Collaborative Guidance

Following the publication of Collaborative Guidance, SSIA organised a series of seminars across Wales to discuss the report and its application. I presented the key learning points and received positive feedback from attendees. I also presented findings at two major conferences organised respectively by WIHSC and the trade union, UNISON to discuss the integration of health and social care. Over 150 people attended and were addressed by the Minister for Health and Social Services. My invitation to contribute confirmed the relevance of Collaborative Guidance to inter-sector collaboration as well as inter-agency collaboration.

This report was also distributed by the SSIA to over 160 people in local and central government at official and elected levels who, through normal organisational channels were asked to distribute it more widely. It was published on the SSIA website as a reference and learning resource and had been accessed 111 times to the 22nd January, 2016. Evidence is not available about how agencies subsequently used the report but it would be customary for it to be discussed and used via orthodox governance channels.

In summary, the three reports have a good standing within Welsh local government and beyond. Profession to Value attracted extensive publicity and became a source document in the years following for discussion and debate on the social care
workforce and the need to collaborate rather than compete for the acquisition of staff. *Achievements and Challenges* and *Collaborative Guidance* were aimed predominantly at Welsh local and central government audiences. Distribution of these reflected this and ensured they penetrated different tiers of management and governance. Website activity confirms they attracted interest potentially beyond those circulated.
CHAPTER 5

A REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

*Profession to Value*

The chosen methodology reflected inadequacies in data and presentation in respect of the social care workforce for long-term workforce planning at the time. Other official data about social workers and other social care staff were also of limited use resulting in important workforce information being based on perception rather than evidence and not allowing aggregation systematically to the all-Wales level.

The methodology I designed was a mixed methods approach involving a carefully chosen blend of whole and part population surveys and face to face discussion via focus groups. The quantitative methods centred on gathering data about staff numbers, turnover rates, pay rates and costs. The qualitative aspects sought to gain opinions from various sources on factors influencing recruitment and retention. By interlinking qualitative and quantitative elements, an integrated response to the research question was achieved that was deeper than would be possible by either method alone (Glogowska, 2011) enabling management issues to be understood through creativity and the use a range of methods and techniques to make sense of complexities (Gummeson, 2006).
I organised three surveys of employers, employees and staff leavers. Details on how these surveys were conducted, samples, results and analysis can be found in the report (pp 29-46). The choice of a survey method reflected its intermediate position on the methodological continuum "somewhere between ethnography and experimental research" (Gill and Johnson, 2002, p96). Whole population sampling frames were chosen for both surveys and the response size justified this decision in terms of avoiding bias and problems associated with sampling errors (Gill and Johnson, 2002). I ensured the questionnaire design considered numerous factors inherent in good practice use of questionnaires including advising respondents of the purpose of the research, providing clear instructions on use, avoiding ambiguous questions, and ensuring wording did not lead to bias (Gill and Johnson, 2002).

The third survey was described as the first all-Wales exit interview of social workers as I wanted to gather information from people leaving their social work posts. Kulik, Treuren and Bordia (2012) note that exit interviews are valuable means of understanding turnover but have been heavily criticised by management scholars. Much of this criticism, however, was founded upon research studies involving unstructured discussions and considerable impression management. Kulik, Treuren and Bordia (2012) promote the enlisting of experienced third-party interviewers who are able to encourage the leaver to comment on positive and aspects of the job.
and organisation which is the practice followed in the *Profession to Value* leavers’ survey interviews.

Other data gathering exercises included a consultation exercise on the roles and responsibilities of social workers and senior social work practitioners and 18 focus groups I conducted with staff, managers, users of services, voluntary sector representatives and elected councillors. The rationale for conducting focus groups was fourfold. First, to gain first hand knowledge that the other methods may have missed; second, to add additional perspectives to the information gained from the other methods; third, to provide a medium for collective engagement to those not being surveyed otherwise, e.g service users; and fourth, to demonstrate the comprehensiveness and seriousness of the study. The aim of the approach was consistent with Coule’s (2013) interpretative theory whereby the researcher (most often me) exercises “engaged control with participants”, achieving “medium discursive flexibility” through a “semi-structured topic guide with either pre-existing groups or strangers” (Coule, 2013, p157).

