(1988) and was the basis of a proposition made later by Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) in respect of cross-sector collaborations when they suggested they were more likely to form in turbulent environments. The turbulence caused by financial austerity was evident in Achievements and Challenges and was also a factor inspiring Profession to Value as a vacancy rate of 18.6% and turnover rate of 15% amongst social workers highlighted the unstable conditions facing authorities. However, their responses had, up to then, been based on competing for staff through different incentives rather than seeking a collaborative solution. Collaboration, therefore, was adopted as an antidote to problems caused by competition, reflecting the central theme of Welsh Government policy, yet the irony of this approach is that the rationale for collaborating was to be more competitive, i.e. to attract and retain more workers than others. Competition in this context is not, therefore, exclusively attached to a private sector environment where the pooling of resources and/or capabilities is used commonly for strategic competitive advantage (Lorange and Roos, 1992; Mohr and Spekman, 1994).

Martin and Webb (2009) present a clear choice between competition and collaboration as philosophies and policy in achieving public service reform, suggesting that the option to exit a service, the “contestability” available to consumers in a competitive environment, is not always available in the Welsh context, and where less efficient provider services collapse, this could even be interpreted as a threat to social justice. However, in espousing the values of collaboration, Martin and Webb (2009, p129) acknowledge the need to recognise
and remove the barriers to its effective use, arguing that there are too few positive drivers to what is a “high maintenance and inherently difficult activity”.

Martin and Webb’s (2009) position reflects a key aspect of Welsh Government’s rationale for collaboration as a rejection of competition but research suggests such choice is over-simplistic. Understanding that there are a combination of competitive and cooperative aspects in strategic alliances is important as there are implications here both for individual partners and the future of the alliance relationship and there is no optimal course of action (Burton, 1995, Stiles, 2001). Moreover, Stiles (2001) argues that identifying the factors which influence the degree of cooperative and/or competitive intent assists operational effectiveness of the alliance. She relates these to the level of mobility of resources from one partner to another, the level of “imitability” or mutual imitation necessary, how unique each partner’s resources are, and the relative perceived value of a partner's resources (Stiles, 2001).

Gazley (2010) notes that scholars have observed that it is possible for collaborative partners to cooperate and compete for resources at the same time. These cooperative and competitive intents, therefore, should not be viewed as opposing options or motivations—and isolated empirically from one another—but rather should be understood as related, co-existing elements in a larger group of strategic motivations. That said, it can also be argued that combined drive for competition and cooperation within a context of joint products places the managers of providers
in a difficult position (Brandsen and van Hout, 2006). An indication of this is detected in *Achievements & Challenges*’ references to joint commissioning of services which is regarded as a positive initiative yet could also involve the collaborating agencies competing for the contracted work that arose from the process.

Whilst recognising the inherent tension between cooperation and competition among partners, Zeng and Chen (2003) also note that alliances are, by nature, competitive collaborations and that partners are involved in a learning race to absorb the capabilities of their alliance partners as fast as possible. They describe the tension as a “social dilemma” which is defined by two simple properties evident in *Profession to Value*. The first is that individuals can receive a higher pay off for a socially defecting choice than a cooperative choice, no matter what the others do, but second, that all individuals are better off if all cooperate than if all defect. So, in a collaborative context, the dilemma manifests itself in the sense that partners face a conflict between maximising self-interests and the interests of the alliance as a whole. The research for *Profession to Value* demonstrated that those who had paid staff more and consequently lowered their vacancy rates faced the dilemma of risking a loss of competitiveness to comply with a new national pay rate designed to create the concept of a virtual “Wales Social Services”. The proposition from Zeng and Chen’s (2003) research is that alliance partners will be less likely to cooperate when they perceive a competitive rather than comparative norm within the alliance.
The element of competition chimes with the analysis of resource-based theory as the foundation of long-term strategy for an alliance (Grant, 1991), which was a primary rationale for the collaborations researched for Collaborative Guidance and many of the partnership arrangements identified in Achievements & Challenges. Resource utilisation is frequently associated with profit, a motivation not evident in the portfolio where resource-based theory applies in a context of efficiency and effectiveness. Numerous partnerships highlighted in Achievements & Challenges extend beyond the functional boundaries of local government and it is inappropriate to view inter-local authority collaborations as being capable of operating in a self-contained universe. As Sink (2001) points out, organisational cultures about missions and function, which discourage reaching out to potential partners, can be particularly difficult to overcome. This reinforces the understanding that roles and responsibilities in different sectors may vary widely and should not be discounted (Himmelman, 1992) and that collaborative facilitators must ensure the differing perspectives of partners are reconciled (Ritchie and Montanheiro, 1996).

