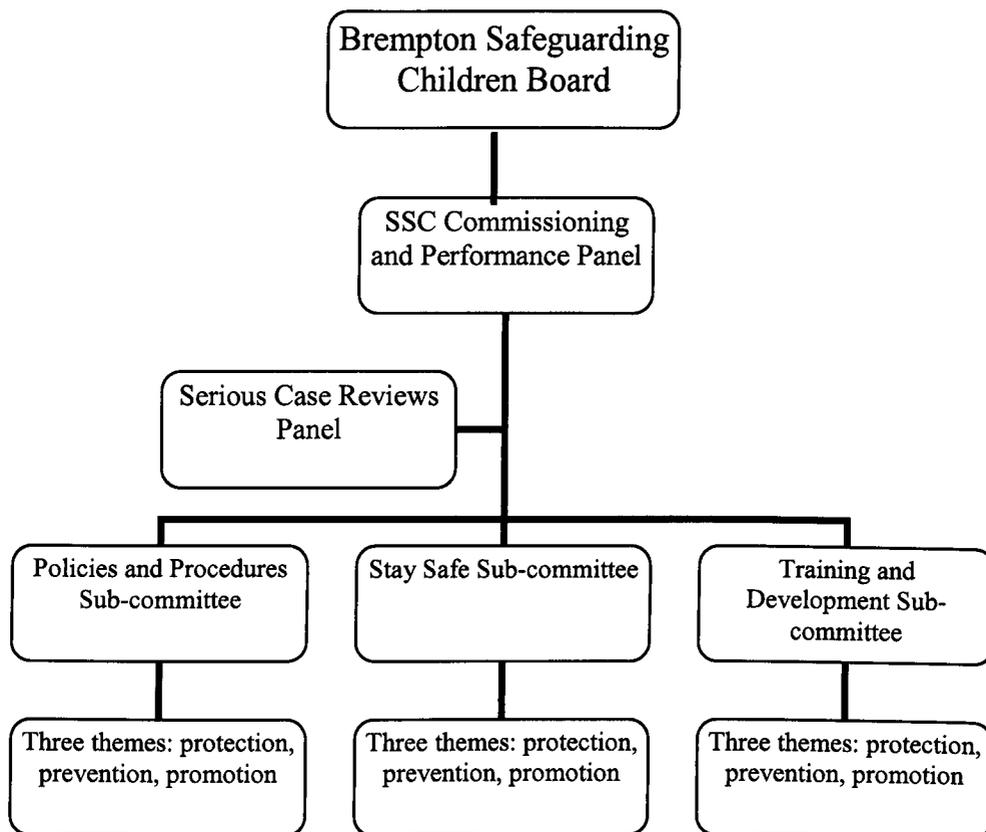
```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Brempton Safeguarding│
                    │    Children Board    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  SSC Commissioning  │
                    │and Performance Panel│
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
        ┌──────────────────┐  │
        │Serious Case Reviews│ │
        │      Panel        │ │
        └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────┬──────────────────┬──────────────────┐
┌────────────────┐ ┌────────────────┐ ┌────────────────┐
│Policies and    │ │Stay Safe Sub-  │ │  Training and  │
│Procedures      │ │committee       │ │Development Sub-│
│Sub-committee   │ │                │ │   committee    │
└────────────────┘ └────────────────┘ └────────────────┘
        │                  │                  │
┌────────────────┐ ┌────────────────┐ ┌────────────────┐
│Three themes:   │ │Three themes:   │ │Three themes:   │
│protection,     │ │protection,     │ │protection,     │
│prevention,     │ │prevention,     │ │prevention,     │
│promotion       │ │promotion       │ │promotion       │
└────────────────┘ └────────────────┘ └────────────────┘
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Figure 14: The optimum configuration for Brempton LSCB as it emerged from teamwork contribution at the Away Day, June 2007

This structure has been found to better reflect the need for integrated working. The three underpinning themes of the partners' work –prevention of harm for children, child protection and promotion of children's wellbeing- can be addressed simultaneously under each of the three committees that better structure the work that the LSCB needs to do to fulfil its role. Then, the distinction between the strategic and the executive levels of the board was abolished in favour of a flatter structure in which representatives would be middle managers in their parent organisations. It was felt that these issues would help the LSCB become fitter for purpose than it currently is. It is important to emphasize, though, that this was nothing more than an exercise of imagination encouraging professionals to think creatively about the mission they are meant to deliver and that would

help bounding processes conducive to trust relations amongst board members.

The LSCB constitutes the core of the case study for this research due to its role in ensuring partners agencies' cooperation in matters that concern the statutory duty to integrated working prescribed by the 'Every Child Matters' (DfES 2004) and the Children Act (2004).

Chapter Five

Findings

It is useful at this findings stage to highlight again the research problem at the core of this investigation:

> *There is a need to understand how the effectiveness of service provider network partnerships might be improved, in order to reduce the potential for implementation failure of social policies regarding children. Such improvement is conceptualised in terms of reducing the risks to which children are exposed.*

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two addressed this problem and offered some interesting theoretical resolutions to it. For issues which are not addressed by previous literature (either at all or not to a large extent), research questions emerged and these will be addressed through empirical research

- What could be learned from previous crises?
- How can the lessons be learned in ways that would not incubate future crises?
- What are the barriers to LSCBs acting as networks?
- What are the incentives that could determine a more integrated work in LSCBs?
- How do the three levels –individuals, professions and organisations- interact in LSCBs?
- How does the LSCB network communicate with its wider context?
- How does this context influence the barriers and incentives to collaboration for LSCBs?

Some of these questions tackle similar issues, hence can be combined to be addressed together in the light of the findings of the empirical component of this doctoral research. The resultant questions prompt the subsections of this chapter, under which the findings of the study will be explained:

1. Lessons from crises
2. Improving partnership working: barriers and incentives, identified at all three levels of network membership: individuals, professions and organisations
3. The context's influence on both barriers and incentives to partnership working

This strategy of structuring the remaining of this thesis –namely the findings and their analysis- has been adapted from method scholars like Patton (2002) and Yin (2003). Patton (2002) advanced the option of drawing the themes of the findings from the questions that were generated during the conceptual phases of the study. Similarly, Yin (2003) put forward a 'theory-building structure' of findings' report, amongst six alternative structures for case study compositions. Theory-building structures are considered to be especially applicable to exploratory case studies such as this one.

In the light of these guidelines and in tune with the research design undertaken in this study, the next sections will present the data as emerged from the various sources investigated, organised under headings representing theory blocks in the overall argument of the thesis.

5.1. Lessons from crises

At the level of policy formulation, the government appeared to have learned two rather conflicting lessons. These are evident in attempts to lift the bureaucratic burden off professionals while introducing more detailed procedures aimed at easing the work of front-line staff by making processes clearer. At the policy implementation level, these had tremendous effects on professionals who, at Brempton, displayed clear risk-averse behaviour. It

was observed that such coping mechanisms were unhelpful to the integrated work in the LSCB, hence, indirectly, to its mission.

Brempton has never known a case of the profile and implications of the 'Victoria Climbié' one, yet this is not to say that learning from other crises has not been undertaken. Significant serious case reviews which prompt national interest are opportunities for systems to change and for professionals to reflect upon, and revise, their practices. Apart from these, cases that do not reach the public eye, yet qualify for full local reviews by independent arbitrators, also present opportunities for learning.

Serious case reviews are part of the 'business as usual' in LSCBs (responsible for holding Serious Case Review Panels), yet access to the data arising from these cases is strictly limited for outsiders. However, once the cases reach a certain threshold of significance (the process by which this happens is illustrated in more detail in Chapter Two –see subsection 2.1.), they prompt the need for lessons learning by those involved at all levels of policy making. Hence the researcher was prompted with more evidence on how lessons were learned from national, rather than local crises. From cases such as the 'Baby P' (Guardian 2008), or the 'Victoria Climbié' (Laming 2003), both policy makers and practitioners appear to have drawn lessons on caution.

At the level of policy formulation (see Chapter Two for a more detailed theoretical account of this point), lessons from Victoria Climbié's tragic death, as identified by the expert panel investigating the circumstances surrounding it, are overarched by the need to create work environments which enable 'meaningful communication' across professional boundaries (Reder and Duncan 2003). This was understood by the government in two very different ways: first, by the issue of detailed ministerial guidelines on how to enhance inter-professional and interagency communication and, secondly, by leaving essential points vague in the legislation with the view that local bargaining over their meaning would contribute to creating a communication mindset amongst professionals.

Evidence for the first of the two interpretations of how 'meaningful communication' is translated into practice by government action is the volume of procedures included in the most recent Working Together document (HM Government 2006), as compared to that following the previous Children Act (1989) (HM Hovernment 1999). The new guidance is twice as voluminous as the previous one (270 pages compared to 128), partly due to a rather sizeable section on 'non-statutory practice guidance', which makes for almost half of the guidance document.

Evidence to the second of interpretations stands the lack of clarification on, for example, how the pooled budget of the LSCB is to be achieved, but also in the general formulation of the board's remits. The fact that the outcomes of joint work are loosely defined, and that the rules of pool budgeting are not comprehensive, encouraged Brempton LSCB partners to undergo extensive debates about the partnership's role and mission, as well as about that of individual members within the wider remits of the partnership. Such discussions often postpone more issues that are considered by many to be more 'pressing', such as the activities that make for the core of the LSCB work. However it must be remembered that the declared aim of the LSCB is to monitor what is done by each of the members in fulfilling the overarching aim of safeguarding the children in the region. If anchored back to their role as 'monitors', then it can be argued that all debates represent an 'investment' in developing collaborative capabilities. Indeed, some interviewees ventured astute observations about the fact that the underpinning and unstated aim of their joint work is to build a joint communication mindset across agencies, rather than to provide specific services.

Away Days were seen to contribute to this goal immensely, in the same ways in which, in private sector organisations, team building days contribute to more collegial work environments. These events are designed to bring together all professionals sitting in the LSCB board, at either executive or operational levels. In one of the Away Days, the chair of the Brempton LSCB raised the issue of whether the LSCB is 'to do' or 'to

challenge'. A brainstorming was generated in this way and that resulted in positive, lively dynamics by which professionals had the opportunity to speak freely about something on which they could not take particular professional stakes and on which higher hierarchical status could not grant superior knowledge of the matter. This contributed to diminishing the boundaries between the LSCB members, in the hope (confirmed by the chair in an interview) that this would serve as exercise for building more equalitarian relationships in the partnership, where status differences (as arising from with professional or hierarchical status) would be diminished. This goal can be linked to the principle of status equality between network members in the theory of networks (see for example Hudson 2004), which makes the aim of bringing the LSCB closer to the type of integration characteristic to 'network structures' (see Mandell and Steelman 2003, Keast et al. 2004) more achievable.

In as far as policy implementation is concerned, an evaluation of a number of local serious case reviews (based on discussions at the LSCB meetings, rather than on documents to which access was restricted) national inquiries over the last thirty years (DoH 1991, DoH 1995, Laming 2003) reveals three main underpinning issues that indirectly led to the development of risks into full blown crises:

- a lack of communication between agencies,
- poor record keeping and
- high turnover of staff passing responsibility over cases from one to another.

These three issues are inter-related: the high turnover of staff contributes to breaking the communication channels between agencies that does rely on basic inter-personal communication between representatives, while record keeping is instrumental for new staff to get up to date with their case load shortly and accurately.

The turnover of staff is a problem in some of the partner agencies more than in others. For example Children's Services (especially the social care

component of it) is badly affected by it, vacancies are many and occasional recruitment from abroad is deemed necessary, yet the retaining of staff tends to be difficult. The interviews held with social care representatives in the LSCB revealed that emotional burden combined with high workload and understaffing are amongst the most important factors that lead to high turnover. In practice, in Brempton, high turnover of social carers lead to risks being taken, for example when there are backlogs of cases left unassigned to social workers or when the latter are confronted with such massive caseloads that it is difficult to familiarise themselves with all. One example is illustrative in this sense in Brempton. A couple of years ago, an agency with responsibilities around tackling substance misuse signalled the need of assessment in the case of four brothers and sisters at risk due to questionable parenting. Due to high turnover of social carers, the case was assigned to one social carer two years later. When the case was eventually assigned to a social worker, the children had already passed the point of critical need, as their parents were on a good path to recovery from substance misuse. However, their encouraging 'progress' was 'sanctioned' by the children being placed in the child protection register. The decision was justified by the substance abuse worker in terms of the lack of time available for the social worker to familiarise themselves with the case, hence resorting to the 'safest' of recommendations. This brings the discussion to issues of risk aversion thresholds in different professions.

While the issues that contributed to crises occurring are identified and widely known by professionals (this was repeatedly stated in interviews), they are not easy to overcome and, overall, it appears that the number of yearly non-accidental deaths of children and young people remains virtually constant (as revealed by a number of senior staff at Brempton Children's Services). However, it was emphasised with every occasion in which this was mentioned, that it is not only the fact that lessons are not learned that explains why crises keep occurring, but also the fact that more issues are being uncovered by professionals as others get prevented or overcome. The problem, nevertheless, is that it cannot be known with certainty which of the two explanations carry more weight. This makes practitioners rather

nervous about their potential involvement with cases that might develop into tragedies.

Emotional and bureaucratic overwhelm becomes a key factor for professionals feeling helpless in preventing all crises from happening, and one way to tackle it while continuing doing their job is by avoidance.

The ways avoidance manifests itself were revealed by the findings of the participant observations of LSCB teambuilding events triangulated with interviews and questionnaires. Hence, in a development day event, concerns were raised by some of the LSCB partners as to the LSCB individual members' inability to take initiative beyond explicit mandate from their agencies. In a couple of occasions, the latter even sustained that they would avoid taking personal charge over a matter even 'against their better judgement' -that is, against their professionally trained instinct to prefer a certain course of action over another. This was especially visible in relation with its opposite. Occasionally, one representative would speak at ease on behalf of their organisation, without reference to the need to confirm with their superiors, despite the fact that the respective agency (the police) was one of the more hierarchical ones. Far from being penalised for it, the person in question was in fact promoted. Hence, there seem to be ways around organisational hierarchy and there are indications to suggest that, for many, invoking the impossibility of taking charge on the basis of accountability lines is an instance of being over, or unnecessarily, cautious.

When this observation was followed up in some interviews, the respondents (including the person observed as displaying outlining leadership) blamed the scapegoating that usually follows crises. In other words, personal liability is systematically avoided in the everyday work lives of these professionals. Another explanation based on the author's interpretation of what was said in interviews is that emotional burden could be alleviated if the job is addressed on the basis of rules rather than of personal involvement in 'negotiating' contribution to the 'mission' of their work.

