



What Works In Strategic Partnerships For Children?

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Barnardo's has been promoting an evidence-based approach to children's services since the mid-1990's. During the past 10 years we have commissioned leading academics and expert practitioners to review research about "What works?" for children in a wide range of subject areas.

We have recently re-launched the series of Barnardo's 'What works?' publications, bringing the material up to date and also including new titles.

What works in strategic partnerships for children? is a new title in the series and considers how to build strong and effective partnerships for children. It examines the policy context in relation to work with children and young people, looks at the history of partnership working, and reviews the theories underpinning the different models of, and approaches to, partnership working. There is also a discussion of the formation and development of partnerships and of how to maintain momentum.

The book reviews the literature relating to partnership working and addresses the following questions:

- how can we get beyond local political schisms and historical conflicts to provide the best services for children?
- are strategic partnerships always the answer?
- what are the costs associated with strategic partnership and how can these be minimised?

What works in strategic partnerships for children? aims to inform policy makers, service planners, managers and practitioners of the best current evidence on effective approaches to strategic partnerships and to provide practical guidance on how to plan, fund and deliver services in partnership for children and young people.

Contents of *What works in strategic partnerships for children?* include:

- Introduction and policy context.
- What kind of evidence help us to understand what works?
- Definitions and models.
- Getting started.
- Maintaining momentum.
- Measuring progress: evaluating strategic partnerships.
- Conclusion.

Summary

The overall aim of the series is to consider the question: what are the best ways to deliver the kinds of outcomes wanted by children and those who are responsible for their welfare? *What works in strategic partnerships for children?* is concerned with partnership working. More specifically it is concerned with strategic partnership working in localities in relation to services and interventions for children and young people.

The emphasis throughout is to use evidence of 'what works' to uncover the best possible approaches to working in partnership, to draw conclusions and to present the information in a way that will be useful and relevant to policy-makers and service planners involved in a wide range of agencies operating in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

The focus of this book is partnership working at strategic level. This includes service planning and policy-making but excludes service delivery. The focus is also primarily on horizontal linkages rather than vertical joining up. However it is recognised that it is far from always the case that effective co-ordination exists between levels of government (see, for example, DETR, 1999). While joined-up government is one aim, essentially involving better co-ordination across government departments, our purpose is to look at the co-ordination of governance through partnerships that involve not only statutory sector organisations but also voluntary and community organisations and, in some cases, the private sector too.

The introductory chapter examines the current policy context in relation to partnership working and children and young people. It also looks at the recent history of partnership working more generally, with a focus on those aspects of the policy and political context that have provided the

impetus for partnership working. Chapter 2 reviews the types of 'evidence' that have informed this publication. Definitions of partnership working are considered in the next chapter as well as reviewing a range of theories that underpin different models of, and approaches to, partnership working. Chapters 4 and 5 review the evidence relating to partnership process. This material is organised around partnership formation and development (Chapter 4) and maintaining partnership momentum (Chapter 5), including involving children and young people and the broader community. Chapter 6 is centrally concerned with measuring progress towards outcomes and frameworks for evaluation, including a discussion of the criteria that might be appropriate for assessing the effectiveness of partnerships. Conclusions are drawn in the final chapter.

Janie Percy-Smith is an independent researcher and Visiting Professor at Leeds Metropolitan University where she was, until 2002, Professor of Public policy. Janie has more than 15 years' experience of research and consultancy in the areas of research impact, social exclusion, local governance, regeneration and community development. She has particular expertise in relation to project and programme evaluation and qualitative research methods, and has worked extensively on projects requiring a high level of community involvement.

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