Navigating Collaborative Networks: Reflections on Collective Impact

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M.Ed., BA (Hons)

This thesis is submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of Glasgow

October 2024

Abstract

At a time in which children's services in Scotland are increasingly focussed on the rights of the child, recent challenges to children's education, health and wellbeing have been identified (Goldhagen et al., 2020). Threats such as inequities, violence, globalisation, and climate change combine with entrenched social, economic, and cultural factors to impact children's lives in complex ways. To mitigate such challenges professionals in educational and children's services are encouraged to develop collaborative approaches, to embed children's rights across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017a). However, despite a plethora of definitions, collaboration remains a contentious term, one that is vague and highly variable (D'Amour et al., 2005). This study aimed to explore how collaboration is understood at the local level and identify how it plays out in practice, providing greater clarity for practitioners and policymakers as they seek to work together to ensure children's rights are realised.

The study focussed on Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, who were responsible for developing collaboration across services in local areas (CNS, online). Through a series of interviews and focus groups, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences of collaboration. Adopting a mixed methods research design, the study combined social network analysis with activity theory, drawing out qualitative understandings of participants' experiences (Murphy et al., 2019). Findings indicated that despite the geographical, relational and contextual differences in their experiences, several commonalities could be identified. Participants had to survey the network of services available in their local areas, before then attempting to integrate within and subsequently influence those networks. They also had to understand the broader context in which the collaborative activity was expected to occur whilst navigating additional constraints. The study demonstrates how individuals obtain positions of influence within established networks and bounded collaborative communities.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, a massive thank you to each and every one of the participants in this study, the Local Coordinators from the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme. Your passion, commitment and determination were incredible to witness. During all the challenges, you were so very generous with your time, enabling me to learn so much from each of you. To say this study would never have happened without you is no exaggeration.

Similarly, a massive thank you to my main supervisor, Professor Chris Chapman. Not only did you take a chance on me, but you gave me the time and space to find my own way, trusting that I would get there in the end. Such unwavering support gave me the strength and drive to keep moving forward, even when unimaginable challenges presented themselves. You were always very astute in realising when things were getting too much for me and talked me through even my very worst bad days. You were always there when I needed you the most and I will never forget it.

On a related note, a big thank you to my second supervisor, Dr Tom Cowhitt. Talk about turning up fashionably late! But you made such a strong impact in such a short period of time, I genuinely cannot imagine how things would have turned out without your influence, guidance and support.

Thanks must also go to Dr Claire Bynner. Again, although our time was limited, you will never know the impact you made. Thanks so much for all your help and support.

I should also thank two of my colleagues and partners-in-crime, who had to suffer many rants, moans and screams of frustration over the years, Elizabeth Black and Marie McQuade. I hope I can return the favour one day.

Which brings me to Dr Mary Wingrave. You will never know just how influential you were. Your energy and enthusiasm were infectious and inspired me to continue my studies. So, this is all your fault!

Finally, to my other half, Roo, who was absolutely no help whatsoever! I couldn't have done it without you, Sweetie! -x-

List of Abbreviations

ANT	Actor Network Theory
AT	Activity Theory
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CCI	Comprehensive Community Initiative
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CLD	Community Learning and Development
CNS	Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CYPCS	Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland
ECN	Educational Collaborative Networks
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GCPH	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
GIRFEC	Getting It Right For Every Child
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
IAA	Impact Acceleration Account
KEIF	Knowledge Exchange and Impact Fellow
LC	Local Coordinator
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
MMSNR	Mixed Methods Social Network Research
PLS	Plain Language Statement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Declaration of Originality

I certify that this thesis is my original work and that all references to, and quotations from, the work of others contained therein have been clearly identified and fully attributed.

Alastair Craig Orr

Chapter 1

Aims and Overview

Recent decades have seen a proliferation of 'existential threats to children and childhood', with universal challenges in areas such as health, education and wellbeing (Goldhagen et al., 2020: 80). These threats include, but are not limited to, inequities, violence, globalisation, and climate change (Goldhagen et al., 2020). To embed children's rights effectively and equitably across Scotland, services and sectors are encouraged to work collaboratively (UN, 1989; Scottish Government, 2017a). Yet, collaboration itself remains a contentious term, with many definitions (Jordan and Michel, 2000; Sicotte et al., 2002; Thomson et al., 2009). To establish how this concept is understood from the perspective of those who are expected to realise it, this study aimed to explore how collaboration is understood at the local level and identify how it plays out in practice.

This introductory chapter aims to:

- Identify the main aims of the study.
- Introduce the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland Programme and the role of the Local Coordinator, as the participants in this study.
- Establish how the research aims have been addressed throughout the thesis, with a breakdown of related chapters.

This chapter will begin by describing the focus of collaboration within children's services in Scotland, before introducing the setting for this study, the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland Programme. Within this programme, Local Coordinators aimed to develop collaboration across local communities to develop local solutions and context-specific responses. This study aimed to support such participants through a reflective process, to identify their experiences of embedding collaborative improvement in local communities. The chapter will move on to introduce the role of these Local Coordinators. From here the chapter will describe the upcoming thesis and how the arguments are laid out.

1.1: Complex Problems, Collaborative Solutions

Global challenges to children's health and wellbeing have changed over the past several decades, with entrenched social, economic, and cultural factors combining to impact children and childhood in complex ways (Goldhagen et al., 2020). A children's rights-based approach is required to respond to such global threats, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) (UN, 1989; 2015) seen as the foundation from which to establish a global children's rights agenda. Together, these treaties have the potential to provide a universal framework to address the needs of children and young people, through an integrated system response (Eastwood, 2018). Yet, to fully embed children's rights in local communities requires a collaborative response.

1.1.1: A Global Issue

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) establishes the rights that every child in the world is entitled to, including civil, economic, political, social, and cultural (UK: JCHR, 2015). It is the most comprehensive statement of children's rights ever produced and has been the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history (UNICEF, online). As the primary driver behind international children's policy, the UNCRC is the foundation underpinning a global children's rights culture (Quennerstedt et al., 2018).

Alongside the CRC (UN, 1989), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, consist of 17 goals, including commitments to end poverty, hunger and food insecurity for all, promoting well-being at all ages and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (UN, 2015). In short, the SDGs establish an agenda focussing specifically on human rights for all (Yimbesalu and Zakus, 2019). While none of the goals exclusively relate solely to children, most SDGs have targets that directly or indirectly address the needs of children (Bhardwaj et al., 2017). Citing 66 meaningful references to children and young people within the UN General Assembly Resolution in which the SDGs were adopted (UN, 2015), Arts (2019) demonstrates the importance given to children and young people in the post-2015 global development agenda.

In the decades since its introduction, children's rights, as articulated in the CRC (UN, 1989), have gained traction in policymaking, influencing a range of political and social practices (Holzscheiter et al., 2019). Similarly, the SDGs (UN, 2015) are an important development, encouraging governments to make better rights-based provision for children and adults

globally (Lundy, 2019). Duncan (2019: 166) observes that there is an increasing incorporation of rights-based approaches and participatory strategies in working with children and young people, suggesting that this is evidence of the increasing recognition of children's competencies and capabilities as active social agents. Yet, the ways in which both the CRC and SDGs are embedded in Scotland is complex and multi-faceted.

1.1.2: A National Response

Set in a backdrop of a global children's rights agenda (UN, 1989; 2015) Scotland's national response is ongoing, with children's rights, and the CRC in particular, prominent in national policy (Tisdall, 2015; Gadda et al., 2019). Within Scotland, children's rights are protected and promoted through a number of legislative measures, including the Human Rights Act 1998, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and, most recently, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Although the Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (1950) into UK domestic law, the first time the CRC was explicitly mentioned in Scottish domestic legislation came with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Section 1(1) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on Scottish Ministers,

> a) to keep under consideration whether there are any steps which they could take which would or might secure better or further effect in Scotland of the UNCRC requirements, and
>
> b) if they consider it appropriate to do so, take any of the steps identified by that consideration.

As well as providing a report every three years to the Scottish Parliament detailing how they have fulfilled these duties, under s.1(5) of the Act, Scottish Ministers must also take such steps as they consider appropriate to obtain the views of children to inform their future plans. However, as Tisdall (2015) argues, the duties placed on Ministers under the Act are generally vague and legally weak. Yet, the Act also places key elements of the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach (Scottish Government, 2008) in statute.

The principles and values of the GIRFEC approach are underpinned by the CRC (UN, 1989), with the aim of being child-focused, centred on the wellbeing of the child and ensuring each child's needs are identified and addressed early (Scottish Government, 2008). Given such a broad remit, the GIRFEC approach emphasises the need for services to work together in a coordinated way, to meet the needs of each child and support their wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2008). This theme of joined-up working will be one that will be re-visited later in the chapter.

Along with the Human Rights Act 1998, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the GIRFEC national practice model, the Scottish Government continue to make strong commitments to rights-based approaches. To realise that commitment, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was unanimously passed in the Scottish Parliament in March 2021. This then received Royal Assent, with the UNCRC Act coming into force from 16th July 2024. Yet, the CRC (UN, 1989) is not the only stimulus for legislative and policy development within Scotland, with the SDGs (UN, 2015) also being strongly reflected.

During a review of the National Performance Framework (NPF) in 2018, the Scottish Government collaborated with a range of stakeholders in identifying the structure and vision of the NPF. The revised framework included a renewed Purpose, eleven National Outcomes and eighty-one National Indicators (Scottish Government, online a). Importantly, these National Outcomes were aligned with the SDGs (UN, 2015) and were meant to help track progress in reducing inequalities (Scottish Government, online b). Of the eighty-one indicators provided, nine relate specifically to education in Scotland, including consideration of the confidence, resilience and participation of children and young people. Further indicators focusing directly on children and young people include the quality of children' services, positive relationships and ensuring their views respected (Scottish Government, online c).

To further support the outcomes laid out in the NPF, the Scottish Government published the Fairer Scotland Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2016 a). This Action Plan was a further response to the SDGs (UN, 2015), setting out specific actions relating to the eradication of child poverty, paving the way for what would become the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2016 a) included a commitment to establish an

independent non-statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission. Established in July 2017, the Commission's initial focus was on child poverty, providing advice during the development of the first delivery plan (Scottish Government, 2017 b). As well as monitoring progress towards tackling poverty and inequality, the Commission also had a strong advocacy role, working with business and wider civic society to promote the importance of such issues. Furthermore, the Commission decided how best to involve partner organisations, including third sector stakeholders and relevant public bodies, as it sought to enhance, rather than replicate, work already being undertaken.

Legislation such as the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, along with the GIRFEC national practice model (Scottish Government, 2008), demonstrate the Scottish Government's commitments to rights-based approaches. Alongside this, the National Performance Framework (NPF) (Scottish Government, online a) and Fairer Scotland Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2016 a) provided a direct response to the SDGs (UN, 2015), setting out specific actions relating to the eradication of child poverty. This was further developed with the establishment of the Poverty and Inequality Commission, which had both a scrutiny and advocacy role (Scottish Government, 2017 b) in eliminating child poverty. Despite such political progress however, how children in Scotland experience their rights continues to vary, depending on multiple, often inter-related, factors.

1.1.3: The Challenge Remains

The legislative and policy measures described above are all inter-related with a common foundation in the SDGs (UN, 2015). Many of these goals, and subsequent measures, reflect children's rights, even if these are not explicitly addressed (Kilkelly, 2020), reflecting the complex interrelationship between the CRC and SDGs (UN, 1989; 2015). Within the National Performance Framework (Scottish Government, online a) for example, a range of indicators cover aspects such as education, wellbeing, equality and respecting children's views. However, in 2019, only 61% of boys and 55% of girls felt that adults took their views into account. These percentages fell for children in the most deprived quintiles and for children with physical or mental health conditions (Scottish Government, online b). This demonstrates not only that many children in Scotland continue to feel that their views are not respected, but that this is also related to aspects such as gender, poverty and health.

Such disparities were further accentuated in subsequent years, due in no small part to the COVID-19 pandemic. A report by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) in 2021 acknowledged that persistent inequalities not only remained, but in some instances increased during the pandemic, particularly in areas such as poverty, food insecurity and education. In March 2020, schools, along with other children's services, closed, exacerbating educational inequalities, and impacting children's learning, health and wellbeing (CYPCS, 2021). Although funding was made available to local authorities to support moves to online learning, many children, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, were unable to access such resources (CYPCS, 2021). In certain instances, these issues were compounded by increasing financial pressures and reduced income, as parents and families struggled to support home learning (CYPCS, 2021).

A key priority for the Scottish Government is in closing the attainment gap in education for children and young people from lower socio-economic areas. Regular attendance at school is seen as crucial in children's educational attainment, particularly those from such backgrounds (Ansari et al., 2020). However, evidence suggests that the educational attainment gap increases over extended absence from educational settings (Holt and Murray, 2022). Stewart et al. (2018) argue that this is due to inequalities in opportunities, and the rising issue of food insecurity. This has led some, such as Holt and Murray (2022) and the Children's Commissioner for England (2020), to argue that the extended closure of schools throughout the pandemic could only exacerbate the already complex issue of educational attainment.

Attendance remained an issue for many students, even once schools began re-opening. With guidance in Scotland requiring students to self-isolate if they, or a family member, tested positive for the virus (Scottish Government, 2020 a), education continued to be disrupted for many. Given that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to be exposed to the virus than those in more affluent areas (Public Health Scotland, 2020; National Records of Scotland, 2021), children and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were once again disadvantaged (Sosu and Klien, 2021). This is supported by data that suggests school attendance rates in Scotland were highest in the least deprived areas (93%) and lowest in the most deprived areas (84%) (Sibieta, 2020).

Further demonstrating the challenges of implementing Goal 4 of the SDGs (UN, 2015) and Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC (UN, 1989), national exams were cancelled in the academic years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, with the appeals system proving inadequate and failing to account for exceptional circumstances. Once again, this was an area in which children and young people felt they were being excluded from the conversation. Rather than engaging them in the decision-making process, young people were not invited to participate in the conversations that were shaping their education (CYPCS, 2021), despite them having the right to express their views in the matters that affect them (Article 12: UN, 1989). Once again, this lack of engagement was accentuated due to gender bias, norms and stereotypes, with girls reporting 'unequal participation in decision-making processes' (CYPCS, 2021: 3). Such gender bias is the primary focus of Goal 5 of the SDGs and yet remains an area of concern for children and young people in Scotland.

With global goals specifically targeted at the elimination of poverty and gender inequalities, along with aiming to improve health and wellbeing, the Scottish Government (online c) argue that children and young people are included and involved in the decisions that affect them. The recent data suggests this is not true for all children equally. Yet, given the plethora of other goals and intersecting rights, governments and services can find their resources targeted in areas beyond genuine and equal participation of children and young people. Exploring the first-hand experiences of children in the UK, Holt and Murray (2022) found that the impact of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic on children was uneven and unequal. The handling of issues such as school closures and the format of exams accentuated the already prevalent disparities and inequalities. It was also in these areas specifically that children and young people felt they were not being consulted (Tisdall et el., 2020).

Although the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated issues around unequal and fragmented service provision for children and young people, it was not the cause of such issues. Fitzgerald and Kay (2008) argue that, since the beginning of the 1990s, professionals involved in the delivery of children's services have been concerned around the demarcation of areas such as the health, welfare, education and protection of children and young people. Similarly, Laing and Todd (2020) stress that many of the attempts to 'close the gap' in attainment between children living in socio-economically deprived areas and those from

more affluent areas has often led to high-stakes environments, further disadvantaging those children and young people. Although international treaties such as the CRC (UN, 1989) and global goals (UN, 2015) seek to address this wide array of issues, the national legislation and policy reflecting these treaties are often multi-layered and reflecting multiple purposes.

Given the complexities involved, embedding children's rights in practice could be, what many define as, 'wicked problems'; complex, ever evolving societal problems that cannot be successfully treated with traditional linear approaches (Ritchey, 2013). Attempts to manage such wicked problems require a broad range of knowledge and skills, to address the complexities involved and to serve as a premise for cooperation (Weber and Khademian, 2008: 337). In short, 'wicked problems' require collaborative solutions. Given the complexities of embedding children's rights in Scotland (Tisdall, 2015), the challenges are too great for any one organisation or service to handle on their own. What is required is a collaborative approach to children's rights implementation.

1.2: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

As governments around the Western world grapple with the multiple factors and complex problems that impact children's rights, education and outcomes (Chapman, 2021), creative approaches, adopting alternative approaches to collaborative improvement have developed. Many of these initiatives develop from place-based approaches, in which the focus is on 'local flexibility rather than systematic coherence' (Bynner, 2016: 11). Increasingly, schools are finding innovative approaches when collaborating with other services to provide wide-ranging and continuous support to children and families in what has been described as comprehensive community initiatives (CCI) (Kerr et al., 2024). The following section will describe a recent programme within Scotland, Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS), which aimed to address some of the 'wicked problems' described above. A key role within this programme was that of the Local Coordinators, who were tasked with supporting partnerships and developing collaboration across services (CNS, online). To understand how collaboration plays out in practice, these were the individuals who were invited to participate in this study.

1.2.1: Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) was initially developed during 2016-17, with an introductory meeting between local and national stakeholders and potential partners occurring in December 2016 (Chapman et al., 2019). The primary aim of the programme was to improve outcomes for children and young people living in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty, addressing inequalities in areas such as education, health, and housing, by applying evidence-based approaches within a Scottish context (CNS, online). Given the educational reform agenda, along with legislation such as the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act (2017), and related delivery plans, such as the 'Every child, every chance: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022' (Scottish Government 2018a), CNS developed in a complex web of interweaving policy and legislation (Bynner et al., 2019). Along with those already mentioned, some of the policy, legislation and reports that informed the development of CNS are provided in Table 1.1, below.

Every Child, Every Chance: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22
The Place Principle 2018
Scotland's Public Health Priorities 2018
Child Poverty Scotland Act 2017
Scotland's Open Government Action Plan: 2018-2020
Delivery Plan for Scottish Education 2016
Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
The Scottish Attainment Challenge 2015
Children and Young People's Act 2014
Developing the Young Workforce 2014
Public Bodies Joint Working Act 2014
Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) 2012
The Christie Commission 2011
The Scottish Education Curriculum – the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) 2008
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)

Table 1.1: The policy context for CNS (adapted from Bynner et al., 2019)

Aiming to contribute to several targets within the 'Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022' (Scottish Government, 2018a), along with multiple outcomes and indicators from the National Performance Framework (Scottish Government, online a), CNS focussed on developing collaboration across services, leading to new working arrangements and approaches. The following few months saw the development of

collaborative relationships between key stakeholders, whilst resources were secured to appoint key personnel (Chapman, et al., 2019).

By August 2017, funding had been secured from several sources, such as through an Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Account (ESRC, IAA), along with business and philanthropy, to secure two research and evaluation associates and a knowledge exchange and impact fellow (KEIF). Alongside this, support from the Local Education Authority enabled a headteacher of a local primary school to join in the role of local co-ordinator, with the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) providing additional academic support and operational leadership when required (Chapman et al., 2019).

Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland was formally launched in early 2018, within two adjacent neighbourhoods in the east end of Glasgow. Initial activity within this area included identifying priorities for action, with the CNS team working closely with local young people and communities on projects focussing on play, the development of student research teams and investigations relating to young people not in education, employment or training. Not long after the official launch, the Scottish Government committed to extending the CNS approach, by developing new sites in other areas within Scotland, both urban and rural, in which high concentrations of children and young people live in poverty (Chapman et al., 2019). This eventually led to the development of six CNS sites across three local authority areas, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, below.

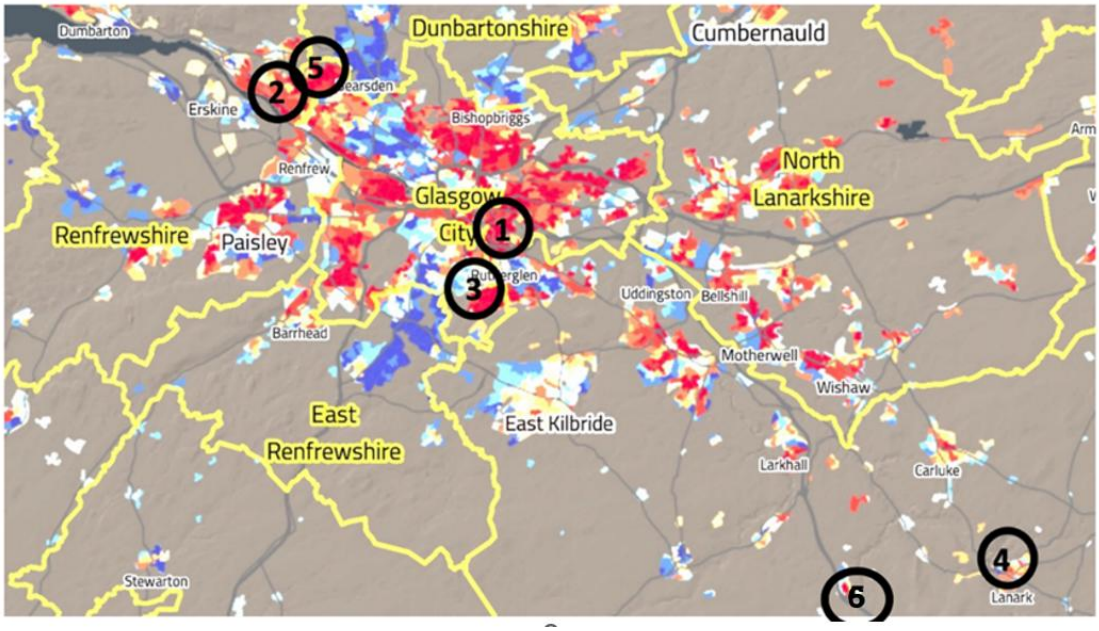


Figure 1.1: CNS sites (from Ward, 2022)

The second of these commenced in September 2019, with the other four sites established in October 2020 (CNS, 2021a). Each of the sites selected were areas of multiple deprivation, with each area containing high concentrations of children living in poverty (Chapman et al., 2019). Issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and inequality are of increasing concern to governments both within the UK and farther afield. Currently one in four of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty (Scottish Government, online b). Along with this, children from low-income households in Scotland are recognised as doing significantly worse at school than their more affluent peers (MacInnes et al., 2014).

Describing themselves as an 'impartial, backbone organisation' (Leman and Watson, 2018), CNS sought to support service delivery, by ensuring services were co-ordinated and working towards 'collective impact with collaborative action' (CNS, online). First described by Kania and Kramer (2011: 36) as 'the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem', collective impact is an alternative approach to service reform. Bringing together a variety of organisations and businesses within one network, the backbone organisation (in this case, CNS) aims to support them in moving beyond existing partnership models, to deliver better outcomes from a place-based perspective with the specific needs of the local community, children and

young people at the centre. The concept of collective impact will be further explored in Chapter Four.

Aiming for long-term collaborations between practitioners and researchers, CNS was an example of a research–practice partnership (RPP), which aims to encourage researchers to focus on problems of practice, at the same time as establishing new, innovative ways for researchers and practitioners to work together (Coburn and Penuel, 2016). Research is a core activity of RPPs, rather than those forms of collaboration which primarily focus on service delivery (e.g., professional development, evaluation) and pure advocacy. RPPs do not seek to advance knowledge and theory for its own sake but focuses instead on the development of practice. In this way, such collaborative research arrangements aim to transform the relations between researchers, educators, and communities (Penuel and Hill, 2019).

Developing on both the collective impact approach and with a focus on research–practice partnerships, CNS also aimed to incorporate a capabilities approach to service delivery. Brunner and Watson (online) describe a capabilities approach as one which 'assumes that the social world incorporates diverse people, with different levels of power, efficiency and interests'. By recognising the strengths and capabilities within the community, CNS aimed to engage directly with the children, young people and families within local areas in co-developing and co-producing the delivery of services. As the CNS programme developed across multiple locations, the requirements of the service led to further developments within the CNS team, including appointing a National Director and expanding the research team. As part of these developments, and to develop collaboration across local services, a Local Coordinator was recruited for each of the six CNS sites.

1.2.2: The Local Coordinator

Being the visible presence of the programme, a Local Coordinator was based in each neighbourhood (CNS, online). Identifying the priorities that are distinctive to each area, Local Coordinators were responsible for developing local solutions and context-specific responses. In ensuring each neighbourhood effectively promoted the priorities of local children and young people, Local Coordinators were required to support partnerships and develop collaboration across services (CNS, online). This necessitated developing

relationships with a broad range of stakeholders, to support and facilitate local, strategic and community engagement and action. Aligned to the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Standards Council Competences Framework (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2022), Local Coordinators were expected to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and personal characteristics reflective of competent CLD practitioners.

Setting out the CLD values, competences and ethics that are applied in professional practice, the Competences Framework (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2022) seeks to develop practice, supporting practitioners to become not only competent, but critically reflective. Embodying the values and principles of CLD, practitioners, in this instance, the Local Coordinators, had to critically reflect on their practice and experience to integrate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, using these effectively in their work (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2022: 4).

An overview of Local Coordinators skills and attributes is presented in Figure 1.2, below.

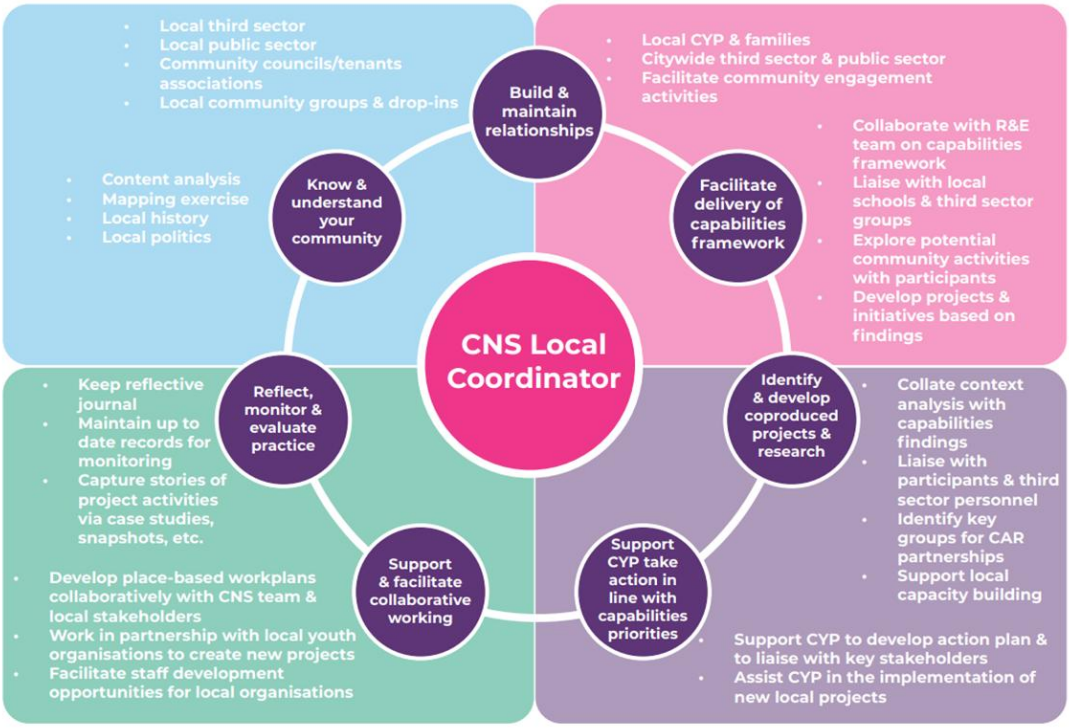


Figure 1.2 Overview of Local Coordinator skills and attributes (CNS, 2021a)

As the first CNS site opened in the East End of Glasgow in 2018, a Local Coordinator was recruited to be based in the area, working at the community level to identify what the real issues, priorities and concerns are for those who live and work there. As the pilot site of the

larger programme, the Local Coordinator was entering an established network, one that had a recent history of engaging with the smaller CNS team, including the research and evaluation associates and the knowledge exchange and impact fellow (KEIF). As the second site opened in September 2019, another Local Coordinator was positioned within that area, entering a substantially different network, with less of a shared history. By October 2020, four additional CNS sites had been established, each with their own dedicated Local Coordinator based in the area. Sites varied between urban, town and rural locations, and Local Coordinators experiences varied greatly, reflective of the place-based nature of their roles (CNS, 2021b). Being contextually and demographically different, each area presented unique challenges for Local Coordinators, as they aimed to enable and facilitate collaboration between local organisations, families, and children and young people.

One challenge that could not have been foreseen in the early days of the CNS programme, however, came in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, to ensure public safety in light of the pandemic, Scotland, along with the other nations within the UK, went into 'lockdown', effectively closing all but essential businesses, with the Scottish Government asking the public to work from home where possible (SPICe Spotlight, 2022). The closure of educational and care services proved especially problematic, as this was seen to negatively impact the economy, education and employment (OECD, 2020). Nevertheless, given the public health concerns, a number of lockdowns and additional measures were required up until December 2021 (Institute for Government, 2022).

Although necessary given the public health concerns, for Local Coordinators within CNS, such measures proved particularly challenging in the development of relationships with local communities. Expected to build and maintain relationships, and to understand the communities, Local Coordinators questioned how to adopt a place-based approach when access to the 'place' in question was limited. To facilitate and support collaborative working, Local Coordinators had to regularly reflect, monitor and evaluate their practice and progress (CNS, 2021a). Given such restraints, Local Coordinators had to carefully consider the best ways to develop relationships between many stakeholders, giving them a unique perspective on the collaborative process. With an underpinning focus on promoting collaborative working between and across sectors, Local Coordinators experiences varied, given the geographical and contextual differences. However, through participating in this

study, Local Coordinators were encouraged to reflect, both individually and collectively, about their experiences of collaboration. Doing so, enabled them to identify commonalities across their experiences, and identify how collaboration is understood at the local level, exploring the ways it plays out in practice.

1.3: Research Aims

Given the focus on collaborative working across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017a; GTCS, 2021) this study aimed to establish a greater understanding of the term collaboration and how it plays out in practice. With current definitions ranging from simply working together (Jordan and Michel, 2000) to more detailed consideration of the factors and phases that shape collaboration (Sicotte et al., 2002; Thomson et al., 2009), it seemed important to establish how this concept is understood from the perspective of those who are expected to realise it. As Viry (2022) argues, while contexts are important in the establishment and development of collaborative relationships, the identification and impact of such contexts remains generally under explored. To this end, Local Coordinators from the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme were invited to participate in this study, sharing their own views and experiences of collaboration and the ways in which it plays out in practice, with a focus on the cultural and historical contexts within which they operate. Developing such a 'bottom-up' understanding of what collaboration is may provide greater clarity for practitioners and policymakers as they seek to work together to ensure children's rights are realised.

To this end, this study aimed to explore how collaboration is understood at the local level and identify how it plays out in practice.

Specifically, the study aimed to:

- Identify what factors individuals need to consider when entering or establishing a collaborative network,
- Discuss how individuals understand their own role within such networks,
- Examine the challenges or barriers to collaborative improvement, and
- Reflect on the outcomes of collaborative improvement.