It was mentioned previously that while learning points are clearly identified and efforts are paid to address them, incidents keep occurring, be them at local or national levels. The effort to create an integrated work force capable of delivering a seamless service for children and young people arguably stems from the need for sustainable learning processes. This is due to the fact that it tackles the problem from its origins rather than reacting to it in a fire-fighting fashion. Efforts towards creation of sustainable structures for integrated work are evident in the formation of 'networks of networks' in local authority areas, in the introduction of posts which essentially are about boundary spanning (such as 'partnership manager' and 'safeguarding manager', in Brempton), in the creation of cross-professional categories (see Deschamps and Doise 1978) such as the youth offending officers (cross-ethos between youth and police work), in building an integrated workforce for children where professional boundaries (hence 'social categorisation' – see Brewer and Miller 1984) are minimised, and in the creation of an integrated database where all professionals would input data on the children with whom they have contact.

5.2. Improving partnership working

It was argued earlier in this thesis that improvement of integrated work comes from essentially blocking inhibitors and developing the incentives for collaborative work. The literature on inhibitors is vast, while that on motivators is yet to be developed, only incidental findings being published and mostly, in other literature areas than that of public sector networks or collaborations. The reason why there is more literature on barriers to collaborations than there is about motivators may have to do with the fact that often people and organisations manage 'by exception' –they lay out plans and assume they are well drafted and appropriate for reaching their goals, unless proven otherwise, hence they are more alert to 'inhibitors' than they are to 'motivators', because the former is a deviation, whereas the latter is something that works in accordance with the plan, hence is less visible.

The analysis of the case study makes no exception from this general rule, in that it was far easier to spot what did not work in partnerships than what it did. Careful analysis, however, did unpack some motivators, but in strong connection with their opposites –inhibitors. This subsection will illustrate the researcher's understanding of the balance between the two, on three analytical levels: individuals, professions and organisations. Then, it will examine more integrated outcomes that cannot be attributed to either of the three levels of analysis, but rather to combinations of these, as well as to task or mission tackled by the 'whole' created by individuals, professions and organisations.

5.2.1. Individuals

Data was collected in this study primarily by talking and listening to people, due to the fact that they are conceptualised as bearers of the contexts that surround them and that shape both their identities and the ways in which they interact with others. Hence it was sought important in this study to capture their 'core beliefs', which could then be explained in terms of their belonging to one professional and organisational culture or another, combined with personal circumstances (where these were known).

Individuals sitting in Brempton LSCB were found to interact, first, on the basis of their own inclinations to bond with other people and, secondly, on the basis of their trying to fulfil a 'mandate'. The latter must be seen in terms of roles that individual representatives are expected to play in the partnership, to promote and protect the interests of the organisations of which they are part. It must also be linked to professional ethos shaping people's instincts and judgements on matters concerning children. Individuals in the Brempton LSCB were found to contribute to the aims of the partnership in creative ways where the links with their professional bodies and with their organisations were not very strong. Moreover, where individuals proved commitment to the LSCB's cause, stronger inter-personal ties with the network members were observed. Where this

occurred, discontinued membership to the partnership structure was regarded as being extremely disruptive.

The individuals' level in the analysis of this research findings is essential, for individuals are more dynamic than either their professions or their organisations, hence in times of conflict between various rules and regulations of the partners organisations, individual representatives can offer imaginative solutions that bend the rules to the point of making them compatible and giving the partnership direction. This was revealed both in interviews and in questionnaires, and, in some depth, in one of the away days where leadership in the LSCB was extensively debated. It was observed, for example, that some individual representatives in the LSCB exceeded their organisational mandate, while others fulfilled it reluctantly. This was easily noticeable with successive representatives of the same organisation (some organisations, such as police and probation customarily changed their representative every year or three years, respectively). Over the two years and a half sitting in LSCB meetings, the researcher observed three police delegates, and each one was very different in what they were bringing to the collective work in LSCB. One of the three exceeded their organisational mandate considerably, taking leadership in many of the issues discussed in partnership and having some initiatives on improving the effectiveness of the group. The other two representatives, however, seemed to be flagging out the organisational boundaries which stood in the way of information sharing with the LSCB partners. It must be noted that all three representatives had the same rank in their parent organisations (tier 3).

In their interactions in partnerships, people often engage in personal exchanges. In some cases, people are happy to interact as 'themselves', rather than as 'the voices of their agencies', while other times the opposite is true. Some representatives were especially popular amongst their LSCB partners and had their voices heard even when their organisation was not in fact one of the 'core', or even the 'named' partners, as derived from the Children Act (2004). Two notable examples of charismatic representatives are the representative of one nongovernmental organisation with stakes in

domestic violence and the head teacher of an independent school in the borough. Conversely, there were also occasional clashes that, explored in interviews, were accounted for by histories of 'collective' disagreement with the agencies represented by these people (most notably, the police, but also education), 'difficult' personalities, and 'rigid' professional ethos and work ethics. It proved difficult for interviewees to pin down the reasons behind lack of chemistry with a number of partnership members, and the aforementioned issues were not clearly defined against each other. Rather, people used these labels interchangeably. This suggests that they are strongly connected and likely so, by causal links. This was, in one occasion, clearly indicated by the LSCB chair who, when asked why the third sector organisation's representative was specifically invited to the board although there were other organisations in the sector which could have been more relevant to the cause advanced by the LSCB, responded that 'she is such a lovely lady and we worked together [well] before'. This statement suggested that the person was demonstrably easy to work with (more notably in ACPCs, but not only) and a likeable person, able to raise loyalty from her colleagues. The fact that she was 'easy to work with' could have been explained by the fact that she had the same professional ethos (social work) as the LSCB chair and many of the other LSCB partners. Being likable may have had an impact, but probably not exclusively, since some of the trained social workers in the group were a lot less popular, if not simply unpopular.

Looking to link personal motivations of people in the LSCB with their 'popularity' amongst their LSCB partners, from one of the questions in the survey, it became apparent that people who are intrinsically motivated in their job (for example belonging or having belonged to a vulnerable category of population themselves) could constitute better 'boundary spanners' in that they engage better with the partners to fulfil joint work programme than people who do not feel any personal commitment to the cause. This engagement seems to occur naturally for these people, and this is partly what explains their being seen by others as 'easy to work with'. Often, this is enough to make them 'likeable' and trustworthy for future engagements.

Linking representatives' professional training with their ability to act as boundary spanners, the researcher triangulated data from interviews and observation and realised that the police representative who was resourceful in finding ways to involve and commit their organisation to the partnership goals was trained in police work later in their life, kept their personal earlier inclinations to welfare (representing only a minor subculture in the police as an organisation). Another representative who was perceived as 'boundary spanner' was also trained late in their profession (social work), a number of others had multiple professional hats on (for example the YOT representative, but also the LSCB chair) and others (such as the representatives of the third sector, but also the holder of the 'partnership management' post) had more generalist professional backgrounds (defined as requiring less degree of specialisation, in lines with Abbott's (1988) classification of professions). It follows then that weaker professional backgrounds represent an incentive for people to demonstrate personal abilities to span boundaries in multi-agency work. The correlate of that is that strong professional ethos is likely to place limits on the extent of freedom individuals feel to exercise their own will and judgement in professional exchanges such as those taking place in the LSCBs.

As a result of the observed patterns of some agencies changing representatives more often than others, interviewees were asked about the perceived benefit of this practice to the outcomes of partnership work. While a couple of respondents appreciated the need for membership change for some organisations (such as the police or the probation), it was widely accepted that the practice is disruptive to collective work. In a closer, more 'collaborative' partnership (in the sense attributed to the word 'collaboration' by Keast et al. 2004) such as the YOT, the risk of deskilling is recognised by the YOT interviewees to be important enough to avoid. This would justify secondment of some professions in YOTs only for limited periods of time. In LSCBs, however, more 'cooperative' than 'collaborative' in their nature, time-limited representation is seen to be a serious problem. Indeed, in YOTs, it was deemed important by some organisations to make sure their YOT secondees retain their original

professional culture. This is justified by the intention to really benefit the collective by throwing different perspectives into the mix (for example a probation or a health perspective), but also to avoid the cost of retraining, should they want to return to the mainstream work of their profession later (as revealed by the interviews held with YOT professionals). In LSCBs, though, most interviewees believe it important to cooperate with the same representative of an agency. This is seen as an acceptably safe practice, for the work is not close enough to indicate the risk of de-skilling that would justify the same time-limited membership that some organisations promote in other partnerships, such as the YOTs. An example of how effective work was haltered by a change in representation was when the resourceful, boundary spanning police representative was replaced, following promotion to a different department, with someone else displaying far less of a cooperative attitude towards the work undertake by the LSCB and seen by the partners to be far more rigidly anchored in their professional background to engage interactively with others.

Another instance in which individuals appeared to have made a difference to partnership working was when, at an Away Day, board members challenged the aims of their joint work. By doing that, they acknowledged that the conceptual boundaries they held came largely from the definitions advanced by the first chair of the LSCB, perceived as a strong leader who gave the partnership a firm direction in their work. While most accounts were appreciative of that, some challenged the force of this initial direction. Indeed, while leadership from the part of the LSCB chair was useful in keeping the group anchored to the joint mission and also press on with hard decision-making such as the case of the pooled budgets, it was considered by some to have obstructed freer collective brainstorming, ultimately impending the LSCB's capacity to 'challenge' the work undertaken by each agency, as their role is prescribed by the Children Act. It was not conclusive, from the data collected, whether the balance between the two extremes was leaning towards any one of them in particular, but what was clear was that the chair definitely had an influence on the dynamics of the group and this influence depended to some degree on their personality.

Finally, the data suggests a link between the ability of a representative to 'fit' with the partnership structure (measured in terms of their 'likeability' by their colleagues) and their gender. It is not gender per se that is of relevance here, but gender as relative to the gender bias (or lack of it) in their parent organisations and to that in the LSCB as a whole. There is a perceived gender bias in the LSCB (confirmed by interviews, and also based on some earlier findings in literature about gender bias in welfare-type jobs – see Quadagno and Fobes 1995, Bochel and Briggs 2000, Featherstone 2006) and that is characterised by 'feminine', welfare-based characteristics of the mission –safeguarding children. The professions that are involved are, to a large degree, also gender biased towards 'feminine' values in their ethos (Parton 2003), with the exception of the 'police' which embraces more 'masculine' traits (Martin 1999). There were examples of the clash between gender biases both in interviews and in the first-hand observations of interactions. Anecdotal evidence of this comes from one of the interviewees who had witnessed, in a child protection conference, an incident in which a male police office asked a female social worker to make them some tea; the incident was allegedly followed by an open inter-personal conflict which clearly hindered the work that needed to be done at that meeting. Another evidence of how the dynamics between people can be affected by their perceived compliance with the gender bias of their organisation is the fact that, amongst the police representatives to both the executive and strategic LSCB boards, the one enjoying most acceptance and demonstrating most 'fit' with the mission pursued by the LSCB was a woman and one that was openly critical to the male culture dominance in mainstream police work. Conversely, the social care representative with least 'fit' within the partnership was the one with least perceived compliance with the 'feminine' values promoted in the board.

5.2.2. Professions

Individuals' interpretations of the cultures existent in their profession and in their organisations were the data main data source for identifying the

elements described under this section. Although this data was crossed-referenced with documents, people's conceptions were particularly valuable sources of information, in the sense that they behave based on their perceptions of reality.

Based on the similarities and differences between the occupational cultures in Brempton LSCB, it was observed that certain professions seemed more compatible than others. It was also revealed that professions which are cross-cultural (for example 'newer' YOT or Connexions workers) were not regarded by any of their LSCB partners as being problematic or hard to work with. Such professions represent new additions to the 'welfare mix' and offer invaluable prospects for further inter-professional integration in this realm. This subsection goes to elaborate on these main findings, and, in doing that, it relies chiefly on the findings from interviews and questionnaires.

Amongst the barriers to collaborative work rooted in professional ethos, the questionnaires revealed the following (in the order of how often the theme occurred): working in professional silos; defensiveness; territoriality; lack of understanding of the others' work; 'confidentiality' rules (especially so in the case of the health professionals); mistrust; too many professionals involved which confuses clients and can duplicate work.

Working in professional silos is as unhelpful to multi-agency work as is working in organisational silo-type divisions. Having been trained in the spirit and the letter of professional ethos, professionals have a natural tendency to bond, sometimes against different professions of a significantly different occupational ethos. This brings about the issue of territoriality and some sort of unwillingness to understand the other professional viewpoints. With lack of understanding comes mistrust. When this occurs, then organisations can use part of their ethos –which naturally cannot be challenged- such as the 'confidentiality' issue that health professionals bring up when they object to other professionals interfering with their patients. The solution to all these problems, according to the respondents of this study, comes from multi-agency training and simply more exercise in co-

working with other professions (which is likely to happen over time). The imminent creation of the Children's Trusts (April 2008) and of the 3-Area Working is expected to ameliorate the problem of confusion created by the multiplicity of often uncoordinated professional inputs in one case.

These barriers were perceived by interviewees to be due to inherent values promoted by their professions. Based on similarity and dissimilarity between those, professionals revealed the professional groups which that they work best with and those with whom the have most conflicts. Thus, 'compatible professions' have been found to be teachers with social carers, teachers with health professionals, police officers with probation officers, YOT workers with Connexions workers, YOT workers with probation officers, YOT workers with teachers. The highest 'misfit' has been registered between Children Services professionals (both social workers and educationalists) and third sector workers, between police officers and social carers, and between police officers and health professionals. The sources of the tension / compatibility between them appear to be around:

- Cultural roots of welfare vs. punishment. This differentes for example social work from police work, but brings together officers of the probation and of the police.
- Professionalism vs. amateurism. This divides for example third sector workers from most other professionals in the so-called 'statutory sector' in the sense that the former are not 'professionals' per se –in that they do not have a normative professional background. While they perceive this to be an advantage in working with others from other sectors, the statutory sector workers regards this as being lack of expertise.
- Gender bias. This is most evident in the divide between police officers and social workers.