Traditional thinking tends to view collaboration and conflict as either diametric opposites of a single organisational dimension (Parsons, 1937) or accepting a certain degree of conflict is an essential element of group formation (Simmel 1950). The challenge for interagency collaboration is exploring ways in which conflict can be acknowledged but reconciled with collaborative activity (Hudson et al., 1999). In the context of collaboration between social services authorities, it can be argued that whilst some conflict will inevitably arise out of competition for scarce
resources, as evidenced in *Profession to Value*, it should not be evident for any other reason because each authority's purpose is identical. Other conflicts which surface are likely, therefore, to be caused either by bureaucratic exigencies such as contracting and the existence of quasi-markets (Bartlett, Roberts and Le Grand, 1998) or by human factors, at political or executive level, such as mistrust or the pursuit of power. These will be discussed later.

Williams (2002) summarises the inter-organisational literature as offering three explanations to the triggers of partnership working which he describes as "hegemony, resource opportunity and mandate" (Williams, 2002, p120). The former is based on the view that inter-organisational working is the only way for dealing with complex problems that cross administrative boundaries and the latter is consistent with central government's desire for other agencies to be as committed to inter-organisational working as it is. I have already discussed the third trigger in respect of resource exchange theories.

Hudson et al.'s (1999) analytical framework for the co-existence of collaboration and conflict rests with a comparison of policy networks and exchange theory. He notes that although the concept of a policy network implies qualities, trust, shared objectives and the voluntary exchange of resources, they can also be defined in terms of different structures of dependencies (Rhodes 1992), thereby linking them to exchange theory and further to resource dependency theory. This reflects the fact that organisations are typically orientated to acquiring and defending resources.
(Benson, 1975). In this context collaboration is a means of managing individual organisational survival and will only be entered into when there is some mutual benefit to obtain (Hudson et al., 1999).

These theories are evident in *Profession to Value*. Debates about market forces played a prominent role in the analysis and conclusions leading to collaboration amongst authorities being recommended as a means of neutralising the negative impact of open market recruitment. Child and Faulkner (1998) identify market-power economics theory as an evident feature of cooperative strategy where it offered firms an opportunity to modify the position they held in the industry. The identification of regional as well as local variations in *Profession to Value* helped gain an understanding that where national solutions may have been beyond reach, a regional or sub-regional solution remained available to those authorities wishing to collaborate on a smaller scale. *Profession to Value* recognised the application of market supplements to basic pay as an acceptable approach where there were genuine anomalies caused by market forces.

The presence of rationality influences the ability to clearly articulate a shared aim and vision or common set of goals, some arguing that a shared purpose must be "multidimensional, practical and constantly enriched in debates about concrete problems" and is a "long, complex process" to develop (Adler, Heckscher and Prusak, 2011, p101) Shared purpose is considered by many to be a pre-requisite for success and a requirement for achieving a rational-altruistic model of collaboration.
Webb (1991) – two or more bodies working together to achieve common objectives which are inherently for the public good – and clarifying it was instrumental in *Profession to Value* being able to drive the creation of a single strategy amongst a multitude of interests. It was also a central feature of the guidance contained in *Collaborative Guidance*. However, many of the partnership arrangements which featured in *Achievements & Challenges* resulted from governmental requirements and therefore more typical of a hierarchical model of collaboration rather than a desire to form networks based on cooperation and trust.

Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) identify three different rationales for Government favouring collaboration. Firstly, combining the contributions of different agencies in respect of resources and competencies should lead to more efficiency and effectiveness. Second, joined up governance should emerge from networking, and third, a new inclusive form of representative democracy should emerge. The argument by Entwistle and Martin (2005) ten years ago that partnerships which raise standards and reduce costs were expected to expand their operations into other councils leading to new partnerships transforming whole service sectors on a regional and national basis remains equally relevant as an aspiration today. The reality is, of course, somewhat different and hierarchical responses through legislation are indicative of a lack of scale and pace in meaningful collaborative progress.
Fragmentation and differentiation of services (Axelsson and Bihari Axelsson, 2006) remain issues to be addressed and rectifying such has been a major reason for cross-sector collaboration or integration of health and social care services. This can have negative and positive connotations if it is assumed that addressing integration problems (Davies and Macdonald 1998) such as gaps, inconsistencies and duplications in service are primarily short-term goals and the collaborative effort is exited once they are achieved (Zeng and Chen, 2003). Such action appears to contrast with the rational-altruistic approach promoted by Webb (1991) and is a further indication that the motivation to collaborate can be expressed in either “optimistic” or “pessimistic” terms as an outcome of seeking better results for citizens or being coerced into collaborating by government (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). The sustainability of the partnerships in Achievements & Challenges remains uncertain.