The issues relating to effective cross-sector collaboration are of particular interest to me, as I have spent over twenty years working with children and young people in a variety of settings. Having worked across the public, private and third sectors, there has always been an expectation that children's services will collaborate when required. Yet, how such collaborations are expected to manifest and develop is rarely made explicit. With this in mind, I aimed to support Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme through a process of individual and collective reflection, providing them an opportunity to consider for themselves what collaboration means to them. Such a focus required an ongoing process of self-reflection, as I had to regularly consider how effective the research design was in achieving this aim.

The value of this small-scale, qualitative study was in revealing the breadth and nature of participants understandings, experiences and perceptions of collaboration (Lewis et al., 2014). Purposefully not designed as an evaluative study, nor to measure outcomes, the focus was on how participants experienced collaboration across their different professional communities of interest (Fischer, 2001), considering some of the factors that influenced collaborative improvement and the different ways in which they went about embedding children's rights in local communities.

Given the challenges faced by Local Coordinators it was important that participation in the study was not onerous or burdensome (Cohen et al., 2018), but that participants found value in the process. To this end, the study aimed to support Local Coordinators through an ongoing process of reflection, supporting them in the development of relationships and collaborative working, aligning with the elements within the CLD Competences Framework (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2022).

1.4: Thesis Overview

Having set out the overall aims of the study, the following four chapters will provide the accompanying literature review, in which greater context will be established relating to the focus of study. This will begin in the following chapter, Chapter Two, which will identify how the term 'collaboration' has been defined in the literature and theory, describing some of the ways in which the term has been understood. From the basic premise that collaboration simply means working together (Jordan and Michel, 2000), the chapter will move on to

consider some of the more complex understandings, including consideration of the different phases of collaboration. The chapter will conclude with consideration of some of the criticisms around collaborative practice.

Chapter Three will then consider what collaboration consists of, such as the flow of capital between collaborative partners, such as social capital (Halpern, 2005) or professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). This will be followed as the chapter identifies some of the ways collaboration can manifest, such as in collaborative communities or networks (Dumitru, 2012; Wasserman and Faust, 1994). The chapter will move on to consider how such communities and networks are led by firstly exploring the concept of leadership along with a multitude of leadership styles (MacBeath, 2003), before then describing the styles and behaviours most suited to leading collaborative networks (Coleman, 2011).

Chapter Four will then develop the theme of collaborative networks, identifying why it is important to understand these in relation to the larger systems within which they operate. The chapter will begin by exploring a range of systems, including closed, open and ecological, each of which reflects the relationship the system has to its environment. From here the narrative will move on to consider the ways in which such knowledge can develop into systems leadership, underpinned by a 'moral imperative' (Mowat, 2019). The chapter will move on to describe the open-systems approach taken by the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011), identifying some of the common challenges, and how it differentiates from other forms of collaborative improvement.

The last of the literature reviews, Chapter Five, will pick up on the themes established previously, specifically the importance of networks and systems perspectives. The chapter will describe two frameworks that were to influence the research design and the methods I would use to elicit reflections on collaborative networks and systems from Local Coordinators, Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Engeström, 2001). Providing background information on both, the chapter will discuss the underlying principles and provide examples of how each have been used effectively in practice and research.

This will be followed by two chapters describing the methodology and methods used to generate and analyse data. To begin, Chapter Six will begin by positioning the research within a suitable paradigm, for without a systematic methodology, grounded in a firm paradigmatic position, any conclusions drawn may be dismissed as guesswork (Haralambos and Holborn, 2013). The chapter will then move on to describe how the data was generated. The narrative will describe how both Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory were applied within this Mixed Methods Research (MMR) design (Johnson et al., 2007) to engage the participants in a reflective process, drawing out their experiences of collaborative improvement. From here, the chapter will reflect on some of the limitations inherent in the research design, before concluding with consideration of the ethical factors relating to the study.

Having described the methods of data generation, Chapter Seven will then provide a detailed account of the methods of data analysis. Beginning with the network data, the chapter will describe the ways in which this was visualised to support the reflective process. This will be followed by consideration of the measures of analysis that were applied to the network data, such as individual and group degree, density, components, and connectedness (Krackhardt, 1994; Borgatti et al., 2018). The chapter will then go on to describe the methods used to analyse the textual data, and 'network narratives' (Crossley et al., 2015) from both the qualitative interviews and subsequent discussion groups, providing qualitative understandings into the 'network cultures' that underpinned the 'network structures' (Crossley et al., 2015).

Following this, two chapters will then be presented, each discussing the primary themes that emerged from the analysis of the generated data, drawing out tentative conclusions where possible. This will begin as Chapter Eight describes Local Coordinators experiences of their own developing professional networks and their own roles within them. Moving beyond the size and structure of such networks, participants were encouraged to reflect on the relationships between network members. The chapter will describe some of the common themes identified and how these influenced attempts at collaborative improvement. Chapter Nine will develop this, as it discusses the ways in which participants went on to discuss some of the factors that influenced their developing relationships with network members. Throughout both chapters, some of the commonalities amongst

participants experiences are drawn out and examined. Specifically focussing on the challenges, barriers and outcomes of collaborative improvement, the chapters will look to identify the ways in which collaboration plays out in 'real world' settings.

The thesis will conclude with one final chapter, in which conclusions will be drawn relating to the ways in which collaboration is understood at the local level and identify how it plays out in practice. In doing so, primary factors in the development of collaborative improvement networks will be identified, with consideration of the relationship between them, and the cultural/historical landscape in which they are situated. The chapter will describe the approach Local Coordinators took when seeking to obtain positions of influence within established networks and consider implications for future practice and research.

Chapter 2

Understanding Collaboration

Although international treaties such as the CRC (UN, 1989) and the SDGs (UN, 2015) are reflected within Scottish legislation and policy, embedding them at the local level remains problematic, requiring a collaborative approach to service provision (Christie Commission, 2011; Scottish Government, 2018b). As the visible presence of the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, Local Coordinators were based in neighbourhoods across a number of local authorities, to support partnerships and develop collaboration across services (CNS, online). These roles required developing relationships with a broad range of stakeholders, to support and facilitate local, strategic and community engagement and action, under-pinned by a rights-based agenda (UN, 1989; 2015). This study aimed to establish how the individuals in these roles experienced collaboration, identifying some of the commonalities and distinctions between their experiences.

Collaboration is not, however, a focus unique to the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme. Indeed, cross-sector collaboration is featured heavily across the policy and legislative landscape, following on from the Christie Commission report on public sector reform in 2011. To better situate the CNS programme within the appropriate context this chapter will begin by describing the ways in which collaboration is commonly featured in policy and legislation relating to the educational and care services for children and young people in Scotland. This will not only provide greater clarity and context in relation to the role of Local Coordinators but will highlight the increasing focus on collaborative approaches. However, given such a focus, it is also necessary to establish what precisely is meant by the term collaboration, and the variety of ways it has been understood.

To address this, the following chapter aims to:

- Describe the collaborative focus within the Scottish policy and legislative landscape as it relates to services for children and young people, providing more background context in relation to CNS and the role of the Local Coordinator.

- Identify how the term 'collaboration' has been defined in the literature and theory, taking account of the different phases of collaboration, including the preconditions, processes and outcomes.

The chapter will begin by developing the discussion from the previous chapter, demonstrating the focus of collaboration when seeking to embed children's rights and global goals within Scotland (UN, 1989; 2015). The chapter will identify some of the legislation and policy that was developed in response to the Christie Commission report into the reformation of public services, which itself highlighted the need for more integrated service provision (2011). Two legislative Acts will be discussed with a focus on collaboration and the development of local provision through community involvement (Brock and Everingham, 2018). The chapter will move on to consider how this collaborative focus is reflected within the Scottish education sector specifically, for example, through the establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives and related initiatives. This will be followed by consideration of how collaboration is featured within professional standards, in education and related sectors.

Having established the legislative and policy background of the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, with an underpinning focus on collaboration, the chapter will move on to identify how collaboration has previously been understood. From the basic premise that collaboration simply means working together (Jordan and Michel, 2000), the chapter will move on to consider some of the more complex understandings, including factors that many perceive as being vital to the process, such as the distribution of power, maintaining autonomy and creating shared rules (Lank, 2006; Wood and Gray, 1991). Yet, many, such as Sicotte et al. (2002), acknowledge that collaboration is a linear process, occurring in a series of stages or phases. Therefore, the chapter will consider three phases of collaboration; the preconditions, the processes, and finally, the outcome of such activity.

Beginning with the conditions that need to exist before collaboration can occur, the chapter will consider some of the foundational aspects necessary for collaboration to be effective. However, many acknowledge that factors that are often seen as a necessary foundation are often emergent properties; ones that will manifest and develop throughout the process (Huxham and Vangen, 2004; D'Amour et al., 2005). From here, the chapter will aim to identify what some of these processes are, and what actually happens during collaboration.

These invariably reflect the relational aspect of collaboration, with a focus on team processes and team development (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977; Lacoursiere, 1980; Gersick, 1988). The chapter will explore how such concepts can be applied to collaborative, multi-agency teams, with a focus on the interpersonal processes, as the importance of learning about such levels of interaction is widely acknowledged (Marks et al., 2001; Imperial, 2005; McNamara, 2012). The narrative will then move on to reflect on 'the dark side of collaboration' (Chapman, 2019) and consider some of the less effective interactions. Reflecting on such aspects invariably leads to related concepts, such as conflict and contradictions (Abbott, 1988; Engeström, 2001). How effective these interactions are will impact the effectiveness of the collaboration and so the narrative will go on to consider the outcome of such activity and whether it can be described as collaborative advantage or collaborative inertia (Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

2.1: Collaboration in Action

By considering how children's rights (UN, 1989) and Global Goals (UN, 2015) are embedded within the Scottish policy landscape, it is evident the Scottish Government are aspiring to make rights real for all (Scottish Government, 2016a). It is as equally apparent that many children and young people do not feel their rights are being upheld (Scottish Government, online b). Given the complexities involved, many services have developed collaborative, integrated approaches to service reform. This section will go on to consider some of these collaborative approaches in both health and social care and the education sectors.

2.1.1: Cooperation and Integration

Given the recognition that no one service can cater for the needs of all children and young people, let alone aligning these with global goals (UN, 2015) and national targets (Scottish Government, online a), there is a greater drive towards collaboration and joined-up working. For example, as previously discussed, the GIRFEC approach emphasises the need for services to work together in a coordinated way, to meet the needs of each child and support their wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2008). Establishing a common language and shared understanding, the national practice model promotes multiagency coordination across organizational boundaries. Yet, despite the intentions for greater service integration, Coles et al. (2016) argues that there are still inherent tensions when applying the model to

practice, including issues around professional roles, data sharing and confidentiality. Despite these tensions, aspects of the GIRFEC model are placed in statute, in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This Act is one of two pieces of legislation that had a significant impact on children's services in Scotland (Brock and Everingham, 2018). Alongside the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 was introduced in the same year; both underpinned by the principles of public sector reform established by the Christie Commission, in its report on the Future Delivery of Public Services in 2011.

The Commission was established to identify recommendations for the development of public services. Key to the reform process, several principles were established, including empowering individuals and communities, becoming more efficient, with a greater focus on integrated service provision (Christie Commission, 2011). The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 reflected these principles in two key ways. As previously discussed, aspects of the GIRFEC model were brought into statute, including the Child's Plan and Assessment of Wellbeing, supporting greater cooperation and integration between services (Scottish Government, 2008). Along with this came a requirement for health boards and local authorities to report to Scottish Ministers annually on their progress towards more integrated service delivery (Brock and Everingham, 2018). This focus on integration and cooperation was further embedded in the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014.

Providing the legislative framework for the integration of health and social care services in Scotland, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 placed a duty on health boards and local authorities to integrate the governance, planning and resourcing of adult health and social care services. Other services, such as children's health and care services could also be included, if there is local agreement. A report the following year, by Audit Scotland, claimed that the potential to improve outcomes for children and young people through this Act were achievable so long as they were given equal priority (Stephens et al., 2015). The intentions of both the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 was not only to achieve improvement in adult care and children's outcomes, but to develop local provision through greater community involvement (Brock and Everingham, 2018), further reflecting the principles of

the Christie Commission report (2011). These principles influenced not only health and social care services, but all services for children and young people.

2.1.2: The Educational Impetus

Along with other public service reforms, the education system in Scotland also developed to better reflect the principles set out in the Future Delivery of Public Services report (Christie Commission, 2011). A number of developments in the sector aimed to transition from a culture that had been dominated by bureaucracy and hierarchy, to one in which greater collaboration and partnership between service providers was prioritised (Chapman, 2019). These developments were best exemplified in the establishment of six Regional Improvement Collaboratives, which aimed to provide support for educational improvement through partnership and collaborative working across regions (Scottish Government, 2017c).

Following a review of education governance, the Education Governance Next Steps publication set out a vision of a school and teacher-led system (Scottish Government, 2017a). The report aimed to support the development of education governance reform, empowering schools to deliver excellence and equity for the benefit of every child in Scotland. As part of this aim, the report recommended the establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) to provide greater support for educational improvement for headteachers, teachers and practitioners through dedicated teams of professionals (Scottish Government, 2018b). The RICs were intended to support local authorities to develop new ways of working, bringing together capacity across regions and adding value through collective efforts. A dominant feature of the RICs is the ability to deliver collaborative working, including the sharing of best practice (Scottish Government, online d). The RICs are a key factor in the joint work on Public Service Reform, including collaborative partnerships across children's services (Christie Commission, 2011; Scottish Government, 2017c).

The establishment of these RICs reflected the Scottish Government's commitment to close the attainment gap between children from areas of deprivation and those in more affluent neighbourhoods (Humes, 2020). Rather than each local authority working autonomously, there is now a requirement on them to collaborate, sharing expertise and examples of good practice to develop improvement plans based on local needs (Humes, 2020). Progress is

measured through the delivery of annual regional plans and work programmes aligned to the National Improvement Framework (Scottish Government, online e). Although it is still too early to evaluate the impact of RICs on school performance and improvement (Chapman, 2019; Humes, 2020), they help illustrate the continuing focus on collaborative practice and partnership working across children's services in Scotland. Other developments within the education sector further underline this focus.

The Scottish Government developed a delivery plan specifically focussing on the promotion of excellence and equity throughout the education system (Scottish Government, 2016b). The delivery plan centred on three core aims; closing the attainment gap, ensuring the delivery of the curriculum, and empowering teachers, schools and communities (Scottish Government, 2016b: 3). To ensure the actions set out in the delivery plan were influenced by international best practice an International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) was established, to advise Scottish Ministers on how best to achieve excellence and equity in Scottish education (Scottish Government, 2018c). Along with this aim, the ICEA's role was to advise on the Scottish Government's priorities for education, ensuring policy and practice and to advise on the reporting and planning cycle of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Improvement Plan (Scottish Government, online e).

In a report by the OECD in 2015, the NIF was seen to have the potential in providing a strong evidence base, enhancing the breadth and depth of the Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, online) and complimenting current inspection reports. By developing a culture of collaboration and empowerment, many of the activities outlined in the NIF aim at the creation of a self-improving education system (Scottish Government, online e). The role of school leaders was specifically identified as being critical in establishing collaborative and empowered cultures, leading to high quality teaching and learning (Scottish Government, online e).

Following the initial two-year period of appointment, the International Council of Education Advisors (Scottish Government, 2018c) first formal report set out considerations of the challenges involved, analysis of key policy issues, and suggestions for the actions required to further develop Scotland's education system. Within the report, the ICEA acknowledged that a policy focus on leadership, pedagogy, and collaboration were significant strengths within the current education policy framework in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018c).

The establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives, along with delivery plans and improvement frameworks for education all contribute to and promote collaborative cultures and partnership working across services. The focus on collaborative practices and joined-up working in education was further developed through several other measures.

Launched in 2015, the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) aimed to help achieve equity in educational outcomes throughout Scottish society (Scottish Government, 2018d). The SAC was underpinned by the National Improvement Framework (NIF) (Scottish Government, online e), the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Education Scotland, online) and the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) National Practice Model (Scottish Government, 2008). The primary aim of the programme was in supporting schools, local authorities and partners to develop their own approaches to raising attainment, reflecting their own circumstances, by providing extra resources to schools in areas of high deprivation. However, as Kintrea (2018) identify, the SAC only provided a general call for equity, with the Scottish Government remaining vague in relation to what they wished to achieve in a strategic sense.

The SAC brought with it targeted funding models, such as the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), providing additional resources for local authorities and schools to prioritise improvements for children adversely affected by the poverty-related attainment gap. Some, such as Chapman and Ainscow (2019), argue that using the indicator of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as criteria for inclusion can be problematic. Nevertheless, an interim evaluation on the impact of the ASF found that the fund appeared to have had a positive impact in three key areas: skill development, usage and understanding of evidence and collaboration (Scottish Government, 2018e). In relation to this final area specifically, the evaluation noted that 'the level and nature of collaboration appeared to increase over the life of the fund; particularly within-school collaboration and collaboration with external partners' (Scottish Government, 2018e: 2), though the report also noted that there were greater opportunities for collaborations at local authority level. The importance of the SAC, and associated funding models, was also acknowledged by the OECD, who noted that these measures, along with other strategies continued to address the issues of deprivation and educational inequity (OECD, 2015).

2.1.3: The Collaborative Response

With a greater focus on collaborative partnerships and joined-up working, the Scottish Government appear keen to move away from the siloed, autonomous approach previously taken by services and local authorities. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, along with the GIRFEC National Practice Model, promote partnership across services, with the aim to improve children's outcomes. Alongside this, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 supports the integration of health and social care services. Together, these legislative measures seek to draw agencies and services together, working collaboratively to support and promote the health and care of children and young people in Scotland more effectively. Similarly, initiatives such as the Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC) aim to share good practice and expertise across local authorities, head teachers and practitioners to improve children's educational outcomes, and close the poverty related attainment gap. This is reflected in the National Improvement Framework (Scottish Government, online e), the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) (Scottish Government, 2018d) and associated funding models. The International Council of Education Advisors (Scottish Government, 2018c) recognised that such measures contributed to the strong focus on collaboration, one of the key strengths within the current education policy framework in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018a).

The legislation, policy, frameworks and guidance introduced by the Scottish Government in recent years are a focussed response to the Future Delivery of Public Services report (Christie Commission, 2011), which called for greater alignment and more integrated service provision across public services. In relation to children and young people in particular, the drive towards collaboration and integration is evident in health and social care reforms, alongside developments in the education sector. These areas specifically reflect aspects of both the Global Goals (UN, 2015) and the CRC (UN, 1989). For example, improvements in children's health and social care services are reflective of Goal 3 of the Global Goals (UN, 2015), and Articles 6 and 24 within the CRC. Ensuring an equitable education system, one with a focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap, are illustrative of Goals 4 and 10 of the Global Goals (UN, 2015) and Articles 28 and 29 within the CRC (UN, 1989). The Scottish Governments collaborative agenda reflects not only the Christie Commission report (2011), but international priorities such as those set out in the CRC (UN, 1989) and the Global Goals (UN, 2015).

As well as the Scottish Government approaches to collaboration, several sectors demonstrate a similar commitment, as is evidenced in many professional standards. For example, the Professional Standards for Teachers in Scotland (GTCS, 2021: 9, 10) state that, to demonstrate their professional skills and abilities, teachers are required to utilise partnerships for learning and wellbeing, seeking advice and collaborating as required (3.1.3; 3.2.2). Similarly, Key Area 3 in the International Standards for Community Development Practice (IACD, 2018: 20) state that CLD practitioners should 'understand, develop and support collaborative working and community participation'. Alongside that, the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework (CLD Standards Council, 2022: 12) identifies that 'CLD practitioners need to understand, recognise and value the benefits of collaboration and build appropriate and effective alliances, networks and other forms of working together.' Yet another example can be seen with the Standard for Childhood Practice (SSSC, 2016), which states that leaders in the sector should (19.1) 'establish and develop a culture of collaboration and cooperative working' and be (21.2) 'proactive in developing or contributing to integrated working and inter-professional collaborative practice'.

Such a focus across children's services demonstrates that embedding children's rights and Global Goals (UN, 2015) into national legislation and policy is multi-stranded and complex, requiring a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to implementation. Yet, adapting national legislative and policy measures to local neighbourhoods and communities can be problematic. In a study exploring the early implementation of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) Scotland Act 2014, Pearson and Watson (2018) found that policy implementation can be inhibited by a lack of flexibility and structural change. These issues were compounded by an absence of collaboration due, in some instances, to historical animosity between sectors. The authors argue that if changes to such cultures are to be developed, systems that support and promote collaboration must be prioritised. 'Cultural change goes hand in hand with structural change' (Pearson and Watson, 2018: e402). Despite the laudable aims of the Scottish Government to develop integrated, collaborative service provision, embedding such transformational change in practice remains problematic (Chapman, 2021).

2.2: Collaboration

Before considering how collaboration plays out in practice it is first necessary to define the concept of collaboration. Drawing on a broad range of sources, the narrative will identify some of the ways in which the term has been understood, beginning from the basic premise that collaboration simply means working together (Jordan and Michel, 2000).

2.2.1: Defining Collaboration

Despite its prevalence within the literature and policy documentation, the concept of collaboration remains vague and highly variable (Henneman et al., 1995; D'Amour et al., 2005). Jordan and Michel (2000) simply state that collaboration literally means working together. Huxham and Vangen (2005: 4) claim that the term collaboration relates to those 'working across organisational boundaries towards some positive end'. Lank (2006) goes further, arguing that there are key distinctions which differentiate collaboration from other forms of activity. Firstly, and in a similar vein to Huxham and Vangen (2005), Lank (2006) argues that collaboration features more than one organisation working together to achieve a common aim. Yet, collaborative activity should involve an even distribution of power and authority, in which leadership itself is distributed throughout the collaborative endeavour (Lank, 2006). Yet, as the author acknowledges, collaborations are invariably shaped and influenced by a wide variety of other factors, such as the aims, attitudes, behaviours, processes and resources within the network (Lank, 2006: 9). Given these additional variables, it is worth considering how else collaboration can be understood.

Thomson et al. (2009: 25) argues that one of the most important definitions of collaboration is the one offered by Wood and Gray (1991), who sought to identify a common definition of the term. In doing so, the authors identified a plethora of definitions, 'each having something to offer and none being entirely satisfactory by itself' (Wood and Gray, 1991: 143). The authors argued that many of these definitions had either imprecise or unnecessary elements, with much being left implied. Concepts such as distributed leadership, power and, trust (Lank, 2006; D'Amour et al., 2005) are, for Wood and Gray (1991), imprecise and difficult to measure. Any theory of collaboration, the authors argue, must begin 'with a definition of the phenomena that encompasses all observable forms and excludes irrelevant issues' (Wood and Gray, 1991: 143). To establish a precise definition of the term collaboration, Wood and Gray (1991: 146) sought to address the question; 'Who is doing what, with what means, towards which ends?' In essence, this question reflects what

the authors see as being the three critical issues of collaboration; the preconditions that facilitate collaboration, the intervening processes, and the outcomes (intended or otherwise) of the collaborative activity (Wood and Gray, 1991: 140).

In addressing the question, 'Who is doing what, with what means, towards which ends?', Wood and Gray (1991: 146) claim that:

> Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain.

For the authors, the concept of autonomy was a defining feature of collaboration. Should stakeholders relinquish all autonomy, they argue, an alternative organisational form is created, one distinct from collaboration (Wood and Gray, 1991). In collaborative endeavours, participants may agree to work within shared rules, norms and structures but effectively maintain their autonomy. Generally, these rules and norms are explicitly agreed between stakeholders to govern interactive processes. However, as Wood and Gray (1991) acknowledge, at times these rules and norms can be implicit if stakeholders have already established a negotiated order.

In considering who these stakeholders may be, Wood and Gray (1991) state that this should involve groups or organisations who have an interest in the problem domain. However, unlike Lank (2006) who argues that stakeholders must share a common interest, Wood and Gray (1991), much like Huxham and Vangen (2005), argue that stakeholders can have common or differing interests, particularly at the beginning of a collaborative venture, but that these interests will inevitably develop as the collaboration develops. Whether common or differing interests, genuine collaboration can only be effective when stakeholders engage in a process that results in action or decision (Wood and Gray, 1991). Stakeholders must ensure that the processes, actions and decisions are focussed on the problem domain that brought them together in the first instance in order for genuine collaboration to take place (Wood and Gray, 1991).

Although attempting to account for the broad variety of collaborative forms that are empirically observable, Wood and Gray (1991) accept that their definition does not address a variety of factors. These include the system level at which the collaboration will occur, the

number of stakeholders involved, the intended outcomes or the overall impact of the endeavour. Yet, by basing their definition of collaboration on what is empirically observable, the definition proposed by Wood and Grey (1991) reflects the diversity of collaborative forms evidenced in practice, making no assumptions about the nature or scale of the issue around which the collaboration is formed. The definition also avoids questions around the number of collaborative partners, their role and power (Bramwell and Lane, 2000).

Yet, in the intervening years, others have sought to develop the definition of collaboration offered by Wood and Gray (1991). Thomson and Perry (2006: 23), for example, claim that:

> Collaboration is a process in which autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interaction.

The definition offered by Thomson and Perry (2006) draws on many of the same themes offered by Wood and Gray (1991). For example, both describe autonomous actors working with shared rules and norms, to act or decide on common issues or problem domains (Wood and Grey, 1991; Thomson and Perry, 2006). Yet, there are some key distinctions between the two definitions. Thomson and Perry (2006) for example, describe an element of negotiation as partners jointly create the rules and structures through which collaboration can take place. The authors also describe how the interactions within the collaborative network should be 'mutually beneficial', whereas for Wood and Gary (1991), the primary aim of collaboration should be in addressing issues related to the problem domain. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Thomson et al. (2009: 31) recognise that no single definition of collaboration exists. The authors admit that their research provides only a 'partial view of reality' and is only meant to contribute to the wider debate around the nature and meaning of collaboration (Thomson et al., 2009: 31).

Reflecting these models, Sicotte et al. (2002) also established a model of collaboration based on three distinct phases. Similar to the pre-conditions, processes and outcomes identified by Wood and Gray (1991), the model developed by Sicotte et al. (2002) considers the inputs, processes and outputs. The inputs (or the preconditions) of collaboration are described as those conditions that exist prior to activity. The processes are identified as the

interactions between such factors, with the outputs demonstrating the results of the activity (Mohammed and Hamilton, 2007). Sicotte et al. (2002: 994) then supplemented these three factors, the inputs, processes and outputs, with a moderating factor, taking account of the type of work performed. This type of factor is often associated with the contingency theory perspective, in which the nature of the task determines the impact of the process factors on the outcome. Contingency theory is common in considerations of collaborative activity (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Gladstein, 1984). However, some, such as Yeatts and Hyten (1998) recognise this as a distinct branch of organizational theory.

Authors such as Sicotte et al. (2002), Wood and Gray (1991) and Thomson et al. (2009) all draw attention to the different phases of collaborative activity. Several others have also sought to explore collaboration, with a similar focus on the pre-conditions (or inputs), processes and outcomes (or outputs) of the collaborative process (Corser, 1998; Miller 1997; West et al., 1998). To reflect this, the rest of this chapter will go on to consider the preconditions that facilitate collaboration, the intervening processes and the possible outcomes of collaborative endeavours.

2.2.2: Preconditions of Collaboration

Authors such as Henneman et al. (1995) have sought to identify a range of antecedents and preconditions necessary to begin a collaborative process, including both personnel and environmental factors. The authors warn that these factors must apply to all stakeholders involved if the endeavour is to succeed. Collaboration is, according to Henneman et al. (1995), a process that occurs first and foremost between individuals, not organisations. Consequently, 'only the persons involved ultimately determine whether or not collaboration occurs' (Henneman et al., 1995: 108). However, subsequent authors have argued that many of the preconditions to collaboration that Henneman et al. (1995) consider are actually emergent properties; ones that will manifest and develop throughout the process of collaboration (Himmelman, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2004; D'Amour et al., 2005).

Given the limitations inherent in the traditional fragmented service delivery systems when tackling social issues, collaborative endeavours generally begin with innovative partnerships between diverse stakeholders (Brandsen and van Hout, 2006). Although diverse, stakeholders must share a strong value-base from which to then develop a clear vision. The

value base that underpins interagency collaboration reflects the moral imperative (Fullan, 2008), which Mowat (2019) argues should be the foundation for all approaches to educational reform. Understanding collaboration as a relational process positions it fully within a framework of moral action, in which ethical questions arise out of the process itself and its impact (Engel and Prentice, 2013). The values and moral imperative (Fullan, 2008) behind collaborative practices may reflect the sense of urgency, described by Hanleybrown et al. (2012) as one of the preconditions of collective impact. This has implications, for, as Clark (1994: 36) states, 'one cannot have a vision without values'.

By establishing a shared value base, or sense of urgency (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), a shared vision can be established, leading to shared aims and goals (Henneman et al., 1995; D'Amour et al., 2005). However, Huxham (2003) warns that the alignment of individual aims may not be straightforward. Agreeing on common aims and shared goals can prove challenging as partners attempt to align each of their own individual and organisational agendas (Huxham, 2003). Some of these aims and agendas may be implicit, whereas others may be deliberately concealed (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Revealing these hidden agendas may not be desirable, let alone possible, as 'open discussion can unearth irreconcilable differences' (Huxham and Vangen, 2004: 192). Although communication between partners may be effective in addressing such issues (Henneman et al., 1995), this can be undermined if there is not sufficient trust between stakeholders (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

Stressing the importance of trusting relationships in collaborative activities, Miller (1997) described a cycle of collaboration involving the relationships, the individual attributes of participants and the outcome. As the author explained, 'trusting relationships… led to successful outcomes... These successful outcomes, in turn, led to increasing trust, which led to more positive outcomes in a continuously reinforcing positive spiral' (Miller, 1997: 307). This concept reflects the developmental relationships discussed by a variety of theorists, including Henneman et al. (1995), Himmelman (2002) and, D'Amour et al. (2005), with the features of professional, collaborative relationships, such as respect and trust developing over time (Alpert et al. 1992).

This is reflected in the work of Huxham (2003) and Huxham and Vangen (2004: 194), who claim that suspicion, rather than trust, is the most common starting point from which

partners begin collaborative endeavours. The authors argue that, with this consideration in mind, it is frequently more helpful to consider trust building between partners, rather than expecting trust to be established from the offset (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). From this perspective, rather than trust being viewed as a necessary precondition to collaboration, trust is viewed as an emergent property. If the collaborative endeavour proves successful, leading to positive outcomes, the increased trust between partners can lay the foundations for future collaborations, as demonstrated by Miller (1997).

In essence, trust within a collaborative network often reflects the distribution of power amongst stakeholders. D'Amour et al. (2005) claim that in genuine collaborative endeavours, power is shared amongst stakeholders. The authors argue that this power should be based on knowledge and experience rather than functions or titles, evidenced in the more traditional, hierarchical organisational structures. Instead, collaboration requires a greater distribution of power and leadership, with different individuals taking the lead at different times or on different issues (Lank, 2006). D'Amour et al. (2005) argue that professional boundaries need to be transcended if all stakeholders are to contribute effectively. Freidberg (1993) goes further, arguing that power within collaborative endeavours is a consequence of the relationships within the network. Yet, just as trust may be developed as a consequence of collaboration, the locus of power within such networks is as equally fluid (Huxham, 2003). Although often presumed that members with the greatest financial or monetary input are the most powerful, different points of power can be identified at any time within collaborative networks (Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

Many of the preconditions of collaboration more broadly are emergent properties. Aspects such as values, trust and power are often dependent on previous successes, and develop over time (Miller, 1997). For this reason, some, such as Thomson and Perry (2006) argue that much of the literature focuses too heavily on the antecedents and preconditions, at the expense of understanding the processes of collaboration. This is supported by Reilly (2001), who argues that much of the related research focuses on the preconditions that influence specific interactions, neglecting the process of those interactions. Exploring the 'doing' of collaboration in greater detail, Thomson and Perry (2006) state that when managers examine the processes of collaboration, they will be confronted with a complex construct of variables. The following section will explore some of these processes in greater detail.