Extremely revealing has been the case of the YOT officers which seemed to have been most compatible with most professionals (see Dudau and McAllister, forthcoming, for a full account of this case). Even though the

professional groups cited by YOT officers as being most compatible with them are consistently probation, Connexions, education and youth work (a branch of social work), they did not list any profession as being particularly difficult to interact with and, also, were not listed by anyone amongst the 'reluctant partners'. When this thread of evidence was investigated more thoroughly, it became apparent that YOT officers are largely 'tolerant' of professional diversity, having experienced it first-hand, and for a longer time than most other LSCB professionals, in their own organisation. The YOT is essentially a multi-professional organisation, unlike most of other LSCB agencies which are dominated by either one (for example police is dominated by police officers and social services, by social workers) or two professions (for example health authorities are dominated by both doctors and nurses). Moreover it is an organisation which brings together not only representatives of, and 'secondees' from, a range of agencies (such as social services, education, police, probation and Connexions) but also YOT workers recruited through the usual recruitment channels from the outside labour market. This mix determines a merge into a 'cultural compound' that is likely to be compatible with others than might be the case with more rigid, longer developed professional cultures.

What these findings show is that, while some professions are antagonistic towards each other, others are more naturally inclined to work together. They also reveal that YOT workers are particularly well place to work with most other professionals in the LSCB due to their extended exposure to multi-disciplinarity before getting into the LSCB partnership.

5.2.3. Organisations

Since many of the LSCB partner organisations were formed around one or a couple of dominant, long-standing professions, it was not surprising to observe that the perceived 'misfit' between professions translated in some organisations being labelled as 'reluctant' partners. It was also not surprising to encounter newer agencies (most notably the YOTs) not part of

any account of difficult inter-organisational relationships. This subsection elaborates on these findings.

Although the questions about organisational culture were differentiated from those about professional ethos, respondents often did not see any difference between the two, which is an indication that they are significantly intertwined. In human services organisations, which tend to be dominated and defined by one professional group or a couple of them, and which, in the LSCB, are represented by professionals belonging to precisely these professions, this is very natural. One consequence of it is that it makes it rather difficult to illustrate some of the findings of this study in two clear cut sections –or organisations and professions, respectively. Hence, the compatibility or incompatibility between professions, as illustrated under the previous sub-section, is valid for the organisations in which the professions in question are concentrated. For example, if there is an affinity between police and probation officers, it is also the case that there is institutional affinity between the police and the probation services.

Based on grounds for compatibility and incompatibility described under the previous sub-section, the partners that have been most referred to as 'reluctant' (and confirmed to be so by the researcher in the non-participant observation component of this research) are: health agencies, police, social care and education. Conversely, the agencies that are easiest to interact with have been found to be the YOTs.

Incidentally, the 'reluctant' partners are organisations with the most professionalised groups and also those in which these professions are essential to the functioning of the organisation. For example, the doctor is essential to a GP practice, for if the latter can scarcely survive without its administrative staff, it would certainly lose meaning without its general practitioner. Similarly, schools could not operate without teachers, police stations without police officers, hospitals and PCTs without doctors and nurses, education departments without educationalists and social services without social workers.

The reasons for 'reluctance' were said by interviewees to be related to inherent values in the organisational culture or professional ethos of these more 'difficult' partners. In describing the cultural features of organisations (found to coincide, to a large degree, with the 'ethos' of the dominant professions), perceptions of these by the partnership members themselves (as arisen from questionnaires and interviews) were extremely revealing. Using people's perceptions as indicators of organisational culture is in line with Menzies Lyth's (1989) and Hofstede's (2001) views according to which individuals are bearers of their contexts. Respondents used up to five attributes to describe both to their organisations and others which they considered they had problematic work relations with. Their views are illustrated here.

Social services are said by respondents to be 'rigid', 'closed as a profession', promoting 'recruitment from within', 'communicative', 'non-hierarchical', 'gendered', 'hard working', and 'frustrated' with all other professions and agencies on suspicions that they do not work as hard and are not as committed. The more notable barriers to cooperation are with health authorities (due to difference of standards around children's welfare, same resource pressures –both agencies are over-spent- and internal divisions between health professionals), with education (due to the latter's moralistic attitudes and territoriality around children and families), with the police (due to the macho-ness of their organisation and training and to their inclination towards punishment) and with the voluntary sector (due to suspicions of amateurism and of tendency to overestimate their costs when they are commissioned work by social services).

Education as both an organisation and profession is said by respondents to be 'elitist', 'territorial', 'moralistic', 'arrogant', 'good at organising', 'childish' and 'culturally old-fashioned'. The more notable barriers to cooperation are with social services that can ruin long and trustworthy relationships with children and families when taking management of a 'case'. Here, educationalists can be quite similar with health professionals such as the GPs who also feel they have a privileged, long relationship with

children and their families and feel that they can ruin it by getting the social services involved.

Health agencies and professionals are said to be 'under-funded', 'caring', putting 'the patient first', 'secretive', and 'gender segregated'. They can communicate best with teachers and educationalists, and worse, with social workers and police officers. These negative relations can be explained in terms of territoriality, but also in terms of differences of thresholds in diagnosing various conditions (for example) in children.

Police are said to be 'rigid' in defending the 'letter' of the law, 'patriarchal', 'regimented', 'hierarchical', 'opaque', 'mistrusted' (by the public), nurturing a 'fear culture' and a 'blame culture' within the profession, as well as a majority culture in the organisation (favouring the recruitment of male, white, British police officers and also some departments over others). They have antagonistic relations with most of the other key organisations and professions in the policy area that interests this research, on the basis of the attributes outlined here, complemented by high loyalty to their profession, which makes them display territorial behaviour. At its turn, this affects their communication with other professions. A particular problem is that the Family Crime Investigation Unit that delegates representatives in local LSCB boards is an overlooked department in the organisation, hence often a stepping stone for many new police officers that then move to more 'high profile' units (such as Crime Investigation, for example).

Going beyond culture to more structural aspects of organisational life, barriers to effective cooperation have been described by questionnaires' respondents and confirmed by some of the interviewees to be: conflicting key performance indicators (KPIs); defensiveness; lack of a shared database in place; high volume of work corroborated with limited available resources; fear of commitment and of taking responsibility.

The conflicting KPIs are a result of the traditional 'silo' working within the services for children and can be corrected by means of a more effective cooperation of central and local government agencies. More imaginative

solutions to these can originate from the representatives themselves who can juggle with these incompatibilities until they reach solutions. Yet for this to happen, familiarity with each other's cultural baggage is necessary, and this was said by respondents to be potentially acquired through away days, common training and shadowing initiatives. The latter suggestion is also said to help with the organisational defensiveness that sometimes occurs in multi-agency work. This familiarity with other people's work, together with a between coordination of legislation acts, come to complement the imminent set up of a shared database where various organisations get to add an input in various cases, for a holistic evaluation of multi-faceted interventions. This is also expected to contribute to reducing the volume of work needed to ensure effective cooperation and information sharing.

Findings from the multi-agency away days and development days revealed many of these issues to be true. Indeed, close proximity with LSCB members, outside strict, formal meetings, revealed that they are averse to committing organisational resources to collective work -this point was raised explicitly as a problem both by those in this position and by those who cannot work comfortably without their colleagues being able to commit as much as they can. It was also shown during these events that hierarchy still matters (arguably inevitably so) -some representatives were silent or hesitant in front of their hierarchical superiors, as well as in front of people in positions of higher responsibility than them, though in other agencies. Then, it was fairly obvious that the highest representation was of social services (Children's Services, Youth Services, Housing) and also, that most people that were in position of hierarchical superiority were from social services. Finally, it was also revealing that police officers and doctors are somehow isolated in multi-agency workshops during these events —with only a couple of exceptions, they displayed general distant attitudes towards the rest of the group, often answered their mobile phones and left the room in a few occasions. Nonetheless, and beyond these shortcomings, the events revealed a kin interest of professionals in the LSCB to understand and define together the' mission' of the partnership and the structure that the latter should take to best serve its goals.

5.2.4. 'Complex wholes'

The three levels of analysis –individual, professional and organisational levels- have been presented separately in order to help the clarity of analysis. In reality, these levels interact continuously, forming what Kauffman coined to be *'complex wholes'*. This *compound* of different levels of a phenomenon is *complex* due to the fact that, while there are clear lines of behaviour within each of these dimensions, the collective acquires emergent properties that make the outcomes of joint work largely unpredictable (Kauffman 1996, Smith and Toft 1998, Rhodes and MacKechnie 2003). For example, there may be organisational rules and structures which govern work within and between organisations; similarly, there may be a clear professional ethos that professionals abide by; finally, there may be reasons for individuals' actions which come from psychological or upbringing circumstances. Yet the combination of all these three levels could give way to unexpected, 'emerged' paths of behaviour. Hence, commitment and actions in partnership work cannot be accounted for by representatives' loyalty to any of the three sets of values conceptualised here. Rather, it is likely to be the result of a combination of the three. This section elaborates on the theoretical concept of 'complex whole' as applied to this case study.

Some barriers to cooperation are not about organisational issues, nor about professionals or individuals. They are about the mission that the collective is set to fulfil and have implications for all the three levels of analysis addressed here. Some issues that are not mission-related, nor linked exclusively to any of the other three levels of analysis, are cross-level in the sense that they arise from the interaction between individual, professional and organisational features of the network members. These cross-level issues illustrate the interactions within the 'complex wholes', while those related to the mission of the partnership represent the 'target' around which these 'complex wholes' gravitate.

The mission-related barriers identified in both the questionnaires and interviews are: non-acceptance of safeguarding as a shared responsibility; different thresholds for defining one phenomenon or another (for example 'significant harm'); lack of role clarity in the shared area of responsibility. This type of barriers has been raised primarily due to the continuous struggle of culture alignment between the agencies and professions with a duty to cooperate in safeguarding children. The solution advanced in questionnaires is common training and exchange/shadowing activities, raising awareness as to the different interpretations of the collective goal, as well familiarity of professionals with each other, which would lead to higher trust relationships. These developments are partly underway by means of the away day events –good teambuilding exercises offering opportunities for familiarisation of partners with both each other and the assignments undertaken by their collective.

From a cultural standpoint, individual, professional and organisational levels interact simultaneously within each of the individual representatives to the partnership. These levels create *complex wholes* (diagram 1 in Figure 9 –see page 118) comprised of individual, professional and organisational features that overlap partially according to the alignment that exists between individual demographical and psychological characteristics of a representative and the profession in which they have been educated and trained, on the one hand, and the organisational structures within which their work is being carried out and evaluated, on the other hand. These 'complex wholes' gravitate towards the common goal of effective cooperation, while at the same time being affected by the context they find themselves in –the system (diagram 2 in Figure 9 –see page 118). The fact that elements within these *complex wholes* are strongly defined against each other can delay productive collaboration, whilst the system can impact on this by providing with a positive or a negative influence, i.e. helping or delaying cooperation.

The richest findings of this research are related to the individual level of interaction. At this level, some issues coincided with others at the other two levels (testimony o the partial overlap exemplified in diagram 1 –Figure 9,

page 118), but some were unique. Most importantly, while most issues identified in the other two levels were obstacles to collaboration (the catalysts being derived from these), at the individual level, most of the observed issues constitute 'incentives' to collaboration, or potential incentives, where some 'inhibitors' need to be removed to allow for activation of these 'motivators'.

Whilst individuals are important within partnerships, it is also true that they are effectively representatives of their organisations and the wider professions, following relatively long socialisation periods into both the professional bodies and the organisations where these are dominant. Consequently, individuals embed professional and organisational values and beliefs, which are added to their own personalities, personal views and judgments. Where the organisations that individuals represent are firmly structured around certain professions, the cultural heritage is usually strong, and this can impact on their openness and receptiveness to other, different cultures. Thus, the cultural heterogeneity of the organisations involved impacts on that of the multi-agency settings. It is not surprising that the organisations most referred to as 'reluctant partners' are precisely those that are the strongest defined: health, police, social services and education.

Some barriers to collaboration between these 'complex wholes' transcend all the three levels discussed earlier. The cultural compound formed in the interaction of these levels between each other (see diagram 1) and then between them and the other (see diagram 2) can itself become such a barrier. Given the complexity of the dynamics between the different levels of culture (individual, professional, organisational and of policy area), the resultant compound culture is more than the sum of all. Taking into account issues of emergence, by which actions' outcomes in complex adaptive systems such as multi-agency settings of the kind that concerns this study cannot be quantified and foreseen (Smith and Toft 1998), it is hard to engineer the overall culture of a group. Beyond engineering, the research findings indicate that the LSCB culture has borrowed substantially from one

of its partners' cultural profile, as well as from the ethos and the spirit behind the policy area itself.

Our interviewees revealed that the culture in LSCB is welfare-oriented (see for example Parton 2003). This outcome can be explained in terms of the fact that the policy area is so, and also of the fact that social services' representation and financial contribution goes well beyond those of any other agency in LSCBs. Furthermore, given the fact that safeguarding children is a paramount organisational priority in social services and that it also fits well with the professional ethos of social workers, as well as with the personal drives of people who chose this career path (as revealed by both questionnaires and interviews), it is rather natural for the welfare philosophy to be dominating in LSCBs. This cultural compound is likely to be at odds with discrete professional or organisational cultures which are different, such as that of the police, which explains their perceived 'reluctance' in partnership and also their apparent misalignment with the LSCB 'mission' compared to their counterparts.

Having identified the factors which explain the welfare bias in LSCBs, the next section will unravel some of the consequences in terms of other potential barriers that result from this cultural compound. One is represented by the fact that, due to the fact hat welfare-oriented cultural features are indicative of gender-biased policy goals, and given the fact that many of the professions and organisations involved are themselves gender-segregated, interactions between them are also likely be 'gendered'.

Gendered interactions in a gendered policy area

Policy issues and policy problems that involve nurturing and care (such as welfare problems) are sometimes labelled as 'women's issues' (Bochel and Briggs 2000, Chaney et al, 2007). In such environments, it is intuitive that gender can constitute a barrier to communication between male-dominated and female-dominated agencies and professions in a welfare-dominated

inter-organisational culture tackling a welfare policy problem: safeguarding children and well being. This was first signalled explicitly by a couple of interviewees (independent of each other). Desk research (focused at both secondary research and primary data about workforce composition of those professions and organisations identified by the research respondents as being 'reluctant') confirmed the link between the two variables and this informed the remaining of the fieldwork in which the researcher was alert to manifestations of this link at all three levels of analysis.