Documents, data and reports relating to the recruitment and retention of social workers were researched by me and colleagues on the working group in hard copy and online and where appropriate, reference made in the text to specific sources.
An open invitation to comment was made through two widely circulated newsletters I wrote and distributed widely, in July 2004 and December 2004, in which details of the project were provided and participation by readers encouraged.

Colleagues from King’s College, London played an important supporting role, particularly in respect of data analysis, providing technical expertise that I did not possess at the time. I converted their analysis into a narrative for the report and used it extensively to draw my conclusions. The analytical methods used can be found in the report (p34).

The research project involved oversight by a multi-agency group chaired by myself, comprising representatives of ADSS Cymru, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), the British Association of Social Workers, the Care Council for Wales and the Unison trade union. The Local Government Data Unit provided valuable comments on questionnaire design and additional data preparation support. An officer of the Care Council for Wales conducted the interviews of leavers.

My objective throughout the project was to achieve access to the best information available through a variety of methods, thereby obtaining what Gummeson (2000, p25) describes as “access to management reality” through adopting a combined “researcher/consultant” role (Gummeson, 2000, p36) where my expertise in the social care workforce could enable me to play multiple roles in the project, such as
analyst, participant, catalyst and change agent.

Achievements & Challenges

Details of the methodology can be found in the report (pp8-11). It involved the construct of a template which cross referenced service domains with positive and negative classifications using the NVivo research tool. Over 700 pages of text contained in the 22 local authority reports were codified and analysed. Over 10,000 references were coded and cross referenced to make numerous comparisons between the service domains and the positive and negative statements, and enabling confidence that the substantive issues were taken into account. The domains were broadly based on a toolkit which had been developed to support the ACRF process and included, for example, services for adults and children, corporate support and partnership working.

Details of how positive and negative statements were classified are in the report (p10). NVivo was chosen as the preferred system of computer-assisted qualitative data-analysis software (CAQDAS) because of its ability to store, manage and analyse qualitative data. It is an efficient “code and retrieve” system that “allows the researcher to manually code snippets of the data according to their common themes. That coding can then be retrieved and viewed separately from the original data” (Hoover and Koerber, 2011, p70). However, its strength became more
apparent through its ability to process and query the coding in different ways, setting it apart from more traditional qualitative analysis methods (Hoover and Koerber, 2011).

The codification exercise presented significant challenges as the source documents, namely the reports, were in free text arranged in different formats plus appendices. Descriptive comments, for example comments designed to explain how a service operates, were avoided in favour of recording statements related to performance. Nevertheless, the coding system NVivo allows via “nodes” which are “similar to electronic bins or folders” (Hoover and Koerber, 2011, p72) proved effective.

As the analysis was not evaluative, I made no attempt to ‘weight’ the importance of statements. Therefore, for example, the ratio of positive to negative statements was not in itself assumed to be indicative of performance. The approach and research methodology were robust and provided a number of benefits, not only for this exercise but also in terms of any similar exercise which may be required in future.

The exercise was commissioned as a meta-analysis of the 22 reports in order to arrive at a single overview. Reference to individual reports was made only in respect of attributing examples of interesting positive actions, initiatives or developments. The analysis avoided comparisons of individual performance, the intention being to draw together key themes that enabled an overall representation.
Denyer and Tranfield (2006) note that meta analysis is frequently used to quantitatively combine the data from studies on the same topic in order to reach some general conclusions, the primary motive behind this form of aggregative synthesis being to provide greater confidence in the results of statistical analysis. However, in the research for Achievements & Challenges I adopted the concept in a qualitative sense akin to a systematic review where results are produced that are “generalisable to other contexts and can be used to make reasonable predictions of future events” (Denyer and Tranfield, 2006, p217). Hammersley (2001) argues that combining studies in order to achieve a mean effect can remove critical contextual information and this was avoided in Achievements & Challenges through my experience as a director of social services.

The reports were on local performance and inclusion or exclusion of particular subjects by directors was at their individual discretion, as was the amount of detail offered to support particular statements. The reports varied enormously in style and balance, so citing initiatives as interesting, was not to be taken as reflecting in any way the reality of services on the ground. I considered making reference to the collaborative initiatives in an appendix as important to reinforce the evident centrality of the partnership approach.