2.2.3: Processes of Collaboration

Acknowledging that the processes of collaboration are neither easy nor prescriptive, Marcelin et al. (2021) argues that there are some basic tenets necessary if the collaborative activity is to be successful. Although recognising that the forms of collaboration can be as diverse as the factors that contribute to its success, the authors go on to identify several common features of collaboration. Several of these reflect aspects such as regular and transparent communication, a shared interest around an issue and the identification of common goals (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1995; Salas et al., 2018; Schensul et al., 2008). Further aspects are presented in the work of Marks et al.'s (2001) model of partnership processes.

Exploring the temporal phases of partnership processes, Marks et al. (2001: 357) define team process as 'members' interdependent acts that convert inputs to outcomes through cognitive, verbal, and behavioural activities directed toward organizing taskwork to achieve collective goals.' This definition once again reflects the notion that, between the inputs and outcomes of a selected activity, lies a number of distinct processes through which the success of the given activity will be influenced. Although some, such as Hanleybrown et al. (2012) focus on 'early wins' within the collaborative approaches, Marks et al. (2001) argues that, rather than processes, these 'early wins' are outcomes or products of team interaction, becoming new inputs to successive processes and outcomes. As such, these emergent states are not processes, either of collective impact or collaboration more broadly, as they do not consider the nature of group interaction. The authors warn that precision in definitions and terminology is important, for a continual intermingling of emergent states and interactional processes will lead to 'serious construct contamination' (Marks et al., 2001: 358).

With a focus on team processes, Marks et al. (2001) develops on previous work that sought to understand the processes of team development (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977; Lacoursiere, 1980; Gersick, 1988). Tuckman (1965), for example, initially identified four stages of team development: forming, storming, norming and performing. These were then considered in relation to the two realms of group functioning identified by the author, group structure and task activity. The model presented by Tuckman effectively describes the ways in which collaborative teams develop, either in regard to their interpersonal relationships or in the tasks that brought them together. This model was later adapted to incorporate a fifth stage, adjourning, marking the end of the collaborative endeavour (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977).

Five stages of team development were also identified by Lacoursiere (1980). These were defined as orientation, dissatisfaction, resolution, production, and termination. Both the order and description of these terms mirror the five stages identified by Tuckman and Jensen (1977). Yet, others, such as Gersick (1988: 32), argue that teams do not transition through these stages in a linear manner, but are instead in a constant state of revision and renegotiation. In reviewing the literature around the formation and development of collaborative teams, Drinka (1994) found that there was general disagreement about the number of development stages, as well as the order in which they occur. Farrell et al. (1988), for example, in considering interdisciplinary teams, claim that, although the stages Tuckman and Jensen (1977) describe were in evidence, there was little to suggest that such teams moved through the stages in any defined way.

In considering this further, Drinka (1994: 93) argued that, although such group development theories may be helpful, they are insufficient when considering such a multidimensional phenomenon as developed interdisciplinary teams. Proceeding through the stages of group development, Drinka (1994: 101) warns, may provide members within interdisciplinary teams with a false sense of progress and development. Traditional group development theories do not consider the changes over time that characterise interdisciplinary teams and are generally seen as inadequate in addressing the conflict and leadership that is inherent within such collaborative teams. Drinka (1994) went on to develop a dynamic model, one specific to the development and maintenance of interdisciplinary teams. Similarly to Tuckman and Jensen (1977) and Lacoursiere (1980), the model developed by Drinka (1994) constitutes five distinct stages; forming, norming, confronting, performing, and leaving.

Although initially appearing to reflect the model presented by Tuckman and Jensen (1977), Drinka's (1994) model is distinct in a number of ways. To begin with, the author is quick to establish that the stages apply to individual members, as well as the collaborative team as a whole. This is especially evident when considering both the first and the final stages within the model. As Drinka (1994) describes, the initial formation of a collaborative, interdisciplinary team may only happen once, with entire teams rarely dissolving once the collaborative endeavour has been completed. Instead, building on the relationships from the first endeavour, some partners may choose to continue in collaboration. As this relationship has already been established, no formation is necessary. However, should a

new member join the new endeavour, that individual may have to form relationships with the rest of the established team.

The three main phases within Drinka's (1994) model, norming, confronting and performing, are the most frequently recurring, although, as the author explains, these need not be followed in any specific order. Instead, the team, and the individuals within it, may proceed towards different phases at different rates, depending on a number of variables, both within and outside the team (Drinka, 1994: 94). Out of these three phases, Drinka (1994) identifies 'confronting' as being the most important in the development of the collaborative team. In the confronting phase, conflict may arise. Yet, for Drinka (1994), the team's ability to deal with conflict constructively is what helps drive the development of the team, determining the quality of decision making and establishing, or developing the culture of the team. In order for genuine collaborative endeavours to be effective, team members need to feel both comfortable and confident enough to disagree. In interdisciplinary teams, 'conflict marks change' (Drinka, 1994: 100).

As members transition constructively through the confronting phase, as they develop problem-solving behaviours, functional leadership begins to emerge. Drinka (1994) warns, however, that it is the responsibility of individual team members to realise their own potential in this area. As functional leaders emerge from within the team, the balance of power begins to re-orient. After confronting the conflicts, tensions and challenges, and with a focus on individual power and functional leadership, the culture of the collaborative team develops, establishing a shared history and background experience (Drinka, 1994). Throughout this, the collaborative, interdisciplinary team becomes multi-dimensional, with an increasing capacity to learn and develop, using their past experiences to form new approaches (Drinka, 1994). By considering this multi-dimensionality, Drinka (1994) develops the traditional group stage theory, creating instead a non-linear and transient model of interdisciplinary collaboration.

The focus on developing from past experiences is, for Marks et al. (2001) an emergent state, rather than a process, relating instead to the outcomes and prospective inputs. Indeed, much of the literature pertaining to team development (Drinka, 1994; Lacoursiere, 1980; Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) reflects what Marks et al. (2001) defines as the interpersonal processes, one of three temporal phases of collaboration. These interpersonal processes

reflect some of the issues identified by the likes of Lacoursiere (1980) and Tuckman and Jensen (1977), such as conflict management, motivating and confidence building. Driskell et al. (2018) goes farther, arguing that relationships must be established, nurtured, and maintained if the collaborative activity is to be successful. Marcelin et al. (2021: 27) argues that these interpersonal processes are especially crucial 'when collaborating with communities that have a history of marginalization'.

Alongside the interpersonal processes, Marks et al. (2001) identifies two other temporal phases of collaboration: the transition phase and the action phase. The transition phase processes include mission analysis, formulation and planning, goal specification and strategy formulation. The action phase processes include monitoring of progress, systems and the team. Acknowledging that some processes are more likely to occur during the transition phase, whilst others are more likely during the action phase, Marks et al. (2001) argues that the interpersonal processes will occur throughout both other phases. This further underlines the importance of interpersonal processes in collaborative endeavours, as identified by Driskell et al. (2018) and Marcelin et al. (2021)

The three phases of collaboration described by Marks et al. (2001) are not linear, unlike the three phases of the collective impact approach as defined by Hanleybrown et al. (2012). The three phases of collective impact are however, reflected in the work of Hall et al.'s (2012) model of transdisciplinary team-based research. Exploring transdisciplinary team initiatives, Hall et al. (2012) identified four phases of such collaborations:

1. development,
2. conceptualization,
3. implementation, and
4. translation.

In the development phase, a preliminary team gathers together members who then define a problem, develop a shared approach to studying it, and begin to form a team identity. In the conceptualization phase, the team goes on to identify the specific research questions to be addressed, the design to do so, and define team roles and responsibilities. Hall et al. (2012) go on to describe the implementation phase, in which research is coordinated, conflicts managed, and learning integrated into practice. Finally, the translation phase occurs when learning is effectively applied to address the problem(s) that brought the team together.

In a similar approach to understanding collaborative approaches, Gitlin et al. (1994) also established a stage process model for collaborative endeavour. The model draws on the constructs of social exchange theory, providing a step-by-step guide to the processes that should occur if collaboration is to be effective (Gitlin et al., 1994). Social exchange theory describes the ways in which members of a group interact in such a way as to benefit themselves, each other, and the group as a whole. Gitlin et al. (1994) expanded this basic premise into four parameters; exchange, negotiation, an environment of trust and role differentiation.

These parameters laid the foundation for a series of five overlapping stages of collaboration (Gitlin et al., 1994: 21):

1. assessment and goal setting
2. determination of a collaborative fit
3. identification of resources and reflection
4. refinement and implementation
5. evaluation and feedback

For Gitlin et al. (1994), once the four parameters, or preconditions, were established within a network, this linear model could be used to clearly identify the stages, procedures and processes from which to develop collaboration. Yet, some, such as D'Amour et al. (2005: 126), argue that such frameworks offer little in the way of understanding the relational dynamics within a network of collaborating professionals, nor do they provide any insight into the working lives of network members. Collaboration, the authors argue, needs to be understood as a human process, not only as a professional endeavour. Even once the preconditions are accounted for, and even if all the procedural stages are followed, collaboration is not guaranteed (D'Amour et al, 2005).

Developing this further, Thomson and Perry (2006) identified five key dimensions of collaboration, with a focus on the relational processes. The authors begin by considering the process of collaborative governance, in which decisions are made jointly about the rules governing behaviour and relationships within the network. This has been described as shared power arrangements (Crosby and Bryson, 2005), participative decision making (Wood and Gray, 1991) or problem solving (Hellriegel et al., 1986). The concept of governance effectively describes the collective choices made that shape the collaborative

endeavour, along with members' willingness to monitor themselves and each other (Thomson and Perry, 2006: 24). The second process identified by Thomson and Perry (2006) concerns collaborative administration. As the authors acknowledge, in order to move from governance to action, some kind of administrative structure is required. Within collaborative networks, these administrative functions should reflect the horizontal relationships evident within collaboration, rather than the top-down approaches inherent in traditional, hierarchical organisational structures (Thomson and Perry, 2006).

Following on from the processes of governance and administration, Thomson and Perry (2006) move on to consider the dimension of autonomy, in which individual interests must be aligned with the interests of the collective. In collaborative endeavours, partners have dual identities, having to navigate between their self-interest and the collective interest. Yet, as the authors warn, reconciling these tensions often proves too challenging for many collaborative endeavours. With governance and administration reflecting structural factors, and autonomy reflecting agentic factors, the final two dimensions of collaboration identified by Thomson and Perry (2006) reflect the concept of social capital; namely mutuality and trust.

In describing the process of mutuality, Thomson and Perry (2006) claim that, in collaborating, organisations must benefit equally, through recognising either their shared interests or differing interests. Providing a foundation from which to identify common views, mutuality in collaboration helps address differing interests through a process of negotiation (Hellriegel et al., 1986). In considering the fifth and final dimension of collaboration, Thomson and Perry (2006) agree with Huxham and Vangen (2005), who state that building and developing trust between partners should be a priority in all collaborations. Yet, Thomson and Perry (2006) develop this by claiming that trust is closely related to the concept of reciprocity, in which partners may only demonstrate willingness to collaborate if they see that same willingness in others. As partners interact and the collaborative relationships develop over time and with experience, this 'tit-for-tat reciprocity' may develop into stronger long-term commitments (Thomson and Perry, 2006:27).

Taking this into account, a number of theorists focus on the types of interaction and relations between members within the collaborative network (Himmelman, 2002; Imperial,

2005; Thatcher, 2007). With a focus on the distinction between cooperation, coordination and collaboration, many, such as Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006), position such interactions along a relational continuum. In attempting to distinguish between these three levels of interaction, Thatcher (2007) established 15 different dimensions through which to consider the cooperative, coordinated and collaborative levels of interaction between members. As McNamara (2012) later recognised, these dimensions were generally underdeveloped and consequently difficult to apply in practice. Nevertheless, the importance of learning more about levels of interaction is widely acknowledged (Walter and Petr, 2000; Imperial, 2005; McNamara, 2012).

Himmelman (2002), for example, developed a collaboration continuum, setting out six levels of interaction. Although differing in the positioning of specific interaction terms in comparison to the broader interorganisational literature (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006; Keast, Brown and Mandell, 2007; Thomson and Perry, 2006), Himmelman's (2002) collaboration continuum serves as a framework through which to consider levels of interaction. The six levels of interaction identified by Himmelman (2002) begin with the concept of 'immuring', in which members generally work in isolation, with little or no input from others. From here, levels of interaction gradually develop, with increasing levels of time, trust and turf-sharing required by network members. The final stage in the collaboration continuum developed by Himmelman (2002) refers to the concept of 'integration', with network organisations fully merging, until the constituent parts are no longer discernible.

A further example of levels of interaction framed across a continuum can be seen with the work of Ainscow and West (2006). Basing their typology on the ideas of Fielding (1999), Ainscow and West (2006) postulated four different levels of interaction: association, cooperation, collaboration and, collegiality. As with the collaboration continuum developed by Himmelman (2002), the typology presented by Ainscow and West (2006) is developmental, with each level of interaction incorporating and developing on the previous level. Each of the authors recognise that no level of interaction is better than another and that what is appropriate in one situation may not translate to others (McNamara, 2012). From the descriptions provided by authors such as Himmelman (2002) and Ainscow and West (2006), professional relationships will, with time and building on previous successes,

grow and develop smoothly along a continuum 'in a continuously reinforcing positive spiral' (Miller, 1997: 307). Yet, others argue that a key factor in effective collaboration, is in the potential for conflict (Engeström, 2001; Sicotte et al., 2002).

Similar to the study by Miller (1997), Sicotte et al. (2002) demonstrated that the success of collaborative activity was inherently related to the internal dynamics of the network. However, unlike Miller (1997), trust was not identified as a key factor in these relationships. Instead, Sicotte et al. (2002) focussed on features such as levels of social integration, degrees of conflict and conflicting processes. It was the nature of this conflict that was found to foster collaborative activities, whilst also placing constraints on them. These conflicts were understood as two distinct types, relationship conflicts and task conflicts. The authors were, as they describe, predominantly focussed on the task conflicts, choosing to focus less on interpersonal incompatibilities (Sitcotte et al., 2002: 996). The disregard of relational features in this study distinguishes it from that of Miller (1997), who focussed on features such as the levels of trust between participants. Instead, Sicotte et al. (2002) developed their model of interdisciplinary collaboration by focussing instead on the nature of the task. This mediating variable was, for Sicotte et al. (2002) demonstrably more significant in collaborative activity than the relationships between participants.

Nevertheless, Sicotte et al. (2002) found that conflict can come in a variety of forms, such as conflicting values or beliefs, or relationship-based or task-based conflict. Yet, conflict within collaborative networks not only presents challenges but, has the potential to enhance collaboration (Sicotte et al., 2002). Abbott (1988), in analysing the ways in which professions protect their field of expertise, recognised the importance of interdisciplinary conflict and competition. In a similar vein, Engeström (2001) argues that conflict and contradictions are inevitable within interagency collaboration. If articulated openly, these conflicts and contradictions have the potential to develop into 'expansive learning cycles', in which alternatives are thoroughly explored, leading to new knowledge and transformation of the system (Engeström, 2001). The way in which conflict is managed will have an impact on the success of the collaborative endeavour, as collaboration is inherently fragile (Thomson and Perry, 2006).

Given this fragile nature, it is always worth considering the purpose of the collaborative endeavour, as 'collaborating for collaboration's sake or to achieve only individual goals is

likely to result in failure' (Thomson and Perry, 2006: 28). As Huxham and MacDonald (1992) identify, the benefits of collaboration can frequently be overshadowed by the consequences. This relates to what Chapman (2019) describes as 'the dark side of collaboration'. The model Chapman (2019) presents reflects the continuum of collaborative activity presented by Ainscow and West (2006). As discussed previously, the model developed by Ainscow and West (2006) postulates four levels of interaction: association, cooperation, collaboration and collegiality. Whereas Ainscow and West (2006) claim that the primary aim of collaborative activity should be in transitioning towards increasingly interdependent relationships, Chapman (2019) warns that each of these levels of interaction has its 'dark side'.

In considering the first level of interaction, association, Chapman (2019) states that this risks being nothing more than illusory, with passive buy-in from stakeholders leading to the pretence of constructive association. At the second level, cooperation, individual agendas are prioritised, with stakeholders seeking to enhance their own authority, power or status, often at the expense of others. This is what Chapman (2019: 7) terms 'fabricated cooperation'. The third level, the level of cooperation, can see initial levels of engagement from stakeholders; however, this is invariably to protect their own interests and establish their own agenda. As others become embroiled in the dominant discourse, collusion becomes the overriding interaction, which Chapman (2019: 7) describes as 'collaborating with the enemy'. The final level represents the 'dark side' of collegiality, in which stakeholders' express values and beliefs in the collaborative process, although this is not reflected in their behaviours. In short, in instances of 'contrived collegiality', actions speak louder than words (Chapman, 2019).

Developed by Hargreaves (1991), the concept of contrived collegiality refers to overly regulated collaborative processes, characterised by bureaucratic procedures and control. These can often present as false, fake or forced attempts at professional collaboration (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). In its positive aspect, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 118) describes this as 'arranged collegiality', which can provide a strong framework through which to develop greater forms of collaboration. However, when applied inappropriately, this form of collegiality becomes contrived, leading to a limited version of a truly collaborative culture (Hargreaves, 1991). What distinguishes arranged collegiality from

contrived collegiality is the levels of trust, respect and understanding already shared amongst stakeholders (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Arranged collegiality can often provide a strong foundation from which to develop collaborative cultures, yet this requires a leader sensitive to the needs of the group in order to ensure that collaboration remains genuine and that appropriate interactions are matched to the desired goal (Himmelman, 2002; Imperial, 2005; Keast, Brown and Mandell, 2007).

As much as Chapman's (2019) consideration of the dark side of collaboration reflected the model presented by Ainscow and West (2006), the concept can be applied to any model of interaction, such as the six levels described in Himmelman's (2002) collaboration continuum. As can be seen with Hargreaves' (1991) concept of contrived collegiality, any level of interaction is like a two-edged sword, carrying both positive and negative aspects. It is important, therefore, that stakeholders are aware of, and can recognise the dark side of collaboration, in order to achieve the desired outcomes (Chapman, 2019). This requires the capacity to continually reflect on progress and practice (Schön, 1985), as well as understanding and appreciating the different values and perspectives that come with genuine collaboration (Clark, 1994).

Through reflection, a greater understanding of the processes of collaboration can be developed (Schön, 1985; Clark, 1994). This may begin by considering the different stages of the collaborative activity, such as those presented by Gitlin et al. (1994), in which aims are set, resources are considered and plans implemented and evaluated. Others, such as D'Amour et al. (2005) believe that attention should be paid to the human process of collaboration, rather than just viewing it as a professional endeavour. This is supported by the likes of Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006), Himmelman (2002) and Ainscow and West (2006) who focus instead on interactional and relational models. Consideration of the levels of interaction invariably leads to related concepts, such as conflict and contradictions (Abbott, 1988; Engeström, 2001) or the dark sides of collaboration (Chapman, 2019). Yet, with the preconditions established, leading to effective processes, it is worth considering what the outcomes are of collaborative endeavours.

2.2.4- Outcomes of Collaboration

Given the complex variety of interrelated preconditions and processes, collaboration can be seen to be a complicated, multifaceted phenomenon. Before embarking on any collaborative endeavour, it is important that stakeholders consider the potential outcomes, both positive and negative, of the initiative. Moving beyond the 'upbeat, feel-good' rhetoric described by Humes (2012: 169), collaborative endeavours need to be continually evaluated in relation to their outcomes (Cooper et al., 2016). In contrast to the large body of research on the preconditions and processes of collaboration, the evidence base on outcomes of collaboration remains patchy (Cooper et al., 2016). A number of reviews exploring the outcomes of interagency collaboration across services for children and young people have been conducted (Brown & White 2006; Percy-Smith 2006; Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford 2009; Oliver et al. 2010). The results suggest that, generally, collaborative endeavours tend to be reported positively, with interagency collaboration being considered as helpful and important by professionals, parents and carers (Cooper et al., 2016). Yet, a repeating critique of these reviews on the outcomes of collaboration is in relation to the lack of quality data provided (Sloper, 2004; Oliver et al. 2010).

Defined by Arino (2003: 76) as the

> 'degree of accomplishment of the partners' goals, be these common or private, initial or emergent (outcome performance), and the extent to which their pattern of interactions is acceptable to the partners (process performance)',

collaboration outcomes relate not just to the tangible benefits, but relational aspects as well. Utilising a resource-based perspective, Arya and Zin (2007) investigated the collaboration outcomes of a group of not-for-profit organisations. In doing so, joint consideration was given to both the monetary and nonmonetary dimensions. The findings reflected those of Itami (1987), who recognised that although tangible assets were necessary for organisational operations, it was the intangible assets that proved to be the genuine source of competitive success. These include features such as the collaborative culture, human and social capitals, knowledge, reputation and leadership (Itami, 1987). In the study by Arya and Zin (2007), tangible benefits, such as the sharing of physical resources, proved to be most beneficial when partner organisations had dissimilar resources, as they were better able to establish broader service provision. Yet, the study

also identified that an overemphasis on the material benefits frequently leads to lack of consideration around the immaterial benefits.

Whether material or immaterial, whether tangible or intangible, the positive outcomes of any collaborative endeavour can generally be described as 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham, 2003). Huxham and Vangen (2004: 191) describe collaborative advantage as a positive outcome that could not have been achieved by any one stakeholder. In this regard, outcomes may not necessarily be those initially hoped for or expected. As well as achieving the substantive aims established at the start of the collaborative process, collaborative advantage may present itself in less obvious forms, such as the development of a relationship with one or more of the collaborative partners (Huxham, 2003). Collaborative advantage may be more related to the process of collaboration rather than the physical output, such as in the development of relationships. The concept of collaborative advantage or, the belief that more can be done together than can be achieved individually, is easy to adopt (Vangen and Huxham, 2006). Yet, in practice, collaborative endeavours do not always lead to such positive outcomes (Vangen and Huxham, 2006).

When the outputs of collaboration are negligible, when the rate of output is considered too slow or, when the cost of collaboration is just too high, collaborative advantage can instead become 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004). The concept of collaborative inertia reflects the 'often disappointing output' of collaborative endeavours (Huxham, 2003: 401). Given the significant resources and energy required in collaborating, partners' can be disappointed when outcomes are not seen to be successful (Lank, 2006). Whereas collaborative advantage may only be evident in the development of relationships, should the impact of collaboration lean more towards collaborative inertia, those relationships may instead be damaged, with partners less willing to collaborate in future (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Although the prospect of collaboration can be appealing, in reality collaborative endeavours are often 'painfully slow', with many achieving little success (Vangen and Huxham, 2006: 3). Given the resources required and the stakes involved, Huxham and Vangen (2004: 200) argue that unless the potential for collaborative advantage is clear from the outset, collaborative endeavours are best avoided.

2.2.5: Critiquing collaboration

This is a point developed by Hargreaves (2019), who, although identifying that the effects of collaboration are mostly positive, argues that it is not always beneficial. Collaboration can at times be too focussed on maintaining the status quo and 'norms of politeness' (Hargreaves, 2019: 612). In other instances, collaboration can be contrived, as it focuses on imposing pressure or bureaucratic norms on participants. A few decades earlier, the same author identified that some forms of collaboration, ones that were forced or artificial could even be harmful and limit participants willingness to collaborate again (Hargreaves, 1994).

Similarly, Kirschner et al. (2018: 221) argue that if the knowledge and experience of partners is asymmetric, the collaborative experience may lead to 'extraneous cognitive load due to task-unrelated transactive activities.' In essence, although some collaborative partners may benefit incidentally, the experience for the group will be generally negative. This is a point developed by Torres (2019), who identified that cultures in which partners had less time or authority were inevitably less likely to benefit from collaborative engagement. The author therefore concludes that collaboration can only be effective when balanced with the distribution of leadership and self-efficacy. This does not negate the fact that collaboration itself can be challenging and time consuming (Peters, 2018). In such instances, the problem that brought the partners together in the first instance may only be addressed through the lowest common denominator, with little in the way of positive solutions or outcomes (Peters, 2018).

Additional challenges to the collaborative process were identified by Le et al. (2018) in their study relating to collaborative learning. The authors identified that the collaborative process could be inhibited when partners lacked certain skills, such as accepting opposing viewpoints, providing or receiving help, and negotiating. Such issues were further accentuated when partners did not contribute evenly or equally to the process or when influential members dominated the group. Given such challenges, it is perhaps unsurprising that authors such as Huxham and Vangen (2004: 80) argue that unless the benefits are clear 'it is generally best, if there is a choice, to avoid collaboration.'

2.3: Summary

With a focus on the reformation of public services, the Scottish legislative and policy landscape aims to empower individuals and communities, with a greater focus on

collaborative and integrated service provision (Christie Commission, 2011). Both the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 aimed to improve outcomes for adults and children by developing local provision through greater community involvement (Brock and Everingham, 2018). This collaborative agenda was further developed within the education sector through the establishment of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), which were a key factor in the joint work on public sector reform, including promoting collaborative partnerships across children's services (Christie Commission, 2011; Scottish Government, 2017c). The establishment of these Regional Improvement Collaboratives, along with related delivery plans and improvement frameworks for education all promoted collaborative cultures and partnership working across services (Scottish Government, 2016b; online e).

Beyond government initiatives, the focus on collaboration is reflected within several related sectors and their associated professional standards. For example, the Professional Standards for Teachers in Scotland (GTCS, 2021), the CLD Competent Practitioner Framework (CLD Standards Council, 2022) and the Standard for Childhood Practice (SSSC, 2016) all emphasise the importance of establishing and developing cultures of collaborative and cooperative working. Pearson and Watson (2018) argue that if changes to such cultures are to be developed, systems that support and promote collaboration must be prioritised. Such a focus on collaborative cultures and systems reflects not only the Christie Commission report into public service reform (2011), but international priorities such as those set out in the CRC (UN, 1989) and the Global Goals (UN, 2015). It was within such a landscape that Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland emerged.

Yet, before understanding how Local Coordinators within CNS experienced collaboration it was important to firstly identify how the term collaboration had previously been understood. As a concept, collaboration remains highly vague and variable (Henneman et al., 1995; D'Amour et al., 2005), with a plethora of definitions, 'each having something to offer and none being entirely satisfactory by itself' (Wood and Gray, 1991: 143). To account for this, the chapter went on to look at the different phases of collaboration, with a focus on the preconditions, processes and outcomes (West et al., 1998; Sicotte et al., 2002; Thomson et al., 2009).

Beginning with the factors and conditions that need to exist prior to collaboration, the narrative identified the importance of stakeholders sharing a strong value-base (Fullan, 2008), as ethical questions arise out of the collaborative process (Engel and Prentice, 2013). Through establishing a shared value base, a shared vision can be established, leading to shared aims and goals (Henneman et al., 1995; D'Amour et al., 2005). Yet, identifying shared aims and goals can be challenging if there is not sufficient trust between partners (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004). With authors arguing that trust develops over time (Henneman et al., 1995; Himmelman, 2002; D'Amour et al., 2005), it is important that trust is recognised as an important emergent property, that can be built and developed 'in a continuously reinforcing positive spiral' (Miller, 1997: 307), rather than a prerequisite to collaborative improvement.

From here, the chapter moved on to describe some of the processes of collaboration. Authors such as Gitlin et al. (1994) describe the number of different stages of collaboration, in a clear and linear fashion. Yet, some, such as D'Amour et al. (2005: 126), argue that collaboration needs to be understood as a human process, not just a professional endeavour. Even if all the procedural stages are followed, collaboration is not guaranteed (D'Amour et al, 2005). For this reason, authors such as Thomson and Perry (2006) focus on the interpersonal processes and relational factors that shape collaboration. Here, as with the preconditions of collaboration, trust remains an issue, with the development of trust amongst stakeholders a key priority for Huxham and Vangen (2005).

In discussing the processes of collaboration, the chapter went on to reflect on the ways in which collaboration can frequently be overshadowed by the consequences (Huxham and MacDonald, 1992) or what Chapman (2019) describes as 'the dark side of collaboration'. In such instances, collaboration can often present as false, fake or forced (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012), otherwise known as contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1991). It is important, therefore, that partners can recognise the dark side of collaboration (Chapman, 2019), requiring a continual reflection on progress and practice (Schön, 1985) to achieve the desired outcomes.

This is a point developed by Cooper et al. (2016), who argue that collaborative improvement initiatives should be continually evaluated in relation to their outcomes. Although the evidence base on outcomes of collaboration remains patchy (Cooper et al., 2016), they were

generally understood to relate to the 'degree of accomplishment of the partners' goals, be these common or private, initial or emergent' (Arino, 2003: 76). Where the outcomes were seen to be positive, and only possible through collaboration, these were identified as 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham, 2003). When the outputs of collaboration were negligible, or when the cost of collaboration is just too high, the advantage can become 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham, 2003), reflective of the dark side of collaboration (Chapman, 2019).

Given such challenges, the Local Coordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland had to reflect on many varied aspects and features of the collaborative process and the ways in which collaboration itself is understood. To best support partnerships and effectively develop collaboration across local services, Local Coordinators had to reflect on how to effectively embed such collaborative relationships within local communities. As Huxham (2003) argues, one of the most important variables impacting the success of the collaborative endeavour lies in the participants involved. With such considerations in mind, Local Coordinators had to move beyond theoretical understandings and definitions of collaboration and identify which individuals, services or organisations would make up their own collaborative networks. To explore this further, the following chapter will move on to consider different forms of collaboration, including communities and networks, before then reflecting on the ways in which such networks may be led, exploring the concept of collaborative leadership in greater detail.

Chapter 3

Leading Collaborative Networks

As the previous chapter deconstructed the term collaboration, with consideration of the preconditions, processes and outcomes (West et al., 1998; Sicotte et al., 2002; Thomson et al., 2009), the complexities inherent in collaborative activities were highlighted. Despite the challenges, those individuals, organizations and services aiming to work together seek 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham, 2003), with the realisation that more can be achieved collectively than when working in isolation (Vangen and Huxham, 2006). Such a focus is similar to the concept of collaborative improvement, which focusses on continuous innovation and enhanced performance (Kaltoft et al., 2006). Yet, the effectiveness of the collaborative activity invariably comes down to the individuals involved, leading to the question of who leads such collaborative networks.

To address such issues, this chapter aims to:

- Discuss the flow of capital within collaborative networks, and consider how such professional communities and networks have been understood, and
- Reflect on theories of leadership, identifying which leadership styles or approaches may be best suited to leading collaborative improvement networks.