This subsection will illustrate first, how gender might shape each of the three dimensions of the 'complex wholes' (individual, professional and organisational) and secondly, how significant gender is in incubating service delivery failure by prohibiting smooth communication. It is worth mentioning that the complex system model is not to deny a causal relation between gender and partnership effectiveness. Instead it conceptualises gender as a barrier to communication on different levels that are not independent from each other, but in continuous interaction. This may conceal the adverse effects of this variable that can keep incubating until it meets a context in which it might reveal itself with potentially dramatic effect. The crisis literature illustrates disasters produced by seemingly minor issues that are incubated in the system prior to the incident. Regrettably, many of these case studies actually involve children such as Victora Climbié (Laming 2003) which makes a study of incubators in this context especially relevant and timely.

Clearly, at an individual level, gender is only one personal trait, alongside race, religion, age, ethnicity and sexuality. Whilst one might expect individual traits to have little impact at an inter-organisational level, they can, however, make a significant difference if individuals are closely aligned to organisations that are, in turn, at odds with other organisational identities. By way of illustration, a male police officer and a female social worker can have a history of disagreements about whether to imprison an abusive parent or to keep the family united (a case illustrated by one of the interviewees, a social worker). Such tensions might originate from the

different environments and distinctive performance measures that their organisations impose. However, such disagreements might become personal if individuals in this case are presented as loyal representatives of 'masculine-type' organisational ethos around punishment (the police officer) versus 'feminine-type' nurturing of children's welfare within families (the female social worker). The solution to the communication tensions between individuals in child focused networks thus relies on other remedies taken on different levels other than the organisational level- that will then impact on inter-personal interactions.

At the occupational level, there are two aspects that interest us: the dominance of one profession in organisations, and that of one sex in the respective central profession. The principal professionals involved in safeguarding children partnerships all sit at the core of their wider organisations, both numerically and substantively (for example, without teachers there cannot be an education sector, and without nurses, hospitals lose operational purpose). The numerical gender imbalance is more distinct in the case of social workers, police officers and nurses, but still apparent amongst doctors and schoolteachers (especially in the nursery and primary school component of education). The gender bias in each of the five professions will be explored in detail later in this section.

At the organisational level, gender clearly shapes norms and organisational culture (Martin 1999). This is due to both cultural and structural determinants (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Quadagno and Fobes 1995).The choice of the analysis layers came from the fact that the policy arena is the scene of complex interactions amongst organisations that are highly characteristic of the professionals that represent their core employees. Culture influences individual career choices by framing the sort of jobs deemed 'appropriate' for boys and girls at a relatively early age. For example, social services professions are dominated by female workers because their cultural and structural character corresponds to the 'desired' personal attributes of care associated with females. Structural determinants manipulate the organisational structures and mechanisms already in place to

ensure benefits for one gender. Thus, organisational priorities can be gender-induced. To illustrate, child protection sits rather low in the police priorities' hierarchy (Martin 1999).

Workforce data in Children Services Authorities (DoH 2006a) compares male and female staff numbers. Data from 2005 shows an overwhelming dominance of women (81 per cent), both amongst practitioners and amongst managers. The gender gap is obvious here and may come from the welfare culture in the profession. The same explanation can be applied in education too, where there are 88 per cent female teachers in nursery and primary school, with the gap narrowing for secondary school and upwards (DfES 2002). However, over the last nine years, the gap is narrowing for head teachers and deputy head teachers by 10 per cent and 5 per cent respectively, confirming nevertheless the 'glass escalator' phenomenon advanced by established literature on gender (Williams 1992).

The nursing profession also reflects a strong gender bias, similar to that of nursery and primary school teachers: 89 per cent of the qualified nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff are women and only 11 per cent men (DoH 2005). From these, registered nurses working with children are predominantly female (96 per cent), whilst amongst the nursing consultants in paediatric nursing, 81 per cent are women (DoH 2005). Although female GPs represent 40 per cent of the totality of GPs in Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), nearly half of them work part-time in comparison with only 12 per cent of the men (DoH, 2006b). In the case of organisational culture, the professions and their associated cultures and norms cease to be gender-biased and become almost gender-neutral. The optimum critical mass of women in general practice might be interpreted as higher than four out of ten GPs, since the existing figure of 40 per cent has not yet produced substantial equalities as suggested by the high number of part-timers among women in this profession.

With the caveat of limited available statistics[i], the police service is male dominated overall (Metropolitan Police, 2005). The figures for London show a percentage of 81 per cent men officers. Over the past five years, this

number has only decreased by 4 per cent as a result of attempts to encourage a higher representation of women in the service.

Clearly, the key professions that interact in safeguarding children matters seem to be gender imbalanced. Next, research suggests that the organisations which, under the Children's Act 2004, have a duty to cooperate in this policy area, might also be gender segregated due to the fact that they function around these core traditional professions that are conventionally gender biased. Not only are professions and organisations gendered, so too are policy issues and policy problems (Brückner 2002). On a policy realm such as safeguarding children, organisations with a welfare oriented culture have better odds to 'fit in' than those that are dominated by different cultures, such as the punishment culture nurtured by the police. In this organisation, safeguarding children work might be overlooked by some officers as it does not fit well with the more 'masculine' tasks of dealing with offenders, for example (as indicated by two of the police representatives).

That the practice of collaboration and co-operation amongst professionals in child-care became statutory in 2006 is a strong indication that organisations engaged in child-care activities have experienced major difficulties in working collaboratively. This research suggests that gender is an important dimension of this collaboration deficit, largely due to the fact that the organisations in question are in part gender-segregated. Hence, this thesis argues that there is a clear link to be drawn between, on the one hand, occupational segregation in welfare domains and, on the other hand, the need for improving inter-professional and inter-organisational collaboration to ensure effective service delivery for this vulnerable group. Maintaining occupational segregation can potentially add another level of risk to an already vulnerable system of child-care provision in England and elsewhere. A firm correlation between the two is, of course, yet to be proven by subsequent research, but for the present purposes in this thesis, it is an evidence-led hypothesis that is worth considering.

Another issue that transcends all three levels of analysis is that regarding leadership manifestations in partnership. The issue of leadership was raised rather late in this research, during an away day in which concerns were raised about the lack of leadership manifested by the LSCB members and about how this is affecting the dynamics of collective work. This relation was then followed up in interviews as well as in the questionnaires and also triangulated with relevant findings in leadership studies. It has become apparent that, indeed, leadership is an important variable to consider in partnership working, one that can constitute a catalyst by encouraging flexibility in a system that is inflexible by nature. This section elaborates more along these lines in the light of the case study findings.

It could be inferred, from documentary research, that, according to how LSCBs were envisaged at their outset (HM Government 2006), leadership should be able to manifest itself in three principal aspects. First, the local authority is the statutory designated leader of such partnership in the local community (HM Government 2006). Its role and duty are to make arrangements for local cooperation in pursuit of children's well being. These arrangements are in tune with holistic theories that see local authorities not only as service providers, but also as leaders in governing local communities (Elcock 2002, Hartley and Allison 2000): they facilitate and mediate in network partnerships of various agencies and across public, private and voluntary sectors in order to boost prosperity in the region. Secondly, the representatives of agencies with a duty to cooperate on children's issues are themselves leaders of their organisations' resources and commitment to the common goal of the partnership (Huxham and Vangen 2000). Thirdly, in the light of unprecedented complexity in policy making, getting things done often depends on the leadership capabilities of people and of organisations to work with the tension between multiple sets of professional, organisational and sectoral values and priorities. Here, the leadership model advanced is similar to Heifetz's adaptive leadership (1996): 'mobilising people to tackle tough problems'. Indeed, in the

complex cobweb of organisational structures (created by the recent public sector reforms), intricate societal problems set the context for new direction in leadership studies, one that enables the achievement of policy goals by creating collaborative capabilities (Huxham 1993). Field research, however, unravelled a number of gaps in applying these principles into practice, certain issues blocking leadership manifestations in LSCBs.

First, although the Children's Services Authorities are the designated coordinators of the collaborative efforts in LSCBs, they cannot 'get' the partners to do something, but can merely encourage a certain course of action by using for example reminders of the vision, or just political bargaining. What often happens in practice, however, especially in the subgroups, is that the meetings get to look like excuses for the local authority to sort out some of their own organisational priorities. This is made possible primarily by the fact that present at the meetings are various departments of the Children's Services (such as: safeguarding children, child protection, youth services, adult services, housing, education) as separate agencies, with equal bargaining power with other 'external' agencies in LCBS.

Secondly, where committing organisational resources to collaborative work is concerned, this research has revealed the fact that, in reality, people are reluctant to commit resources and cannot even predict whether their agencies would be able to commit any resources at all. The survey confirmed this result, for only eight percent of the respondents said that they were able to count on their organisations getting involved financially for one collective goal or another. Most respondents said that they could not decide and could not even guess what their organisations' decision would be in regards to any commitment, especially of a financial nature, to collective goals. This is because the representatives in the LSCB on which this research is centred are not middle managers by in large, but often front-line practitioners. Some of the representatives in the LSCB in this study are top managers (tier 1-2), typically in organisations such as the Social Care, but also in the newer Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Connexions. The

fact that a few agencies are represented by their top managers can skew the discussions in board meetings, these representatives often ending up dominating the discussion. The author has observed this happening very often in the LSCB meetings. This can prove to be problematic, for the type of leadership displayed by these organisations helps to promote their organisations and professions (especially in the case of social care managers) rather than helping create collective capabilities.

Thirdly, in creating collective capabilities, there are still gaps between organisational cultures and between and professional cultures in LSCBs. Although the cooperation between these agencies is not new, its becoming statutory in 2004 signals a need for the creation of a common culture that is consistent with the goals of the partnership: children and young people's safeguard and promotion of welfare, which is still far from happening. Partners are constantly aware of insurmountable differences between them and the others and of the difficulties to work together. Some agencies work considerably better with some rather than with others: for example, schools feel closer to the educationalists in the Children Services Authority than to social carers; similarly, social carers have a better understanding of health authorities than they have of schools or of the police. Nevertheless, more 'modern' organisations, such as the YOT and the Connexions work best with each other.

These gaps in organisational and professional cultures can obstruct positive manifestations of leadership. Yet leadership can well be the energy that can link all agencies and all their efforts together despite gaps in legislation and despite divergent interests at the negotiation table. If leadership is about making things happen, than it fits well with the Third Way of delivering public services and it is important to take measures to encourage leadership behaviour in partnerships by covering these gaps in the implementation of the 'spirit' of the need for LSCBs.

After considering barriers and incentives to collaborative work as arising from the three levels of analysis, the next subsection will examine the context's influence (see Checkland 1983) on both these aspects.

5.3. Context influence on the 'complex wholes'

The context influence on the 'complex wholes' is made of the paradigms of service delivery and specific public sector operations (notably via legislation).

There are three successive paradigms of public service delivery that have changed over the past thirty years in Britain: the welfare state (until the early 1980s), the New Public Management (NPM) (until the second half of the 1990s) and the New Labour's 'Third Way' (until present). As detailed in Chapter one, each of these left some legacy to the next ones; some features of these legacies were rather enduring, making it impossible to eradicate completely if at all to make room for new principles. Hence, old and new went hand in hand until these days when some of these traits really contradict each other, in a sense neutralising some of the new initiatives' desired outcomes. This subsection will illustrate this point further.

The New Public Management paradigm left a rather unfortunate heritage to the public services, exemplified by a great number of fragmented services (e.g. Lawton and Rose 1994, Sanders 1999, Klijn 2005) such as the complicated framework of the social services at the local level or the distinction between health authorities (PCTs, NHS Trusts, GP surgeries), as well as between health professions (for examples GPs and doctors in hospitals). Another issue that the NPM has brought about is diffuse accountability (e.g. Elcock 1998), compensated more recently under the New Labour by ever tougher audit and inspection procedures (e.g. Power 1994) that centre agencies' efforts on 'ticking boxes' rather than on delivering services effectively (e.g.: Cooper 2005). Nevertheless, it has impacted on the public sector culture, making a subtle shift from 'trust culture' to 'contract culture' (Hudson 2004). Under the Third Way paradigm, trust has become a valuable asset again, that is essential to effective multi-agency communication and, hence, cooperation (ibid.). Equally, the new paradigm asks for a re-definition or at least a

reconsideration of the accountability debate (Klijn 2008) as it presently obstructs partnership members taking responsibility and acting as boundary spanners in partnerships. In the light of these arguments, the heritage of both the NPM and the bureaucracy paradigms on the public service ethos are obstacles to fully implementing the new paradigm, one which is likely remain so for a long time, until a full adjustment of the new elements with the old system.

The second difficulty identified in having integrated children's services in practice as well as in theory is the confusion caused by the ever changing legislation. This creates a delay in internalising the ever-new rules of the game and in aligning their spirit to the organisation's pre-existing internal procedures, but also to other rules of different games that these organisation play. For example, the police authorities are involved in a number of policy areas, including more recently, safeguarding children. Since, traditionally, they have not had this explicit responsibility, it takes some time for it to list among the organisation's performance indicators. However, not being able to tick boxes in the event of an inspection can be a serious reason why some attributions can be disregarded by professionals in organisations in favour of others that are more 'high profile'.

The responses to questionnaires' questions revealed system barriers to their working together more collaboratively. Moreover, the solutions envisaged by respondents for many of the other type of barriers to come from the government, too. Below are described the problems (either system-based or otherwise) and the solutions that are expected to come from government intervention:

- Excessive red tape which leads to a disproportionate balance between what is perceived to be mere 'talking' and action. Under this broad category, some respondents included the high volumes of work to be done (mainly of a bureaucratic nature) and identify the need for more targeted resources to

correct this problem, together with a reduction in bureaucratic procedures.

- Lack of detailed specifications. To the problem of lack of remit clarity and of role clarity for each of the members, the questionnaire's respondents recommend more guidance from government, for example for the exact formula to use when calculating the pooled budget of the partnership

- Conflicting legislation. The Children Act 2004 has some points of conflict with the legislation that prescribes the mainstream work of some organisations. The solution to this is a more effective coordination at the central government level, but also imaginative approaches, as identified previously.

- Repeated reorganisation of departments. This problem was especially raised by professionals in PCTs, for this organisation has suffered numerous waves of re-structuring. The solution to this problem is simply for the government to stop re-organising agencies and allow them the space and the time to reach some degree of stability.

- Diffuse accountability. To the issue of non-acceptance of safeguarding as a shared responsibility, the respondents thought of 'tighter controls to compel agencies to take responsibility'. By this, people referred to strengthening the direct accountability lines between government departments and local agencies, as well as developing tighter inspections frameworks.