The complexity of understanding certainty in respect of rationales for collaborating is illustrated through research by Blair and Janousek (2013) into the administrative networks and mutual organisations that comprise the collaborative mechanisms of municipalities in the state of Nebraska. They discovered that while improving efficiency was a notable encouragement for cooperation, several other reasons were cited by respondents suggesting both a need for clarity in collaborative ventures wherever possible and an acknowledgement that this will not always be as straightforward a task as first envisaged.
The importance of networks

The literature contains numerous references to networks, much of which serve to develop concepts connected with traditional practices of working together. Gazley (2010) comments that scholars who have used social network theories to explore interpersonal relationships have noted that one of the outcomes of social networks is increased opportunity to collaborate. Some insights into public management networks are offered by Agranoff (2006, p56) who sees them as “real-world public entities” which may not only comprise representatives of disparate organisations but also go beyond analytical modes to include intra as well as inter organisational networking. Agranoff (2006) views networks as a collaborative form, only differing from organisations in part, and sharing a place alongside other interagency agreements such as grants and contracts. His research suggests public management networks offer public value benefits to managers and agencies such as learning opportunities, access to information and technology, and delivering concrete results.

The benefit of seeing a network as a collaborative form is echoed by Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) who propose that cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed when they establish - with both internal and external stakeholders - the legitimacy of collaboration as a form of organising, as a separate entity, and as a source of trusted interaction among members. Their studies suggest that networks centralised around a lead organisation are more effective than dense, strongly tied
networks, aided further by the presence of “cliques” (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006, p49). This supports the belief that a clear distinction between hierarchies and collaborative management is not always accurate and a blending of the two approaches is not uncommon (McGuire, 2006). It is argued that instead of a completely flat, self-organising network, the presence of a lead organisation, acting as system controller or facilitator, is often a critical element of effectiveness in collaborative management. Such a network administrative organisation can reduce the complexity of self-governance and enhance the legitimacy of a network (McGuire, 2006). The evidence in research for Achievement and Challenges was that partnerships tended to have a nominated lead body amongst their membership.

Agranoff (2006) concludes that “the all-important potential for agency-based implementation for most collaborative solutions lies not in the network itself or in any one agency or program but among the many” (Agranoff, 2006, p59) supporting the view that the existence of social networks of administrators and elected officials may be instrumental in helping to mitigate the risks associated with collaboration in service provision (Benton 2013).

It is important to recognise that not all networks are alike. A typology of four emerged from Agranoff’s (2006) research into 14 networks involving federal, state, and local government managers working with nongovernmental organizations in the United States. These were informational, wherein partners came together almost exclusively to exchange agency policies and programmes, technologies, and
potential solutions; developmental, wherein partner information and technical exchange were combined with education and member services that increased the members’ capacities to implement solutions within their home agencies and organisations; outreach, wherein the activities of the developmental network were engaged; and action networks, wherein partners came together to make interagency adjustments, formally adopt collaborative courses of action, and deliver services, along with information exchanges and enhanced technology capability.

There are elements of all four in the portfolio but the expectation in all cases was that action would follow. It is significant that only one of these forms emphasises action and the typical network decision-making process has been characterised as “involving joint learning that leads to brokered consensus” (Agranoff, 2006, p60) with the deliberative process being about “reaching agreements” rather than decisions (Agranoff, 2006, p59). Furthermore, Agranoff’s (2006) research detected as many as six distinct pre-decision strategies. I would argue that this presents too many options for dynamic action and is indicative of the criticism collaborations encounter. His conclusion that the most distinctive collaborative activity of all the networks studied proved to be their work in public sector knowledge management (Agranoff, 2006) is a relatively modest outcome given the size of the challenge and must be considered alongside the argument that improvement may be “better served by learning from within” and that “networks are both a major vehicle in, and hindrance to, the development of public organisational learning” (Fenwick and McMillan, 2005, p53).
The extent of desired action should reflect the extent of the problem and the evidence in *Achievements & Challenges* was that many of the challenges were significant and consistent across Wales. It should follow that the collaborative solutions should also be consistent but other than the statutorily required partnerships this was not the case, raising two questions, one about whether more mandated collaboration is necessary and the other whether the virtues of localism are deliberately overstated to protect political autonomy.