The methods were constrained by only being able to draw on what Directors chose to mention. However, all 22 reports were based on a common rigorous methodology
formulated as part of the toolkit using the EFQM RADAR methodology to analyse effectiveness.

**Collaborative Guidance**

The methodology adopted to develop *Collaborative Guidance* was primarily first-hand observation of, and participation in, the work of the two initiatives and semi-structured interviews with key players at the political and executive levels. I briefly researched other guidance and literature on collaboration and collaborative governance, none of which fully reflected the objectives being pursued by the four authorities. Therefore, the outcome proved to be an original contribution to learning. As the commissioners were clear that they did not want an academic report, the focus of the research was at practical rather than theoretical models of collaboration. The choice of methods used was at my discretion.

My method constituted action research in that the research design involved a "planned intervention by a researcher, or more often a consultant, into some natural social setting, such as an organisation" (Gill and Johnson, 2002, p 71). Again, I adopted the combined "researcher/consultant "role (Gummeson, 2000, p36) intending not only to contribute to existing knowledge but also to help resolve some of the practical concerns associated with a problematic situation (Gill and Johnson, 2002).
My approach epitomised the benefits qualitative methods can "offer the management researcher in enabling access to the subjective experiences of organizational life" (Cassell et al., 2006, p291). Bryant (2006) cites Kvale (1983, p174) as defining the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". In other words, the qualitative research interview enables participants to report their stories of organisational change within the context of their personal values and experiences in a way that a more structured interview format may constrain (Bryant, 2006).

I therefore ensured that the interviewees were able to offer their individual perspectives which differed according to the different roles each played within their authorities. The semi-structured approach allowed me to guide the direction of the interview but use primarily open-ended questions that encouraged the participant to discuss their experiences of the organisational change being considered (Bryant, 2006). I selected the people to interview on the basis of their qualities to be a good informant, namely their knowledge about the topic, their ability to reflect and provide detailed experiential information about the area under investigation and their willingness to talk (Morse (1991). I also ensured interviewees were clear about my role and the objectives of the project, and given sufficient notice to see me at a venue of their choice.
Further reflections on the research methods used in the portfolio

The account above demonstrates the differences in the nature of the projects and the methods used. I consider my role in *Profession to Value* and *Collaborative Guidance* to have been a combination of researcher and consultant – a “knowledge worker” (Gummesson, 2000, p6) seeking to arrive at “recommendations for solutions to the specific problems” (Gummesson, 2000, p5) of the organisations or industry. In *Achievements & Challenges*, my role was arms length and easier to define in terms of objectivity as the project did not allow interaction with the authors of the source documents.

All three projects were rooted in the principles of management research. I was not unduly concerned with identifying beforehand any particular research paradigms but, on reflection, suggest the methods were generally chosen on a philosophical basis of pragmatism when considered against alternative philosophies of “positivism”, “realism” and “interpretivism” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p119) because I wished to adopt both a subjective and objective viewpoint, using mixed methods and focusing on applied research. The “paradigm wars” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p3 cited in Cropley, p14) of qualitative versus quantitative research were neither apparent nor relevant.

The bulk of the research was qualitative in nature and I am encouraged by Cassell et al.’s (2006) argument that qualitative research is inclusive of a range of techniques.
that focus on textual data, and Gummesson’s (2006) assertion that in “addressing the complex reality of management issues, qualitative methodology supported by modern natural sciences, is superior to quantitative methodology emanating from traditional natural sciences” (Gummesson, 2006, p171). That said, I would support the argument that the two approaches are “not in conflict; they should be treated in symbiosis” (Gummesson, 2006, p171) and was committed to working to an approach attributed to most researchers of “adopting a pragmatic approach and implementing whichever research methodologies are most appropriate to answer their research question” (Halcomb and Hickman, 2015, p41).
CHAPTER 6

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANT AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION THE WORK MAKES TO THE ACADEMIC FIELD IN QUESTION