The narrative will begin by considering what is exchanged or enhanced within collaborative networks and how to leverage collaborative advantage, by reflecting on the flow of capital between collaborative partners (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Who precisely these partners are is then considered, as the narrative moves on to look at professional communities and how these have been understood and defined, before then considering the value of network approaches, focussing as they do on the relations between the actors within the collaborative system (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Borgatti and Foster, 2003).

Who leads such collaborative networks will then be considered, as the chapter moves on to explore the concept of collaborative leadership in greater detail. Key dimensions of leadership will be identified (Bush and Glover, 2014), before styles best suited to collaborative endeavours will be discussed (Azorín et al., 2020; Giltinane, 2013; Senge et al.,

2015). However, as Chapman et al. (2017) argue, seeking a single leadership style that best suits collaboration is unrealistic. Therefore, the chapter will move on to consider leadership behaviours, with an awareness of the broader contexts and factors (Nowell and Harrison, 2010). Finally, the chapter will conclude by drawing out the main themes from the previous discussion, to identify the primary elements of collaborative leadership (Coleman, 2011).

3.1: Collaborative Communities and Networks

Having examined some of the many definitions around collaboration and reflecting on the different phases of the collaborative process, this chapter will begin by reflecting on what precisely is exchanged or developed within collaborative cultures, with a focus on the flow of capital between collaborative partners. Yet, it is also necessary to consider precisely which partners and parties are engaged in such collaborative activity. Doing so requires an awareness of the communities and networks within which these activities develop. The chapter will move on to discuss how such communities and networks have been understood, identifying the importance of reflecting on such collaborative networks.

3.1.1- The Flow of Capital

One of the most common responses, when thinking of the benefits of collaboration, lies in the concept of social capital. Social capital is broadly defined as the resources that stem from the relationships within a network or community (Coleman, 1988). Through social capital theory, the focus moves to the whole network and the resources and expertise embedded within it (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 2001). In defining it further, Lin (1999: 39) states that social capital is an 'investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions.' These 'expected returns' suggest that a strong feature in the concept of social capital is one of reciprocity; in other words, individuals not only obtain benefits from the network, but may also provide benefits to the network (Steinfield et al., 2009). Social capital, according to Coleman (1988: 96), provides benefits that may not otherwise be possible. Muijs et al. (2011: 23) argue that it would be ineffectual and inefficient for all network members to learn each other's knowledge. Instead, the concept of social capital provides opportunity to utilise knowledge and expertise without having to acquire it

oneself. Steinfield et al. (2009) claims that such benefits are related to different types of social capital; namely, bonding, bridging and linking.

In describing the first two type of social capital, bonding and bridging, Halpern (2005) considers the ways in which each echo the strength of ties or relations within the network. Strong ties between members indicate close-knit relations which, within organisations, may provide greater social, emotional or tangible support (Putnam, 2001; Steinfield et al., 2009). Strong ties are commonly related to bonding social capital, which Steinfield et al. (2009: 246) argue provides an environment of trust and obligation, encouraging reciprocity. Generally shared amongst individuals who are similar, networks in which bonding social capital is prevalent have a high degree of homogeneity (Putnam, 2001). Several limitations associated with social capital, such as the exclusion of outsiders or the risk to individual community members (Portes, 1998), are most often related to bonding social capital (Putnam, 2001). This is demonstrated in Fischer's (2001) critique of traditional communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), with the bonding social capital distributed between community members proving a barrier to engagement with the broader community.

Alternatively, bridging social capital relates to weaker ties within a community and can most commonly be found in larger communities (Halpern, 2005). These weaker ties provide greater opportunities in terms of access to information and opportunities (Halpern, 2005; Steinfield et al., 2009). Bridging social capital relates to horizontal ties that span different groups and communities (Woolcock, 2001). For Putnam (2001), the primary affordance offered by such ties is greater access to a broader range of resources, information and opportunities than would otherwise be available. Some of the risks associated with bonding social capital are less likely within bridging social capital ties, due to the moderating influence of these cross-cutting relationships (Putnam, 2001).

Bridging social capital is also closely related to the concept of structural holes with collaborative communities. Whereas some, such as Coleman (1988, 1990) espouse the benefits of a tightly formed community, others, such as Burt (1992, 1997) argue that such closure may in fact hinder coordination. Instead, structural hole theorists claim that a lack of connection between network members can provide a greater diversity of information and brokerage opportunities (Gargiulo and Benassi, 2000). Muijs et al. (2011: 21) suggest that 'structural holes' can be bridged more effectively with a greater number of weak ties, than a

smaller number of strong ties. Whether bonding or bridging, social capital is a key consideration when reflecting on collaborative communities. Although each may offer different affordances and benefits (Halpern, 2005), the relationships within which these forms of social capital flow can be limited by a lack of resources or power.

Social capital is also one of the underpinning features of another form of capital, professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). To develop professional capital requires a confluence of human capital (the knowledge and skills within individuals), social capital (the knowledge and skills gained through interaction) and decisional capital, (the ability to make discretionary judgements in situations of uncertainty) (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012: 93). The authors go on to claim that decisional capital can be developed through collective reflective practice, to 'create high quality and high performance in all professional practice' (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012: 102). The collaborative nature of professional capital was emphasised in a study by Chapman et al. (2016), which aimed to explore the development of professional capital in a three-year school improvement initiative that used collaborative inquiry within, between and beyond the school settings. The authors identified a relationship between the development of professional capital and collaborative inquiry-based approaches aimed at promoting educational equity. In doing so, they argued that the development of professional capital should be focussed not only within and between schools, but importantly, beyond school settings, facilitating partnerships to achieve more equitable outcomes. Developing professional capital across public services can provide new opportunities to improve outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Chapman et al., 2016).

These findings were reflected in a similar study by Fitzgerald and Quiñones (2018), who focussed on the role of Community School Coordinators (CSC) as they cultivated community partnerships. The findings indicated that the role of the CSC was effective in the development of professional capital amongst multiple school and community stakeholders, connecting and promoting trusting relationships, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and supporting the emergence of decisional capital. Although this was contingent on the professional development opportunities made available to the CSC, the authors argue that strategies to develop professional capital and collaborative cultures

positively impacted student outcomes, demonstrating the leadership role of the CSC as a professional capital builder (Fitzgerald and Quiñones, 2018).

In looking at the ways in which the development of social and professional capital was promoted in schools in disadvantaged areas, Bourke (2023) found that creating connections and networking across the wider educational landscape highlighted the connections between the micro, meso and macro levels of policy. The author also identified that the three types of social capital influenced the development of professional capital in different ways. For example, bonding social capital was seen to provide opportunities to access human capital, at the same time as enhancing members decisional capital, with professional judgements grounded in practice, experience and reflection. Bridging and linking social capital created connections with other stakeholders, bridging structural holes and disconnections in individuals' social ties, thereby enhancing members decisional and professional capital (Bourke, 2023). Yet, such high-quality collaborative practice does not emerge by chance and is invariably dependent on whether those within the community are high quality to begin with (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). It is important therefore to identify how such collaborative, professional communities have been understood.

3.1.2- Collaborative Communities

Professional communities have been defined and described in a multitude of ways (Wenger et al., 2002; Fischer, 2001; Dumitru, 2012). In seeking to define 'professional learning communities', for example, Stoll et al. (2006) argued that no single, universal definition exists, due to the wide variety of contextual differences that leave it open to interpretation. Other authors have also sought to describe the ways in which professionals form communities. Wenger et al. (2002), for example, claimed that it is through communities of practice that professionals can develop knowledge and expertise through regular interactions. Wenger et al. (2002: 6) claim that through communities of practice individuals develop relationships with other professionals, effectively 'knit(ting) the whole system together around core knowledge requirements.' Through sustained collaboration, communities of practice enable effective communication and knowledge exchange for those within the community. In doing so, boundaries are established, and identities set; either one is a member of the community, or they are not (Wenger, 1998).

Yet, as Fischer (2001) describes, these boundaries may be empowering to those within the community but can frequently act as a barrier to outsiders. Although perhaps seeking to adopt a collaborative approach to knowledge creation and exchange (Littlejohn, 1983), communities of practice risk developing an increasingly closed system perspective (Yeatts and Hyten, 1998), as they become ever more removed from their surrounding environment (Fischer, 2001). For this reason, some, such as Fischer (2001) argue that professionals need to extend their communities of practice, developing instead communities of interest.

According to Fischer (2001: 4), communities of interest bring together individuals from different communities of practice in order to address a specific issue of common concern. In essence, they are 'communities-of-communities' (Brown and Duguid, 1991), with greater collaboration across all levels of the system (Littlejohn, 1983). Rather than assuming a single knowledge system which all members traverse over time, those within communities of interest appreciate the more complex, multi-faceted knowledge terrain in which they navigate (Fischer, 2001). Within communities of interest, interactions across different levels, or boundaries of the system, are supported in the form of boundary objects (Star, 1989), providing a shared reference that can be understood by all (Fischer, 2001).

Beyond the communities of practice espoused by Wenger et al. (2002) or the communities of interest favoured by Fischer (2001) a similar collaborative approach to system development lies in the concept of communities of inquiry. According to Dumitru (2012: 239), a community of inquiry is defined as 'a group of people united in the examination of an area of common interest via a process of dialogue-based inquiry'. Communities of inquiry are underpinned by two key ideas; firstly, that the acquisition of knowledge is a collective endeavour and secondly, that it is emergent, in the sense that it is never complete, and no individual or group will ever develop a complete understanding (Kennedy, 1996). Within such communities, individuals are in a constant process of knowledge co-construction, reflection, and adaptation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Whether the communities involved are based on practice, interest or inquiry, the key theme throughout all is in the appreciation of professional communities as a source of learning and development that could not be achieved by any one individual (Wenger et al., 2002; Fischer, 2001; Dumitru, 2012). One of the limitations of communities of practice, as identified by Penuel et al. (2009), is in the limited understanding generated by the focus on subsets of

activity, rather than the full network. This limitation can also be seen more within communities of interest, being as they are 'communities-of-communities' (Brown and Duguid, 1991). Yet, the opportunities afforded members of such professional communities in relation to, for example, the flow of professional capital, leads one to question which individuals contribute to collaborative improvement networks.

3.1.3- Collaboration and Networks

Given the broad array of definitions for the term 'community', a 'network' is most commonly understood to be a set of actors and the ties, or relations, amongst them (Borgatti and Foster, 2003). Networks are generally understood as social structures which, as Durkheim (1964) identified of social structures more broadly, provide affordances and constraints on those within them (Crossley et al., 2015). A particular strength of the network concept is in identifying the ways in which the disparate parts of the network influence and impact each other (Borgatti et al., 2018). As Wasserman and Faust (1994) identify, social networks consist of the relations between a finite set of actors. When considering networks at the system level, Henning et al. (2012: 29) acknowledges that, either explicitly or implicitly, social networks most commonly act as transitional meso-level variables.

Whereas system perspectives accentuate the interactions between the environment, the individual and the properties or capabilities that emerge as a result (Dori and Sillitto, 2017), network approaches focus instead on the relations between the actors within the system (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Borgatti and Foster, 2003). As much as actors within a network can take on a variety of attributes, whether being an individual or a collective, relationships within networks can be as equally diverse, with ties between actors taking on a number of different properties (Crossley et al., 2015). Network theory emphasises the importance of these relational features as opposed to the input-process-output model favoured by traditional system theorists (Bertalanffy, 1968; Kim, 1999; Dimmock, 2016). It is in the study of such relations that disparate parts of the network can be seen to influence each other, even indirectly (Borgatti et al., 2018).

In exploring the use of networking and collaboration within education, Muijs et al. (2011) identifies several categories of network theory. The authors begin by considering the insights afforded from networking in relation to constructivist organisational theory, in

which organisations are generally viewed as closed systems, independent from their environment (Muijs et al., 2011). Through the constructivist lens, organisations create shared perceptions of reality which, according to Muijs et al. (2011: 19), may become myopic, closed to external influences, leading to a disconnection between the organisation and its external environment. This is reflective of Fischer's (2001) critique of the communities of practice, espoused by Wenger et al. (2002), as they become ever more removed from their surrounding environment. According to Weick (1995) and Muijs et al. (2011), this disconnection can be addressed by extending the field of influence beyond the immediate organisation, in much the same way as communities of interest (Fischer, 2001). By considering constructivist theory, networks can be viewed as an opportunity for organisations to engage in social learning, thereby gaining new insights they may not have otherwise had access to (Muijs et al., 2011), reflective of the communities of inquiry described by Dumitru (2012). This perspective also relates to the Vygotskian (1978) view of social learning, in which knowledge is formed through interactions, enabling the collective to achieve more than the individuals on their own otherwise might. As a basis for learning, Muijs et al. (2011: 20) argue that networking affords an opportunity to better understand one's own position, as a consequence of having to rationalise it, whilst also providing greater understanding of other perspectives.

One of the issues identified by Huxham (2003) in relation to collaborative structures is that there can frequently be a lack of clarity about who partners are within collaborative networks. This is often compounded by some of the complex arrangements and structures in place, or as members work within an increasing number of collaborative networks (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Huxham and Vangen (2004) suggest that a potential method with which to keep track of the structure of collaborative networks, is in mapping them through diagrammatic techniques. This becomes increasingly important as collaborative networks, structures and roles become increasingly dynamic and fluid (Huxham, 2003). The notion of mapping collaborative networks seemed particularly relevant when considering how best to support Local Coordinators through a reflective process. With consideration of the flow of capital, along with the ways in which communities and networks have been understood, providing Local Coordinators with an opportunity to map their collaborative networks afforded opportunities to reflect more fully on the fluctuating structures and

roles. However, before considering how such network structures may be visualised, consideration of roles within those collaborative networks inevitably led to questions relating to how such networks were led.

3.2: Leadership and Collaborative Networks

In consideration of the structure of collaborative networks, key questions emerge, particularly in relation to the leaders of such networks. Much has been written about leadership, with authors such as MacBeath (2003) listing up to nineteen different leadership 'styles', including collaborative, dispersed, invitational, shared and visionary. Copeland (2014) identifies alternative leadership styles, such as authentic, connective, ethical and values-based, whereas Giltinane (2013) focuses solely on situational, transactional and transformational styles. The rest of this chapter will focus on the theories and concepts of leadership, distinguish between leadership styles and leadership behaviours and seek to identify which leadership styles or behaviours may be best suited to leading collaborative improvement networks.

3.2.1- Concepts of Leadership

Much has been written around the concept of leadership. For example, Bush and Glover (2014) argue that there are three key dimensions to leadership; where it is an intentional process exerted by one person over others; where actions are explicitly linked to values; and when the development of a vision is prioritised. The importance of such a vision is recognised by others, such as Rodd (1997), who argues that what distinguishes leadership from management was the way in which leadership is 'future orientated', whereas management is 'present orientated'.

This distinction between leadership and management is an important issue to consider, particularly in relation to collaborative networks. Fayol (1916, cited in Belyh, 2019) identified several functions unique to management, including planning, organising, directing, staffing and controlling. Similarly, Mintzberg (1975) described management in relation to the related roles, beginning with the formal authority leading directly to consideration of the relationships and the focus on interpersonal roles. Yet, as well as the interpersonal, Mintzberg (1975) also described the importance of the informational roles

and decisional (or decision-making) roles, with the integration of all these roles reflecting the effectiveness of the management.

Whereas management is often understood in relation to formal functions or roles, leadership, as noted above, is often discussed in relation to appropriate 'styles' (Giltinane, 2013; Bush and Glover, 2014). Yet, leadership has also been defined as having certain 'core capacities'. Fullan (2001), for example, identified five such capacities of effective leadership, beginning with the importance of moral purpose to underpin practice. The author goes on to state that leaders also need to understand change, build relationships, create and share knowledge and seek coherence. To support them in this, effective leaders must also share personal characteristics such as energy, enthusiasm and hopefulness (Fullan, 2001). With a range of dimensions, capacities and characteristics to consider, leadership can be seen as distinct from management (Rodd, 1997). Yet, this distinction can be unhelpful as leadership and management often overlap, with competencies in both areas required (Fullan, 2001).

Such an overlap can be seen when considering the high-leverage leadership discussed by Mongon and Chapman (2011). The authors define high-leverage leadership as leadership that is associated with more positive outcomes than would otherwise be expected. Focussing on the education sector specifically, Mongon and Chapman (2011) argue that high-leverage leaders achieve such positive outcomes by promoting fairness for the children and young people, as well as the adults who work with them. They go on to argue that such leaders engage in three forms of related activity: navigation, management and partnership. Navigation reflects leaders' ability to secure a vision, set a direction and nurture workforce development to introduce sustainable change. Related to that is leaders' management, which reflects the ability to analyse multiple sources of data to establish how well the school is working, and processing that into informed judgements and professional action. Finally, high-leverage leaders focus on partnerships, engaging the wider community in a collaborative role (Mongon and Chapman, 2011).

Yet, in relation to leading collaboration specifically, Carroll and Orr (2023: 269) noted that there is a 'conceptual incoherence' when defining collective approaches to leadership such as participative, shared and collaborative. Although the terminology may vary, the root idea is the same; that leadership is seen as less about positional authority and more a collective approach, frequently initiated in response to the pace of change, both socially and

professionally (Bush, 2019). Shared leadership is most often enacted by organisational leaders when they recognise the value of team members' expertise. This approach may involve individuals transitioning in and out of leadership roles due to the expertise that they have to offer at any given time. The sharing of leadership, based on expertise rather than positional authority, is most often associated with teamwork involving colleagues and, on occasions, children, family members and other stakeholders (Morrison and Arthur, 2013).

Alternatively, although similar to shared leadership, collaborative leadership is most often linked to inter-agency working, with stakeholders, including families and communities, coming together to respond to a particular situation (MacBeath, 2003). Much like shared leadership, leadership in collaborative teams is based on the expertise that individuals have rather than formal positional authority. In this way, any individual member can act as a leader in different ways and at different times. Ultimately collaborative leadership can facilitate integrated services for children, young people and their families, so it is sometimes referred to as leadership for community (Morrison and Arthur, 2013). But whether collaborative leadership, or leadership for community, leading such inter-agency teams presents unique challenges that are not present when leading one team within the same organisation.

3.2.2- Leading Collaborative Networks

In defining leadership within collaborative networks specifically, Huxham and Vangen (2004: 198) identify those that are most 'concerned with the mechanisms that lead to the actual outcomes of a collaboration'. In short, leaders within collaborative networks are generally those who are most concerned with 'making things happen' (Huxham and Vangen, 2004: 198). Leadership, much like network structure, invariably reflects the distribution of power within the network (Kraus, 1980; Lank, 2006). Henneman et al. (1995) argue that, in order for genuine collaboration to take place, both power and leadership should be distributed based on knowledge and expertise, as opposed to role or function. Developing this, Lank (2006: 132) argues that leadership from within the network is more desirable than a top-down approach, requiring a redistribution of power, away from the 'command and control' approach favoured within traditional organisational structures. Huxham and Vangen (2000) take this further, claiming that, rather than being inherent in individuals, leadership occurs throughout the collaborative structures and processes. The emergent nature of leadership

within the collaborative network is another example of the knowledge that will be acquired through the very process of collaborating (Kolb, 1984; Clark, 1994).

There is increasing evidence, both within practice (Chapman, 2018) and the related literature (Sullivan and Skecher, 2002a), that in such inter-agency teams, traditional leadership styles are not effective in developing the trust or relationships necessary to deliver the intended outcomes. Rather, a more collaborative form of leadership is required to develop the relationships and build a sense of community across a range of professional boundaries. However, Leithwood and Ndifor (2016) claim that although leadership of networks is understood to vary from leadership of single organisations, there is relatively little empirical evidence to support this. Nevertheless, leadership is recognised to be essential to effective networking, with authors such as Azorín (2020) claiming that no single individual can be responsible for leading collective action. Consequently, an emerging focus on leadership of collaborative networks draws on the concept of distributed leadership (Azorín et al., 2020).

Distributed leadership focusses on the practice of leadership, rather than the functions, roles and routines (Spillane, 2005; Aliakbari and Sadeghi, 2014). Those who are not formal leaders are provided with opportunities to exert their own leadership (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Rather than viewing leadership as being solely about one individual's knowledge and skill, the distributed perspective defines leadership practice as focussing on the interactions between people (Spillane, 2005). Such an approach is not without its challenges, as Sims et al. (2015) note that leaders often fail to see that such a distributed approach to leadership requires ongoing reflection between all members, in order to effectively find approaches to flatten leadership structures (Gronn, 2002). Yet some, such as Harris (2009), argue distributed leadership should involve both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of leadership practice, rather than simply seeking to flatten such leadership structures.

This collaborative, distributed approach leads to what Alvesson and Spicer (2012) call 'deliberated leadership', entailing a collaborative deliberation about authority. However, be it distributed or deliberated; Díaz-Gibson et al. (2017) found a lack of references to such approaches within their own study of leadership within Educational Collaborative Networks (ECNs). This is a point supported by Harris (2009) who argues that although the evidence

about the impact of distributed leadership is encouraging, it is by no means conclusive. Instead, Díaz-Gibson et al. (2017) argue that such leadership approaches are primarily about enhancing connections among community members, rather than promoting individual responsibilities. Leadership focussed on developing trust, enhancing communication and knowledge exchange amongst actors was seen to be more appropriate, particularly when leading multi-agency networks (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017).

On a similar note, Hadfield and Chapman (2011) argue that network leadership requires a broader understanding of agency, one that emphasises the creative, and at times, disruptive, role of the network leader, whereas previous theories have placed a greater emphasis on co-ordination. The authors argue network leaders must focus on understanding the context, defining, and agreeing purposes, identifying expertise or gaps in knowledge, and take action to generate new knowledge (Hadfield and Chapman, 2011: 927). This is supported by Díaz-Gibson et al. (2017), who argue that network leaders must not only empower discussion to help members share knowledge and ideas, but also create a space for such innovation. Leadership of networks involves managing tensions, overcoming barriers, and leveraging the potential within the network (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017).

In many ways, such approaches reflect an alternative leadership style, that of transformational leadership. According to Bush (2003: 187) a central feature of transformational leadership is the concept of vision, with leaders seeking to engage with team members and stakeholders, winning over their hearts and minds and, in doing so, securing their commitment to the larger vision (Giltinane, 2013). Transformational leaders seek to motivate, influence and develop the skills of others in order to bring about change and secure team members' commitment, ultimately inspiring them to become leaders themselves. Providing team members the opportunity to develop their own leadership skills leads to consideration of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is often seen to be focused on supporting teachers in their key role of implementing the curriculum (MacBeath, 2003) and is primarily concerned with teaching rather than learning (Bush and Glover, 2014). However, Palaiologou and Male (2019) argue that such approaches should extend the principle of 'leadership for learning' beyond the classroom to embrace the community.

Whether reflective of the vision that is central to transformational leadership, or the commitment to extend the principle of 'leadership for learning' to embrace the community, one factor important in many leadership approaches is the underlying 'moral purpose' (Fullan, 2001). A variety of terms have been used to describe such a focus, including moral leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and values-based leadership (Bush and Glover, 2014). Such approaches require team members to base their actions on 'what is right' or 'what is good' (Bush, 2003). Values-based leadership is underpinned by principles such as integrity, honesty, trust, compassion, fairness, and respect (Newman, 2000). Such principles inform the vision and purpose of the network providing all members with a foundational basis on how to conduct themselves. Values-based leadership requires that leaders themselves consistently act in accordance with these principles and are authentic in both their actions and words (Carroll and Orr, 2023).

Such authentic leadership develops the relationships within the collaborative network, as the leader demonstrates transparency between their values and actions (Coleman, 2011). Consequently, network members establish respect and trust, which are two aspects important in collaborative endeavours (Fry and Whittington, 2005). The concepts of values-based leadership and authentic leadership also reflect aspects of transformational leadership, as such leadership approaches develop commitment between network members and a willingness to pursue a shared agenda (Coleman, 2011). Through connecting values and behaviours, and in demonstrating authenticity, leaders of collaborative networks can establish and develop a greater context and commitment to the collaborative activity (Coleman, 2011).

Identifying the similarities and overlap between many of these leadership styles, Anderson and Sun (2017) argue that what is required is a new 'full-range' concept of leadership that embraces the uniqueness of each style, whilst integrating characteristics of each. Individuals possess multiple self-identities which can, depending on the situation, help to enact specific leadership behaviours (Anderson and Sun, 2017: 90). The authors go on to argue that the development of such self-identities is closely related to the development of the ego, particularly through three individual stages; the dependent stage, the independent stage, and the inter-independent stage (McCauley et al., 2006). Regarding leadership behaviours appropriate for collaborative networks, it is in these final stages of ego development that

relational and community orientations are most likely to develop (Anderson and Sun, 2017). Such a 'full range' conceptualisation of leadership may go some way in aligning the collaborative leadership challenges by situating the individual within the larger context and network.

Consideration of these larger contexts situates the need for collective leadership across institutional boundaries. Yet, to cultivate such collective leadership requires specific capabilities and competencies most commonly demonstrated by system leaders (Senge et al., 2015). With an awareness of the cultural contexts within which each organization is situated, system leaders recognise that success depends on alignment between and across organisational boundaries. For Senge et al. (2015) system leaders develop three core capabilities when seeking to foster collective leadership. The first of these is the ability, and willingness to see the larger system, rather than focussing on the individual parts. The second capability the authors identify is the need to foster reflective environments and conversations between network members. Shared reflective practice enables those within the network to understand others' perspectives, 'and to appreciate emotionally as well as cognitively each other's reality' (Senge et al., 2015: 28). Finally, system leaders need to direct the networks focus from one of reactive problem solving, to collectively developing positive visions for the future. This includes the need to identify tensions in the system, using these to draw out new and alternative approaches. Drawing on these capabilities enables system leaders to catalyse collective leadership to bring about change.

Related to the concept of systems leadership, and the ability to focus on more than the individual parts, lies the concept of political leadership (Coleman, 2011). Such a leadership approach requires not only the willingness to see the bigger picture, but the skill in 'addressing the day-to-day practicalities of working relationships' (Coleman, 2011: 308). Political leadership requires an awareness of the different political levels, from the broader policy agendas, through to the strategic relationships between local collaborative partners, down to the minutiae of individual and interpersonal operations. With consideration of these macro, mezzo and micro political levels, leaders are often required to focus on practical transactions to progress collaborative partnerships (Bass and Avolio, 1990). This may require the adoption of 'negative' leadership traits, such as manipulation or coercion in order to 'get the job done' (Einarsen et al, 2007: 212). In essence, although political

leadership may be effective, arguably critical, in establishing effective collaborative networks, this may require leaders who are able to reconcile their commitment to authenticity or openness, with their willingness to 'get the job done' (Coleman, 2011).

3.2.3- Leadership Styles versus Leadership Behaviours

Given such contradictions, Chapman et al. (2017) argue that attempting to develop a single overarching model of effective collaborative leadership would be unrealistic. Instead, the authors argue that collaborative leadership is invariably a social process in which strong relationships are developed and maintained, whilst trust is built with and between network members. With less of a focus on traditional, hierarchical and autocratic organizational structures, the relational leader prioritises a more democratic, inclusive and open network (Forde et al., 2000). Through demonstrating a willingness to share leadership opportunities, and by nurturing and enabling others to lead, relational leadership is particularly important within such collaborative contexts, in which traditional organizational structures are not appropriate (Coleman, 2011).

To effectively facilitate collaboration it is equally important that information is effectively shared across the network to reinforce these positive relationships. Similarly to Senge et al. (2015), Chapman et al. (2017) also identifies the importance of understanding the cultural and relational context in which the collaborative activity is situated. This helps to identify opportunities, resources, and potentially new network members. In essence, rather than a specific leadership style, Chapman et al. (2017) identify the importance of relationships and associated behaviours when developing collaborative networks.

This is a focus similar to that of Sullivan and Skelcher (2002b) who argued that collaborative leaders, or what they termed 'reticulists', should be aware of the context in which the collaborative activity is expected to occur, identifying the opportunities and constraints that influence individual and collective behaviours. In doing so, such leaders need to be effective communicators and negotiators, along with being excellent networkers, seeking out new network members with similar interests and goals. Just as Senge et al. (2015) identify the importance of systems perspectives, similarly Sullivan and Skelcher (2002b) argue that collaborative leaders need to be able to see the 'big picture' and be strategic in orientation. This requires individuals who are effective problem-solvers and have good organisational

skills. In this sense, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002b), much like Chapman et al. (2017), argue that collaborative leadership is less about styles than it is about skills and behaviours.

Other authors, such as Nowell and Harrison (2010), go further, arguing that understanding leadership solely through personal attributes has limitations. Although recognising that skills, commitment, vision, and knowledge of individual leaders are key factors in effective collaborative networks, the authors go on to argue that an individual's capacity to take on leadership roles can be constrained by the broader organizational and institutional context. Given that those within collaborative networks are acting as representatives of organizations, their own organizational context greatly influences their capacity to take on leadership roles.

This can be impacted by factors such as 'bureaucratic flexibility, agency size, financial solvency, and the degree of organizational stability' (Nowell and Harrison, 2010: 32). When resources are limited individuals can face significant challenges in adopting leadership roles in broader collaborative contexts. The authors claim that effective leadership of collaborative networks requires organizational capacity, along with political capital focussed on relationship building, gaining recognition and influence. Such awareness of organizational contexts, including limitations and challenges, can lead to what Coleman (2011) defines as constitutive leadership, requiring effective communication between collaborative partners, a willingness to listen and an understanding of constraints. Constitutive leadership focuses on the ways in which leaders create a collaborative climate through acknowledging the, sometimes challenging, contexts within which partners operate (Coleman, 2011).

The constraints individuals within organizations can experience in terms of leading collaborative activities is similarly recognised by Bonnell and Koontz (2007), who argue that organizational development and maintenance can overwhelm attempts at collaboration. However, the authors go on to identify that, despite the challenges, such constraints can provide opportunities, for example, with open communication about the challenges, trust is developed. At the same time, with the challenges recognised and acknowledged, leadership can be more evenly distributed, accounting for individuals' strengths and capacity. This has the potential of developing leadership within the collaborative network, as individuals take on leadership roles at different times and in different contexts. Through recognising the

time and resources required to develop and maintain collaborative activity, network partners can effectively plan stakeholder involvement at different scales appropriate to the task and situation (Bonnell and Koontz, 2007).

3.2.4- Elements of Collaborative Leadership

In drawing together some of the points discussed, leadership of collaborative networks is complex and multi-layered. Yet, Coleman (2011) draws several of these themes together to establish the core elements of collaborative leadership. Firstly, distributed leadership, and the sharing of power and responsibility, is central to the concept of collaboration, with authority being shared across individuals, groups and organizational boundaries (Coleman, 2006; 2011). Secondly, authentic leadership, and the alignment of values and behaviours, is important in establishing trust between collaborative partners (Fry and Whittington, 2005). An awareness of the larger political systems and levels is also seen to be crucial in the development of collaborative networks, although this may require leaders who are able to reconcile their commitment to authenticity, with their willingness to 'get the job done' (Coleman, 2011). The inherent contradictions here may be managed through a relational leadership approach, through a willingness to share leadership opportunities in a democratic and inclusive collaborative network (Forde et al., 2000). Yet, collaborative partners may not have the capacity to take up such leadership opportunities depending on the organizational context and constraints. For this reason, Coleman (2011) identifies that the final element of collaborative leadership involves constitutive leadership, through recognising the time and resources required to develop and maintain collaborative activity (Bonnell and Koontz, 2007).