From these problems and their solutions it comes apparent that professionals in local agencies still look up to the government to solve many of the local issues for them. In some cases, that may be justified -for example, in refraining to keep reorganising agencies, in cutting bureaucracy and in issuing conflicting legislation and procedures. However, at other times, the declared wish for government intervention can be justified simply by people's fear of taking personal responsibility in deciding where the law is

silent or vague. For example, one area of profound disagreement is the individual contribution of each of the partner agency to the pooled budget. There is not such stipulation in the law by which organisations can work out exactly how much to contribute with. The general level of funding that the main statutory organisations add to the mix is customary, rather than specifically required by law, hence, sometimes it takes as long as three LSCB meetings (half of the total amount of meetings) to decide on the budget. This is often perceived by the LSCB representatives to be a waste of time (since it delays the discussion of other issues perceived to be more central to the aims of the partnership); hence they would recommend government intervention in specifying clearly what the financial duties are for each partner. However, the fact that this financial aspect is not straight forward offers the LSCB opportunities for debate about the shared responsibilities that the partners have, and about the remit of the group. This can be considered to be extremely beneficial for multi-agency working, for it allows members to interpret legislation and policy guidance so that it suits their local needs. As it has been said in a number of times by one of the LSCB chairs, 'the LSCB is *to challenge*, not *to do*', hence dialogue and continuous effort to reach collective definitions and interpretations is a definite gain.

Chapter Six

Discussion: Wider lessons for 'safer' management approaches to human services

This section takes the analysis of the findings a step further, in a more thorough discussion around the ways in which the public sector deals with uncertainty in decision-making. Then, this discussion extends to consider ways to improve partnership working and ultimately promote 'safer' public services provision.

6.1. Public sector dealing with uncertainty

A fundamental part of this research endeavour was to explore the ways in which the public sector deals with uncertainty. This is an underlying issue of the research problem, since network configuration addressed in this thesis is itself the result of policy-makers' (arguably, 'experts') decision about optimal paths of action in conditions of uncertainty. Then, the issue occurs again in the ways in which practitioners implement these decisions within uncertain environments, while in this case by engaging in meaningful collaboration with other practitioners.

Hence, the findings of the case study around public sector approaches to dealing with uncertainty are explored at two fundamental points in the policy-making cycle: when the policy is formulated and when it is implemented. Applied to the case study, the focus was, first, on the ways in which policy makers advanced the 'Every Child Matters' policy and, secondly, on the way it has been implemented through LSCBs.

6.1.1. Policy formulation

In the formulation stage of the 'Every Child Matters' policy, the view taken on risk was one of 'risk to the child' (Johnson and Petrie 2004) and was seen in general terms, as risk to all children, not as specific risk to particular categories of children (Williams 2004). Moreover, the boundaries of risk objects were widened even further to the entire society, since children were conceptualised as 'future citizens', hence justifying early investment for the good of the society as a whole (HM Treasury 2002). The consequence of this was a shift of many targeted services towards a more universal approach to service provision (this was illustrated in more detail in Chapter One).

The application of the 'dignified' aspect of the 'precautionary principle' (Majone 2002) implies that no risk is acceptable where children are concerned, given their position as first, vulnerable clients, and second, future autonomous citizens with opportunities depending largely on their development years. Hence, all opportunities for early action must be utilised. However, the 'efficient' aspect of the principle (Majone 2002) indicates the danger that it expands the regulatory discretion of the government. In line with this argument, Parton (2006) raised the concern that the wide stake prompted by the shift of focus from child protection to safeguarding children signals an overstretching of the government's resources to the point in which the aims of the policy could not be matched by sufficient resources.

Another consequence of widening the remits of government action on grounds of need for early intervention is the over-bureaucratisation of the system. Indeed, the recommendations of the Laming Inquiry Report (Laming 2003) are considerable in number (108) -much higher number than in any of the previous inquiry reports into adverse events involving children- and they are addressed in the subsequent 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper (DfES 2003) in great detail. This was done in spite of some problems identified in the report as being precisely the over-focus on bureaucratic systems at the expense of the 'client'. This contradiction

between recommending something criticised to be a problem in the first place is also found in this research. Evidence from the interviews and in the questionnaires indicate that practitioners blame the high amount of ever-changing regulations and procedures for the much of the confusion experienced when dealing with complex cases involving information sharing with other professionals. However, when asked about solutions for neutralising the effects of obstacles to effective partnership working identified, many mentioned the need for newer procedures spelling out exactly what is expected of them to do. Further research into the issue revealed that practitioners (at both front-line and managerial levels) believe that detailed procedures would alleviate the need for subjective judgement calls, which would then reduce the instances of mistakes being done. This brings the discussion around uncertainty to expert decision-making about risks at the policy implementation level.

6.1.2. Policy implementation

The call for newer regulations to replace old ones, which are perceived to be a problem in the first place, is an indication of a number of issues experienced by the implementers of the 'Every Child Matters', notably by members of the LSCB. One is a problem of anxiety. It has been argued before that social workers go through a great deal of emotional labour in their daily work (Cooper 2005) due to the complex decision-making with regards to vulnerable clients who could potentially be let down by the slightest of oversight. Arguably, the argument holds for all professions involving direct work with, or whose activities can affect children, under the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. The constant measuring of risk when deciding on alternative courses of action contributes to the accumulation of a great deal of anxiety. This is likely to lead to hesitation in making decisions for fear of assuming responsibility for them.

The case study reveals a number of occasions where these issues are unravelled by professionals. Other than the contradiction between criticism

of over-bureaucratisation and the expectation of increasing it even further, these issues are either observed first-hand in meetings and events, or contained in stories told by practitioners in interviews. A Workforce Reform Group meeting at Brempton was very revealing in this sense. There, when the group was debating the aims and the remits of the board, the representative of the voluntary sector raised the point that the aims of the group should be to ensure that the core skills laid out in the relevant policy documents (DfES 2005), as desirable in all professionals working with children, are covered in the training considered by each of the 'named' agencies with duties around children. Whilst this assertion was perfectly in tune with the statutory requirements, human resource professionals of a couple of the health authorities represented at the meeting argued that health authorities did not prioritise these core skills and hence the remit of the group should be another, more representative to all partners. The CVS representative chose not to respond to this, and the discussions diverted towards various other directions, without a consent being reached on the main item of the meeting's agenda. When asked by the researcher why they did not engage into further discussions of the theme that formed the central aim of the meeting, the CVS representative said they assumed they were wrong, given the fact that the opponents of their ideas were 'specialists' in human resources and hence 'know what they are talking about'. This is a clear example of how decision-making was transferred to those perceived to be 'the experts'. Similarly, in LSCB meetings, more than fifty percent of the talk time is generally done by social work professionals representing the Children's Services. Although this is perceived by many as an annoyance at the lack of multi-disciplinary input, little is done to change this, the underlying assumption still being that social workers 'know best' about children, hence they should be allowed to dominate the discussions. This is something that all professionals in Brempton seemed to have agreed on, though some more explicitly than others.

More explicitly, when asked by the LSCB chair in an away day how many of them would commit resources before checking with their superiors, less than ten per cent answered yes. Some of them, however, admitted that the

circumstances of their commitment were important (for example the type of resources needed, the availability of resources). This points to a serious misbalance between LSCB members who are able to assume responsibility and speak with confidence on behalf of their organisations and those who do not. While it can be argued that traditional hierarchy boundaries could be the reason why not more LSCB members can display the same high degree of autonomy, this has been proven wrong in one instance in which subsequent representatives of the police (by far the most hierarchical of all LSCB partners) displayed different commitment to the LSCB group, with the more 'proactive' one being promoted rather than reprimanded for their 'boundary-spanning' actions.

The examples cited above suggest that, when faced with anxiety about the outcomes of their work decisions, professionals look for 'the ultimate experts' and, in general, do not tend to venture creative solutions where additional responsibility is necessary for these solutions to be carried out. If, in multi-disciplinary activities, meetings and events answers to complex problems are expected of other professionals, in the more day to day aspects of their work, practitioners look for solutions from their superiors and, ultimately, from the government. Carrying out job tasks according to the letter of formal procedures eliminates the potential for personal liability in case of negative outcomes from the work undertaken. This, however, limits the scope for taking initiative beyond what is legislated and formally prescribed. Indeed, professionals seemed to look to reduce uncertainty not by exercising professionally trained instinct or judgement calls, but by getting the direction from the people that are then to evaluate them. Since the government is regarded as the ultimate evaluator of public administrators' work, it is safe to assume and act as if it should be the government who should lay out explicit and detailed indications of how the work should be done.

The issue of practitioners playing it 'safe' is a delicate one, because it implies that safety is applied to work processes rather than to the clients to whom the service is delivered. As signalled in the more recent literature on

children's policies (e.g. Johnson and Petrie 2004), there is a need to step away from conceptualising 'risk' as an organisational problem and look at it from the viewpoint of the service users. This requires a departure from the predicative model of risk in child protection, which practitioners appear to prefer to a more subjective approach (Houston and Griffiths 2000).

According to the predicative model of risk in the context of the 'Every Child Matters' policy (DfES 2004), professionals are happier to demonstrate good work by 'ticking boxes' rather than using their judgement in deciding about, evaluating and reflecting on their work. Fulfilling organisational requirements appeared to give the respondents in this case study a sense of security that all that could be done was done. Indeed, interviews with the more 'cautious' of the LSCB members revealed that they conceptualise their position in terms of 'compliance' rather than 'caution'. This was explained in literature in terms of avoidance of emotional labour in decision-making (Cooper 2005), as well as in terms of psychological need to feel that risks have been avoided by compliance with the systems designed to avoid them (Johnson and Petrie 2004).

6.2. Wider lessons on overcoming barriers and enabling motivators to ensure that every child matters

The case studied in this thesis offered important insights into wider lessons of ensuring that, in tune with the policy promise, 'every child matters'. This can be achieved by influencing policy at two key points: that of formulation and that of implementation. If lessons on policy formulation were extrapolated mainly from documentary research of both policy documents and extant literature on policy and governance, more insightful conclusions could be derived from the case study on implementation networks. At this level, playing motivators against barriers to collaboration is the best way to ensure 'safe' service provision for children. By doing this, risk factors (seen as outcomes of the obstacles) can potentially be contained.

The analysis of the findings from the case study analysed here revealed the list of obstacles and their corresponding catalysts to collaborations in the table below. Next, these are analysed in the light of wider lessons for the public sector in general and the policy area of children and young people in particular. To help this analysis, Table 2 (page 200) has been drawn to synthesise the findings of inhibitors and motivators for collaborative work.

Some of the identified barriers to collaborations are easier to tackle than others. For some, the present state of affairs is likely to allow the management of these issues in time. For others, immediate action is enough to improve the balance between obstacles and catalysts. Yet in other cases, enduring features of old service provision paradigms are serious impediments to full utilisation of catalysts to neutralise the negative impact of the barriers to effective collaboration.

Debates on various topics in the LSCB are consistent with the role of the LSCB to monitor

> '... how the relevant organisations in each local area will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and (...) ensuring the effectiveness of what they do' (HM Government 2006, para 3.2).

Hence, free debates should be encouraged further in various ways, such as open discussion at regular LSCB meetings, but also away days, development days, and so on. Restricting the space and time for debates, by either strong local direction or government detailed procedures, do not serve the purpose of building intrinsic commitment to the cause of the partnership through the definition of work and participation remits by its own members.

Multi-agency events such as away days, but also seminars, workshops and operational teams are seen as opportunities for professionals to familiarise themselves with the work of others. It is a way to get them used to different 'frameworks of knowledge' (Herriott and Pemberton 1995) and, upon understanding of their divides, to take advantage of the creative opportunities that diversity offers.

Table 2: Obstacles and catalysts to collaboration as derived from the case study

No.	Level of analysis (where observed)	Obstacles to collaboration (corresponding to incentives)	Catalysts to collaboration (potential solutions identified to neutralise the obstacles)
1	Individual	Lack of personal involvement with the aims of the collaboration	Taking a personal stake in the partnership's mission
2	Individual	High adherence to strong professional ethos	Late training in specialised professions Training in generalist professions Lack of training
3	Individual	Discontinued membership to the partnership board	Continuing membership to the partnership board
4	Individual	Firm directions about the remits of the partnership's work	Encouragement of debates on various topics Multi-agency Away Days, Development Days, etc.
5	Profession	Professional silos	Multi-agency training Experience working closely with other professions

6	Profession	Rigid professional culture	Use of cross-cultural professions (such as YOT officers) as buffer between professions
7	Organisation	Rigid organisational culture, long developed around one or a couple strong professional groups	Use of newer, catalyst organisations (such as the YOTs) encompassing a representative professional mix as buffers
8	Organisation	Rigid structural features of human services organisations (e.g. KPIs, procedures)	Organisations' representatives' personal commitment to find creative solutions across organisational boundaries. This can be bolstered via familiarity with the partners, both the individuals and the organisations they represent (in away days, shadowing sessions, common training).
9	Organisation	Hierarchy (including its effect on mixed representation to LSCB, derived from different hierarchical levels of the 'parent' agencies)	Representation to the partnership board from middle management levels of organisations
10	Cross-level	Gender bias	Eradicating gender bias in human services professions and organisations
11	Cross-level	Leadership	Allowing leadership to manifest itself through the three channels available to the LSCBs

Source: Author's own

Fears of de-skilling (Pitts 2001) of professionals when interacting closely with others is unfounded, if it is accepted that there is one set of core skills necessary to enable professionals to work with children across the boundaries raised by educational and training backgrounds. Already new university degrees in areas such as medicine, nursing and social work include subjects that touch upon inter-professional work, and also incorporate joint courses where students of a number of specialisations enrol together. This is, naturally, at odds with more traditional professional paradigms by which professions protect their boundaries against others through highly specialised training, specific jargon and professional ethos that distinguishes one profession from another (subsection 2.3.2. contains more theoretical background for this point). Yet it is a way to train multi-disciplinarity which has evidently become, in the recent years, as much of essence to the job of human services professionals as are their specialised skills. Yet, as signalled by YOT workers in the case study, who are indeed more used to inter-disciplinarity than other human services workers, to maximise the use of skills diversity in the workplace it is important to strike a balance between 'fusion' and 'separation'. If all professionals work as one, it could be argued that the diversity advantage could be lost. Instead, a fine balance must be stricken between the two extreme positions. Having organisations, such as the YOT, formed around a professional mix rather than around one or two strong professions, work more centrally in partnerships such as the LSCB as catalysts for integrated work, could be one way to help strike such balance.