Acknowledging that network theory tends to conceptualise networks as coherent entities, Brandsen and van Hout (2006) warn that this must be qualified by the fact that some of the problems associated with network integration are played out within organisations. This emphasises the importance of understanding the relationship between network interactions and the internal organisation, a factor which featured strongly in *Collaborative Guidance*.

A further separation of networks from organisational form is proposed by Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) who argue that multi-organisational partnerships are organisational structures that are not synonymous with a network mode of governance, which fosters positive assumptions of pluralism and benign state action. By distinguishing organisational structure from mode of governance, a more critical analysis of multi-organisational collaboration is facilitated (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). This position offers some protection against identifying the virtues
of networking as the desired approach and is a reminder that an evaluation of the benefits of collaboration requires consideration of all collaborative methods and forms.

Organisational and institutional theories

The constraints on this thesis prevent a comprehensive analysis of organisational theory but its relevance to collaboration is self-evident. Hudson et al. (1999) argue that from the point of view of individual organisations, collaboration may pose a threat because each individual agency loses some of its freedom to act independently and each must invest scarce resources in developing relationships with other organisations when the potential return on investment is often unclear and intangible. This can lead to a loss of control and/or identity or even, when sharing success, a "loss of glory" (Huxham and Macdonald, 1992).

McGuire (2006) notes that collaborative partnerships can take on a number of features that are more commonly associated with formalised agencies while Bardach (1998) observes that "interorganisational collaborative capacity is very much like an organisation in its own right" (Bardach, 1998, p21). McGuire (2006) reflects on research by Thacher (2004) which concluded that partnerships more accurately resembled inchoate hierarchies than purely networked collaborative arrangements. Webb (1991) reinforces resource dependency theory when he
argues that there is potential for collaborative behaviour among organisations, even when negative relationship forces such as domination, avoidance and conflict may be present because few organisations are likely to be wholly self-sufficient in all their resource requirements.

When organisations work together, some basic principles are needed to design a complex collaboration. Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald (2004) identify these as falling into three categories: the first is the “magnetic forces”, such as shared goals and complementary capabilities that bring them together; the second is the “glue” that keeps them together such as compatible cultures and a culture of mutual trust; and the third are the factors that propel the collaboration forward such as leadership, resources, skills and experience. Collaborative Guidance covered all these. Forms of organisation and governance need to be designed around collaboration, partnership and networking if a holistic approach to government is to be achieved yet holistic thinking is “not the prevailing discourse of classical organisations that are underpinned by notions of rationality, linear thinking, task differentiation and functionalism” (Williams, 2002, p105). Furthermore, collaboration is occurring at a time when research suggests large, complex organisations have become more “heterodox” and “do not fit an ideal type” (Farrell and Morris, 2013, p1389), making applying organisational theory to collaborative theories even more challenging.

Williams (2002) notes that there is no consolidated body of inter-organisational theory and suggests that because many of the collaborative challenges are cross-
sectoral, the focus of organisational action needs to move from a pre-occupation with intra-organisational imperatives more to a commitment to the building of inter-organisational capacity. However, my research in *Collaborative Guidance* suggested that many of the tensions arose from differences within individual authorities, such as different objectives of the service and finance departments, so the intra-organisational perspective is also critical. This emphasises the relevance of local authority administrative structures to the collaboration discussion. Heley and Moles (2012), in research specific to inter-local authority collaboration in Wales, found “institutional asymmetry” among authorities, typified by different roles, responsibilities and job descriptions, to the extent that it even hindered the development of their comparative research matrix – a problem consistent with my experience in attempting to identify a single job specification for social work practitioners in *Profession to Value* and numerous procedure and systems differences in the four authorities connected with *Collaborative Guidance*. They concluded that as “manifestations of past rounds of departmentalism and uneven, incremental modernisation”, local authority structures are “important determinants of intra and inter authority compatibility and the capacity for partnership-driven service delivery” (Heley and Moles, 2012, p145).