Preamble

This review involves an examination of the literature on collaborative theory and consideration of its application to the three research outputs, leading to a discussion and conclusions. An original framework for the review is included as Fig.3 and explained in the introduction below. The constraints on the review were identified in Chapter 1 as was its original contribution to knowledge which centres on the application of the literature to the portfolio of the research projects. This enables firstly, consideration of the effectiveness of collaboration in a Welsh social services context - particularly relevant at time when new legislation is being introduced that focuses on co-production and joint working and secondly, consideration of its application across Welsh public services and beyond.
An introduction to the theory and practice of inter-organisational collaboration

Whilst the dominance of collaboration as a direction of policy became most prevalent after 1997 and following the creation of the Welsh Assembly in 1999, it would be wrong to assume collaborative working is a new phenomenon. Numerous inter-agency partnership arrangements were already in place across the UK but it has been argued that the greater acceptance of collaboration as a prominent form of governance arose out of a need to respond to societal changes (McGuire and Agranoff, 2013) and the view that the complexity of problems faced by governments cannot be addressed by traditional bureaucracies (Alter and Hage, 1993). However, despite decades of initiatives to improve collaborative processes, including attention to differences in professional cultures, organisational structures and incongruent planning cycles, the problems entailed in the process have persisted (Cameron and Lloyd, 2011).

One of the main learning points to emerge from the research into Collaborative Guidance was that means and ends were often confused when seeking collaborative solutions, reflecting the way inter-organisational collaboration has been described as both in the literature of public health (Axelsson and Bihari Axelsson, 2006). It is both a means of improving efficiency and quality through synergistic combinations of resources and expertise (Axelsson and Bihari Axelsson, 2006) and, via the end of being a more holistic approach, allows organisations to constructively explore their
differences and find solutions that go beyond their own limited visions of what is possible (Gray, 1996; Huxham, 1996). During the Collaborative Guidance fieldwork, models of collaborative governance and the collaborative aim were discussed as very separate entities but in reality the form and outcomes of the collaboration were synonymous. For example, the creation of a joint committee governance model between two local authorities was also a form of collaboration - councillors from more than one council committing to meet together and discuss issues of potentially mutual benefit. Consideration of the most appropriate governance model led to ongoing reconsideration of the type of collaboration to be pursued.

Similar characteristics are reflected in much of the literature in respect of separating theory from practice. Huxham and Vangen (2001), authors with an extensive portfolio of published research on collaboration, refer to their approach being inspired by the action research paradigm described by Eden and Huxham (1996), an important aspect being that it is “inductive rather than deductive” (Huxham and Vangen (2001, p4). This means that “theory about the practice of collaboration is derived from data drawn from the practice of collaboration and used directly to inform the practice of collaboration” (Huxham and Vangen, 2001, p3) – i.e. the theory of collaborative advantage is therefore constructed through the themes which emerge from the action research (Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

This leads to the legitimisation of a thematic framework as a means of understanding the theory and practice of collaboration, and this framework forms
the basis for the review of the literature and this critical overview. The approach seems particularly well suited to meeting the requirements of a PhD by Portfolio because it allows the material to be researched and presented into “manageable though clearly related chunks” (Huxham and Vangen, 2001, p11), each of which can be considered in isolation from the others, and together through overlaps. Huxham’s (2003) overarching framework is reflected in Fig.1 and confirms that every aspect of these conceptualisations is rooted in real collaborations.

An alternative framework (Fig.2) is proposed by Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006). The similarities in these frameworks are sufficient to confidently use them as a basis for this critical overview. Aspects of their content have been applied to the research outputs and the overlaps within and between each are recognised and prioritised further from the application of the theories contained in the literature to the portfolio. This leads to an original framework for this thesis arising from the prioritisation of a number of thematic domains for the detailed examination necessary to suit the context. Fig.3 presents this framework diagrammatically and broadly, the domains cover:

i. Defining, contextualising and rationalising collaboration – it is important to understand the reasons agents and organisations collaborate, recognising that multiple and alternative motives will determine the criteria for success.

ii. Structural and organisational considerations – the relevance of organisational theory and the organisational and structural mechanisms
chosen to support collaborations and emerging from its adoption, including collaborative forms.

iii. Agency and individual influence – understanding the influence of individuals on organisational behaviour and performance and the interpersonal theories relevant to achieving collaborative goals.