The practice of discontinuing membership to the partnership board has often been motivated by the professionals in this case study out of fear of de-skilling from over-exposure to other professions. This has also been raised in earlier literature on closer partnership structures such as the YOTs (Pitts 2001). In the LSCBs, however, given that they are more 'cooperations' than they are 'collaborations' (Keast et al. 2007), this risk is substantially reduced. Hence, membership continuity to the LSCB group is desirable and necessary in creating the trust bonds that are instrumental in developing effective collaborative networks (see for example Hudson 2004).

Instrumental to this goal is also allowing leadership to be manifested through the three channels available: through individuals, through the 'lead' organisation and through interactive processes. Hence, the Children's Services department of the local authority should be able to obtain commitment from the partners that their organisations, too, are anchored to such collective values. Secondly, the individual partners should themselves be personally committed to the joint aims and be able to act as channels of commitment from and to their parent organisations. Representation from middle management level of each agency can be extremely useful in ensuring that representatives are effectively 'managers of meaning' (Bryman 1996, pp.280). This will constitute a catalyst for the third type of leadership manifestation in partnerships such as the LSCB, which is the effective mobilisation of diverse resources 'to tackle tough problems' (Heifetz 1996) via creation of integrated inter-professional, inter-organisational structures able to deliver coherent policies for children's safety and wellbeing.

It is at the levels of interpersonal interactions in partnerships where the flexibility needed to establish trust, boost creativity in working across boundaries and root commitment, are to be yielded. Lessons can be inferred from new institutionalism theories around the difficulty of changing institutions (in this case, either professions or organisations) to reach innovative solutions to complex problems. It is therefore the individuals who retain some flexibility (from that side of them which was unaffected by either professional or organisational socialisation) to work across traditional boundaries in their work and, indeed, across paradigms.

Ultimately, the arguments put forward here amount to the incompatibility between past and present paradigms of public sector work. The trust relations between people have been severely affected by the NPM managerial reforms and indeed the 'contract culture' (Hudson 2004) following those. Now such bonding must be resurrected if public partnerships are to work, for although they often bring together agencies under statutory duties to work together, these are ultimately represented by

people who base their relations upon trust (Zaheer et al. 1998, Hudson 2004). They also bond around inspiration to work for a higher cause; hence their personal commitment to the 'metastrategy' of safeguarding children is something that must be sought in building an integrated system in which every child matters.

People have been traditionally left out of the practice (and even the study) of public administration and management. Striving to ensure the design of a fair system to all, the very entities that can ultimately make this system work have been overlooked. It is people who work inside the system and it is them who are at the receiving end of the service provision. The latest paradigm of public administration -the 'Third Way'- recognises that, but has had inherent difficulties in translating it into practice, not only due to the legacy from previous 'legacies' such as bureaucracy and the NPM, but also due to more significant underpinnings of the decision-making around risk.

Indeed, 'every child matters' and not just the majority of children. The loss of a child due to institutional failure is in theory possible and, if addressed statistically, it is likely to happen, yet this risk is unacceptable in practice. Hence clients are to be put at the centre of the services provided for them, but how this can be accommodated within the limits of universal service provision under budgetary constraints is unclear. Moreover, how people involved in delivering the service can do so by taking personal responsibility for their clients without putting their lives and jobs on the line requires further attention. How can they tackle certainty and doubt without ultimately failing to perform the job to which key is the perpetual balancing of the two against each other? And finally, when such failure is imminent (evidence being the high number of vacancies for jobs in children's services), how can people be convinced to join and stay in the system while making a difference to the lives of their clients?

These questions are to some degree left unanswered in the present research. Indeed, this doctoral thesis set out to examine patterns of behaviour in partnerships around children. Yet these partnerships are themselves the solution found to tackle uncertainty around risk in a very complex policy

area. The thesis followed how the LSCB tackled risk in the policy implementation stage of the decision-making around children and young people in Britain, but it could only touch upon the decisions at the policy formulation stage, when this very solution to the issue was found and incorporated into the 'Every Child Matters' policy and the Children Act 2004.

Issues around incompatibility of old and new accountability debates, resurrecting individuals' enthusiasm for, and commitment to, a cause, rebuilding trust relations in the public sector and a workforce for children that has a common core skills set, but is also representative for the demographics it serves (for example by being gender balanced), are wider issues which each constitutes avenues for future research.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

The research problem of understanding how partnerships of children's workforce might be improved was tackled in this thesis from a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework. Chapter Two considered these fields of expertise and pinpointed where the present enquiry might be expected to contribute. Each of the four pillars of literature upon which this study is based concluded with a view of the research problem as conceptualised through each of these lenses, and with research questions for empirical research. A case study methodology was then employed to capture snapshots of agencies, professionals and the representative individuals working together in one LSCB in Brempton, North West England. This offered some insights utilised in answering the research questions while also unravelling some unexpected avenues largely uncovered by extant literature. The contribution to practice, theory and methodology, which this thesis has brought, as well as its limitations, are illustrated in this final section.

7.1. Contribution to practice, methodology and theory

The contribution that this thesis has made to knowledge is outlined under the following three categories: practice, methodology and theory.

7.1.1. Contribution to practice

The starting point of this research was a dual practical problem: first, the expert decision that failure of policies around children is due to failure in inter-agency communication in policy implementation; secondly, the need to improve effectiveness of the now statutory partnership working by

overcoming inherent difficulties that these agencies have been confronted with in the past.

This thesis tackled both facets of this problem. A distinction, however, exists in the ways in which this was achieved. Indeed, while the first of the two aspects of the problem was investigated using secondary data from policy documents, legislation and literature, the second aspect was also addressed via empirical research. In tackling the first facet of the problem, this doctoral research established both the factors that stayed at the basis of decision making around the shift in policy, from child protection to safeguarding children, and some unintended consequences of it. Then, it looked at ways to enhance the work effectiveness of implementation networks. To this end, it identified the levels at which evaluation should occur –individual, professional and organisational- and how these levels create a system which, at its turn, is influenced by the context in which it is embedded. In this system, barriers to collaboration were unravelled and, also, potential incentives for collaborative behaviour that could be played against the inherent difficulties. The table (Table 2) of obstacles and catalysts of collaborations as emerged from the case study could be developed into an instrument that policy makers could use to improve collaborative practices in LSCBs, but also in other partnerships centred on children throughout the country. It is, however, important to point out that the findings of this research are not necessarily generic ones that can be applied across case studies. Hence, an evaluation instrument should be tested before being used as such. It is, nevertheless, useful if regarded as highlighting issues which policy makers should be alert to in their practices.

7.1.2. Contribution to methodology

The research problem at the root of this doctoral thesis is a recurring one in practice, confirmed by the fact that government sought necessary to regulate through legislation something that, in most policy areas, is left unregulated. Because this is a persistent problem regardless of the fact that efforts have

been made by both scholars and practitioners to understand and solve it, it was timely to search novel ways to address it. This was accomplished through the use of Allison's lenses (Allison 1971), a strategy has been deemed especially appropriate for investigating complex problems (Checkland 1983).

Using a mix of theoretical lenses to conceptualise the problem in a number of ways was useful because it helped raising different questions about something that has been traditionally seen in limited theoretical contexts. Allison's lenses is an extremely useful research strategy in multidisciplinary research and, given the more recent profile given to multidisciplinarity in social sciences, the method –albeit so far used only to a limited degree- offers important avenues for future use. More generally, the scope for multi-disciplinary research is considerable, for most often research takes place from narrow, 'disciplined' perspectives (e.g. Geyer et al. 2005). This is largely due to academic departments being themselves separated and evaluated rather strictly under 'compartmentalised' criteria arising from their defined 'subject area' (for a more critical discussion of this point, see Delanty 1997, Delanty and Strydom 2003, Geyer et al. 2005). The ultimate effect of that is that researchers are formed in one academic tradition or another and find it practically difficult to acquire expertise across a range of realms. Here, the mixed cultural, educational and experience background of the researcher helped this investigation have a significant inter-disciplinary focus.

7.1.3. Contribution to theory

The contribution that this research made to theory is around all four pillars of literature discussed in Chapter Two. Apart from the expected contribution to a number of disciplines included in the literature review which stood at the basis of this study, the findings of this doctoral thesis also used the case study of multi-agency cooperation in LSCBs to shed light over issues that

are traditionally restricted to debates in fields of knowledge such as gender and leadership studies.

Contribution to the literature on risk and crisis management

First of all, this is a contribution to the narrow literature on policy change after crises, to add to that advanced by the American theorist Birkland (1992, 2006). Then, it is a 'live' critical description on how crises are incubated, as a response to an overwhelmingly disproportional number of retroactive accounts of it in literature (Birkland 1992, 2006, Smith 2005b). This is seen both in terms of policy formulation, in the ways in which experts define risk and the means to address it, and in policy implementation, in terms of how local agencies comply with national legislation placing on them a statutory duty to collaborate in delivering outcomes for children and young people in Britain.

Contribution to the networks literature

While there are important accounts of network management in the public sector (see Kickert et al. 1997 for one of the most comprehensive such accounts), they are by no means exhaustive. In fact, the application of the network theory to the public sector is rather limited, primarily due to the fact that the theory itself is still developing (e.g. Klijn 2005). It is also because interest in the public sector is rather insular, theorists focusing on particular aspects at the expense of others, for example, on policy networks rather than on provider networks (Hudson 2004) or on network ties rather than network members (Milward 1982, Provan and Milward 1995). This research has added to the existing studies of public sector partnerships, with a focus on provider networks in the safeguarding children policy area. In examining these 'mandated partnerships' (Hudson 2004), a keen interest was focused on the ways in which organisational, professional and personal

histories were carried out. Indeed, it was demonstrated that, in welfare partnerships, the 'baggage' of the partners outweighs the importance of the links between them, the former exercising considerable influence on the ways in which communication is channelled between these long-standing identities found to interact. In consequence, evaluation frameworks used to measure effectiveness of collaborations (e.g. Benson 1975, Provan and Milward 2001) cannot apply to partnerships in those considered in this thesis. An alternative, amended, framework was therefore put forward that might be more applicable. When applied to the case study, the framework revealed a number of obstacles and catalysts to the collaborations of individuals representing professions which are placed at the heart of human services organisations in this policy area. Comparing these results with others which have already been identified by literature, the truly novel findings of this investigation are those obstacles and their correlated catalysts which are related to the individuals in partnerships:

Table 3: Novel findings

No.	Obstacles to collaboration	Catalysts to collaboration
1	Lack of personal involvement with the aims of the collaboration	Taking a personal stake in the partnership's mission
2	High adherence to strong professional ethos	Late training in specialised professions Training in generalist professions Lack of training
3	Discontinued membership to the partnership board	Continued membership to the partnership board
4	Given direction about the remits of the partnership's work	Encouragement of debates on various topics Away Days, Development Days

Source: Author's own

Thirdly, there are only a couple of critical analyses of who it is that interacts in networks. It was said previously that the interest on network ties abounded in the extant literature, at the expense of that on network members. Now this argument will be taken one step forward in arguing that the interest on partnership members has also been myopic.

Contribution to the literature on individuals, professions, organisations in networks

Interest in inter-organisational (e.g. Provan and Milward 1995) and inter-professional (Leathard 1994) networks has flourished in literature at the expense of inter-personal links that develop in collaborative work (Schruijer 2008, Smith and Fischbacher forthcoming). In offering an amended evaluation framework for network effectiveness in the policy area of safeguarding children, the present doctoral thesis also enhanced the role of individuals in partnerships. Indeed, it was demonstrated how individuals embed both their professional ethos and organisational values alongside more characteristic features such as their own personality and personal beliefs, which all become apparent in the ways they relate with others. The distinctive contribution to the literature on individuals in networks has been made apparent in the novelty to the findings, as exemplified in Table 3. Hence, in partnership settings, collaboration must pursued through ways that would improve personal communication. This brings the discussion to the contribution to the literature on communication.

Contribution to the literature on communication within the wider system

In the field of communication, informal networks have traditionally been overlooked by theorists due to the difficulty to analyse them empirically. Here, given the centrality given to individuals in shaping dynamics in collaborations via interpersonal communication, informal networks were examined in their development. Furthermore, analysing the case study in context, according to Checkland's (1981) formal system model, contributes to applying complexity and systems theory to the public sector, which is under-researched and can enhance people's understanding of the ways in which knowledge is attained and employed in both policy formulation and

implementation as well as of the ways in which communication within and across the system's components develops on this basis.

Contributions to the gender literature

It has been shown that the agencies that interact in delivering policy outcomes for children and young people are gender biased, due normally to the fact that they have gender-bias professions at their core. From here, the findings revealed how gender-biased organisational cultures can be harder to interact with each other, more notably so male-dominated organisations and professions versus female-dominated ones. Existing literature on organisational culture has identified cultural differences as potentially having adverse effects on working together in some instances (for example, communication between nurses and doctors, or between police and social workers). Then, gender studies contain evidence of gender segregation in some organisations (e.g. Featherstone 2006), and of gender biased professions (e.g. Acker 1998, Martin 1999, Dombeck 2003, Harlow 2004). The findings of this research have unravelled the cultural discrepancies between the five main professions involved in the LSCBs. The emphasis lies in the difficulties of multi-agency working against prominent cultural dissonance yielded by gender bias. The principal addition to existing literature on gender is the assertion that gender is a factor that can prove decisive in the success or failure of the multi-organisational settings recently established to implement policies around safeguarding children at local level.

Contribution to the leadership literature

Then, it has been noted that under the 'networks' paradigm in public administration, there is more scope than ever for 'transformational leadership' in partnerships such as the policy delivery networks with a focus

on safeguarding children. This is in tune with earlier findings that connect leadership with the creation of collective capabilities (Huxham 1993) rather than with people alone. Hartley and Allison (2000) and Huxham and Vangen (2000) found that, in the context of partnerships, there are three ways of conceptualising leadership: as personal quality, as organisational quality and as a process. It was observed, in the research undertaken here, that LSCBs were envisaged with all these three 'channels' for leadership in mind (HM Government 2006). It was also found, however, that traditional administrative practices stand in the way of these channels being activated. The consequences of such 'blockage' are that some of the aims for which the LSCB were envisaged may get compromised in practice.

The findings of this research revealed how individuals are the key level of intervention that would improve integrated work in welfare partnerships. The corollary of that is that the overarching 'obstacle' to all leadership manifestations in LSCBs is the inherent inability of public sector professionals to 'surrender' to the cause and take personal responsibilities, largely caused by the rigidity of the public sector accountability system in which initiative is discouraged and control is tighter than ever before.