A different perspective of the relevance of organisational theory is offered by Rigg and O'Mahony (2013) who suggest that the literature inappropriately uses the term, “institution”, inter-changeably with “organisation”. They promote the usefulness of institutional theory which, they argue, relates to institutionalisation as a process
and tells us that individual and organisation actions at a local level are likely to be guided and constrained by the institutional logics of which they are a member. This in turn is aligned with paths that are structured by the funding and performance management arrangements of the centre, i.e. the central government departments. Such path dependency creates a powerful cycle of self-reinforcing activity consistent with the institutional logics of the “parent department” (Rigg and O’Mahoney, 2013, p99). Many of the partnerships in Achievements & Challenges are the product of fulfilling Welsh Government expectations and the question arises as to whether they are designed and operated in line with assumptions about such expectations. This leads further to it being likely that the forces of “embedded agency” (Rigg and O’Mahony, 2013) which refers to the tension between institutional determinism and the ability of agencies to lead and manoeuvre despite or within the constraints posed by institutional practices and structures on their behaviour, play a significant part in influencing collaborative action.

The broader relevance of Rigg and O’Mahony’s (2013) research is that it helps conceptualise collaboration in social services taking place in an organisational field consisting of suppliers, service users, regulatory agencies and others who want to influence services, for example councillors. Key actors in this field interact for positive shared purposes and the notion of a field extends conceptualisation of a collaborative arrangement from internal organisational factors to wider areas such as power relations and the institutional logics guiding and constraining local actors.
(Rigg and O’Mahony, 2013). This introduces consideration of how the governance of collaborations is conducted.

**The relationship between collaboration and governance**

Networked systems used by local government historically adopt a form of shared governance (Abels, 2012) where actors are able to identify complementary interests and develop interdependent relationships based on trust, loyalty and reciprocity to develop and maintain the collaborative activity (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). Conflicts within the network are resolved on the basis of members’ reputational concerns (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998) and this was evident in my research on Collaborative Guidance as officers of the different authorities sought to iron out their differences in a framework of supporting the shared aims. Governance has been viewed as a concept to achieve the increased networking required by joined up government following the decline of the New Public Management movement in the 1980s (Acevedo and Common, 2006) and a shift from the 1990s in political management from government to governance (Rhodes, 1996; Derzken, Franklin and Bock, 2008). Vangen, Hayes and Cornforth (2015) argue for differentiating between collaborative governance, which is associated with public policy aims of bringing organisations together to govern society and contribute to public value and governing collaborations which is concerned with the governing of public entities per se.
Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) identify market based and hierarchical forms of governance, the former providing a strong basis for independent activity which can be overcome by the latter’s imposition of an authoritative integrated and supervisory structure. The advantages of a more directive role for Welsh Government was recognised in *Collaborative Guidance* but I also warned that it could be a double edged sword in that service users, carers and the general public may perceive the collaboration as designed to meet political aspirations rather than achieve real service benefits. Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) argue that hierarchical concepts of governance are problematic if we assume that networks are horizontal systems yet governance, as a set of coordinating and monitoring activities, must occur in order for collaborations to survive. They maintain that the choice among types of governance, e.g. self-governing, lead organisation or network administrative organisation – all of which were highlighted in *Collaborative Guidance* – is likely to influence network effectiveness.

The original commission of *Collaborative Guidance* was to assist in designing appropriate governance models for the collaborations. The brief (and my role) extended when it became clear that boundary spanning support was needed. Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald (2004) suggest criteria for governance design, all of which were adopted in *Collaborative Guidance*. These are to ensure all the entities involved are represented in the governance structure, to follow principles of simplicity and clarity and to have a clear decision authority. The reality, however,
was that arriving at a particular favoured model, referred to in *Collaborative Guidance* as the Joint Committee model, also highlighted the difficulties of collaborating in a complex environment such as social services. This support Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald’s (2004) conclusion that complex collaborations require significant amounts of structure to make the complexity more manageable but it also denies the positive effect less structured collaborations can have.

Rigg and O’Mahony (2013) confirm that structural explanations of collaborative success and failure have been developed through the lens of governance and suggest that the literature on governance concentrates on inter-organisational coordination and methods to improve effectiveness. Structure in this context is primarily concerned with the roles and stratification amongst collaboration members (Rigg and O’Mahony, 2013). A different approach to detailing contrasting, yet potentially complementary, approaches to governance is offered by Sundaramurthy and Lewis (2003) who promote the use of agency and stewardship theories, the former reflecting a control approach aimed at curbing self-serving behaviours of managers (agents) and the latter a collaborative approach empowering managers (stewards) to make decisions. Agents are more risk averse and have the potential to adopt opportunistic behaviour, inspiring distrust whereas stewards in the collaborative approach are more likely to identify with the organisation and internalise its mission. However, as the collaborative approach leads to the formulation of a co-operative governing team, the dangers of groupthink arise which initiates a pattern of collective defences aimed at denying or suppressing tensions (Sundaramurthy
and Lewis, 2003). This point was not reached in the research sites for Collaborative Guidance but it does emphasise that blind loyalty to collaboration contains risks of suppressing healthy tension and leads to defensiveness, underlying the need for an open appreciation of the need to review and invest in the collaborative effort.