This framework enables the exploration of significant theories concerning trust, power and resources. It also reflects one view expressed in respect of understanding public health integration that, in order to be useful for researchers and practitioners, the concepts should be relatively few and the relationships between them relatively simple. This constitutes an acceptance that a simplification of reality may help to better understand complexities (Axelsson and Bihari Axelsson 2006), in contrast to an alternative view that “complicated issues should mandate complicated solutions” (Blair and Janousek, 2013, p271).
Fig. 1 Themes in collaboration. (Huxham, 2003, p. 405)

INITIAL CONDITIONS
- General Environment
  - Turbulence
  - Competitive and institutional elements
- Sector Failure
  - Direct Antecedents
    - Conveners
    - General agreement on the problem
    - Existing relationships or networks

PROCESS
- Formal and Informal
  - Forging agreements
  - Building leadership
  - Building legitimacy
  - Building trust
  - Managing conflict
  - Planning

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE
- Formal and Informal
  - Membership
- Structural configuration
- Governance structure

CONINGENCIES AND CONSTRAINTS
- Type of collaboration
- Power imbalances
- Competing institutional logics

OUTCOMES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES
- Outcomes
  - Public value
  - First-, second-, and third-order effects
  - Resilience and reassessment
- Accountabilities
  - Inputs, processes, and outputs
  - Results management system
  - Relationships with political and professional constituencies

Fig. 2 A Framework for Understanding Cross-Sector Collaborations. (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006, p. 45)
Fig. 3 Framework for a critical overview of the theories and practice of influencing the implementation of collaboration in Welsh Social Services
The Public Policy Context for this Critical Overview

Welsh Government’s policy over the last decade has centred on the principle that collaboration, not competition, is the most effective basis for the delivery of public services. A series of policy statements, beginning with "Making the Connections" (Welsh Assembly Government 2004), and structural reorganisations, epitomised by the creation of integrated health boards and the removal of the purchaser/provider split in the NHS in Wales, supported the former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan’s desire to create “clear red water” between Wales and England (Davies and Williams, 2009), creating a marked contrast with the approach to public service reform espoused by Ministers in London (Bradbury, 2005).

The rejection of a market-led philosophy has been enshrined in numerous Welsh Government policies and initiatives, including the “One Wales” document (Welsh Assembly Government 2007) the Compact for Change with local government (Welsh Government 2011) and the Local Government Measures of 2009 and 2011 (Welsh Government 2009, 2011) which gave Welsh Ministers reserve powers to direct collaboration and an obligation to consider using these powers in the face of evidence that a collaborative opportunity had not been taken where there was a clear business case.
However, Martin and Webb (2009) note that neither the Beecham (2006) review of public services nor the Webb (2007) review of further education had argued that the citizen/collaboration model they espoused was working in a way which inspired confidence that it would deliver more responsive and efficient public services. Williams’s (2014) later critical comments chimed with this.

Although rejecting competition, Welsh Government policy was consistent with aspects of the New Labour U.K. Government’s approach from 1997 to 2010 to modernising public services with an emphasis on empowering citizens, more user choice and tackling cross cutting issues (Forman 2002, Clark 2005). Choice in the Welsh context, however, was not intended to reflect choice through market mechanisms, and partnership working became the accepted modus operandi. In the social services context, policy documents such as “Fulfilled Lives: Supportive Communities” (Welsh Government, 2007) emphasised the need for support to be citizen directed. The notion of collaboration between state and citizen through a system of co-production of services was developing and the passing of a new Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) placed statutory requirements on local authorities from April 2016 to co-operate with others in the delivery of services, and initiate new forms of delivery methods such as social enterprises.

The 1996 local government structure had produced new collaborations in social services to avoid services previously run individually by the eight previous county councils being inefficiently spread amongst the 22 smaller unitary authorities.

The implications of this policy context for Welsh social services authorities are, therefore, about achieving Welsh Government’s vision of “Sustainable Social Services” (Welsh Government 2011) and meeting the requirements of the new Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) through increased collaborative working, and to provide social care services which are truly integrated with health services. Some of the desired collaboration is legislatively prescribed through the creation of regional safeguarding boards and national organisational arrangements for adoption services. This reflects a hierarchical approach to achieving collaboration - an imperative or mandated coordination (Webb 1991) - to induce the relevant self-interests, professions and organisations to work together.