The elements of collaborative leadership identified by Coleman (2011) develops from previous discussions around leadership, but blends aspects of different leadership styles and approaches to provide a distinct model, focussed on the complex and often contradictory contexts of collaborative networks. Collaborative leaders are required to focus on the relational aspects of the role, whilst understanding the organizational contexts within which network members operate. In order to effectively distribute leadership appropriately, collaborative leaders need to account for the different political levels and systems, whilst also striving for authenticity and alignment between values and behaviours. By 'blending' competing ideas around effective leadership, Coleman (2011) seeks to address the

limitations of individual approaches to establish an alternative approach to enacting collaborative leadership.

With such an array of leadership styles and behaviours to consider, Local Coordinators had to account for the leadership within their own collaborative networks within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland. In their role as 'reticulists', Local Coordinators had to be aware of the context in which the collaborative activity was expected to occur, identifying the opportunities and constraints that influenced individual and collective behaviours (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002b). This was particularly important when accounting for the open systems approach to the development of collaborative networks taken within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, collective impact with collaborative action (Kania and Kramer, 2011). This particular form of cross-sector collaboration, and the implications on leadership practice, will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

3.3: Summary

This chapter began by considering what is exchanged between collaborative partners, specifically the flow of capital. Firstly, three different types of social capital were identified, bonding, bridging and linking (Steinfield et al., 2009). Of these, bridging social capital reflects the concept of structural holes within collaborative communities, where a lack of connection between network members may provide greater opportunities for brokerage (Gargiulo and Benassi, 2000). Alongside social capital, another form of capital can seen to be exchanged in collaborations, professional capital. Defined as the confluence of human capital, social capital and decisional capital, professional capital helps 'create high quality and high performance in all professional practice' (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012: 102). This leads to the point the authors make, as they argue that high quality collaboration can only be effective if those involved are high quality to begin with (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

To address this, the chapter moved on to consider who is involved in the collaborative improvement communities, and how professional communities have been understood. Ranging from communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002), to communities of interest (Fischer, 2001) and communities of inquiry (Dumitru, 2012), the key theme throughout is in the appreciation of professional communities as a source of learning and development that could not be achieved by any one individual (Wenger et al., 2002; Fischer, 2001; Dumitru,

2012). Yet, beyond the professional community, it is important to identify who else may be involved in collaborative improvement. To address this, the chapter went on to reflect on collaborative networks.

Rather than solely focussing on the individuals, services and organisations within professional communities, network approaches focus on the relations between them (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). As a basis for learning, Muijs et al. (2011: 20) argue that networking affords an opportunity to better understand one's own position, as a consequence of having to rationalise it, whilst also providing greater understanding of other perspectives. Huxham and Vangen (2004) suggest that a potential method with which to keep track of the structure of collaborative networks, is in mapping them. This may become increasingly important as collaborative networks, structures and roles become increasingly dynamic and fluid (Huxham, 2003).

The chapter moved on to reflect on theories of leadership and identify which leadership styles or approaches may be best suited to leading collaborative improvement networks. With a plethora of leadership styles to consider (MacBeath, 2003), the chapter went on to identify the 'conceptual incoherence' when defining collective approaches to leadership specifically (Carroll and Orr, 2023: 269). To account for this, a number of leadership styles best suited to collaboration were discussed, such as distributed, transformational and authentic leadership (Azorín et al., 2020; Bush, 2003; Bush and Glover, 2014). Yet, as Chapman et al. (2017) identify, it is unrealistic to expect one leadership style that is best suited to collaboration. Instead, it is also important to consider leadership behaviours, particularly in relation to the context in which the collaboration is expected to occur. Taking account of such factors, the chapter concluded by identifying the core elements of effective collaborative leadership, by 'blending' competing concepts to address the limitations of individual approaches (Coleman, 2011).

Along with adopting a distributed approach to leadership, Coleman (2011) also identifies the importance of relational and authentic leadership styles when engaged in collaborative activity. This is further developed when understanding the context in which the collaboration is expected to occur, and the distinct political levels that influence such activity (Coleman, 2011). This final consideration can be further supported by developing a systems approach to collaborative leadership, with system perspectives accentuating the

interactions between the environment, the individual and the capabilities that can emerge as a result (Dori and Sillitto, 2017).

Such considerations were important for Local Coordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, as they sought to establish or develop collaborative networks. They would not only have to account for their own leadership styles or behaviours, but also account for those other individuals and partners who adopted leadership roles. This could become increasingly complex when accounting for the open systems approach taken within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, collective impact with collaborative action (Kania and Kramer, 2011). The following chapter will consider the value of such an open systems perspective in greater detail, before considering the implications for network leaders, and reflecting on some of the inherent challenges of such an approach.

Chapter 4

Collective Impact

Network approaches to collaboration focus on the relations between actors, and provide opportunities to better understand one's own position, along with greater understanding of other perspectives (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Muijs et al., 2011). One potential method through which to keep track of the increasingly dynamic structure of collaborative networks, is in mapping them (Huxham, 2003). Yet, before identifying how such approaches might be applied to this study, and the role of the Local Coordinators, it is important to reflect on an alternative to network approaches, systems perspectives. To support cross-sector collaboration, the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme adopted a specific open systems approach, collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011; Virtanen et al., 2020). To provide more context in relation to Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland and the role of the Local Coordinator, this chapter aims to:

- Describe systems theory and identify the need for systems approaches to cross-sector collaboration.
- Discuss the Collective Impact approach, including the conditions, preconditions and phases, and provide examples of such an approach in action.
- Identify some of the challenges involved in the collective impact approach.

Systems have been defined as a group of parts which, when combined, create emergent properties not possessed by the individual parts (Dori and Sillitto, 2017). The chapter will begin by exploring a range of systems, including closed, open and ecological. Each of these reflects the relationship the system has to its environment, for although 'a system in an environment is easy to imagine, the reality is not so simple' (Kitto, 2014: 557). From here the narrative will move on to consider the ways in which such knowledge can develop into systems leadership, in which individuals are able to lead within their own level, as well as work collaboratively with leaders from other levels of the system. This is necessary for, as Spillane (2013) argues, it is necessary to go beyond any one level, to understand the impact the wider system has on quality practice. Yet, as Mowat (2019) warns, system approaches to

educational leadership are not enough but, should be underpinned by a 'moral imperative' (Fullan, 2008). The chapter will therefore consider how this imperative is reflected within the Scottish context.

As a form of cross-sector collaboration, the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme adopted a collective impact approach which embraces an open-systems perspective. The chapter will go on to describe the collective impact approach in greater detail, beginning by identifying how such an open-systems approach can align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), demonstrative of the moral imperative identified by Mowat (2019). This will be followed by consideration of the conditions necessary to embed collective impact, ones that differentiate it from other forms of cross-sector collaboration, along with the preconditions that need to be in place. Having defined the collective impact approach, the chapter will move on to provide examples of such an approach in action, for example the Greater Shankhill Children and Young People Zone in Belfast, Northern Ireland (Generation Shankhill Zone, online), and the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) in New York, USA (HCZ, 2020).

The chapter will conclude by considering some of the challenges involved in collective impact, along with some of the criticisms of such an approach. Examining the expectations of collaborative partners in collective impact initiatives is important, as one of the most common challenges suggests that those involved expect the wrong kind of solutions (Kania and Kramer, 2013). Another challenge to consider in collective impact initiatives is ensuring the right people are round the table (Schmitz, 2021) and so the narrative will reflect on power and equity within such networks.

4.1: Systems Perspectives

Before identifying in what ways systems perspectives may support the implementation of such international agendas as the CRC (UN, 1989) and SDGs (UN, 2015), at the local level, it is first necessary to understand what is meant by the term 'system'. Buchanan and Huczynski (2019) describe the way in which the term 'system' can be applied to a range of phenomena; for example, nervous system, drainage system, energy system, planetary system or solar system. However, as Dori and Sillitto (2017) argue, understanding systems depends on one's ontological positioning. For the realist, systems, much like those described

by Buchanan and Huczynski (2019), are independent of human observation or thought, existing in nature. Constructivists, however, believe systems to exist purely as mental constructs (Dori and Sillitto, 2017). The correct definition of the term system, according to Dori and Sillitto (2017), is related more to the thoughts, beliefs or worldviews of the researcher, rather than a clear, consistent and universal understanding.

Despite this array of definitions, some researchers, such as Bertalanffy (1968) sought to establish a common understanding of systems theory. Stemming from his background in biology, Bertalanffy (1968) went on to develop what would be commonly known as General Systems Theory (GST). For Bertalanffy (1968), a system was defined as a set of elements in interrelation, with GST being applicable across all systems, including real, conceptual and abstract systems. In seeking to build on this work and synthesize a common definition, Dori and Sillitto (2017), acknowledge that the GST developed by Bertalanffy (1968) provides a strong foundation for a framework in which most systems definitions can sit. This led the authors to define a system as a group of parts which, when combined, creates emergent properties or capabilities not possessed by the individual parts (Dori and Sillitto, 2017).

This concept of emergent properties is what distinguishes systems perspectives from the traditional reductionist perspectives (Kim, 1999), in which parts are studied in isolation. Kim (1999: 2) considers these emergent properties of a system to be intimately related to a specific goal or purpose, arguing that 'purpose acts as (the) predominant organizing force in any system.' As the author acknowledges, the intended purpose of a system is generally explicit. It is in seeking to understand the unintended purpose or consequences of actions within the system that help identify and anticipate issues before they arise (Kim, 1999). To do so, systems thinkers must not only consider the impact of actions within the system, but also on the environment in which the system is situated (Kitto, 2014). Depending on how, or indeed whether, a system interacts with its environment establishes whether that system is open or closed.

4.1.1- Closed, Open and Ecological Systems

Gunaratne (2008) defines closed systems as those that are isolated from their environments, progressively develop entropy, leading to disintegration and death. In particular, it is in this isolation that closed systems can best be understood. Yeatts and

Hyten (1998) claim that closed systems were the primary focus of most early systems theorists, stemming as it did from classical and human relations perspectives on organizational change. Proponents of closed systems perspectives argue that many variables within an organization can be easily measured, such as employee performance, satisfaction and motivation, without the need to look at external variables (Yeatts and Hyten, 1998: 12).

Alternatively, open systems are described as those systems which purposively interact with their external environments in order to survive (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2019). As Littlejohn (1983: 32) describes, 'an open system is a set of objects with attributes that interrelate in an environment'. Due to this focus on the relationship between factors in the environment, the study of open systems became commonly known as the environmental approach to systems theory (Yeatts and Hyten, 1998) and can be found in the biological, psychological and social systems (Gunaratne, 2008).

Developing on the environmental approach to studying open systems, the psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) established Ecological Systems Theory. This framework considers five environmental systems and, in doing so, provides a way in which to examine an individuals' interrelationship with their community and wider society. With the individual at the centre, this open systems perspective goes on to consider the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems which surround them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Since the original publication, Bronfenbrenner then went on to also consider the role of biology within his systems framework, which later came to be known as the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007). The work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) heavily influenced the ways in which individuals were to be understood in relation to their environments (Jeronimus et al., 2014).

By introducing a framework with which to understand the individual and their relationships with their external environments, Bronfenbrenner provided a distinct approach to the psychology of human development (Spencer, 2008). In doing so, the author was able to address one of the common challenges in most systems approaches; boundary specification. As Kitto (2014) identifies, it is often difficult to identify the boundary between the system and its environment. Systems theorists should acknowledge that 'while a system in an environment is easy to imagine, the reality is not so simple' (Kitto, 2014: 557). It is up to the

researcher therefore to make clear the distinction between the system and the environment, with clear boundary specification, as this will inevitably impact the response (Kitto, 2014).

4.1.2: Systems Leadership

The concept of boundary specification is one especially relevant when considering the inter-related and compounding issues of Scottish education, in which factors such as poverty, inequality, inequity and attainment dominate the agenda (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014; Scottish Government 2020b). With such a multitude of complex issues, leaders in education must increasingly reach across organisational boundaries, developing an integrated, systems approach to achieve outcomes (Christie Commission, 2011). This was a theme identified in the Donaldson Report into teacher education, which called for greater support for head teachers, enabling them 'to contribute to system-level leadership of education in Scotland' (Donaldson, 2010: 101).

For Hopkins and Higham (2007), system leadership relates specifically to headteachers who are able to adopt wider system roles and consequently are as invested in the attainment of students in other schools as much as their own. The authors argue that there are similarities between system leadership and the adaptive leadership approach described by Heifetz et al. (2004). Hopkins and Higham (2007: 157) state that system leaders need to work adaptively to lead people through restrictive boundaries and entrenched cultures. The authors go on to identify four key capabilities that underpin the role of system leaders, including setting the direction, managing teaching and learning, with a focus on developing people and developing the organisation. In this way, there are also key links between system leadership and leadership for learning (Palaiologou and Male, 2019).

According to Dimmock (2016), system leadership should be promoted at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. Reflecting these levels, Hopkins (2009) describes system leadership at the school-, local- and regional levels. The author argues that all three levels must operate interdependently to achieve effective system development. To support this, system leaders must be able to lead within their own level, as well as work collaboratively with leaders from other levels of the system, to drive improvement and system development. This concept is further developed in a review of the Scottish education system from the OECD

(2015: 10), which recommended 'a strengthened 'middle' operating through networks and collaboratives among schools, and in and across local authorities'. Leading from the 'middle', or the meso-level, is seen to develop this level of the system, from one of dissemination and distribution to an empowered driver of systems development, driven by collective responsibility (OECD, 2015: 134).

The authors of this review are quick to establish the distinction between leading in the middle and leading from the middle (OECD, 2015). In the former, leadership is underpinned by partnership working and consensus building within the systems level, such as through networks and collaborative partnerships among schools and across local authorities (OECD, 2015). A variety of approaches and initiatives within Scottish education demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, such as the multi-agency approach promoted through the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) national practice model (Scottish Government, 2008) and the Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (Scottish Government, online f). Leading in the middle, or meso-level, is also evident in the Scottish Attainment Challenge (Education Scotland, 2020) and the School Improvement Partnership Programme (Education Scotland, 2018). The commonalities amongst these strategies lie in the focus on integrated partnership working at the meso-level, in order to support the delivery of high-quality teaching and learning at the micro level (OECD, 2015: 134).

However, Hargreaves and Shirley (2020) make some clear distinctions when comparing leading in the middle to leading from the middle. The authors argue that the main principle underpinning leading in the middle is to improve performance. Leading from the middle focuses instead on transforming learning and well-being. Whereas leading in the middle is about creating better systems, leading from the middle focuses on strengthening communities. Although leading in the middle is about implementing initiatives, leading from the middle is about taking the initiative. Essentially, leading from the middle seeks to address the specific needs of schools and communities, rather than simply 'promoting the capacity of abstract systems to undertake self-improvement' (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2020: 107).

In calling from a move from leading in the middle, to leading from the middle, the OECD (2015) recognised that the concepts of collaborative partnerships and collegial working that characterise current leadership approaches in Scottish education can be further developed

and built upon. As leadership moves from within the meso- level, extending to the rest of the system, it has greater potential to drive innovation and systems change (OECD, 2015). As leadership develops laterally, so too does the professional accountability for improved outcomes (OECD, 2015: 135). This theme is further developed by Spillane (2013), who argued that it is necessary to go beyond any one level in order to understand the impact the wider education system has on quality practice in the classroom.

4.1.3: The Moral Imperative

In considering the approach taken by the Scottish Government in 'closing the gap' for example, critics, such as Torrance and Forde (2017), argue that approaches so far have failed to account for the structural inequalities that underpin disadvantage. Instead, to address such a complex and entrenched phenomenon, a focus on systems leadership is required. Yet, as Mowat (2019) warns, system approaches to educational leadership are in themselves not enough but, should be underpinned by a 'moral imperative' (Fullan, 2008) with a key focus on social justice for all children (Fuller, 2012).

Indeed, the concept of moral purpose lies at the very centre of the model of system leadership practice developed by Hopkins and Higham (2007). The authors argue that system leaders should be driven by a moral purpose related to enhancing student learning and empowering teachers to develop schools thereby improving communities. For Hopkins and Higham (2007: 159), system leaders are able to translate their own moral purpose 'into operational principles that have tangible outcomes.' Alongside the focus on moral purpose and strategic acumen, system leaders also engage in personal development as they develop their skills in response to the contexts they find themselves in. Taken together, these three behaviours and skills reflect the core practice of 'setting direction', the first of the key capabilities from system leaders (Hopkins and Higham, 2007).

The focus on moral purpose is further illustrated when considering the international agendas discussed previously; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). As noted, these international treaties share a number of commonalities, not least the vision of a sustainable, rights-based society (Bhardwaj et al., 2017). Wernham (2017) demonstrated not only the obvious connections but identified some of the more subtle connections both between and across the treaties. In

understanding how these global treaties are implemented at national, local and school level a systems perspective is required in order to appreciate how local educational policy and practice is situated within and related to wider social change (Mowat, 2019).

Scottish educational policy is founded on social democratic values, rooted in historical and cultural traditions (Lingard and Sellar, 2014). The rationale for educational policy development is often embedded within broader Scottish policies, demonstrating the importance system perspectives have in understanding and implementing local educational policy. This is further illustrated with consideration of the global drivers behind such policies leading to further levels of complexity for education systems throughout the world (Arnott, 2017). Whilst the Scottish education system attempts to hold on to social democratic values and traditions, Mowat (2019: 54) argues that it is not resistant to the challenges inherent in education systems around the globe. With global pressures and narrowing curricula, issues around purpose, values and the moral imperative are often neglected (Alexander, 2012: 19).

Instead, Scottish educational policy should be understood in relation to wider social policy, much as schools themselves should be understood in relation to broader societal developments and needs. Similarly to Dimmock (2016), who identified the need for system leadership to be developed through all parts of the system, Mowat (2019) argues that, if there is to be effective and sustainable developments in the areas of social justice within Scottish education, then system approaches, along with distributed leadership will support change through all levels of the system. This extends the OECD (2015) recommendation of a greater emphasis on leading from the middle. Rather, in identifying the distributed nature of leadership throughout all levels of the system, powerful learning environments can be developed and sustained, enabling networking and collaboration between and across different system levels.

To ensure this collaboration across system levels is not based on poor methodology, Weick (1976: 4) calls for a rigorous conceptual and methodological foundation, in which the identity, separateness and boundaries of the system and elements are clearly specified. Rich detail about the context of the system, with any number of couplings occurring amongst the elements, requires an appropriate methodology. Thus, Weick (1976: 10) suggests that an initial stage in the process should be in mapping the coupling and elements

within the given system. One approach to mapping these elements is through reflection on the individual activity systems.

4.2: Collective Impact

The Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme aims for transformational change by developing an approach based on Kania and Kramer's (2011) concept of 'collective impact with collaborative action'. Kania and Kramer (2011: online) define collective impact as 'the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem'. From this, the authors go on to argue that collective impact is distinctly different from other approaches to collaboration. This chapter will begin by first demonstrating why an open systems approach to societal change, such as that afforded by Collective Impact, is desirable. This will be followed by a description of the Collective Impact approach, including consideration of the conditions and preconditions necessary. The narrative will move on to consider other Collective Impact initiatives, both nationally and internationally, to establish what Collective Impact looks like in practice. The chapter will conclude with some of the challenges inherent in the Collective Impact approach, followed by consideration of some of the criticisms of such approaches to cross-sector collaboration.

4.2.1: An Open Systems Approach

Given the complexities inherent in system reform, Kania and Kramer (2011) claim that system-wide progress will remain an unobtainable aspiration if services continue to strive only for individual impact. Large-scale social change will not be possible, the authors argue, with only the isolated intervention of individual organisations. Instead, a move towards better cross-sector coordination and collaboration is required, if genuine systems-wide transformational change is to occur. Yet, the authors go on to warn that this requires more than simply encouraging greater collaboration. Rather, it requires a systemic approach, with a focus on the relationships between and across services and an alignment of objectives.

Taking this further, Virtanen et al. (2020) demonstrates the ways in which the open systems perspective afforded by Collective Impact aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The authors argue that the focus on partnerships within CI initiatives

builds on the experience and strategies of those involved, developing new knowledge and aligning with the essential objectives of Goal 17 of the SDGs (UN, 2015). Virtanen et al. (2020) then go further, demonstrating the ways in which CI initiatives that focus on children's wellbeing can reflect up to eight of the SDGs, including Goals 1-5, 10, 11, and 16 (UN, 2015). As Collective Impact initiatives seek to address such global challenges in a local context, they need to be responsive to changes in their environment (Virtanen et al., 2020). This reflects the open systems approach rather than a closed system perspective, in which elements within the system only respond to each other (Virtanen et al., 2020).

With such a complex array of societal issues, Collective Impact approaches offer an open systems response, promoting partnerships and building bridges between individual, collective and institutional actors (Schneider, 2020: 60-61; Virtanen et al., 2020). Yet, Collective Impact is not the only form of cross-sector collaboration (Henig et al., 2015), nor the first seeking to address systemic challenges (Wolff, 2016). To clearly distinguish Collective Impact, the narrative will move on to describe the five conditions of the CI approach, as first defined by Kania and Kramer (2011). Yet, the authors would revisit and revise the concept in subsequent years and so the chapter will then move on to consider some of the preconditions necessary to establish a Collective Impact response and reflect on the different phases of such initiatives (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

4.2.2: Conditions of Collective Impact

Kania and Kramer (2011) identify collective impact as distinct from other forms of collaborative activity due to five specific conditions, unique to the approach: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.

1. Common Agenda- All partners share a vision for change, including a mutual understanding of the issues and a collective approach to addressing them through agreed upon actions.
2. Shared Measurement- Gathering data and measuring results consistently across partners ensures the alignment of activity and mutual accountability.
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities- Partner activities must be differentiated and coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.

4. Continuous Communication- Consistent, transparent communication across partners builds trust, assures objectives are aligned and creates a common motivation.
5. Backbone Support- A separate organisation serves as the backbone for the entire collective impact initiative, coordinating partner organisations, services, and agencies. Both the Strive Together Partnership (Strive Together, online a) and Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS, online) act as the backbone support for their respective programmes.

For Kania and Kramer (2011), these five conditions lead to the alignment of aims, services and activity in a way that reflects collective impact. The following year, however, the authors refined their description of collective impact to incorporate three pre-conditions and three phases of such approaches (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

4.2.3: Preconditions and Phases

Before beginning any collective impact initiative three conditions must be in place: an influential champion, adequate financial resources, and a sense of urgency for change (Hanleybrown et al., 2012: online). Of these, the authors argue that the most important factor is to have an influential champion (or small group of champions) who can galvanise support, drawing together a range of cross-sector leaders. Second to this, Hanleybrown et al. (2012) claim, is the need for adequate financial resources and funding to pay for the required infrastructure and planning processes. Finally, it is important that there is an urgency for change and widespread recognition that new approaches are necessary. Combined, these preconditions create the opportunity to draw a range of stakeholders and partners together, some of whom may never have collaborated before, in a collective impact initiative. The preconditions also create the motivation necessary to maintain these partnerships until the initiative develops its own momentum (Hanleybrown et al., 2012: online).

Of the three preconditions, Hanleybrown et al. (2012) argue that the most important and critical are the influential champions, who can draw stakeholders together and maintain their active engagement as the initiative develops. Within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) programme, at least some of these influential champions came in the form of the Local Coordinators, who were tasked with promoting the priorities of local children and young people, whilst supporting partnerships and collaboration between organisations

(CNS, online). According to Hanleybrown et al. (2012), to do so effectively requires a passionate leader, who can support stakeholders in identifying their own priorities for action, rather than promoting an individual point of view or agenda. These champions, although influential, do not impose their own agenda, but rather support stakeholders in the identification of their own solutions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). This requires a reflective understanding of the power within the network (D'Amour et al., 2005), the emergent trust between stakeholders (Huxham and Vangen, 2004) and the shared values, moral imperative or sense of urgency around the issue (Fullan, 2008; Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

This exemplifies what the authors had previously identified as Adaptive Leadership, supporting positive change 'by provoking debate, encouraging new thinking, and advancing social learning' (Heifetz et al., 2004: 26). In their 2021 Process Evaluation Report, Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland identified key traits for the role of Local Coordinators, including communication and relational skills, a facilitative mindset and an understanding of roles, boundaries and vulnerabilities. Together, these traits and skills established the Local Coordinators in their positions as Adaptive Leaders, developing local actions and achieving transformational change, suited to the local context (Heifetz et al., 2004; CNS, 2021a).

Alongside these Adaptive Leaders (Heifetz et al., 2004), Hanleybrown et al. (2012) also claim that adequate funding and financial resources are another important precondition to collective impact initiatives. The authors state that adequate financial resources must be made available for at least two to three years (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Given that the first two phases of collective impact approaches that the author discuss, initiating action and organising for impact, can take up to two years, this would, at most, leave only one years' worth of funding for the final phase. As this final phase relates to the sustainment of action and impact, it would be reasonable to assume that even three years' worth of financial resources may not be enough to truly sustain collective impact approaches. Hanleybrown et al. (2012) argue that at least one anchor funder should be engaged from the beginning of the initiative; one who can mobilise other resources to support the required infrastructure and planning processes.

With Adaptive Leaders (Heifetz et al., 2004) and anchor funders in place, Hanleybrown et al. (2012) claim that the final precondition to collective impact is a sense of urgency for change around an issue. For Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) the initial issue and aim of

the project was focussed on closing the poverty related attainment gap in education (CNS, 2021a). Yet, the focus soon began to shift to consider what they describe as 'the preconditions to attainment'; namely, to improve children's overall wellbeing and outcomes (CNS, 2021b: 2). With this broader remit, CNS were able to attract a wide array of interested parties, including policy makers and practitioners. Creating a sense of urgency around improvements in children's wellbeing and outcomes aligned to a plethora of key policy priorities at both a national and local level (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; CNS, 2021a).

This sense of urgency was further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as existing inequalities and inequities were magnified (Bynner et al., 2020). From an initial focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap, CNS created a greater sense of urgency around the broader areas of concern relating to children's wellbeing and outcomes. This not only reflected international agendas, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) or Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), but also national aims of service reform, such as those set out in the Christie Commission report (2011). Importantly, however, CNS developed a sense of urgency through a place-based approach to service reform, redirecting their focus in response to local and timely concerns.

Through ensuring Adaptive Leaders (Heifetz et al., 2004) and anchor funders were in place, and with a sense of urgency, the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) programme had all the preconditions necessary to develop a collective impact approach to improving children's wellbeing and outcomes (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; CNS, 2021a).

Once these preconditions are in place, there are then three distinct phases through which collective impact approaches develop: initiating, organising, and sustaining (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). To initiate action, the project must first identify the key players, gather baseline data and form the governance structure, including influential champions. As the project moves into the second phase, stakeholders then need to form the backbone infrastructure, identify common goals and shared measures, and begin to align partners and stakeholders around those goals and measures. By doing so, they will organise for impact (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Phase three relates to how that action and impact will be sustained, requiring the systematic collection of data, the coordinated prioritisation of specific action areas, and continual active learning and course correction (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). The authors go on to stress that each of these phases takes time, with the first two phases alone taking

anywhere between six months to two years. Beyond that, once the project has been initiated, phase three can last a decade or more. The authors emphasise that 'collective impact is a marathon, not a sprint' (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Acknowledging that collective impact initiatives are most successful when developing and building on existing collaborative activities, the authors argue that such approaches take time. 'There is no shortcut in the long-term process of social change' (Hanleybrown et al., 2012: 4). Although progress may happen gradually, it is important that there are some 'early wins', so that network members begin to see the value of working together (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). In this way, the outcomes of the collective impact initiative are inexorably linked to the process.

With their description of the five conditions, three preconditions and three phases of collective impact initiatives, Kania and Karmer (2011) and Hanleybrown et al. (2012) define collective impact as distinct from other forms of cross-sector collaboration. Yet even the authors acknowledge that such an approach is not without its challenges. Cross-sector collaborations are, by their very nature, challenging and complicated (Henig et al., 2015). In this respect, collective impact approaches are not unique. Yet, Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland is not the first programme to adopt such an approach. The following section will describe other examples of collective impact.

4.2.4: Collective Impact in Action

Increasingly, schools in England are exploring alternative approaches to supporting children and families, with many initiatives adopting place-based approaches focused on areas with high levels of poverty (Kerr and Ainscow, 2017). Seeking to provide a continuous 'pipeline' of support for children throughout their schooling, such projects are termed comprehensive community initiatives (CCI) (Kerr et al., 2024). With an approach similar to that of Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, the Children's Communities network in England, recognised that 'many of the factors that shape children's outcomes originate beyond the school gates' (Dyson et al, 2013, p. 86). To understand this more fully, the Children's Communities initiative sought to engage local children, families, and communities to help identify the complex range of interconnected factors which create and perpetuate disadvantage within the local areas. Developing a holistic system of service delivery, giving account of local needs and issues, the Children's Communities network aimed to support the children, families, and

communities in finding their own solutions (Save the Children, 2017). Recognising the value of local knowledge develops on the place-based approach, reforming and maximising the capabilities within the communities.

This recognition of the capabilities of the community can also be seen in other network initiatives, such as the Greater Shankhill Children and Young People Zone in Belfast, Northern Ireland (Generation Shankhill Zone, online). In 1995, residents within Greater Shankhill requested that it be designated 'an area for priority education treatment' (Generation Shankhill Zone, online). This eventually led to the formation of the Greater Shankhill Children and Young People Zone and an increased focus on listening to and involving local children and young people in the realisation of their goals. With a long-term vision for every child in the area to realise their potential and shape their own future, the Shankhill Children and Young People Zone developed on the initial concept of support identified by the community over twenty years ago (Generation Shankhill Zone, online). Their vision included engaging every child and young person within the area in conversations, establishing how they want their futures to unfold. Together they then work towards shaping that journey, with the Zone providing sustained, 'wraparound' support, for however long it took to achieve the desired outcomes. As well as this child-centred holistic approach, the Greater Shankhill Children and Young People Zone identified the importance of partnership and collaborative working to achieve these outcomes (Generation Shankhill Zone, online).

The focus on listening to children, collaboration and partnership working can be seen elsewhere, such as the Children First pioneer project initiative in Wales. Working collaboratively with the children and young people from identified areas, Children First aimed to initiate change at the local level (Welsh Government, 2017). Central to the work of Children First were the rights of children, as laid out in the CRC (UN, 1989), particularly relating to the right of children and young people to participate in decisions affecting them (Article 12). These rights underpinned the collaborative nature of Children First, ensuring the development of strategic plans based on local needs. With children's rights at the centre, all local partners in the Children First zones were required to work collaboratively, bridging services and support to reduce inequalities and inequities for local children and young people (Welsh Government, 2017).

With the Children First pioneer project in Wales, the Shankhill Children and Young People Zone in Northern Ireland, the Children's Communities network in England, and the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland program in Scotland, place-based approaches to service reform are evident throughout all four nations of the UK. With a focus on putting children and young people at the heart of decision-making, each initiative seeks to improve outcomes by aligning services in response to local needs. Yet, such collective impact approaches to service reform are not unique to the UK. The following section will consider similar initiatives across the USA.