A further consideration arising from Sundaramurthy and Lewis's (2003) conclusion that a dynamic mix of insiders and outsiders on private sector governing boards may contribute valuable, contrasting perspectives is whether local government is too insular. The difficulty of establishing effective collaborative governance is intrinsically linked with local authorities' individual democratic accountability which is a complex issue for collaborations because it is not often clear whom the collaboration is accountable to and for what (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006). The need for clarity about how partnership governance affects democratic effectiveness is expressed by Munro, Roberts and Skelcher (2008) and the research on Collaborative Guidance illustrated this as the authorities wrestled with sharing accountability for effectively spending pooled resources on services which at a given time, may have disproportionate benefits.

Lowndes and Skelcher (2002) argue that the multi-organisational partnership as an organisational form should not be confused with the network as a mode of governance. I stressed in Collaborative Guidance that form should follow function when determining the most appropriate governance model and that the means by which collaborations work, in this case the mode of governance, are often
synonymous with the collaboration itself. In other words, forming a partnership, such as those listed in *Achievements & Challenges* is both a means and an end and being clear which is being considered is important.

An insightful commentary on governance in a collaborative context is provided by Rhodes (1996) who argues that in the light of the hollowing out of the state, governance refers to “self-organising, interorganisational networks” (Rhodes, 1996, p652). This has implications for democratic accountability via central government because they become autonomous and resist central guidance. Rhodes (1996) essentially argues that the assumption of institutional hierarchy which underpins discussions of bureaucratic accountability no longer holds. The emphasis on preserving autonomy amongst the participating authorities in *Collaborative Guidance* was self-generated but there was also evidence that they were pursuing the collaboration route because of expectations of central government rather than altruism. Similarly, many of the partnerships in *Achievements & Challenges* are the direct result of government demands for collaborative approaches. This appears to conflict with Rhodes’s (1996) theory and is more consistent with the findings of Fenwick, Miller and McTavish (2012) who argue that partnerships do not represent a growth in autonomous networks and governance arrangements but rather an extension of bureaucratic control, effectively creating a meta-bureaucracy. However, when considered in the wider context of authorities fearing their abolition through the sharper sanction of local government reorganisation, their willingness to play the politics of state directed policies is more understandable.
Fenwick, Miller and McTavish (2012) present three other comparable theses adapted from research by Rhodes (2000) on which the evidence from the portfolio can also be assessed. First, that governance involves state and non-state actors in a network caused by a need to exchange resources and negotiate shared purpose and second that governance networks are characterised by interdependence between organisations. The portfolio evidence suggests that there was little resource exchange in the partnerships cited in Achievements & Challenges and the motivation was based on a mixture of altruism and government expectation. However, there was a high degree of interdependence underpinning the collaborative rationale behind the other two outputs. The third thesis is that governance interactions are game-like and rooted in trust and this was evident in research for both Profession to Value and Collaborative Guidance where negotiations and persuasion dominated proceedings.

**Collaborative forms**

This takes us to considering how collaborations are formed. Benton (2013) argues that they can be both formal and informal, ranging from formal agreements to ad hoc meetings and impromptu discussions while Agranoff (2006) identifies formal collaborations as chartered and informal as unchartered which may be equally permanent, organised and mission orientated. Roiseland (2011) links informal
governance arrangements to network theory and formal arrangements to organisational theory, concluding that collaborative governance stands for a hybrid institutional arrangement. However, Alter and Hage (1993) stress that to create an effective and sustainable collaboration, administrators must select a method by which to forge a workable relationship that is suitable for the participating entities and the circumstances. Blair and Janousek (2003) view the collaborative form to be an integral component of the interlocal process. Reflecting my argument that form should follow function and supporting one of the aims of this thesis, they argue that the selection and nature of the collaborative mechanism must meet the requirements of the situation or problem being addressed and that management could be improved by a better understanding of the collaborative mechanisms that foster and sustain intergovernmental cooperatives over time.