This critical overview of the research outputs provides an indication of the extent to which this strategic intent is capable of being fulfilled.
Definitions of Collaboration

Most definitions in the literature are predisposed to positivity. At face value, the variations arise out of interesting subtle nuances rather than clear differences. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002, p1), for example, describe collaboration as “a way of working with others on a joint project where there is a shared interest in positive outcomes” whereas Finn (1996) leans towards a more organisational dimension by suggesting that “when groups and organisations begin to embrace collaborative processes...they are in essence inventing a new type of organisation” (Finn, 1996, p152). This is supported by others who suggest that collaboration facilitates the creation of new institutions and norms, making them available “interorganisationally” as “proto institutions” (Lawrence et al., 2002, p283).

Bardach (1998, p8) defines collaboration as “any joint activity by two or more agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together rather than separately” but recognises that defining what constitutes public value contains an “inescapable element of subjectivity” (Bardach, 1998, p9). This notion of achieving added public value is pertinent to the collaborative aims reflected in the portfolio in the sense that it is assumed that, notwithstanding the presence of other motivational factors, the overall objective of collaboration between local authorities is linked to the public interest in a representative democracy. Huxham (1996) provides a ‘rough’ and simple definition, suggesting that the term “collaboration” is “often used when individuals work together towards some common aim” (Huxham,
1996, p1) but then proceeds to argue that there is a great deal of variety, and hence confusion, in the meaning of it.

Confusion can arise from genuine differences in meaning but also alternative terminology (Huxham 1996), some of which varies between organisational sectors. The literature confirms that "strategic alliances", "partnerships" and "joint ventures" are often used to describe a collaboration, with inter-organisational behaviour described in one case as an "ecology" of organisations (Hannan and Freeman, 1989). Similarly, "co-ordination", "networking" and "co-operation" are used as means of describing the collaborative form leading to a need to also consider definitions relating to these terms (Himmelman, 1996). In the banking context an alliance has been described as the "joining of forces and resources, for a specific or indefinite period, to achieve a common purpose" Takec and Singh, (1992, p32), while strategic alliances in the business sector have been defined as "coalitions between two or more firms, either formal or informal, that share compatible goals, acknowledge a high level of mutual interdependence, involve partial or contractual ownership, and which are formed for strategic aims" (Stiles, 2001, p18).

Recognising debates about the dominance of markets and hierarchy in organisational theory, collaboration has been defined as a "cooperative, interorganisational relationship that is negotiated in an ongoing communicative process and that relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control" (Lawrence, Hardy and Phillips, 2002, p282).
Therefore, collaboration can be a way of working (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002), a form of organisation (Finn 1996) or an activity (Bardach 1998). Any elements of added confusion reinforce the view that understanding collaboration is multidimensional. The dimensions increase following consideration of different rationales and cognitive complexities.

For the purpose of this submission, Huxham's (1993, 1996) concept of "collaborative advantage" is taken to be the most suitable way of describing the intent evident in the portfolio. Collaborative advantage is defined as occurring when "something unusually creative is produced – perhaps an objective is met – that no organisation could have produced on its own and when each organisation, through the collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone" Huxham (1993, p603). This resonates with the apparent objectives within the portfolio and the expectation of the Compact for Change (Welsh Government 2011). Similarly, Collaborative Guidance referred to "collaborative gain" as a key intended outcome of the integration of social services in the participating authorities. Perhaps more significantly in the context of social services, Huxham (1993) argues that "in some cases, it should also be possible to achieve some higher-level......objectives for society as a whole rather than just for the participating organisations" (1993, p603).

It is argued that collaboration occurs in the midrange of how organisations work on public problems, between organisations that hardly relate to each other when
addressing a public problem that extends beyond their capabilities, and organisations that have merged into a new entity to handle problems through merged authority and capabilities. In the midrange are organisations that share information, undertake coordinated initiatives, or develop shared-power arrangements in order to pool their capabilities to address the problem or challenge (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006). Glasby, Dickinson and Miller (2011) argue for a map of where partnerships sit in relation to the depth and breadth of relationships. The examples of collaboration in the portfolio sit consistently in the midrange other than two of the authorities researched for Collaborative Guidance whose ambitions to integrate could be interpreted as merger.