Originating from a pilot programme in the 1990s, the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) now supports over 14,000 children and young people and 14,000 adults in Central Harlem, New York, USA (HCZ, 2020). Recognising that intergenerational poverty stems from a multitude of interconnected, systemic issues, HCZ developed a series of community-responsive, place-based services and solutions targeted to the needs of the community. The aim was to offer holistic support 'from cradle to career', listening and learning from the community in the identification of those needs and how to address them (Dyson et al., 2012; HCZ, 2020). With some of the Harlem Children's Zone projects, such as the Promise Academies (Department of Education [US], 2013) having been rolled out across the country, this place-based approach appears to be increasingly acknowledged as an important development in service reform.

Offering a range of programmes around education, health and the community, the HCZ develop a range of place-based services to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Dobbie and Fryer (2009) demonstrated that those children and young people involved with the Harlem Children Zone outperformed their peers in a variety of curricular areas. Hanson (2013) too claims that there is evidence that the Harlem Children's Zone is having a beneficial impact on the lives of those children, young people and their families participating in their programs. Yet some, such as Zelon (2010), argue that the success of the project is not equally measurable for all and that not all children within the catchment areas have equal opportunities in accessing these resources.

An alternative initiative, the Strive Together Partnership (STP) began in 2003 and aimed to address issues of poverty and inequality for local children and young people in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. Bringing together a variety of leaders from education, business and non-profit

organisations, members of the STP worked collaboratively; to support every child, from cradle to career. Aiming to advance equity to improve outcomes for all children, the Strive Together Partnership transformed systems through collaborative improvement (Strive Together Partnership, online a). Utilising such an approach, communities conducted small tests of change, observed the impact, and used data to make informed adjustments. In doing so, the work became more effective and the focused efforts resulted in improved outcomes. The Strive Together Partnership (STP) aimed to combine the best thinking from across the field of social change and the health care sector's approach to continuous improvement, to help communities work toward better cradle-to-career outcomes for every child (Strive Together, 2021).

The success of the STP became evident as the project made progress on many of their defined indicators, such as reading scores and graduation rates (Bathgate et al., 2011). Alongside these successes, the projects transformative approach to social change led to national interest and discussion around cross-sector collaboration (Henig et al., 2015). In 2011, the Strive Together Cradle to Career Network was formed and within the first couple of years the network had projects from over 100 cities seeking to engage. At this point, network leaders declared that only projects willing to commit to their theory of action for effective implementation of Collective Impact, and who were making clear progress towards such goals, would be accepted as network members (Henig et al., 2015). By 2024, over 70 network partners across 30 states had made such a commitment (Strive Together, online b).

By developing an approach, like that of the STP or the HCZ, communities can, as Bathgate et al. (2011) argues, counter the impact of poverty and inequality more effectively. This is supported by a similar study by Grossman et al. (2014), who claim that, by focussing the whole community on a shared set of outcomes, the collective impact can be greater than individual services can achieve on their own. It is with such an approach that organisations, such as Children First or Children's Communities, aim to improve outcomes for children and young people by establishing priority action areas based on local needs.

The Local Coordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland are tasked with identifying these needs, developing local solutions and context-specific responses by supporting partnerships and developing collaboration across services (CNS, online). In doing so, Local Coordinators not only work to serve local needs but address global issues of

concern. Having described the collective impact approach to cross-sector collaboration, providing examples of it in practice, the rest of this chapter will move on to reflect on some of the challenges inherent in such an approach.

4.3: Challenges and Critiques

As an open systems approach to cross-sector collaboration, collective impact is distinct given the conditions, preconditions, and phases (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Such an approach has been adapted for local circumstances, as in the case of the Children's Communities network in England (Dyson et al., 2013) and the Harlem Children's Zone in America (Hanson, 2013). However, collective impact is not without its critics. Henig et al. (2015), for example, argue that since its initial inception in 2011, the concept of collective impact has become less prescriptive. Although the authors identify that this has led to greater flexibility and pragmatism, they also note that 'the model has become less taut' (Henig et al., 2015: 5). However, this is not the only critique of collective impact.

4.3.1: Expectations and Outcomes

In reflecting on some of the inherent difficulties in developing a collective impact approach, Kania and Kramer (2013: online) describe the challenge of bringing together partners who may never have collaborated, the difficulties in agreeing shared metrics, competition amongst funders and 'the perennial obstacles of local politics.' However, the biggest challenge, according to the authors, is that those involved expect the wrong kind of solutions. Traditionally, social problems have been addressed through discreet programmes of activity, supported by evaluations that evidence impact. The primary issue with such an approach is that social problems are complex, with outcomes dependant on the unpredictable interactions of multiple partners.

Instead, collective impact works as an entirely different approach to service reform. Rather than predetermined, as with traditional approaches, the processes, outcomes, and results of collective impact approaches are emergent (Kania and Kramer, 2013). Through such an approach, the rules of interaction lead to developments in both individual and organisational behaviours, creating an ongoing, iterative process of alignment, continuous learning and emergence. In other words, solutions emerge from the interactions between

partners, which no single individual or organisation can control. By looking for solutions to social problems through the same lens, multiple organisations can engage in continuous learning, finding new, more effective ways of working, leading to better outcomes. However, as Kania and Kramer (2015) were to later acknowledge, the conditions and pre-conditions of collective impact alone are not enough to ensure better outcomes for all.

4.3.2: Power and Equity

Collective impact approaches, even those with the most laudable aims, are often situated within contexts of structural inequity. Kania and Kramer's (2011: online) original definition of collective impact was 'the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem'. Who defines the importance of actors is never acknowledged. This can lead to some disparities if the collective impact initiative is situated within a culture that reinforces patterns of inequity. Kania and Kramer (2015) argue that, to combat this, collective impact initiatives must be underpinned by a strong focus on equity. Every aspect of the collective impact process must be considered through an equity lens, otherwise practitioners and partners may reinforce the very challenges and structural inequities they are seeking to address.

In a review of the peer reviewed literature around collective impact approaches, Ennis and Tofa (2020) found that issues around power and equity remained a concern. Rather than seeking to address some of the inequities within cultures, collective impact approaches can all too often reinforce the very systems they are seeking to reform (Barnes et al., 2014; Christens & Inzeo, 2015; Wolff et. al., 2017). For Ennis and Tofa (2020), the concerns around equity and the distribution of power are accentuated by another issue common amongst collective impact initiatives; that the framework utilises a 'top-down', rather than 'bottom-up' approach to change. This is a point also identified by Wolff (2016), who argues that, as Collective Impact emerges from a top-down, business approach, it is not genuine community development, failing to engage meaningfully, or to adequately address the needs of the people within the communities affected.

Again, this comes back to Kania and Kramer's (2011) original definition of collective impact, and the issue around which parties are identified as important and by whom. LeChasseur (2016: 231) argues that it is often the powerful individuals and organisations around the

table that set the collective impact agenda. This then influences the processes of change, with a greater focus on business and organisational practices and priorities. As identified by Wolff (2016), Collective Impact approaches can be useful for those already in positions of authority. However, such approaches can be less suitable for those with less power but who are, nevertheless, working to improve their communities (Wolff, 2016).

This is a point developed by Schmitz (2021), who argues that one of the common challenges in Collective Impact initiatives is ensuring the right people are round the table. The impact of a top-down approach, in which only those in positions of authority are invited to attend are, as Schmitz (2021) identifies, three-fold. Firstly, and as already identified, when the right people are not invited around the right tables it can lead to top-down governance, limited to executive leaders. Secondly, as the author argues, this can also lead to a group which may have large ambitions, but do not have the authority, resources or support necessary to initiate change (Schmitz, 2021). Finally, when the wrong voices are round the table, they may not reflect or represent the concerns of the community they seek to serve (Schmitz, 2021). If the emergent solutions that Kania and Kramer (2013) discuss are to manifest then it is vital that genuine community engagement is seen as a foundational step in the process (Amed et al., 2015).

4.3.3: Cross-sector Collaborations

The final critique of the collective impact approach that Ennis and Tofa (2020: 35) identify relates to the concept of collaboration itself and the ways in which this is often adopted unquestioningly as the appropriate and 'good' approach to system reform. Examining the rise in collaborative approaches across organisational systems, Christens and Inzeo (2015: 422) found a correlation between this and the outsourcing of government services. The authors argue that collaborative practices not only fill gaps in service provision but may be used to justify further cuts to such services. The concept of collaboration should not, they warn, be adopted unquestioningly.

Although not critiquing the concept of cross-sector collaboration to the same extent, Wolff (2016) argues that the original concept of Collective Impact, as established by Kania and Kramer (2011), fails to account for the many examples of cross-sector collaborations that preceded the original article. This is an issue that Henig et al. (2015) similarly acknowledge,

as they argue that although Collective Impact may dominate the contemporary discourse, it is not the only valid approach to cross-sector collaboration. Indeed, the authors go on to describe several historical examples of cross-sector collaborative initiatives, starting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Accounting for these, Henig et al. (2015) situate Collective Impact within a broader definition of cross-sector collaboration.

Having only based the concept of Collective Impact on their observations of a few coalitions, Kania and Kramer (2011), according to Wolff (2016), failed to engage with the previous knowledge, experience, literature and research relating to cross-sector collaborative practice. Indeed, Wolff (2016) goes further, stating that cross-sector coalitions are complex, evolving in response to a multitude of variables. These complexities cannot, for Wolff (2016), be simplified into the five conditions of Collective Impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011). It may be for this reason that Kania and Kramer subsequently revisited their original article, expanding on their original premise and including consideration of necessary preconditions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

Given the Criticism of Wolff (2016), that Kania and Kramer (2011) failed to account for the vast range of research on collaborative coalitions that preceded their work, it is nevertheless interesting to reflect on the ways in which Collective Impact is shaped and influenced by the concept of collaboration. As much as Kania and Kramer (2011) claim that collective impact approaches are distinct from other forms of collaborative activity, the concept of collaboration itself remains problematic and yet embedded in their approach. Discussing the ways in which learning across stakeholders happens almost simultaneously within collective impact approaches, Kania and Kramer (2013: online) describe the 'cascading levels of collaboration', in which information flows both from the top down and from the bottom up. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

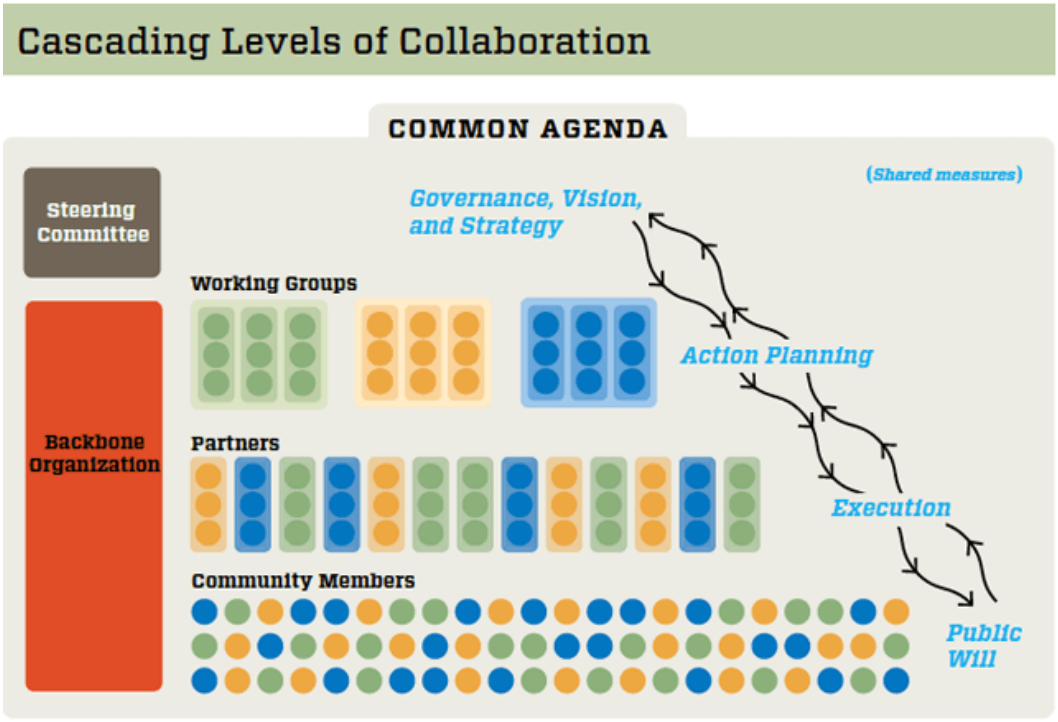


Figure 4.1: Cascading levels of collaboration (Kania and Kramer, 2013)

With the support of a backbone organisation, the cascading levels of collaboration create a culture of transparency, overseen by a steering committee but decentralised through multiple working groups (Kania and Kramer, 2013). Although Kania and Kramer (2011; 2013) argue that collective impact is different from other forms of collaboration, the two concepts remain intertwined. This is a point developed by Henig et al. (2015), who argue that collective impact is but one form of cross-sector collaboration.

4.4: Summary

The Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme adopted a specific open systems approach to supporting collaboration in local communities, collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011; Virtanen et al., 2020). This chapter aimed to describe systems theory and identify the need for systems approaches to cross-sector collaboration. To influence change, and to embed children's rights within local communities, Local Coordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland had to be aware of the larger systems; systems that not only surround the children and young people, but that invariably influence their own attempts at developing and maintaining collaborative relationships. To do so, systems leadership was required, with a focus on leading from the middle, with a need to go beyond

any one level to best understand the impact the wider system has on quality practice (OECD, 2015; Spillane, 2013). Yet, as Hopkins and Higham (2007) argue, moral purpose lies at the heart of systems leadership with a key focus on social justice for all children (Fuller, 2012). To embed international treaties such as the CRC and SDGs (UN, 1989; 2015) at the local level, system leadership is necessary so that local practice can be situated within and related to wider social change (Mowat, 2019).

To this end, the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme adopted an open systems approach to cross sector collaboration, based on Kania and Kramer's (2011: online) concept of 'collective impact with collaborative action'. The chapter went on to describe this approach in greater detail, beginning by illustrating the way such an approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). This was followed by a more detailed examination of the collective impact approach, such as the five conditions necessary to embed collective impact in practice; a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and support from a backbone organisation. However, the authors later refined their description of collective impact to incorporate three specific pre-conditions, including an influential champion, adequate financial resources, and a sense of urgency for change (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Of these, the authors argue that the most important are the influential champions, who draw stakeholders together and maintain their active engagement. Within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) programme, at least some of these influential champions came in the form of the Local Coordinators, who were tasked with promoting the priorities of local children and young people, whilst supporting partnerships and collaboration between organisations (CNS, online). This requires what Heifetz et al. (2004: 26) identify as Adaptive Leadership, supporting positive change 'by provoking debate, encouraging new thinking, and advancing social learning'.

To understand how collective impact plays out in action, the chapter went on to describe similar initiatives to Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, such as the Greater Shankhill Children and Young People Zone in Belfast, Northern Ireland (Generation Shankhill Zone, online), and the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) in New York, USA (HCZ, 2020). Yet, such approaches are not without their challenges and so, from here, the narrative moved on to identify some of those most common in collective impact initiatives. Of these, Kania and

Kramer (2013: online) identify the biggest hurdle often relates to the expectations of collaborative partners. Rather than predetermined, as with traditional approaches, the processes, outcomes, and results of collective impact approaches are emergent and should be valued as such (Kania and Kramer, 2013).

Yet, even when emergent outcomes are appreciated, collective impact approaches are often situated within contexts of structural inequity. Although Kania and Kramer (2015) claim that collective impact must be underpinned by a strong focus on equity, authors such as Ennis and Tofa (2020) argue that issues around power and equity remain a concern in such initiatives, utilising a 'top-down', rather than 'bottom-up' approach to change. If the emergent solutions that Kania and Kramer (2013) discuss are to manifest then it is vital that genuine and equitable community engagement is seen as a foundational step in the process (Amed et al., 2015). Despite the challenges involved, it is nevertheless interesting to reflect on the ways in which Collective Impact is shaped and influenced by the concept of collaboration.

As Local Coordinators aimed to develop collaborative improvement, through collaborative partnerships, it was important that they keep track of the structure of their collaborative networks, as the structures and roles become increasingly dynamic and fluid (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Yet, this chapter demonstrates that, beyond considerations of their collaborative networks, Local Coordinators also had to develop systems approaches to leading change, to embed children's rights in local communities (UN, 1989; 2015). This was a key factor, given their own roles as Influential Champions within a collective impact approach, itself an open-systems approach to cross-sector collaboration (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Virtanen et al., 2020). Before exploring their own roles and experiences of collaboration, I had to consider how best to support Local Coordinators to reflect on their collaborative networks and the systems and contexts within which they operate. The following chapter, the last of the literature reviews, will describe two frameworks that were to greatly influence the research design and the methods I would use to elicit reflections on collaborative networks and systems, Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory.

Chapter 5

Exploring Networks and Activity Systems

As discussed in Chapter Two, collaboration is a complex concept with multiple definitions (D'Amour et al., 2005; Lank, 2006). It is nevertheless important to identify features of collaboration before any collaborative improvement can be implemented. As part of this, understanding who is involved in collaboration is also important, with networking providing opportunities to better understand one's own position, whilst also providing greater understanding of other perspectives (Muijs et al., 2011). Some, such as Huxham and Vangen (2004), argue that an effective way to reflect on these collaborative networks is in mapping them, which becomes increasingly important as the networks, structures and roles become increasingly dynamic.

As well as reflecting on collaborative networks, Chapter Four went on to describe the importance of systems perspectives when considering collaborative relationships. Understanding how these relationships are embedded in larger social systems, be they closed, open or ecological, reflects the importance of systems leadership and working collaboratively with leaders from other levels of the system. The setting of this study, the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, adopted a collective impact approach to cross-sector collaboration, which is itself an open system approach (Kania and Kramer, 2011; Virtanen et al., 2020). In aiming to support the Local Coordinators, as participants, through a reflective process, I had to consider how best to integrate both network and systems perspectives. This chapter will go on to describe two frameworks which would greatly influence the research design. In In doing so, the chapter aims to:

- Describe Social Network Analysis, along with its historical foundations and underlying philosophies.
- Explain the development of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, along with identifying the associated principles, presenting several examples.

Developed as a way to study 'relational data', Social Network Analysis (SNA) focusses on the 'contacts, ties and connections… which relate one agent to another' (Scott, 2000: 3). The

chapter will begin by describing the historical foundations of SNA and identifying the traditions that led to the formation of SNA as it is currently recognised. These traditions coalesced by the 1970s, as SNA began to be recognised as 'a distinct empirical paradigm for analysing systems of social relationships' (Hollstein, 2014: 7). The chapter will move on to explore this paradigm, and the underlying philosophies of SNA, in greater detail. As Carrington (2014: 56) describes SNA 'has a clearly defined and generally accepted theoretical and conceptual framework and an even more clearly defined and accepted methodology'.

This will lead on to consideration of alternative approaches to network analysis, including both whole network and ego-net designs. As part of this discussion, the ways in which network analysis may be incorporated within larger studies will be discussed as the chapter moves on to look at mixed methods social network analysis in greater detail. Although traditional social network analysis may help identify the structure of network relations, it cannot provide any insights into the reasons, expectations or motivations of individuals (Froehlich et al., 2019). As Viry (2022) acknowledges, contexts are important in the formation and development of collaborative relationships, yet what these contexts are and how they are understood remains generally under explored. To this end, some researchers have sought to develop their understanding of network culture by incorporating alternative frameworks within their research design, including, for example, activity theory (Murphy et al., 2019).

Taking account of this, the chapter will go on to discuss this form of systems analysis, also known as Cultural Historical Activity Theory. Based on the work of Vygotsky (1978), activity theory has now been developed through multiple generations and is utilised in a number of different contexts (Engeström, 1999; Douglas, 2011). The chapter will discuss these developments, leading up to third generation activity theory, in which interacting activity systems are analysed. This will be followed by consideration of the five principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, including the multiple voices and history of the systems (Engeström, 2001). The chapter will conclude with some examples of the ways in which Cultural Historical Activity Theory has been applied as a 'descriptive heuristic' through which expansive learning opportunities can be identified and explored (Douglas, 2011), and consider how these frameworks may be aligned to explore collaboration in greater detail.

5.1: Social Network Analysis

As social capital theory conceptualises the flow of exchange throughout social networks (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 2001), Penuel et al. (2009) argues that it is through social network theory that such exchanges can be traced. The authors describe how social network data can provide information on social structures and how these may support or hinder the flow of information and resources (Penuel et al., 2009). As social capital is embedded within network structures (Lin, 2001), network analysis provides a means with which to more fully understand that structure (Penuel et al., 2009). Originating in social psychology, social network analysis has since proven influential across a broad range of disciplines, such as economics, history, political science, medical science and organisational studies (Hollstein, 2014; Muijs et al., 2011).

Social Network Analysis (SNA) developed as a way to study 'relational data' (Scott, 2000), where the focus is on 'social relations' (Burt, 1978) and structural-relational factors (Knoke and Yang, 2008). Traditional variable analysis focuses on 'attribute data', such as 'the attitudes, opinions, and behaviour of agents' (Scott, 2000: 2). This differs from SNA, which has a greater focus on the 'contacts, ties and connections… which relate one agent to another' (Scott, 2000: 3). The central idea of network analysis is that patterns of social relationships, such as the structure, size, or composition, can provide alternative approaches to understanding the ways in which social relationships and networks work (Viry and Herz, 2021). Within SNA, the 'social network' is commonly recognised as a group of actors and the relations between them (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Interest in social networks, and SNA in particular, has increased in recent years, with a variety of research publications and activity in fields as diverse as sociology, economics, mathematics and education (Freeman, 2004).

5.1.1: Historical Foundations

Historically, SNA can be seen to stem from a variety of disciplines and traditions. Scott (2000: 7) identifies three traditions that, together, led to the formation of SNA as it is currently recognised. The first of the traditions Scott (2000) describes are the sociometric-analysts responsible for the development of graph theory. Of these, Jacob Moreno (1889-1974) and Kurt Lewin (1890- 1947) were particularly influential. In the early 1930s, Moreno

(1934), a psychiatrist, was concerned with the ways in which psychological wellbeing can be seen to relate to positions within social networks (Borgatti et al., 2009). Moreno's primary contribution to the field of SNA was the development of the 'sociogram' (Scott, 2000). The sociogram is a way of visualising the properties of social relationships, with individual actors being represented by points, and the relationship between actors being represented by lines (Borgatti et al., 2018). Although the concept of networks was not new, it was not until Moreno that these relations had been systematised into an analytical diagram (Scott, 2000). Doing so enabled researchers to visualise the flow of information or influence through a network. Mapping relationships in this way, enables the researcher to explore the flow of exchange more fully between parties through a visualisation of those ties and relationships (Newman, 2018). Within SNA, such exchanges may be physical or material, but might also include the exchange of advice, information, or communication.

During the same period, Kurt Lewin (1890- 1947), a social psychologist, developed concepts that also contributed to the SNA landscape, related to 'social fields' (Scott, 2000: 11). Lewin (1936) considered that all social activity takes place within a particular field, or social space. This field comprises of not only the group, but the perceived environment. The way in which group members perceived and experienced the environment, led Lewin (1936) to argue that the field embodied not only the relationships between group members, but between them and the environment they inhabit. The aim of 'field theory' was to analyse, through the techniques of set theory and topology (Lewin, 1951), the system of relations between the group and environment. Although field theory 'proved to be an intellectual dead-end' (Scott, 2000: 12), Lewin's attempts to construct mathematical models to better understand group relations, laid the foundations for what would become SNA. Developing on the mathematical techniques of Lewin (1951), for example, Cartwright and Zander (1953, cited in Scott, 2000: 12) went on to apply graph theory to group relations. But, as well as the importance to SNA, Lewin's ideas around social fields can be seen to relate heavily to Bourdieu's (1990) own considerations around fields. Bourdieu primarily described a 'field of struggles' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 101), with the term 'field' relating to the network of social positions and forces, each defined by the resources, or capital available. In this regard, both Lewin (1951) and Bourdieu (1990) consider the social field to be composed of

not only the relationships between individual actors, but also the ways in which those actors perceive, understand and interact with their environments.

Scott (2000: 7) describes two other SNA traditions, including the Harvard researchers of the 1930s, who investigated 'cliques', and the Manchester anthropologists, who went on to explore community relations. These different traditions coalesced by the 1970s, as modern SNA developed into a recognisable paradigm; one that informs the research questions, identifies the selection of behaviours to be studied, and defines the ways in which the data will be analysed (Leinhardt, 1977: xiii). It was around this time that social network analysis began to be recognised as 'a distinct empirical paradigm for analysing systems of social relationships' (Hollstein, 2014: 7).

5.1.2: The Underlying Philosophy

According to Knoke and Yang (2008: 4-6), the paradigmatic position of SNA is founded on three underlying assumptions. Firstly, structural relations are perceived to be of greater significance in understanding behaviours than attributes, such as gender or age. Secondly, individual perceptions and beliefs are invariably influenced by social networks, with numerous structural mechanisms constructed through the relations among individuals. Finally, these structural relations are conceived of as a dynamic process, in which change is anticipated and understood as a consequence of the interactions within the network. The primary focus for network analysts is in attempting to 'measure and represent these structural relations accurately, and to explain both why they occur and what are their consequences' (Knoke and Yang, 2008: 4). As Carrington (2014: 56) describes SNA 'has a clearly defined and generally accepted theoretical and conceptual framework and an even more clearly defined and accepted methodology'.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) has a distinctive methodology that arises out of its uniquely relational view of social phenomena (Borgatti et al., 2018). In much the same way as the sociograms of Moreno (1934) visualised the relational data in such a way as to identify specific phenomena, SNA is best understood as a way in which to graphically represent the connections between actors and relations (Carrington, 2014). Stemming from its foundations in graph theory (Cartwright and Zander, 1953, cited in Scott, 2000: 12), SNA is strongly mathematical. As Carrington (2014) points out, this is not to confuse a

mathematical approach for a quantitative approach. The graph theory approaches utilised by network analysts are seen to represent structures, rather than quantities. So, although mathematical, SNA is not quantitative, but relational. SNA, as Radcliffe-Brown (1957: 69) suggests, deals with the 'calculus of relations.' It is this balance between the mathematical concepts and the graphic visualisations that make SNA of such value to theorists exploring social structures and relations.

In exploring the relational nature of network analysis, Borgatti et al. (2018) distinguishes between relational states and relational events. Relational states describe continuously existing relationships, whereas relational events can often best be understood as distinct, one-off interactions (Borgatti et al., 2018: 4). These one-off interactions may be described as discrete or recurring. As Borgatti et al. (2018) identify, recurring relational events may, in themselves lead to more complex relational states, as actors become increasingly familiar with each other over time. As the authors recognise, it is difficult to establish, let alone maintain relationships without any interactions at all. Despite the importance of relational events, the majority of network analysis is built on the concept of relational states, such as measures of centrality (Borgatti et al., 2018).

Network analysis is distinct from more traditional forms as it distinguishes between three different levels of analysis; the node, the dyad and the network (Borgatti et al., 2018: 2). Individual nodes can be analysed in relation to their individual attributes; yet it is at the dyadic level that network analysis comes to the fore (Hennig et al., 2012: 28). A dyad constitutes a pair of actors who may or may not share a tie, or relation (Hennig et al., 2012: 112). Dyads form the basic unit of analysis within social networks, with other methods essentially aggregated from dyadic data (Hennig et al., 2012). At the node-level of analysis, for example, network properties are aggregations of the dyad-level data (Borgatti et al., 2018), such as when considering the number of relations, or ties, a node has. At the network-level of analysis, aspects such as group density can be identified, again stemming from the dyadic data (Borgatti et al., 2018). Through such interactions features of the network can be identified, such as the flow of resources and information, or in the identification of sub-groups and cliques (Borgatti et al., 2018).

Yet, for network analysts the graphical visualisations provide less information than the accompanying data matrix (Knoke and Yang, 2008). As Galtung (1967) explains, all social research data should be kept within a data matrix, in which the data can be organised more efficiently. But, unlike the matrices used within more traditional quantitative analysis, which generally contain the attribute data relating to each participant, the adjacency matrices use within SNA contain data relating to the relations within the network (Scott, 2000). These matrices take the form of a table, in which the actors are labelled identically across both rows and columns, and their levels of interaction are represented in the corresponding cells (Knoke and Yang, 2008).

Although the sociogram provides a visual representation of the relational data, Carrington (2014: 36) argues that 'the adjacency matrix has the advantage (in) that it can be analysed using matrix algebra'. This provides opportunities for the analyst in identifying features of the network that may not otherwise by apparent. It is the theoretical constructs, such as centrality, brokerage or structural equivalence, that Borgatti and Halgin (2011) argue, make SNA such a unique approach in explaining the social world.

The mathematical and theoretical constructs that make this form of analysis so applicable to the study of relational networks is evident in a study by Pow et al. (2012). When exploring interventions within nursing, Pow et al. (2012) sought to establish the centrality within the network. Identifying the individuals with high centrality, the research team were then able to establish the key communicators within the network and identify the individuals with the greatest influence. As they described, it is often working with these key individuals that can prove critical to the success of interventions. In a similar study, Hindhede and Aagaard-Hansen (2017) demonstrated how SNA can be utilised effectively in order to identify the levels of participation, or non-participation in community development and health promotion activities. These examples demonstrate that the mathematical concepts which underpin network analysis can provide valuable data when exploring network relations.

Yet, other studies have supported the application of SNA with additional theoretical frameworks and methods, developing more of a mixed-method approach to network analysis. In applying a parallel mixed methods design to their study of fertility intentions and behaviours, Bernardi et al. (2014) incorporated a range of data collection methods,

including semi-structured interviews, network charts, network grids and socio-demographic questionnaires. They argued that the mathematical data best illustrated the network structure and composition, whilst the qualitative data was necessary in establishing the meanings associated with the structural factors (Bernardi et al., 2014).

SNA provides a method through which the horizontal ties offered by both bonding and bridging social capitals can be mapped. Yet, the concept of linking social capital extends these relationships along a vertical axis of power relations (Woolcock, 2001; Halpern, 2005). In short, linking social capital describes the relationships between individuals or groups with varying levels of power (Woolcock, 2001). Babaei et al. (2012), for example, describes the linking relations between communities and the state, or between communities and non-state actors. The concept of social capital can be applied at all levels of the community, yet it is when relationships develop between levels that linking social capital is established (Halpern, 2005). What is important is in distinguishing between the different levels of power within society, whilst recognising that they are all part of the same 'sociological genus' (Halpern, 2005: 19). According to Muijs et al. (2011), a key consideration in relation to the flow of social capital is whether the gains from collaborative communities accrue at the individual level, the community level or the societal level. Linking social capital attempts to span this divide (Woolcock, 2001). In this sense, the community, and the corresponding flow of social capital, can only be truly understood in relation to the system within which it is embedded (Woolcock, 2001). However, networks, and the flow of capital within them, may be explored in a variety of ways.

5.1.3: Whole Networks and Ego-Nets

Networks can be studied in different ways. The most common approach to consider is the study of whole networks, in which the focus is on all nodes and the presence or absence of ties between every pair of nodes within the network (Marin and Wellman, 2011). With the assumption that the entire network is available, researchers utilising whole network designs are able to draw on many fundamental network concepts, for example betweenness centrality or regular equivalence (more of which later) (Borgatti et al., 2018). To effectively analyse a whole network, researchers must identify the population of nodes and identify the existence of ties (or lack thereof) between all members of that population (Crossley et al.,

2015). For this reason, as Crossley (2019) identifies, analysis can only be effective when the population is carefully considered and criteria for inclusion is carefully and clearly established.