Lowndes and Skelcher (2002) report the benefits of formalisation, providing clear roles, responsibilities and reporting lines but also note that many viewed networks as the life-blood of partnerships necessary to sustain some informality “beneath the surface’ of increasingly bureaucratic arrangements” (Lowndes and Skelcher, 2002, p324). In doing so, however, they cite comments by a local authority officer needing approvals at different levels and having, for instance, to work around established key dates in an agency’s calendars. This practical consideration featured more strongly than anticipated in the research on Collaborative Guidance and led to a specific section in the guidance on managerial and operational issues.
Gerber and Loh (2014, p270) argue that “collaboration is inherently spatial” and that “proximity matters” evidenced by the partnerships cited in Achievements & Challenges while Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald (2004) introduce the concept of virtual collaborations which enable collaborative activity to take place without geographical constraint. They add a classification of the “complex collaboration” which they define as being the opposite of a “simple collaboration”, which in their terms is “an ideal case – a situation that involves no barriers to overcome and where the collaborative process can flow unobstructed” (Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald, 2004, p2). My research suggests that such simplicity is unrealistic, and a further conclusion by Mankin, Cohen and Fitzgerald (2004) that the more complex the collaboration, the more effort required to make it work, is more practical.

McGuire (2006) reflects temporal elements in collaborative form, citing typology by Mandell and Steelman (2003) involving intermittent coordination, temporary task force and permanent or regular coordination. McGuire (2006) argues that resource exchange is more extensive in the latter but the risk is minimal. Hudson et al. (1999) stress the need to acknowledge the degree of collaboration necessary for different purposes. They identify loosely structured networks, coalitional or federative working and finally unitary working, where resources would be pooled up to the point that they did not lead to merger, as all being fit for different purposes.

For Profession to Value, I led a temporary task force to produce the strategy for change but the only collaborative form available for implementation was a tacit
voluntary commitment to a unified approach, reflecting a mix of Hudson et al.’s (1999) first two categories. Experience proved that this was insufficient to sustain the collaborative strategy whereas in *Collaborative Guidance*, the integration of services was underpinned by a joint governance model and was more likely to lead to sustainable partnership arrangements, hence being more consistent with Hudson et al.’s (1999) third category. The partnerships in *Achievements & Challenges* are a mix of the informal and formal which illustrates the incremental rather than strategic approach to collaboration in social care we have seen in Wales and the failure of the authorities in *Collaborative Guidance* to ultimately fulfil their objectives is further evidence of the collaborative challenge facing Welsh local authorities.

The task force membership in *Profession to Value* was crucially important and ensured legitimacy through a wide representation of relevant stakeholders with sufficient credibility and authority to contribute to discussions and represent their particular organisational interests. This was enhanced through their agreement to write forewords to the report, and consistent with Hudson et al.’s (1999) argument that the variety of stakeholder involvement should relate to the complexity of the issue and decisions on the legitimacy of membership and the criteria for selection not being straightforward. Eden (1996) also identifies the importance of stakeholder analysis in achieving collaborative advantage and argues that clarifying which stakeholders have power in respect of influencing policy and which have an interest but not necessarily the power to influence, is critical in enabling strategy
makers to reposition people to encourage the formation of coalitions and collaboratives (Eden, 1996).

Axelsson and Bihari Axelsson (2006) view collaboration as a third option for inter-organisational integration along with market competition and management hierarchical approaches. They warn, however, that the benefits of integration in the form of mergers can lead to new forms of differentiation and fragmentation. The notion of merger was resisted in Collaborative Guidance mainly because of its association with back-door local government reorganisation. Integration was the preferred terminology but the reality suggested a unification process was, in fact, underway.

Terminology surrounding collaboration, such as network, co-operation, co-ordination, alliances and partnerships, is often used interchangeably (Vangen, Hayes and Cornforth, 2015) and can be confusing in that they ignore differences and nuances between them. This is demonstrated by Johnson et al. (2003) who suggest that history in community care integration has been not to prescribe organisational structural change but collaboration across boundaries rather than integration.

The debate between mandated and voluntary collaboration persists as does the need for formality within the collaborative mechanisms chosen, with scholars recognising that "informal agreements about the collaboration’s composition, mission and process can work but formal agreements have the advantage of
supporting accountability" (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006, p47) but also that removing central direction as to the form of collaborations could result in local impetus being "orientated towards the development of more flexible, fluid and open structures for collaboration" (Lindsey, 2014, p327). One hypothesis that over time, interlocal cooperation will require more formal and complex arrangements (Blair and Janousek, 2013) was not supported by their research. Importantly, it is unclear from the portfolio research whether those leading collaborative activity understood the nature of the formal/informal spectrum available to them or the implications for choosing a particular position on it. Put differently, how committed were they to ensuring form followed function or did they deliberately prefer the wriggle room afforded by the widest spectrum available? In this context, they were exercising all the power available to them in deciding their approach.