Rationales for Collaboration

This critical overview necessitates an understanding of why people and organisations choose to work together. The apparent reasons in the portfolio appear to be concerned with either the diminution or elimination of a problem and/or the pursuit of a more efficient and sustainable service for the betterment of public services. The reasons to collaborate emerging from the literature are implicitly contained within the definitions outlined above, and are also prima facie relatively simple to understand. However, they disguise a range of different and contradictory rationales behind collaborative initiatives, described by Vangen and Huxham (2011, p732) as a “goals paradox” some of which are expressed as consequences of not
collaborating, including repetition, omission, divergence and counter-production which often add up to an inability to compete with the market leaders (Huxham and MacDonald 1992). This theory supports the contention that collaborative participants “fail” into their collaborative roles (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006), only collaborating when they cannot get what they want without doing so (Hudson et al., 1999) and was evident in the failure to obtain and maintain satisfactory staffing levels which led to the research for Profession to Value and the struggle to sustain services in the authorities who participated in the research leading to Collaborative Guidance.

Achievements & Challenges cited a range of themes underpinning the development of partnerships including creating efficiencies, maximising resources, strengthening safeguarding, developing more integrated services with the NHS, improving educational outcomes for looked after children, remodelling and modernising services, joint commissioning, developing family support and maintaining a strong workforce. These different motivations highlight the difficulties of partner agencies achieving a clear shared purpose, and the motivation to collaborate must also be considered alongside other factors like individuals’ capabilities and the opportunities presented by structural, cultural and other variables to understand the determinants of inter-sectoral collaboration (Hendriks et al., 2015). Furthermore, different interpretations of the perceived benefits of working together can affect the design and delivery of the collaborative outcome (Sullivan and Williams, 2009).
An early contribution to understanding collaboration was made by Levine and White's (1962) exchange theory which is founded in organisational behaviour, the argument being that organisations will volunteer to exchange relations on more than an ad hoc basis where they identify it leading to system-wide goals. This "optimistic" view of collaborative theory (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002) is counterbalanced by a "pessimistic" theory that collaboration is based on self-interest, taking place in order to preserve or enhance power or make individual organisational gains (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). The presentation of motivation in the portfolio reflects the optimistic approach but it is the degree of influence of a range of organisational and human factors, defined by some as factors based on agency theory or institutional theory (Rigg and O'Mahony 2013), that is of more interest to this thesis.

Both optimistic and pessimistic views of exchange theory can be identified in rational choice theory which postulates individuals calculating their costs and benefits and entering into a relationship when they consider one will outweigh the other (Alter and Hage 1993). This in turn leads to a range of theories relating to how costs and benefits of inter-organisational collaboration are calculated. Alter and Hage (1993) argue that these relate to changing perceptions of costs and benefits even if the actual costs/benefits relationship has not changed. New benefits can emerge, such as the opportunity for learning, and changing ways of ensuring compliance associated with new social processes and skills. The necessity to be
open to changing aims and objectives was highlighted in *Collaborative Guidance* in the light of changing events and experiences as the programme progressed, not least because the context in which the ambition was being pursued was changing in the face of government austerity measures. What started with an intention of exploring possibilities for closer working moved to more institutional solutions approaching merger. This conformed with the proposition that "complex collaborations functioning in equally complex and dynamic times need to have goals and plans that are adaptable to changing conditions" (Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald, 2004, p22).

The importance of understanding context is promoted by Gray (1989) who identifies seven contextual factors that have incentivised the development of collaborations among which are blurred boundaries among business, government and labour; shrinking governmental reserves for social programmes; and dissatisfaction with the judicial process for solving complex problems, all of which featured in a different context in the research for *Collaborative Guidance*. This synopsis leads to the advancement of a shared vision or resolution of conflict as collaborative aims with expected outcomes being an exchange of information or even a joint agreement (Gray, 1996). The relevance of changing circumstances led Gray (1996, p58) to conclude that "collaborative alliances have been identified as a logical and necessary response to turbulent conditions".

The ideology of public bureaucracies adopting a rational approach to bring predictability and regularity in a turbulent world is also highlighted by Challis et al.