An example of a whole network design can be seen in a study by Padgett and Ansell (1993) who collected multiple types of relational data amongst Florentine families in the fifteenth century. In doing so, the researchers were able to identify how specific economic ties were engineered by the Medici family to secure political support from neighbours, whilst marriage and friendship ties were leveraged amongst more distant families, embedding their status throughout the region. In this study, the multiple types of relational data demonstrated the ways in which different relations were utilised to different effect. However, as Borgatti et el. (2018) identifies, the quality of the data within whole network approaches can suffer as the network size increases, with the researcher then having to scale back the questions asked. This issue is further compounded when taking into account that, within whole-network approaches, a substantial proportion of the population needs to respond for the data to be valid. Grosser and Borgatti (2013) argue that, to ensure a valid analysis of a whole network, the researcher needs a 75%-80% response rate. The authors go on to identify that the issue of response rates is related to another limitation of whole network design, that data collection cannot be anonymous. Response rates can be negatively impacted when participants have concerns that the data will not be kept confidential (Grosser and Borgatti, 2013).

For such reasons, an alternative approach to network analysis can be seen with personal-network designs, otherwise known as egocentric networks or ego-nets (Marin and Wellman, 2011). Ego-net designs focus on the network surrounding one node (commonly referred to as the ego) and all nodes tied to that node (the alters) (Marin and Wellman, 2011; Crossley, 2019). Such approaches can provide more detailed data about the relational ties surrounding individuals, but risk losing information relating to the larger network (Borgatti et al., 2018). Although Crossley et al. (2015) argue that it can be preferable to have data relating to ties between alters, the authors also acknowledge that ego-net analysis can frequently focus only on ego's ties, without considering the ties between alters.

Defined in this way, every whole network is comprised of ego-nets, with every node in a whole network having an ego-net (Crossley, 2019). Every node within a whole network is either connected to others or not, therefore ego-nets can be abstracted from whole network studies (Borgatti et al., 2018). In this way, researchers can abstract ego-nets from whole network studies. However, this is not the only approach to ego-net design, with many researchers gathering ego-net data instead of whole network data (Newman, 2018). This would not allow the researcher to reconstruct the whole network, as no data relating to the ties of the majority of nodes would have been gathered (Crossley et al., 2015). Yet, similarly to whole network analysis, ego-nets have several measurable properties, such as degree and density.

There are a number of recognised advantages to ego-net design, such as providing a way of analysing large networks as only a sample of the population of interest is required (Crossley et al. 2015). Alongside this, ego-net analysis can easily be adapted and incorporated into more conventionally structured research projects, unlike whole network analysis which can place limitations and constraints on the researcher, can be very labour intensive and, for large populations, may not be feasible (Newman, 2018). Another advantage to ego-net designs is that they can simplify issues around boundary specification, as participants can refer to any alter they choose (Borgatti et al., 2018). This provides a related benefit, in that responses can be entirely anonymous, which is not only ethically justifiable, but may also ensure higher quality data, as participants may feel more secure in their responses (Borgatti et al., 2018). A final advantage to consider in relation to ego-net designs is that they can cross many domains (Crossley et al., 2015). As White (2008) identifies, most individuals within modern societies develop social relationships and ties across several ‘social circles’ or ‘domains.’ Whole network approaches are generally limited to one domain with a contained population. However, if the researcher is interested in multiple domains, which may overlap through individuals, ego-net analysis can identify the distinct social circles those actors engage in (Crossley et al., 2015). With the focus on individuals, Hennig et al. (2012: 53) argue that ego network approaches have proven more suitable to studies of community than whole network analysis.

An example of ego-net analysis can be seen in a study by Chamberlain (2006), which explored the extent to which cultural and leisure activities impacted individuals’ social

networks. Utilising qualitative interviews, the researcher asked participants about their cultural and leisure activities. This type of interview was similar to semi-structured interviews, but with the additional step of conducting an ego-net survey to identify participants social networks. Using name generator questions (Borgatti et el., 2018) the researcher was able to identify those with whom the participants believed were friends, eliciting alters who interacted with the participants on a social basis. In a similar study, Bellotti (2016) explored the friendship networks of a non-representative sample of 23 individuals living in Milan, aged between 25 and 35 years. As with the study by Chamberlain (2006), Bellotti (2016) used name generator questions to identify participants friends, some of their attributes, and the existence of relationships between alters (Crossley et el., 2015). The information was then visualised into network diagrams, which were then used as inputs for follow-up, in-depth interviews. Participants were presented with the visualization of their egonets, which was then used as a tool for reflection and discussion.

The studies by Chamberlain (2006) and Bellotti (2016) have certain commonalities, beyond the interest in individuals' friendship circles. In both cases, the researchers drew on ego-net designs, incorporating those within larger qualitative studies. In this way, both Chamberlain (2006) and Bellotti (2016) demonstrated the value of mixed methods social network research. Both studies explored the advantages of using network visualizations together with qualitative interviews in the collection, analysis and interpretation of social networks. In both instances, the researchers utilised social network analysis within a mixed methods research design.

5.1.4: Mixed Methods Social Network Research

Although Chamberlain (2006: 3) claims that the combination of social network research and qualitative research is unusual, Bellotti (2016) argues against this, demonstrating that similar mixed methods approaches can be traced back to the 1990s, particularly in the works of Harrison White and Charles Tilly, who were important figures in what would later be called 'the New York School' of relational sociology (Mische, 2011). Belotti (2016) then goes further, arguing that even these studies were not the first to use qualitative data to understand and examine social networks, citing the famous study by Whyte (1943) which explored the social structure of an Italian slum in Boston. This is a point developed by

Hollstein (2014) who argues that, in the last few decades, there has been a greater recognition that focussing solely on either quantitative or qualitative data alone provides only a partial understanding of phenomena, leading researchers to miss important aspects and key features.

As Hollstein (2014) identifies, the appeal of mixed methods research designs invariably lies in the opportunities it presents, as the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative strategies can be compensated through the respective strengths of each. However, regarding mixed methods social network designs in particular, the advantages of such an approach go further. As Chamberlain (2006) demonstrated, network data provided information relating to the range of social networks each participant was involved with. Yet, by triangulating the qualitative data with the network data, the researcher was also able to establish why participants chose to include certain individuals in their areas of activity, providing a clearer context for the development of such social networks. As Froehlich et al. (2019) argues, the quantification of relations in social network analysis seems overly simplistic. Whilst the quantitative data generated by traditional social network analysis can visualise the structure of network relations, on its own it does not provide any insights into the reasons, expectations or motivations of individuals (Froehlich et al., 2019).

In identifying dimensions of social networks that can be examined with a mixed methods approach, Bolíbar (2016: 7) argues that the 'strong interaction' between quantitative and qualitative data can be useful when studying the structure, composition, and positions within a network. Whereas quantitative approaches provide data relating to the structure of relationships, and qualitative approaches to the content of those relationships, it is only in the combination of the two that researchers can appreciate them 'as two sides of the same coin' (Bolíbar, 2016: 7). This is further developed when considering the meaning individuals attribute to those relationships, such as in Bellotti's (2016) study on friendships. The subjective meanings of relationships, for example, feelings of belonging, loyalty, and identity, cannot be understood through quantitative measures alone. It is only when mixing methods that the dynamic analysis of those meanings can be understood (Bolíbar, 2016).

Similarly, consideration of network dynamics is another justification for the application of a mixed methods approach to social network research (Hollstein, 2011). Although

quantitative approaches, such as agent-based modelling, can potentially predict developments within networks, these presume a rational understanding of actors' agency (Bolíbar, 2016). As Crossley (2010) argues, simulation models are not able to account for the particular story of every relationship. It is only by understanding the 'network narratives' underpinning those relationships that the underlying motivations are acknowledged, and the development of the network can be understood with consideration of the relational contexts. (Crossley et el., 2015). Mixed methods social network designs are able to capture the structure of networks, as well as accounting for what 'flows' through them, exploring the quality of the network, as well as the quantifiable aspects (Pantic et al., 2023).

With such affordances, mixed methods social network research designs have been utilized in a range of studies, beyond those of Bellotti (2016) and Chamberlain (2006). For example, a study by Hollstein and Wagemann (2014) focussed on the conditions that impact transitions from school to work. The authors conducted a secondary analysis of qualitative longitudinal data from the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich, using a particular form of Qualitative Comparative Analysis. Applying this approach to the study of social networks enabled the authors to investigate individual characteristics, along with network aspects, to establish the facilitators and barriers to effective school to work transitions. Given that many network studies are limited to relatively small sample sizes, Hollstein and Wagemann (2014) argued that many statistical methods were not appropriate to their study and so applied Qualitative Comparative Analysis to their medium-sized samples. Such an approach enabled them to model particular network effects, such as facilitating systematic case comparisons, and model complex solutions.

In an alternative study, Murphy et al. (2019) combined social network approaches with activity theory, to consider how information relating to incidents, accidents, and near-misses was shared across an organisation. Data was collected in two stages, a social network survey, followed by semi-structured interviews. Although acknowledging that social network analysis and activity theory evolved from separate schools of thought, the authors argue that both approaches share a focus on the social contexts in which networks develop and so offer potentially complimentary views of the world. The authors analysed the network data, before conducting the interviews. Transcripts from the interviews were then thematically analysed with coding reflective of the primary elements of activity theory. Through analysis

of the ego-nets, along with comments from the interviews, the authors identified that there was frequently a lack of communication and feedback to safety teams responsible for incidents and accidents (Murphy et al., 2019).

Given that many researchers situate social network analysis within broader research designs (Chamberlain, 2006; Bellotti, 2016; Hollstein and Wagemann, 2014), the benefits of such an approach seem clear. For example, consideration of network structures can be developed with an understanding of the subjective meanings inherent in those network relationships (Bolíbar, 2016). However, it is in the triangulation of both network analysis and activity theory in the study by Murphy et al. (2019) that truly emphasises different, yet complementary aspects of the collaborative process most suited to this study.

To support Local Coordinators in reflecting on their collaborative networks, SNA provides an opportunity for participants to map collaborative relationships through diagrammatic techniques, helping them keep track of the structure of their networks (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). When looking at collaborative networks specifically, Hennig et al. (2012: 53) argue that ego network approaches may be most suitable when studying such communities. Yet, in seeking to understand the subjective meanings of relationships, Bellotti (2016) incorporated egonet analysis within a mixed methods research design, developing a greater understanding of the network cultures that underpinned the network structures (Crossley et al., 2015). It is only when mixing methods that the dynamic analysis of those subjective meanings can be understood (Bolíbar, 2016). With a shared focus on the social contexts in which networks develop, both SNA and activity theory offer potentially complimentary views of the world (Murphy et al., 2019). For this reason, the following section of this chapter will go on to provide a more detailed overview of activity theory, before considering the ways in which this might be aligned with network analysis in a mixed methods research design suitable for exploring the ways in which collaboration plays out in practice.

5.2: Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Activity systems are defined as groups of individuals who share a common objective and motive, along with the range of tools they use to work toward that objective (Kain and Wardle, 2014: 275). As a form of systems analysis, activity theory provides a diagrammatic

method through which the important elements of the system can be identified, helping establish a coherent and justified methodology (Weick, 1976). Activity theory focusses on the interactions between people and the tools they use, providing specific aspects of context reflecting how individuals in communities work towards their objectives (Kain and Wardle, 2014). Although now utilised in a number of different contexts (Engeström, 1999; Douglas, 2011), activity theory's foundations lay in early 20th century psychology.

5.2.1: The Development of Activity Theory

In response to the deficits of stimulus-response behaviourism, the influential Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) introduced the concept of mediation in the 1920s, through which he argued that human behaviour was not simply a response to external stimuli, but rather was mediated by artefacts. The term 'activity' is defined as the relationship between *subject* and *object*; in other words, who is doing what and for what reason (Vygotsky, 1978). The outcome of any given activity, he argued, was the result of the interactions between the subject, the object and the mediating artefact (otherwise known as tools). Vygotsky's triangular model of activity is illustrated in Figure 5.1, below.

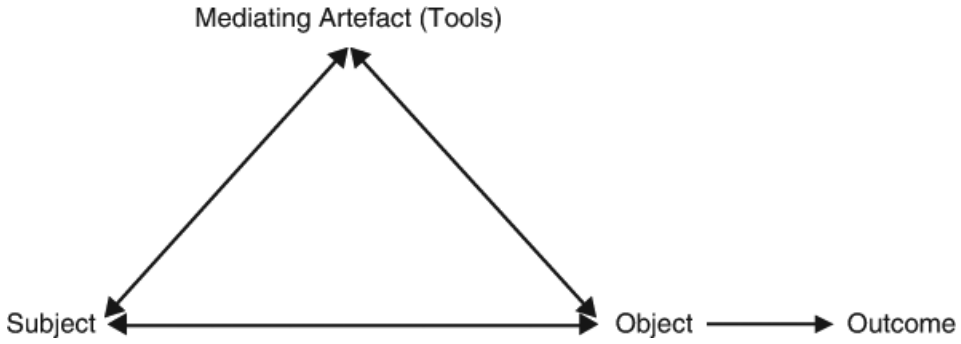


Figure 5.1: First generation activity theory

This basic model of individual activity theory was further developed by a student of Vygotsky, Aleksei Leontiev (1903-1979). Leontiev clarified the terms 'action' and 'activity', claiming that an action is undertaken, either by an individual or a group, to achieve some 'goal', whereas an 'activity' is specifically undertaken by a group and has both an 'object' and 'motive'. These were then further distinguished from 'operations', which Leontiev saw as 'habituated behaviours provoked by certain conditions' (Bakhurst, 2009: 200). Leontiev's definition of 'operations' shares much in common with Bourdieu's (1990) notion of the

'habitus', being acquired more through experience than specifically taught. Describing activity as a high-level, holistic, and frequently collaborative construct, Leontiev argued that it should always be understood in the context of its cultural and historical environment (Kaptelinin et al.,1995).

Activity theory was further developed in relation to these cultural and historical environments by the Finnish educator Yrjö Engeström. Engeström (1999) provided for additional units of analysis, beyond the simple triage of subject, mediating artefact and object introduced by Vygotsky. Central to the units introduced was that of the *community*, through which groups of activities and teams of workers are anchored (Engeström, 2000). Along with the community, two related units were also introduced. *Rules* were seen as specific conditions that help to determine how and why individuals may act, and which is the result of social conditioning. The *division of labour* accounts for the distribution of actions and operations within a community. Hashim and Jones (2007) describe how the relationship between the individual and their environment is considered through this concept of *community*. *Rules* act as mediators between the *subject* and the *community*, whilst the division of labour mediates between *objects* and the *community*. This development of the activity system is illustrated in Figure 5.2, below:

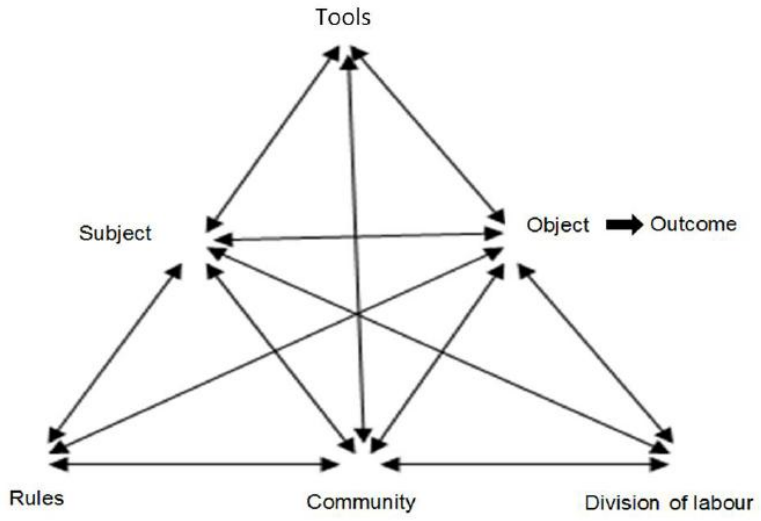


Figure 5.2: Engeström's (2000) representation of a collective activity system

By incorporating elements such as community, rules, and division of labour, Engeström (2000) provided a lens for understanding how individuals in different communities carry out their activities, with an emphasis on the interactions between and across elements.

By its third generation, activity theory began to take account of multiple perspectives and systems, developing on the likes of Bahtkin's (1986) ideas of activity and Latour's (1993) actor-network theory. Third generation activity theorists developed on the ideas of previous generations but argued that 'all activity systems are part of a network of activity systems that in its totality constitutes human society' (Roth and Lee, 2007: 200). The basic model of activity theory was then expanded to consider the interactions between at least two activity systems (Engeström, 2001). This is illustrated in Figure 5.3, below, in which the individual object (object 1) is developed to consider the shared meanings of the interacting activity systems (object 2), leading to potentially shared understandings (object 3) (Engeström, 2001).

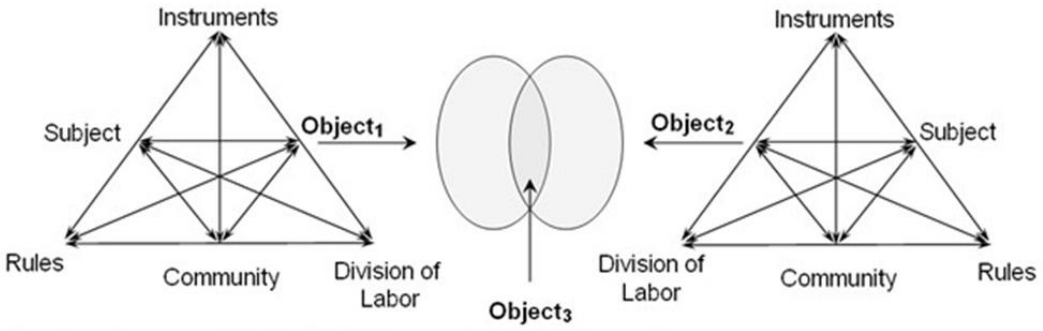


Fig. 5.3: Third generation activity theory, with two interacting activity systems.

Through this interaction, new understandings are created, and new goals, objects and outcomes are realised. The objects of activity continues to develop as new understandings emerge and are no longer 'reducible to conscious short-term goals' (Engeström, 2001: 136).

5.2.2: Principles of CHAT

Engeström (1999; 2001) described five principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, as set out below:

1. The activity system is the primary unit of analysis
2. A focus on multiple voices

3. An appreciation of the historicity of the community and its members
4. Identification of contradictions within and between activity systems
5. Leading to expansive learning

The first of these acknowledges that the primary unit of analysis is the activity system itself, seen in its network relations to other activity systems. Such goal-directed activities can only be understood in relation to the overall backdrop of networked activity systems. The second principle Engeström (2001) goes on to describe is the multi-voicedness of such systems. With a focus on the community of activity systems it is important to acknowledge the multiple perspectives, voices, opinions and interests within the network. These multiple voices can be seen as 'a source of trouble and a source of innovation, demanding actions of translation and negotiation' (Engeström , 2001: 136). The third principle of Cultural Historical Activity Theory that Engeström (1999; 2001) identifies is the historicity. Activity systems develop over time. These activity systems therefore can only be understood against their own history. This includes consideration of the local history of the objects and activity, as well as the history of the tools, voices and ideas within the system (Engeström , 2001: 136).

Contradictions between and across elements and activity systems reflects Engeström's (2001) fourth principle. These contradictions are best understood as internal tensions that develop over time, leading to the transformation of the system (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). Although Engeström (2001) recognises that these contradictions may lead to conflict, he makes it clear that they can also lead to 'innovative attempts to change the activity' (Engeström, 2001: 137). This leads to the fifth principle of activity theory; acknowledging the possibility of expansive transformation (Engeström, 2001). This involves reconceptualising the objects and motives within an activity, to envisage greater possibilities. These five principles of activity theory; the activity system as the unit of analysis, the multi-voicedness and historicity of the activity, contradictions and expansive cycles as sources of transformation (Engeström, 2001), all contribute to a greater understanding of activity theory. Together they can provide a coherent framework with which to better understand how individuals work with communities to achieve a shared objective. In doing so, and with such a focus on the community, activity theory can be combined with SNA to develop more

detailed understandings and provide complimentary views of social worlds (Murphy et al., 2019).

5.2.3: Examples of Activity Theory

In a study in 2001, Engeström used the five principles of activity theory in order to examine the theory of expansive learning. Combined with four central questions related to learning, Engeström (2001) developed a framework for the analysis of expansive learning in a hospital setting in Finland. By developing a matrix with the four questions as rows, and the five principles as columns, Engeström (2001) was able to summarise the answers to the four questions and demonstrate the ways in which these supported the five principles of activity theory.

Engeström (2001) began by identifying the three main interconnected activity systems within the setting. This included hospital staff, primary care staff and patients' families. Once the activity systems had been identified as the primary units of analysis, members of each activity system were invited to participate in a series of discussion groups, demonstrating the multiple voices of the activity system. These discussions led to considerations around historicity, as participants described the historically emerging pressures on staff teams. Contradictions became apparent as the three activity systems identified issues, and potential conflicts, relating to objects, tools and rules. Through identifying these contradictions, the three individual activity systems established new ways of working through expansive transformation (Engeström, 1999, 2001). Utilising the five principles of activity theory in this way, Engeström (2001) was able to explore new methods of working that supported each activity system, developing the services and providing greater cohesion, through collaboration and communication.

Similarly, in a study by Douglas (2011: 195), Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used as a 'descriptive heuristic' with which to identify student teachers' learning opportunities within a school. Although not explicitly utilising the five principles of activity theory, as identified by Engeström (1999, 2001), the study demonstrated the ways in which activity theory supported and informed the data analysis. Following a series of observations and interviews, Douglas (2011: 198) considered the ways in which four elements of CHAT, which he identified as the subject, the object, the tool and the activity system, contributed

to understanding the 'cultural historical psychology' of the activity system. The subjects in this study were identified as being school mentors, university tutors, or those otherwise involved with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) within the school. The object was presumed to be a shared focus on student teacher learning, though this was explored throughout the study. The tools were identified as being anything that was used to support this, such as planning frameworks, department resources or use of language. Through exploration of this activity system, Douglas (2011) was able to identify the historicity of the network; the cultural and historical factors that underpinned it. In considering the multiple voices of the activity system within the school, Douglas (2011) anticipated the possibility of contradictions within and between systems, paving the way for learning and development. In the example he provides, the author (Douglas, 2011: 206) acknowledges that no such contradictions were found but argued that this lack of tension within the activity system 'prevented change in the… ITE practices with a consequent lack of development in the student teachers' learning opportunities.' Although Douglas (2011) does not refer explicitly to Engeström's (1999; 2001) five principles of activity theory, he nevertheless demonstrates the significance of each.

5.3: Summary

In considering how to support Local Coordinators to best reflect on their collaborative networks, two theoretical frameworks have been considered, Social Network Analysis and Activity Theory. This chapter began by describing the historical foundations of SNA, and how this led to the modern application of SNA and the recognition that it is 'a distinct empirical paradigm for analysing systems of social relationships' (Hollstein, 2014: 7). From here, the chapter went on to identify the underlying philosophies behind such approaches, and the distinctive methodology of SNA, arising out of its uniquely relational view of social phenomena (Borgatti et al., 2018). Although dealing with the 'calculus of relations', it is both the mathematical concepts and the graphic visualisations that make SNA of such value to theorists reflecting on social structures and relations (Radcliffe-Brown, 1957; Borgatti et al., 2018).

Yet, there are different approaches to studying social networks, including whole network designs, in which the focus is on all nodes and the presence or absence of ties between

every pair within the network (Marin and Wellman, 2011). An alternative approach to studying networks can be seen with personal-network designs, otherwise known as egocentric networks or ego-nets, in which the focus is on one node (commonly referred to as the ego) and all nodes tied to that node (the alters) (Marin and Wellman, 2011; Crossley, 2019). Several researchers have effectively utilised ego-net analysis within their research design, including Chamberlain's (2006) study of individuals leisure activities and Bellotti's (2016) analysis of friendships. These studies take ego-net analysis further, by incorporating them within broader mixed methods social network designs.

The appeal of mixed methods social network research lies in the opportunities it presents, as the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative strategies can be compensated through the respective strengths of each (Hollstein, 2014). Although traditional social network analysis can visualise the structure of network relations, it does not provide any insights into the reasons, expectations or motivations of individuals (Froehlich et al., 2019). It is only when mixing methods that the dynamic analysis of those meanings can be understood (Bolíbar, 2016). This was illustrated with the study by Murphy et al. (2019), who demonstrated the effectiveness of combining social network approaches with activity theory. Recognising that both approaches focus on the social contexts in which networks develop, the authors argue that both frameworks emphasise different, yet complimentary aspects of the collaborative process.

Given this focus, the chapter went on to explore activity theory in greater detail, from its early foundations in the work of Vygotsky (1978), through to its most recent iteration, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2001). Following this, the main principles of CHAT were discussed, including the importance of recognising the multiple voices within, and history of, each activity system (Engeström, 2001). This was followed as the chapter illustrated how CHAT has been applied in practice, providing new opportunities for expansive learning. The ways in which activity theory can be aligned with social network analysis, with a focus on personal networks or ego-nets, provides opportunities in the current study, for Local Coordinators to reflect on both the network structure and network culture through which collaboration occurs (Murphy et al., 2019).

To this end, the following chapter will provide more detail as to how these two frameworks were developed and aligned within this study, to support participants through a process of structured reflection. To better understand participants experiences of collaboration, the chapter will identify how both SNA and activity theory were applied to the research design. The chapter will begin by reflecting on a suitable paradigm within which to situate the research. This will be followed by a reminder of who the participants were and the methods that were applied to generate data. The chapter will conclude with consideration of the limitations inherent in the research design, and how these were mitigated, along with a reflection on the ethical factors involved in such a study.

Chapter 6

Methodology and Data Generation

Understanding who is involved in collaboration is important, with networking providing opportunities to better understand one's own position, whilst also providing greater understanding of other perspectives (Muijs et al., 2011). Mapping such networks is an effective way to reflect on these (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). The previous chapter described two approaches relevant to exploring not only the networks themselves, but the larger systems within which they operate: Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory. This chapter will go on to identify how these approaches were reflected within the research design. To this end, the chapter aims to:

- Situate the study within the interpretivist paradigm
- Describe the methods used to generate data
- Reflect on some the challenges and limitations inherent in the research design and how these were mitigated, and
- Identify the ethical factors relating to the study

To begin, the chapter will describe the two primary paradigms relating to empirical research, positivism and interpretivism, describing each in relation to its corresponding ontology, epistemology and axiology. The chapter will also briefly consider a 'third research paradigm', specifically Mixed Methods Research (MMR) (Denscombe, 2008), before arguing that the current study is most appropriately situated within interpretivism.

From here, the chapter will move on to describe each of the three methods of data collection: the preliminary network interviews, the subsequent semi-structured interviews and the focus group. Beginning with a brief overview of the participants, the chapter will go on to identify how Social Network Analysis was used to elicit 'ego-nets' for each participant, with these then being visualised in the form of network diagrams (Crossley et al., 2015; Borgatti et al., 2018). These diagrams would then go on to provide the basis for more in-depth, qualitative interviews in which the culture as well as the structure of these networks was discussed (Crossley et al., 2015). The chapter will describe how the principles of Cultural

Historical Activity Theory were used to frame these semi-structured interviews, before then moving on to describe the subsequent focus groups.

The chapter will then go on to consider some of the challenges and limitations inherent in the research design and identify how these were mitigated. Given the focus on ego-net analysis, rather than whole network analysis, some of the common challenges involved in Social Network Analysis, such as non-response, or accuracy, were lessened. However, other challenges, such as establishing trust between myself and the participants, will also be discussed. From here, the chapter will conclude with a reflection on the ways in which this study complied to ethical standards, such as ensuring informed consent, along with some of the ways this study might be deemed to be ethically 'good' (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007).

6.1: Positioning the Research

To ensure the research design reflects the philosophy behind the project it is first necessary to identify the appropriate philosophical paradigm within which the research is situated, before then considering the methods through which the data was generated (Naslund, 2002). To address this aim, this section will provide a brief overview of the primary paradigms under consideration, before identifying the particular paradigm in which this project is framed. This will include examination of the ontological, epistemological and axiological elements of the study, as suggested by Oates (2006).

6.1.1: The Primary Paradigms

The term paradigm has previously been described as the worldview that reflects the researchers' assumptions about reality, methodology and ethics (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Weaver and Olson (2006: 460) define paradigms as 'patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate enquiry within a discipline'. Establishing paradigms prior to the research design is essential as they influence appropriate topics for inquiry, along with compatible methods (Punch, 2005). Before aligning this research to a suitable paradigm, the narrative will describe both the positivist and interpretivist approaches. Both positions relate to what is considered 'acceptable knowledge' (Bryman, 2008, p. 13), however only one will be identified as appropriate for this project.

The ontological concerns of social research are associated with the nature of reality. The primary ontological consideration here is a choice between objectivism, in which the social actor is completely independent of the external reality and constructionism, in which reality is influenced and interpreted by the actor (Cohen et al., 2018). Objectivism here can be seen to be associated within a positivist paradigm, with one universal truth being found through scientific enquiry.

Epistemology is primarily concerned with the nature of knowledge and the researchers' relationship with the data and participants (Creswell, 2013). Knowledge, as viewed from an objectivist, positivist viewpoint is independent of external influence, and the researcher should be objective. The final consideration when comparing paradigms relates to the axiology and the role of values within research, with positivists believing that scientific enquiry should be value free and objective (Bryman, 2008).

6.1.2: Interpretivism

A constructionist ontology, on the other hand, relates more to the belief that there are alternate truths, which can be interpreted in alternate ways. Within an interpretivist paradigm, and with a constructionist ontology, value is given to participants unique perspectives, skills and experiences. This project does not seek to develop a precise definition of collaboration, nor does it seek to establish collaboration as an external social phenomenon. Instead, what is of value is in how the participants themselves experience collaboration. Situated firmly within the interpretivist paradigm, the value will be in seeking to understand participants' subjective world and how they themselves interpret their collaborative experiences.

Within the interpretivist paradigm, 'knowledge is viewed as indeterminate' (Bryman, 2008, p. 19) and the researcher is intimately connected to the creation of knowledge and 'the meaning individuals ascribe to their action and the reactions of others' (Weaver and Olson, 2006, p.460). Acknowledging the relationship between myself as the researcher, the data and the participants lies at the heart of the interpretivist approach.

However, this project aimed to consider the knowledge and experiences of a group of participants, with data being generated through their individual and collective input. Although some, such as Hammersley (2013) would describe this as a constructivist

epistemology, others go further, describing it as a relational epistemology (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). By embracing a relational epistemology, my own role within the project, and my relationship to the participants, is clearly recognised and acknowledged. The relational epistemology, combined with constructionist ontology focus on the understanding of human behaviours, rather than the explanation of such behaviours, again reflective of the interpretivist paradigm (Cohen et al., 2018).