The impact of power

Williams (2002) concluded that inter-organisational capacity is unlikely to flourish in organisational structures that are based on hierarchical control and power. He argues that new capacities are needed to manage conflict, inter-personal behaviour and fragmented and contested power relations. Huxham and Vangen (2005) identify power imbalances among collaborating partners as a source of mistrust and therefore a threat to effective collaboration. Himmelman (1996) argues strongly for a shift in power in collaborations from institutions to the community. He refers to
this as “transformational collaboration” and by arguing that “as a bridge from social service to social justice, collaboration must challenge the existing practices of power” (Himmelman, 1996, p18), he is also seeking a change in focus from a concept of collaborative betterment to collaborative empowerment.

Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) argue that power imbalances become most significant when partners fail to agree on a shared purpose and are affected by numerous events over time. They propose that cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed when they build in resources and tactics for dealing with power imbalances and shocks, equalise power and manage conflict effectively. The relevance of time factors is confirmed by Gray (1996) who suggests that power issues, as prime sources of conflict, vary by phases as the collaboration evolves. The concept of the collaboration life-cycle devised by Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) is relevant here. This suggests partnerships go through four stages in a life-cycle, much of which was evident in the research authorities for Collaborative Guidance:

- **Pre-partnership collaboration**, characterised by a network mode of governance based upon informality, trust and a sense of common purpose.
- **Partnership creation and consolidation**, characterised by hierarchy based upon an assertion of status and authority differentials and the formalisation of procedures.
- **Partnership programme delivery**, characterised by market (or quasi-market) mechanisms of tendering and contract, with low levels of co-operation between providers.
Partnership termination or succession, characterised by a re-assertion of a network governance mode as a means to maintain agency commitment, community involvement and staff employment (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998).

The life-cycle concept has been presented in different ways. Gray (1996) identifies a general sequence of three phases in the process of collaboration, more clearly evident in the portfolio— a problem-setting phase, a direction-setting phase and an implementation phase — but stresses that not all collaborations proceed through these phases in sequence. Kanter (1994, p. 99), amusingly likens collaborative phases to those in marriages— courtship, engagement, housekeeping, bridging and finally, when organisations realise that they have changed, something she refers to as “old-marrieds”. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) refer to a life-cycle paradigm, typically ordered as pre-conception, initiation, formalisation, operation and termination, again familiar characteristics in the portfolio.

Changes in phases means that effective partnerships involve combining different modes of governance in an environment where the power relations between various partners will be shifting (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). Such shifts are recognised by Brandsen and van Hout (2006) who argue that as an organisation’s core tasks are increasingly fulfilled by partnerships, they shift outward and the organisation’s boundaries become more fluid. Managers no longer maintain full control of services and increasingly have to operate through incentives and persuasion rather than hierarchy, losing power as their organisations stretch out,
and resulting in a different kind of power based on “charisma and inspiration rather than rule-making” Brandsen and van Hout (2006, p547).

Power is also relevant to explaining differences between exchange theory and resource dependency theory. Whereas both recognise the mutual dependency of resources, in the former, mutually beneficial collaboration is likely to result where in the latter each party attempts to control or influence the other’s activities, suggesting that power resides implicitly in the other’s dependency (Webb, 1991; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). Webb (1991, p236), however, challenges an over-reliance on traditional resource dependency theories to explain power and suggests that power-dependence can be determined in subtle ways and that theory needs to be sensitive to the “micro politics of power relationships”.

My reflection on the use of power in the life cycle of Profession to Value is positive in respect of the first two phases of Lowndes and Skelcher’s (1998) model but problematic in the delivery phase. The power to determine the terms and conditions of social workers autonomously had resulted in the recruitment and retention problems leading to Profession to Value. The change strategy proposed necessitated forfeiting that power so persuasion was needed to present the solutions not as a forfeit but as exchange for a different power, i.e. to improve and sustain services. The positive initial response suggests that this was effective but the failure to sustain the changes supports Gray’s (1996) argument that the implementation phase results in power issues revolving around the exercise of influence, action