The administrative discretion debate (focused on how much discretion administrators do and should have) dominated much of the administrative leadership literature after 1992 (Van Wart 2003). This comes to prove the link between discretion and accountability, given that, due to the rise of the media and of the blame culture (Reason 1997) of the 1990s, public sector organisations and employees are susceptible to greater and more open accountability than ever before. Indeed, nowadays 'the manager in the public sector operates within the goldfish bowl of public scrutiny and accountability' (Lawton and Rose 1994, p.28). In the attempt to conform and not fall victim to the 'witch hunt' that follows virtually every crisis in the country, public servants may have just gone back to embracing the traditional discretion limits, as prescribed by Weber (Weber 1971). One of Weber's basic features of a bureaucratic system is the 'impersonality'. Lawton and Rose (1994) describe this as occurring when 'the work is

conducted according to prescribed rules, without arbitrariness or favouritism' (p.30). There is little to no personal interference and personal responsibility when the goal is 'no arbitrariness'. Creativity is lost and risk is minimised to a level to which there seem to be no point in making the effort to raise above the game for public managers. Indeed, as Newman (2005) observes,

> 'The bureaucratic principle of the separation of office from personal preference that underpinned the development of the public sector calls from an absence of personal enthusiasm. This is the antithesis of leadership discourse, a discourse that is predicated on the visibility of the leader's embodiment of characteristics such as integrity, vision and charisma.'
> (Newman 2005, p.720)

It is the transformational type of leadership that Newman advocates here. Elcock (2000), too, opts for transformational leaders in local government at the expense of transactional type, 'negotiating marginal changes in policy and resource allocation' (Elcock 2000, p.25). Rather, transformational leaders are needed 'to revitalise local democracy and inspire citizens, councillors and officers with new visions' (ibid.).

However, it is not an easy task for public agencies to allow leadership behaviour be demonstrated, nor is it for public servants to take any risks. Although the private sector's ethos has entered the public sector to some degree, there are still elements of the latter than have not been –and cannot be- challenged significantly. Thus, the sector is still legalistic, merely process led and heavily reliant on government regulations. Indeed, the research undertaken here revealed a 'need' of both practitioners and managers to receive detailed instructions -procedures- as to how to behave in certain complex circumstances arising from new legislation. Hence, although law is being vague as to how to organise to achieve the prescribed policy outcomes precisely to offer local authorities the freedom to implement the law as they find fit, the professionals do not appear to welcome such initiatives. Instead, they enquire about procedures, best practices and, more generally, guidance. Instead, they generally enquire

about procedures, best practices and, more generally, guidance. This is not to say that they are not concerned with the increase in paper work and with the level of government control that these mechanisms entail. However, it would appear from this research that key actors would rather embrace the bureaucracy condemning personal initiatives in order to avoid personal liability that may arise in times of crises.

If public servants are reluctant to give personal resolutions to complex policy problems, for fear of the responsibility that would arise from such personal commitment, the scope for effective leadership activities remains rather limited. One can conclude therefore that leadership is especially hard to perform in the public sector, despite the fact that this is where it would perhaps make a most remarkable difference to people. Leadership can, nevertheless, be the secret ingredient that was until recently too unpopular to be used by policy makers, but that can make a major difference under the paradigm of joined-up service delivery.

Leadership can be integrated in the accountability debate, in the form of 'active accountability' as advanced by Bovens (1998) or in that of 'moral or ethical obligation' advanced by Newman (2004). Yet this type of accountability will always be at odds with the more traditional types: organisational, political, to stakeholders, to consumers, and so on. This incongruity between the various types of accountability to which public servants are subjected is what the author argues to be a threat to successful multi-agency working under the 'Every Child Matters' safeguarding agenda.

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The theoretical contributions of the thesis can therefore be grouped into two categories. One groups contributions to the four bodies of literature that were used as alternative theoretical lenses before tackling the research problem empirically. The other category is that of 'emerged' contributions – that is in literature areas that did not form the focus of any of the theoretical foundations for this research. The issues included under the latter category emerged naturally from the data collected at Brempton. Subsequent

explorations of literature around these research findings revealed important areas to which the present inquiry has made a novel contribution. Indeed, it pointed out that gender segregation in the professions and agencies involved in the policy are of children and young people can constitute a barrier to working together effectively. Conversely, leadership can be a catalyst for integrated work if allowed to manifests itself.

7.2. Limitations and future prospects

Although considerable contributions has been made to a number of areas (as illustrated under the previous sub-section), a number of issues stand as limitations which could be addressed in subsequent research into this specific area as well as into connected fields.

First of all, given the multi-disciplinarity of this study, the theoretical threads explored here could not be tackled comprehensively, and further research might develop the contribution to each of these disciplines. For example, an exploration of risk management in welfare partnerships, or one of psychological aspects of partnership working, may unravel deeper issues than the present research findings have produced.

Secondly, a methodological limitation could be considered to be the fact that most interviews in this research were not tape recorded. A number of interviewees specifically requested to not be taped. In other instances, to the extent to which data was collected in an ethnographic fashion, use of recording technology was seen by the researcher as being potentially distorting the kind of information that interviewees would volunteer to offer. This was particularly relevant in the case of a number of professionals who appeared to be extremely wary at the fact that the interviews could touch upon either confidential or politically sensitive issues. Taping interviews could have presented the researcher the advantage of analysing the data at different points in time. A cost-benefit analysis however determined the

decision to rely largely on notes that were then analysed as soon as possible after the interviews.

Finally, the framework connecting partnership members (individuals, their professions and their organisations) could serve as an evaluation framework that fits partnerships of organisations sharing the characteristics of the LSCBs –mandated partnerships in the policy area of safeguarding children in Britain. Previous evaluation models could not be used here due to the fact that not enough attention was paid to the long histories of development behind the network members, or to the role of the individuals and their backgrounds in network performance. Further research could test the framework across case studies in the same policy area, as well as across policy areas, to explore the validity of the model. Finally, testing the model through investigation of case studies across all UK nations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) may yield evidence of how devolved legislation or more widely, contexts of policy-making, may have influenced the effectiveness of public networks' integrated work.

7.3. Epilogue

This thesis took an interdisciplinary perspective to explore a real-life problem (the constant failure of key agencies to coordinate their efforts designed to protect children). It has sought to conceptualise this problem using an inter-play of academic disciplines. The overall aim was to utilise academic knowledge to tackle a context-based research problem. To this end, disciplinary and, most significantly, trans-disciplinary aspects were discussed, combined and challenged in a way in which true contribution was made to both academia and the work of policy makers.

Its most significant contribution has been unravelling the influence that individuals make to partnerships (see Table 3, page 209). This does not conflict with earlier findings, but complements studies that have looked at either organisations or professions as key levels of analysis within partnerships. Prerequisites for this original contribution are precisely some

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of the issues that may be perceived as limitations to this research - interdisciplinarity being a key one and the use of ethnographic research methods another (the two being very much connected). This research allowed the fieldwork to drive the use of academic theories and these were drawn from as many disciplines as the fieldwork observations deemed necessary. Thus, if initial observation pointed at a crisis management issue, direct observation of partnership work prompted an interest in the literature on networks. Then, the lack of conclusiveness as to network members in this body of literature drove an investigation into the levels of membership observed at Brempton: across organisations, profession and individuals. Finally, it was observed that there are many other factors which have impact on the work of the partnerships; some interior (such as cognitive aspects of basic inter-personal communication), and others exterior (such as government legislation or the work of other local partnerships) to the network itself, as well as the communication processes themselves. This observation gave way to the fourth pillar of literature upon which the study was conceptualised: a system view of communication within and beyond networks.

The theoretical framework emerged naturally from this context-inspired process. Risk was therefore conceptualised as arising from the interaction between partnership members as embedded structures of individual, professional and organisational characteristics, surrounded by a context largely influenced by national legislation. The findings were analysed against this framework and therefore retained a strong link with the real-life problem that inspired this interdisciplinary research journey.

Whilst this process uncovered certain gaps in knowledge in various disciplines, it also advanced ways to address the problem at the outset of the investigation. Thus, the list of catalysts and barriers to collaboration in partnerships (Table 2, page 199) might be developed into a tool of self-evaluation of partnerships' work dynamics, as a barometer of their working relations. Another key area for future research is applying the theoretical framework utilised in this research to the study of other types of

partnerships. A comparison between partnerships in various sectors and industries would provide invaluable insights into sector-specific strategies for strengthening collaborative practices.

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Appendix One: Children's Act 2004 -summary

(Source: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

The Children Act outlines the statutory and legislative requirements to promote change in the way children's services are addressed.

The act identifies 10 main points:

- children's commissioner
- duty to cooperate and make partnership arrangements
- safeguarding arrangements
- information databases
- director of children's services
- lead member for children's services
- integration of reviews and inspections
- intervention
- duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children
- private fostering

Children's Commissioner

The act will establish a Children's Commissioner for England, to promote awareness of the views and interests of children. The commissioner is required to report annually to Parliament through the Secretary of State. The act does not give the commissioner the power to investigate individual cases. The commissioner is required to take into account, the views of and any work begun by the commissioners for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Duty to cooperate and make partnership arrangements

The act seeks to place a new duty on top tier local authorities in England and Wales, to make partnership arrangements with key statutory agencies and other relevant agencies — including the voluntary and community sector — and to improve the well-being of children.

The act also places reciprocal duties on the Police, health bodies, probation service, Connexions partnerships, learning and skills council and, where relevant, district councils, to cooperate in these arrangements.

The act is not prescriptive about how these partnership arrangements should work – i.e. it does not specify a name or organisational title for these arrangements, and therefore allowing local authorities maximum flexibility. Where Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships already exist, many authorities will wish to build on those arrangements.

Safeguarding arrangements

The act seeks to place a new duty on local authorities and key statutory agencies in England and Wales, for the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. They must also ensure that the same approach is followed by any other body providing services on their behalf.

The act requires all local authorities in England and Wales to establish a statutory local safeguarding board, and to replace the non-statutory area child protection committees that currently exist. The purpose of the board is to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of local arrangements and services, to safeguard children.

The core board partners prescribed by the act are:

- local authorities
- NHS bodies
- the Police
- local probation boards

- the Connexions service
- local prisons
- young offender institutions
- the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- district councils

The board's work will be under-pinned by the requirements of individual agencies, in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The director of children's services will work closely with partners on the safeguarding board, to ensure all members are delivering their statutory duties.

Information databases

The act enables the Secretary of State to require — through secondary legislation — that local authorities in England and Wales establish databases containing basic information about all children. The secondary legislation would be explicitly agreed by Parliament, before it could take effect.

Databases might be set up at a local, regional or national level, to facilitate the sharing of information between providers of children's services about the children they are working with — and the safeguard of their welfare, and to promote well-being.

Director of children's services

The act places a requirement on every top tier local authority in England to appoint a director of children's services, to ensue clear accountability across the children's functions of the local authority and more robust integration of services. The director will have responsibility for the functions relating to

children and young people that are currently managed by the chief education officer and the director of social services.

The act amends the former legislation that required a director of social services in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. It also amends the legislation that required a chief education officer in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. It also makes provision for adult social services to continue to be led by a director, and amends the Local Authority Socal Services Act 1970 accordingly, but does not set a deadline for appointments.

The Next Steps document states that the director of children's services must be at chief officer or deputy chief executive level. Other than that, local authorities will have discretion to decide how this role should be constituted.

The legislation does not rule out the possibility of a chief executive discharging this role alongside his or her other duties It will also be for authorities to determine what organisational structures will be needed and how delegation and line management responsibilities should operate in support of the director.

The legislation does not say how the director's functions are to be discharged. A director at chief officer level could, for example, be supported by separate posts for school improvement and child safe-guarding. Statutory guidance will state that authorities will be free to decide whether to add adult education, adult social services, housing, leisure or other services to the director's brief.

The Next Steps document also says that there will be flexibility, to cater for local circumstances and enable a sensible transition time table for the new arrangements, to avoid organisational reforms. Ministers will be monitoring progress and will consider when the requirement should take legal effect. The expectation would be that most areas should have a director by 2006, and all by 2008.

Lead member for children's services

The act requires every top tier local authority in England to designate one of their members as the lead member for children's services, to cover the same span of children's services as the single director.

The Next Steps document states that, as with the director, it will be for authorities to determine the precise role of the lead member. It also sets out that guidance will provide examples of how the role might operate, and include an expectation that the lead member should have a particular focus on child protection.

Integration of reviews and inspections

The act sets out how the chief inspector of schools in England, will be expected to devise a 'common set of principles' which will be the framework for the inspection of children's services in England. There are key criteria, which are set out in the bill that will underpin the inspection of children's services. The act outlines the process that has to be undertaken, before the outcomes of the inspection can be published.

Intervention

The act creates new intervention powers in relation to children's social services, bringing them in-line with those relating to education services.

The Next Steps document states that, "the intervention process itself will build on the experience of the various inspectorates and government departments. The intention will be to suggest and, where possible, agree tailored solutions with authorities. Other departments and inspectorates will be involved as necessary, so as to ensure a proportionate and coordinated

approach, and that the new powers would be invoked only when absolutely necessary."

Duty to promote the educational achievement of looked after children

The act amends the Children's Act 1989, to extend the duties of local authorities in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of looked-after children, to include a duty to promote the child's educational achievement.

Private fostering

The act makes provision for new measures to strengthen the Children Act 1989's private fostering notification scheme. It also contains a 'sunset' provision, which gives the Government the power to enable a registration scheme for private foster carers to be established, if it is not satisfied that a strengthened notification scheme is not working.

The 'sunset' clause has to be enacted within four years from Royal Assent of the act, or it becomes null and void. Next Steps states that local authorities in England will be required to raise awareness in their communities, of the need to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements, and to check these arrangements before the child is placed. Local authorities are also required to appoint an officer for this purpose.

Appendix Two: Policy background: a timeline

Date	Event	Key points
1974	The Inquiry into the Death of Maria Colwell (DHSS 1974)	This is seen as marking the emergence of the modern era of working together in British child welfare.
1980s	Highly publicized tragedies including: -Lucy Gates (London Borough of Bexley, 1982), -Jasmine Beckford (London Borough of Brent, 1985), -Tyra Henry (London Borough of Lambeth, 1987)	Recurrence of the problems identified by the DHSS (1974): -critical information is not recorded, files are unavailable or inaccessible, contact details are out of date and professionals fail to make links between incidents that should have warned them that something is not right in the child's life (Payne, 2004) These incidents shaped the Children Act 1989.
1989	Children's Act 1989 (1989)	The Act formed the basis of inter-agency child welfare practice It advanced a definition of 'children in need' (section 17(10)) whereby children at risk of abuse should be regarded as 'children in need' entitled to get help from the social services.
1999	Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 1999)	Working Together to Safeguard Children is a government issued guidance that sets out how individuals and organisations should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In particular, it spelled out the membership and role of the Area Child Protection Committees (the predecessors of the LSCBs).
2002	HM Treasury 2002: 2002 Spending review	Children were identified as the adults of the future, hence arguing for early investment into their needs, to save future costs.
2002	Department of Health's Safeguarding Children Strategy Document (DoH 2002)	The document introduced the term 'safeguarding children'.

2003	Inquiry report into the Death of Victoria Climbié (Laming 2003)
	The incident was 'entirely preventable': twelve 'missed opportunities', twelve key occasions were identified when the most basic intervention could have made a difference to the course of events in Victoria's short life.
	It revealed serious communication difficulties between agencies.
	It advanced 108 recommendations (short, medium and long term), amongst which the establishment of a national database of all children under 19 years of age where all professionals who have contact with the child would enter their conclusions, as objectively and 'label-free' as possible.
2003	Every Child Matters –Green Paper (DfES 2003)
	It introduced five outcomes that were found from consultations to matter most to children and young people: 'be healthy', 'stay safe', 'enjoy and achieve', 'make a positive contribution' and 'achieve economical wellbeing'.
	It was suggested that ach local authority should establish a local information hub –database– providing basic details on each child living in the area, and allowing any professional coming into contact with a child to "flag" a concern on that system that would be visible to the next agency or practitioner coming into contact with the child. All children up to 19 years of age living in the area would be in this local database.
	A 'lead professional' is introduced: gatekeeper for information sharing systems, to make judgements about whether early warnings merited intervention, and to coordinate service responses where warranted. The Children's Commissioner is also introduced, as a 'champion' and an 'advocate' for children in the UK. The creation of the Department for Children and Families is announced to signal the beginning of integration from the 'top'.
	There is reference to the need for an integrated children's workforce that possesses a core set of skills that are instrumental in safeguarding children and
2004	Every Child Matters: Next Steps –White Paper (DfES 2004)
	Confirmed most of the proposals of the Green Paper.

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2004	Children's Act (2004)	The Children Act 2004 (see Appendix One) provides the legal underpinning for the transformation of children's services as set out in the Every Child Matters: Next Steps
2006	Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2006)	This guidance was updated since the previous version which was published in 1999. The new version reflects developments in legislation, policy and practice.
2007	Local Safeguarding Children Boards: A Review of Progress (DfES 2007)	This document reviews the progress done in LSCBs across the county, in particular with regards with some controversial issues that the legislation did not specifically offer guidelines – for example the issue of the pooled budget and that of the LSCB chair. It also sets out the Government's forward work plan to support the further development and improvement of LSCBs.
2008	LSCBs Exemplars of Effective Practice (DCSF 2008)	This gathers and shares examples of LSCB practice in a way that is meant to help LSCBs grapple with common issues.
2009	Local Government Association Report (LGA 2009)	The report essentially identified and described in detail the crisis of recruitment and retention of children's social workers in the UK. The profession is compared both with other professions involved in children's matters and with other social workers (for example housing or adults' social workers).
2009	Lord Laming's Report Into the Progress of Child Protection Services in the UK (Laming 2009)	The report identifies the integration of the education and the social care departments of local authorities into Children's Services as having induced more vulnerability into the system of child protection in the UK. It also points out that children's social workers do not have the appropriate training and on-the-job support necessary in their work and that this is a problem which needs urgent attention by the government. Furthermore, it focuses on a number of recommendations given after the 'Victoria Climbié' crisis which were not addressed by the government.

Appendix Three: Every Child Matters - Common Core of Skills and Knowledge (Source: DfES 2005)

Area of expertise	Skills	Knowledge
Effective communication and engagement	• Listening and building empathy • Summarising and explaining • Consultation and negotiation	• How communication works • Confidentiality and ethics • Sources of support
Child and young person development	• Observation and judgement • Empathy and understanding	• Understand context • How babies and young people develop • Clarity of job role • How to reflect and improve
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child	• Relate, recognise and take considered action • Communication, recording and reporting • Personal skills	• Legal and procedural framework • Wider context of services • Self-knowledge
Supporting transitions	• Identify transitions • Provide support	• How children and young people respond to change • When and how to intervene
Multi-agency working	• Communication and team work • Assertiveness	• Your role and remit • Know how to make queries • Procedures and working methods • The law, policies and procedures.
Sharing information	• Information handling • Clear communication • Engagement	• Importance of information sharing • Role and responsibilities • Awareness of complexities

Appendix Four: Research protocol with Brempton Children's Services

Research protocol

The principal focus within my study is based upon the processes that underpin crisis incubation. The research seeks to examine the importance of these incubation processes within the context of multi-agency working within the public sector. Although the spectrum of my thesis will probably not limit itself to partnerships in place to safeguard the children, I will, for the purpose of this research brief, focus on this particular type of inter-agency networking.

The government's reaction in the aftermath of Victoria Climbié crisis must be analysed more thoroughly once there is enough evidence to support such a study (Dudau 2004), especially in the light of the recent failure in communications across multiple agencies in Sheffield. The current research programme seeks to examine the ways in which duty of care that exists under the statutory partnership that has been imposed upon local authorities (Children's Act 2004) can provide sustainable safety for children. The total length of this research programme is three years and will be carried out with Brempton Children Services Authority, although other agencies will also be involved. The methodology used within my study will combine informal interviews, direct observation, analysis of documentation, and direct participation in a number of activities. For our present purposes, these various techniques will be described under the broad heading of *participant observation / ethnographic research.*

A number of specific goals can be identified for this research. These can be summarised as follows:

1. To analyse the various changes that have been made in the wake of the Climbié Inquiry and to put these into a wider view perspective of public sector reform (how and why the system changed).

2. To critically analyse the nature of the system that has emerged under the auspices of the Children's Act (2004) that can allow

for similar conditions such as those present in the Climbié case happen again.

3. To identify examples where processes of change associated with the Children's Act have made a difference to the delivery of the service and the integration of the various agencies involved.

4. To identify issues around network communication among the partners involved in the Local Safeguarding Board.

My main points of contact in Brempton Children Services Authority are B.M., G.T., L.J. and D.C. The specific requirements of the research may vary in consultation with the public authority partners and the University's supervisory team (Prof. Denis Smith and Prof Laura McAllister).

Adina Dudau, PhD student, Management Studies

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Appendix Five: Interviews (guiding structure)

Research aims

This research aims to identify barriers and incentives to communication and collaboration across professions and organisations involved in local partnerships that are focused on safeguarding children and promotion of welfare.

Data confidentiality

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. However, your full and open participation would be appreciated.

Confidentiality and anonymity of this research data is important. The data gathered will be collated, analysed, and reported in such a way that individuals will not be identifiable in any way and the information will only be seen by the researcher gathering the data and will not be shared with any third party or be used for any other illegitimate purpose.

I.   *Personal information*

- Name, gender, age group
- Profession
- Personal commitment to profession/LSCB aims

II.   *Organisational information*

- Position in the organisation (function & hierarchy)
- Period spent in the respective position
- Performance measures around children's safety and well being
- Cultural features of own organisation/profession

III. *Network information*

- Time spent doing inter-agency, inter-professional work
- Compatibility/incompatibility with other agencies/professionals
- Cultural features of other professions the interviewee works with
- Barriers of collaboration
- Incentives of collaboration

Appendix Six: List of Interviewees

Nr	Occupation	Agency	Position in hierarchy	Interview date
1	Teacher	Brempton Children's Services	Policy	Oct 2005
2	Social worker	Brempton Children's Services	Policy	Nov 2005
3	Network broker	Brempton Children's Services Brempton PCT	Policy	Nov 2005
4	Social worker	Brempton Children's Services	Policy	April 2006
5	Youth Worker	Brempton Children's Services YOT	Policy	June 2006
6	Police officer	Merseyside Police	Management	June 2006
7	Nurse	Ormskirk Foundation Trust	Practitioner	July 2006
8	Police officer	Merseyside Police	Practitioner	July 2006
9	Social worker	Brempton Children's Services	Policy	October 2006
10	Network broker	Brempton Children's Services Brempton PCT	Policy	March 2007
11	Elected politician	Brempton MBC	Policy	March 2007
12	Teacher	Brempton Children's Services	Middle management	March 2007
13	Social worker	Independent LSCB Chair	Policy	May 2007
14	Educationalist	Brempton Children's Services	Practitioner	May 2007
15	Youth worker	Brempton Children's Services	Policy	June 2007
16	Social worker	Independent LSCB Chair	Policy	June 2007
17	Nurse	Brempton Children's Services Brempton PCT	Policy	June 2007
18	Teacher	Brempton Children's Services	Policy	June 2007
19	Voluntary sector worker	Brempton VCS	Middle management	June 2007

20	Teacher	Brempton Children's Services	Middle management	July 2007
21	Youth worker	Brempton YOT	Policy	February 2008
22	Probation worker	Brempton YOT	Middle management	February 2008
23	Youth worker	Brempton YOT	Middle management	February 2008
24	Social worker	Cardiff YOT	Policy	February 2008
25	Social worker	Independent LSCB Chair	Policy	February 2008
26	Probation worker	Bridgend Probation Board	Middle management	February 2008
27	Probation worker	Merseyside Probation Board	Policy	March 2008

Appendix Seven: Questionnaire

This questionnaire contributes to a doctoral research project that aims to identify barriers to communication and collaboration across professions and organisations involved in local partnerships that are focused on safeguarding children and promotion of welfare.

The questionnaire is arranged in three sections: (1) personal and personal network involvement information, (2) organisational and organisational network involvement information, and (3) network information.

The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may decline to complete the questionnaire altogether or you may decline to answer any question within the questionnaire. However, your full and open participation would be appreciated.

We consider confidentiality and anonymity of this research data to be of the utmost importance. The data gathered from the questionnaire will be collated, analysed, and reported in such a way that individuals will not be identifiable in any way and the information will only be seen by the researcher gathering the data. While we have asked for your name in the questionnaire it is for follow-up purposes only and will not be shared with any third party or be used in any other manner.

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, should you have any further queries.

Adina Dudau.
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Section I: Personal and personal network involvement information

This section asks for general information about you as a network member

1. Please state your name

2. Please indicate your gender by selecting ("x") the appropriate option:

Male ___ Female ___

3. Please indicate your age group by selecting the appropriate category:

20-30 ___   *31-40* ___   *41-50* ___   *51-60* ___   *61-70* ___   *71+* ___

4. Please specify your profession:

5. How long have you been in this profession?

6. Do you sit in the Local Safeguarding Children's Board now or ever in the past? Please indicate by selecting the appropriate option:

I sit in the LSCB now. _____

I used to represent my organisation in the LSCB. _____

I have never represented my organisation in the LSCB. _____

I would like to represent my organisation in the LSCB. _____

7. Which (other) established partnership(s) around issues of safeguarding children are you personally involved in?

8. How did you get to represent your organisation in this/these partnership body/bodies? Please indicate by selecting as appropriate:

You volunteered _____

You volunteered because you knew there was no alternative choice for a representative ____

You chose to represent the organisation because you felt only someone in your position would make a difference _____

Your organisation suggested _____

Your organisation asked you to _____

Other (please indicate)

9. What is your personal motivation in working to promote the welfare of children in your local authority area?

Section II: Organisational and organisational network involvement information

This section asks for information about your organisation as a represented network member.

10. Please name your organisation

11. Please indicate your position level in the organisation:

Practitioner (minimum 50%+ direct work in children's matters per week) _____

Middle management (tier 3+) _____

Top management (tier 1,2) _____

12. How long have you worked at this level?

13. Please indicate your current job title

14. How long have you been in this job?

15. What is your organisation's stake in safeguarding children and promotion of welfare? (for e.g.: 'attendance' for education).

16. What are the performance indicators specific to your organisation with regards to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare?

17. What are the responsibilities specific to your job title with regards to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare?

19. What would you say are the three attributes best describing the culture in your professional group (for e.g.: nurturing, pedantry, etc.)?

20. Please attribute adjectives to the following organisations, which would best describe their organisational cultures:

Social care	
Education	
Police	
PCTs	
NHS Trusts	
Probation and prison services	
YOT	
Connexions	
Fire Service	
CAFCASS	
Voluntary and Community Sector	

21. Please attribute three adjectives to the following professions, that would best describe their professional cultures:

Social workers	
Teachers	
Police officers	
Doctors	
Nurses	

Section III: Network related information

22. Following is a list of agencies that are key to safeguarding children and promotion of welfare policy area. Has your agency engaged in any of types of interaction listed below with these organisations? How would you rate the overall relation with each of the listed organisations, on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 standing for 'hardly any interaction' and 4, for 'excellent relationship'?

Agencies	Types of interactions in the past year Please mark the boxes as appropriate or leave blank if there was no such interaction with the respective organisations					Relationship quality
	Shared information	Joint funding	Joint programme planning	Contact referrals	Working groups	Please mark 1,2,3 or 4
Social care						
Education						
Police						
PCTs						
NHS Trusts						
Probation						
YOT						
Connexions						
Fire service						
CAFCASS						
Voluntary and Community Sector						

23. Could you provide the same information for the professions you find yourself in interaction in matters of safeguarding children and promotion of welfare?

Professions	Types of interactions in the past year Please mark the boxes as appropriate or leave blank if there was no such interaction with the respective organisations					Relationship quality
	Shared information	Joint funding	Joint programme planning	Contact referrals	Working groups	Please mark 1,2,3 or 4
Social workers						
Teachers						
Police officers						
Doctors						
Nurses						

24. In non-financial matters, can you commit organisational resources for a shared, multi-organisational goal, for example in partnership structures?

Yes ___

No, I will have to ask my manager, but I can anticipate with some degree of certainty what they would decide ___

Absolutely not ___

25. In your opinion, what are the most significant barriers to inter-professional and inter-organisational communication in safeguarding children matters?

26. In your opinion, what is needed to overcome these obstacles?