For interpretivists, values are seen as not only being central to the enquiry itself but weaved throughout the research process. This 'consciously value-laden' (Bryman, 2008, p. 25) approach is important to many social theorists. Many, such as Punch (2005) argue that values are a significant part in any inquiry, and it is necessary to recognise the impact they may have on the research process. However, rather than simply acknowledging the impact, others argue that values are the primary driver of social research. Values influence 'which problems are to be addressed..., which methods of investigation are to be chosen..., which theories should be highlighted or used' (Fraser and Robinson, 2011, p. 68).

Here, once again, this project aligns with the interpretivist, value-laden approach as the primary focus was to understand the world through the eyes of the participants, rather than as an outsider. In doing so, I was conscious that participants should be respected as subjects of knowledge, rather than objects to be studied. It was therefore important that participation in the study was mutually beneficial. This became a key feature of the research design as I questioned how to ensure participants had something to gain from sacrificing their time to take part in the study.

6.1.3: The Third Paradigm

It is worth noting that although only two main paradigms have been discussed, several theorists, such as Johnson et al. (2007) and Denscombe (2008) argue that there is a 'third research paradigm', specifically Mixed Methods Research (MMR). As previously discussed, MMR relates to the ways in which quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection can be combined, providing a fuller, more complete understanding of the problem domain than any single approach can achieve (Cohen et al., 2018). This can have several advantages for, as Denscombe (2014) argues, MMR can increase reliability through triangulation and reduce bias in the research. Similarly, Bergman (2011) recognises that one method may

compliment another. Greene (2005: 207) goes further, arguing that MMR should be grounded in 'values of tolerance, acceptance, respect and democracy'. Doing so, MMR operates in a 'transformative paradigm' (Greene, 2005: Cohen et al., 2018).

Given that paradigms have been described as 'world views' (Guba and Lincoln, 2005), seeking to understand them through quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods is unhelpful, given that these relate to types of data (Biesta, 2010). Yet, Cohen et al. (2018) argue that MMR not only mixes data, but the paradigms themselves, providing a more complete understanding of the problem domain. In doing so, MMR operates from within a 'pragmatic paradigm', in which the focus is on 'what works' to best address the research question (Cohen et al., 2018). Similarly, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 16) claim that adopting a pragmatic position facilitates effective communication amongst researchers from different paradigms as they seek to advance knowledge. In essence, the authors argue that pragmatism demonstrates how researchers can mix different approaches effectively.

Although Cohen et al. (2018) warn researchers not to get lost in the paradigm debate, it is important for the purposes of this project to establish a clear underpinning paradigm based on applicability and fitness for purpose. Given the focus of this project was in seeking to understand participants' experiences of the collaborative process both individually (eg. Piagetian constructivism) and collectively (eg. Vygotskyian constructivism), the multiple views and perspectives of participants were prioritised. Interpreting such perspectives involved a 'bottom-up' understanding of participants' experiences, fully aligning with the interpretivist paradigm (Cohen et al., 2018). Although MMR is a key feature of the research design, the quantitative data generated was used to elicit perceptions and opinions, rather than seeking to identify trends or generalise (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). In this regard, based on the criteria of applicability and fitness for purpose, this research project was situated solely within the interpretivist paradigm.

With such a strong focus on the views, perceptions and experiences of the participants, the next section of the chapter will move on to describe how these views were elicited. Drawing on the two frameworks described in the previous chapter (Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory), the research design involved generating both quantitative and qualitative data through several phases, in what Hollstein (2014) claims is a fully integrated mixed design. With this approach, the quantitative and qualitative

approaches are dynamically integrated along all stages of the research process, in what Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006: 23) describe as 'the 'Full Monty' of mixed methods designs.' However, before the methods of data generation are described, the narrative will first provide a brief reminder of the participants invited to take part.

6.2: Methods of Data Generation

The focus in supporting Local Coordinators through a process of organised reflection was not only to investigate the structure of their professional communities and networks, but, arguably more significantly, the meanings each attributed to those communities and networks (Crossley, et al., 2015). As previously discussed, these communities and networks are situated within larger social systems and so it was important to consider methods of data generation that reflected these larger spheres of influence, including some of the cultural or historical factors that might shape or influence these professional networks (Engeström, 1999, 2000, 2001). Exploring 'network structure' identifies the individuals within a given network. Reflecting on 'network culture' develops this to consider the meanings individuals attach to those relationships 'and the ways in which they subjectively categorise them' (Crossley et al., 2015: 107).

To fully explore both 'network structure' and 'network culture' this project utilised several methods of data generation, including both quantitative and qualitative forms of data. This reflects the ambiguity in much social research, as discussed by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005). Yet, as Cohen et al. (2018: 285) argue, the focus should be 'the application of the notion of fitness for purpose'. Given that the purpose in this instance was to support Local Coordinators to reflect on their professional communities and networks, it was important to identify methods that would support them in this endeavour. Methods most appropriate to the question and context of study had to be adopted (Caffrey and Munro, 2017). As Peters (2014) suggests, different research questions help define which of the many different methods and models are appropriate. Given the complexities involved in reflecting on both professional networks and communities, along with the larger social, cultural and historical factors, a mixed method approach to data generation was adopted.

Arguing that neither quantitative nor qualitative research can tell the entire story, Hollstein (2014: 3) states that bringing the two together can compensate for each of their respective weaknesses. As Johnson et al. (2007: 123) define it,

> Mixed methods research (MMR) is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches… for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

In considering the suitability of MMR over single methods research design, Hammersley (1996) describes the ways in which the mixing of methods may support the triangulation, facilitation, and complementarity, in which different features of the research can be combined. This has been further developed in recent years, for example, by Bryman (2006) who conducted a content analysis of specific journal articles relating to MMR. The focus of this content analysis was on the rationales given for why MMR was selected. Similarly to Hammersley (1996), Bryman (2006: 105-107) begins with considerations around triangulation, or greater validity. This is then followed by around seventeen other rationales, including completeness, instrument development and credibility. Although some of these are most easily understood in relation to the methods of data generation and analysis, be it quantitative or qualitative, other rationale's the author goes on to consider can be seen to have more philosophical considerations. One such example can be seen with what Bryman (2006: 106-107) identifies as the 'diversity of views', specifically combining the perceptions of both the researcher and participant. Here, the role of the researcher is acknowledged, as is recognised through an interpretivist paradigm (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

The following sections will discuss each method of data generation in detail, explaining why each was selected. In describing each method, my own role as researcher will be reflected upon, including the developing relationships between myself and the participants. Prior to that, a brief descriptive account of the participants will be provided.

6.2.1: Participants

As previously discussed, the participants involved in the study were the Local Coordinators from the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme. The role of the Local Coordinator was explained in depth in Chapter 1, particularly in relation to the professional standards (CLD Standards Council, 2022) and so will not be re-visited here. Each participant was over

the age of 18 and competent to give consent (details on this process will be discussed later in this chapter).

Each Local Coordinator was assigned to a particular area or neighbourhood, in which the CNS programme was established. At the start of data generation, two Local Coordinators were in post, in two respective areas. Over time, and as CNS expanded, a total of six different neighbourhoods were established. This did not mean, however, that only six Local Coordinators were involved. One thing I had not anticipated, and that led to more participants than expected, was staff turnover. As the CNS programme developed over time, some Local Coordinators resigned from their roles, requiring new Local Coordinators to be recruited. In total, nine Local Coordinators were invited to participate, with eight agreeing to take part in the project. Recruitment was an ongoing process as new Local Coordinators settled in to their roles.

Data was generated over two distinct phases, with each phase involving three stages. Whereas data collection implies an independent existence for data, the term data generation recognises that data cannot exist independently from the researcher and from the specific encounters between them and the participants (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002). Each phase began with two interviews with each participant; one to capture the initial network data and the second to relay this back to the participant in the form of static network diagrams. These were used as a reflective tool, through which participants could consider their networks and working relationships. Following thematic analysis of the interview transcripts (Braun and Clarke, 2006), each of the two phases then concluded with a focus group, in which participants were invited to consider some of the commonalities and differences between their experiences. The different stages of each phase, along with the processes and products of each, are illustrated in Table 6.1, below. This is followed with more detailed accounts of each stage.

Table 6.1: Stages, processes and products

6.2.2: Network Interviews

Given that there can frequently be a lack of clarity about who partners are within collaborative networks, along with the complex arrangements and structures in place, and as members work within an increasing number of collaborative networks, Huxham and Vangen (2005) suggest that a potential method with which to keep track of these network structures, is in mapping them through diagrammatic techniques. To support participants in reflecting on their professional networks, Social Network Analysis was adopted; specifically, ego-net analysis.

As one of several approaches to Social Network Analysis, ego-net analysis focusses on the networks that form around a particular social actor, or 'the network of contacts (alters) that form around a particular node (ego)' (Crossley et al., 2015: 18). As previously noted, whole network analysis studies the ties among all pairs of nodes within a given network (Borgatti et al., 2018), meaning that all members of the network must be surveyed, 'to establish the existence or not of a relevant tie between each pair' (Crossley et al., 2015: 8). As Borgatti et

al. (2018: 34) identify, the cost of such whole-network designs increases exponentially as the network increases, often leading to the quality of the data suffering. From that perspective, ego-net analysis can provide richer, more detailed data about the network from the perspective of one individual (Borgatti et al., 2018).

Given that the purpose of this stage in data generation was to support Local Coordinators in mapping their own networks (Huxham and Vangen, 2005), ego-net analysis was selected over analysis of the whole networks. This afforded the opportunity to analyse potentially large networks, without having to approach every network member, whilst also generating a range of network measures (Crossley et al., 2015). With a focus on the personal network of each participant, such a design enabled participants to list those professionals (individuals or services) that they collaborated with, along with their perceptions of the ties between them (Borgatti et al., 2018).

One of the main methods used by network analysts for data generation is the survey, with the most common survey method being the questionnaire (Henning et al., 2012). As Cohen et al. (2018: 471) acknowledge, questionnaires can be especially beneficial when considering large samples or populations, as they are valid, reliable, quick and simple to complete. However, the authors also argue that 'the questionnaire will always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent' (Cohen et al., 2018: 471). Similarly, Crossley et al. (2015: 20) claim that ego-net questions 'inevitably add bulk to a questionnaire and for this reason their inclusion has to be given careful consideration'. For this reason, as Cohen et al. (2018) argue, a number of ethical factors need to be carefully accounted for, including, but not limited to the reactions of the respondents.

As Cohen et al. (2018) argue, certain methods of data generation, such as the questionnaire, can frequently encourage the perception that the data is somehow distinct from the individual. Yet, as Kvale (1996) identifies, knowledge is generated in the interactions between individuals. Given that the focus of this study was in exploring interactions of individuals, it seemed appropriate to reflect this more within the research design. For this reason, the questionnaire was replaced with short, preliminary interviews with participants. These short interviews provided an opportunity to not only ask questions relating to the ego-networks of the participants but, importantly, enabled the participants to ask more

about the purpose of the research and to clarify any misunderstandings (Cohen et al., 2018: 508).

These preliminary interviews were based on similar network studies, such as that of Johnson and Orbach (2002), in which participants were asked to report on all connections to all other actors within their areas. Yet, as Borgatti et al., (2018: 60) discuss, reporting on so many relationships can be labour-intensive. Such excessive burden on participants 'can lead to various kinds of non-response on the part of the actors' (Borgatti et al., 2018). To limit this burden, participants were asked to limit the relationships down to those they worked most closely with within their local areas. With this boundary specification in place, these initial network interviews developed a 'free choice design', in which the number of answers was not fixed (Henning et al, 2012: 77). This enabled participants to consider their strongest professional and organisational relationships, in a format that limited what might have otherwise been an excessive burden (Borgatti et al., 2018).

However, with a focus on the individual ego-networks, rather than the whole network, it was important to record, not only the interactions between the ego and their alters but also the Local Coordinators own perceptions of the interactions between those alters (Crossley et al., 2015). Having listed those organisations they worked most closely with in their respected areas, participants were then asked to reflect on their perceptions of the relationships between these organisations. To support them in this, they were asked to consider each relationship on a six-point scale. Based on the Collaboration Continuum, as set out by Himmelman (2002) and the escalator of collaborative endeavour, as described by Chapman (2019) (as discussed in Chapter 2), a scale of collaborative interaction was developed. Although these models shared similar features, there were also distinct differences in the way in which collaborative relationships were broken down by the authors.

Preceding the stage of cooperation as discussed by Himmelman (2002), for example, Chapman (2019) considers the term 'association', by which is meant incidental meetings, often initiated through a hierarchy, with little or no communication. Given the nature of the CNS initiative, and the variety of agencies and services involved, this appeared a logical inclusion to the continuum. This was then followed with Himmelman's (2002) concepts of networking and coordinating. These describe the mutual exchange of information between

organisations, as well as altering activities to achieve a common purpose, providing a more detailed consideration of stages leading up to cooperation and collaboration. However, Chapman's (2019: 6) final aim in collaborative endeavour is collegiality, described as

> 'a long-term commitment to a shared enterprise underpinned by shared long-term vision and set of common values with a focus on sharing and developing new knowledge, resources and practice.'

Utilising the ideas of both Himmelman (2002) and Chapman (2019) provided an opportunity to construct an alternate framework of collaborative interaction, one suitable for the specific context of Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland and the purposes of this study. The six-point scale can be seen in Figure 6.1, below.

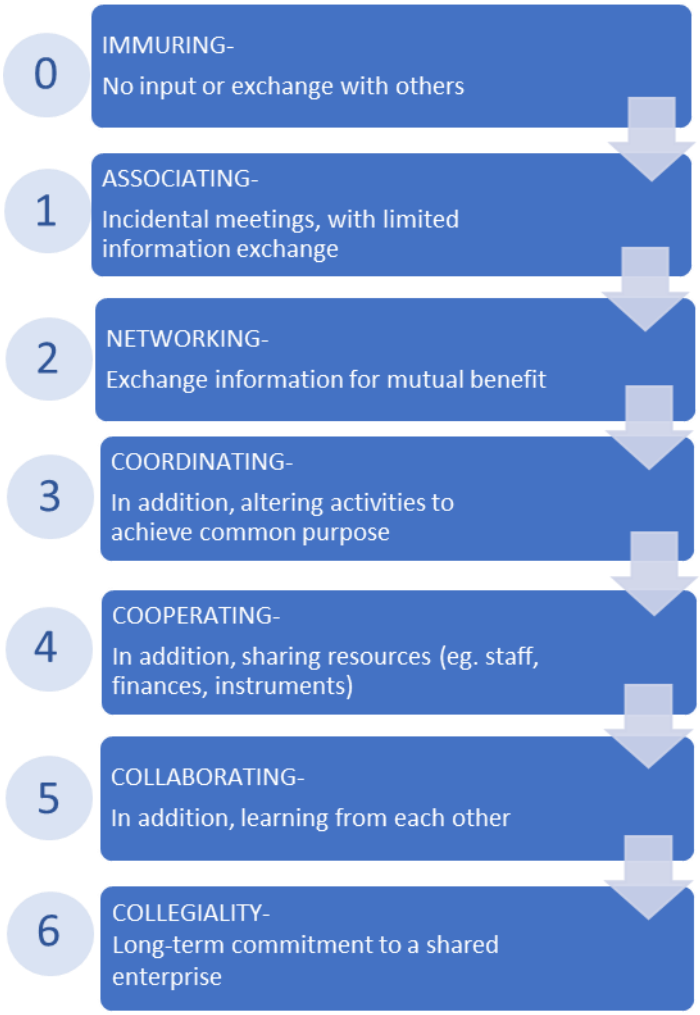


Figure 6.1: The Scale of Collaborative Interaction

Asked to list the individuals, services and organisations they worked most closely with in their local area, the Local Coordinators were then asked to consider how they would rate the relationships between each of the services, utilising this six-point scale. These were recorded in an adjacency matrix, where the data was stored for later analysis (Scott, 2000). The first column and top row within the matrix listed all the actors within the network, in the same order, beginning with the Local Coordinator (the ego). Where the row of one actor met the column of another, the strength of tie (or relationship) was recorded, based on the scale of interaction in Figure 6.1, above.

To more clearly illustrate how these results were recorded, an anonymised sample adjacency matrix can be seen in Table 6.2, below. Here, the Local Coordinator (LC) indicates that they have strong, collaborative relationships with Alters 3 and 4, but have a weaker relationship with Alter 5, who they only associate with. Given the scale of interaction, and as participants were asked to rate the strength of relationships, the adjacency matrices contained valued data. Many network analysists focus instead on the presence or absence of a relationship, producing basic, binary data (Crossley et al., 2015). In this instance, considering the strength of specific relationships provided more data than binary networks could produce.

	LC (Ego)	Alter 1	Alter 2	Alter 3	Alter 4	Alter 5
LC (Ego)	0	4	2	5	5	1
Alter 1	4	0	5	4	3	3
Alter 2	2	5	0	3	1	3
Alter 3	5	4	3	0	3	1
Alter 4	5	3	1	3	0	3
Alter 5	1	3	3	1	3	0

Table 6.2: An anonymised sample adjacency matrix

Crossley et al. (2015: 109) acknowledge that, with such a qualitative approach to network research, data analysis can frequently begin at the same point as data collection, as participants begin to analyse their relationships and what they mean to them.

To develop this analysis further, and to support the reflective process, the data provided by these initial network interviews was then formatted into network diagrams, illustrating each

Local Coordinators professional network. (A more detailed account of the data analysis process will be provided in the following chapter.) As discussed previously, this study embraced a mixed-methods approach (Cohen et al., 2018). Social Network Analysis (SNA) has been used in a variety of Mixed Method Research (MMR) studies. In a study by Edwards (2010: 15), for example, network diagrams were used as a basis for follow-up interviews. This not only provided a basis for the discussion, but also an opportunity to clarify any inaccurate or missing data. This MMR technique is supported by Martinez et al. (2003: 366), who suggests that network diagrams may help identify 'critical issues' which can be followed up by qualitative analysis. The approach taken by Edwards (2010) seemed to be appropriate for this research project, as, following on from the questionnaires, static network diagrams were then developed, providing the basis for more in-depth, qualitative interviews.

6.2.3: Semi-structured Interviews

Reflective of the sequential nature of the MMR design, the results from the first phase of data collection, the network interview, influenced the questions, collection and analysis of the second phase, the semi-structured interviews (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006). This is similar to a study by Cross et al. (2009), in which a range of methods were applied in order to examine changes in interagency collaboration. Methods within that study included ratings of the strength of collaboration, descriptions of interagency relationships and interviews with key leaders (Cross et al., 2009). The qualitative data provided narrative accounts of relationships, as well as supporting the validity of the network data (Cross et al., 2009: 319). Such an approach provided an opportunity to reflect differently on the ways in which interviews can be embedded with other methods in mixed method research designs (Todd, 2018). In a similar vein, by approaching the research design in a similarly sequential manner, with the interviews following the network visualisation and analysis, the qualitative accounts and experiences provided the additional benefit of being able to cross-check and validate the network analysis.

Once the data from the initial interviews had been visualised (see the following chapter for more detail regarding the analysis), participants were then invited for a more in-depth interview, in which they could reflect on their own static network diagrams. An example network diagram is illustrated in Figure 6.2, below, based on the sample adjacency matrix as

in Table 6.2. Here, the strength of the relationship is reflected in the thickness of the ties between nodes; the thicker the tie, the stronger the relationship.

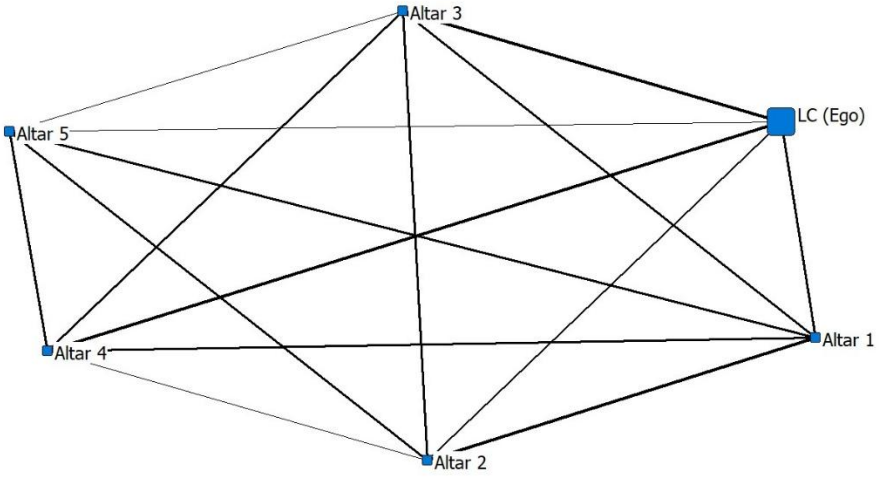


Figure 6.2: A sample network diagram

Given the reflective focus of these interview, it was decided that a semi-structured approach would be the most appropriate option. Avenarius and Johnson (2014: 186) define semi-structured interviews as 'carefully prepared lists of questions that stimulate each informant in a comparable way'. This is similar to what Patton (1980: 206) refers to as the 'interview guide approach' to interviews, in which issues are outlined in advance, but the way in which these issues are presented is left to the discretion of the researcher. Although Patton (1980) argues this approach reduces the comparability of responses, the 'interview guide approach' was deemed more appropriate in providing participants greater opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and express themselves without constraint. Some of the indicative questions used within the semi-structured interviews are set out below.

Indicative Semi-structured Interview Questions:

- Do you think these network diagrams accurately represent your relationships within your local network?
- Are there any relationships you believe are not illustrated?
- Who are you working most collaboratively with?
- What facilitates this relationship?
- What challenges do you face when seeking to collaborate?
- How do you mitigate these?
- How do you imagine these relationships will develop?

Just as Huxham and Vangen (2005) identify the importance of visually mapping networks to ensure clarity of analysis, in a similar vein, Weick (1976) argues that to fully understand the rich detail about the contexts of the systems, these too should be mapped. Although not explicitly referenced within the interviews themselves, it was important that I, when conducting the interviews, account for the underpinning principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001), reflecting the theoretical basis, goals and objectives (Kvale, 1996). Cohen et al. (2018: 512) argue that this is the most important step in interview design, as 'only careful formulation of objectives at this point will eventually produce the right kind of data necessary for satisfactory answers to the research problem'. Integrating aspects of CHAT, and the underlying principles, provided a framework through which qualitative accounts of 'network culture' could be developed and explored (Crossley et al., 2015).

The activity systems in this study were limited to only those of the Local Coordinators and their professional networks and communities. Although each Local Coordinator was only asked about their own relationships and experiences within their given areas, by engaging each in reflective dialogue, multiple perspectives were drawn out. The concept of multiple voices is one that was also reflected in the final stage of data collection, the focus groups (these will be discussed in greater detail in the following section).

The third principle of activity theory, historicity (Engeström, 1999; 2001), reflects the place-based nature of the CNS project (CNS, online). As previously discussed, the CNS project is set within specific areas and communities; communities that have their own history and culture. Yamagata-Lynch (2010: 25) identifies three planes of sociocultural analysis; the personal, the interpersonal and the community/ institutional planes. It is important that researchers clarify 'for themselves and their reader, which plane of analysis they are examining in their study' (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010: 25). This includes the cultural-historical factors which have influenced the work of the organisations and services in the community, as well as, on the personal plane, the history of the individuals within these groups. These were themes that were regularly reflected on in the interviews.

In considering the final principles of activity theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001), it is worth considering Douglas' (2011) observation, noting that it appeared the lack of contradictions within his study led to a lack of development and expansive learning. To develop expansive

transformation, it is important that contradictions are acknowledged and addressed. To this end, a key focus within the interviews was in identifying such contradictions. This relates to what Yamagata-Lynch (2010) describe as being the main difference between second and third generation activity theory. Within third-generation activity, the role of the researcher is not only acknowledged, but utilised, to support participants in experiencing change and expansive transformation (Engeström, 2001), reflective of a relational epistemology (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). By continually reflecting on the five principles identified by Engeström (1999; 2001), this study engaged participants 'within an interventionist framework using third generation activity theory' (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010: 23). Greater detail relating to the analysis of these interviews will be provided in the next chapter. But, following on from this analysis, participants were then invited to a focus group, to discuss the initial findings.

6.2.4: Focus Groups

According to Cohen et al. (2018: 532), focus groups are a form of group interview in which a specific topic has been supplied by the researcher. Data emerges from the interaction of the group, providing insights that might not otherwise have been gained (Denscombe, 2014). Drawing together the emergent themes from the first two stages of data collection, Local Coordinators were asked whether these themes were reflective of their own experiences in practice, effectively triangulating with the network and semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2018). Ensuring the interview data was representative of their experiences reflected the underpinning axiology of the study, whilst also focusing on the multiple voices of the Local Coordinators (Fraser and Robinson, 2011; Somekh and Lewin, 2011; Engeström, 1999; 2001). Within the focus groups, these multiple voices and multiple perspectives generated new data and outcomes (Hydén and Bülow, 2003). From identifying the commonalties and contradictions, new opportunities for expansive learning developed (Engeström, 1999; 2001). Indicative questions from the focus groups are presented below.

Indicative Focus Group Questions:

- Do you think these themes accurately represent your relationships and experiences within your local networks and communities?
- Are there any specific issues you feel were not identified?
- What do you think facilitates collaborative relationships?
- What challenges do you face when seeking to collaborate?
- How do you mitigate these?
- How do you imagine these relationships will develop?

In drawing together the participants in this way, a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) or inquiry (Dumitru, 2012) was established. Through this dialogue-based inquiry, Local Coordinators collectively examined their roles, networks and experiences in practice. Doing so afforded the opportunity to engage in an alternate method of reflection, one which aligned with the broader research themes of collaboration. Exploring the benefits of collegial reflection, Glazer et al. (2004) noted that not only did learning increase, but that participants appreciated the opportunity to slow down, listen to others share similar feelings and recognise that they were not alone. Given that each Local Coordinator within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland worked in a separate geographical area, it would be easy to feel isolated. It was hoped therefore that, by inviting them to a focus group, participants would be provided with more than an opportunity to explore the initial data but also a space in which they could safely share their feelings and experiences.

Combined, these three stages of data collection, the network and semi-structured interviews along with the focus group, made up one phase of the data collection process. Designed to support participants to reflect on the development of their professional networks and communities over time, the project included an additional phase. This enabled participants to consider changes or developments in their professional relationships and networks. The following section will consider some of the limitations in the research design, along with identifying how these limitations were mitigated, before moving on to discuss the ethical factors that underpinned the project.

6.3: Limitations

Having described the research design, the following section will move on to identify some of the limitations noted and describe how these were mitigated. Data was generated through the interactions between myself, as the researcher, and the Local Coordinators, as research participants, as well as between the Local Coordinators themselves. This led to regularly reflecting on my relationships with the participants and, as will be discussed in greater detail later, ensuring that trust was maintained throughout. Such considerations reflected many of the features of collaboration that have been previously discussed. For example, beyond the need to develop trust, the focus on ensuring that the participants found the process beneficial was also reflective of my own moral purpose when conducting the study. With these considerations in mind, the research design developed regularly throughout the process of data generation, as changes were made to ensure that the relationships that were formed at the start of the process developed positively throughout.

For example, one of the earlier changes that was made from the original research design was with the focus on ego networks. Originally, the intention had been to incorporate a whole network research design, which would have meant surveying all network members within the given neighbourhoods. Given that the focus for Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland was in attempting to form and develop collaborative relationships with local network partners, the whole network design seemed an unnecessary burden, risking the relationships that the Local Coordinators were working hard to establish. Rather than over-burdening local partners and risk jeopardising the working relationships, narrowing the area of interest down to the ego-nets of Local Coordinators ensured that such risks were minimised, at the same time as focussing the study on the perceptions of those at the centre of such collaborative work.

Yet, it was not only the generation of data that developed, but the ways in which such data were analysed and subsequently shared. For example, through the focus groups, I was able to demonstrate to the Local Coordinators how the data they had provided me relating to their collaborative networks would be presented to others. In the initial network interviews, participants openly discussed the names of the individuals and organisations they collaborated with. These were then presented back to them in the following semi-structured interviews in the form of static network diagrams in which all network members were labelled accordingly. This helped each Local Coordinator reflect effectively on the

relationships they were forming in their local neighbourhoods. However, from that point on, all identifiers and labels were removed from the network diagrams to ensure anonymity and protect all parties and relationships. These anonymised network diagrams were first presented to the participants in the first focus group, reassuring each that the data they had provided would be kept confidential.

Making adaptations to the research design required me to evaluate the effectiveness of the data generation process after each step, ensuring that, not only was data generated effectively, but that each Local Coordinator found value in participating. This led to an iterative process, in which developments were made based on the perceived needs of the participants, rather than solely the need to collect data. With such values prioritised, my own role became more complex, as I had to balance several competing (and, at times, contradictory) priorities. Nevertheless, the changes that were made were reflective of a commitment to the professionalism of the Local Coordinators, supporting them in their role as influential champions.

6.3.1- The Network Design

One of the common challenges when researching social networks can relate to the problem of missing data, due primarily to non-response to network surveys. This is especially true within whole network designs, as non-response from some actors within the network can greatly impact the structural and analytical outcomes (Borgatti et al., 2018). Given that the focus of this study was to elicit the perceptions of participants professional relationships in order to engage them in reflective dialogue, the choice of ego-net analysis seemed more appropriate, whilst minimising the risk of non-response. Yet, another concern amongst social network theorists is in the accuracy of such self-reported data (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). For example, Bernard et al. (1985) found that around half of what individuals report about their relationships is inaccurate in one way or another. Similarly, Freeman et al. (1987) concluded that individuals were less accurate in their recording of behaviours in specific periods of time than in their reporting of long-term behaviours and relations. As this study was not seeking to ‘prove’ or ‘validate’ participants claims, the value lay instead in how each perceived their professional networks and relationships, and how collaboration itself was experienced. Drawing out such qualitative information relating to how

participants felt about the collaborative process was the priority, with the static network diagrams representing these perceptions. However, to elicit such 'network narratives' (Crossley et al., 2015), it was important that, as the researcher, I was able to develop trust between myself and the participants.

6.3.2: Establishing Trust

As Cohen et al. (2018: 518) and Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) discuss, an important feature in developing rapport is in establishing trust between the participants and the researcher. From the beginning of data collection, it became apparent that, although having been provided with Plain Language Statements detailing the project, participants still had concerns relating to who I was, what I was looking at and who would have access to the data. This involved ongoing reflection and consideration of the 'interpersonal, interactional, communicative and emotional aspects of the interview' (Cohen et al., 2018: 518). One of the biggest challenges in establishing this rapport was the online way the interviews and focus groups were conducted.

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Scotland, along with the other nations within the UK, went into 'lockdown', effectively closing all but essential businesses, with the Scottish Government asking the public to work from home where possible (SPICe Spotlight, 2022). This impacted, not only myself as the researcher, but the entire Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, including the Local Coordinators. This occurred just as data collection was about to commence. Adapting the design from face-to-face interviews to online required an amendment to my ethical application (more of which later). Although Cohen et al. (2018: 538) identifies some affordances to online interviewing, such as greater flexibility in contact times and locations, this adaptation, although necessary, proved challenging in developing my relationships with the participants, having not met any of them prior to data collection.

Developing this rapport and trust became an underpinning focus in much of the data collection. For example, although one of the common methods for gathering network data is through a survey or questionnaire (Crossley et al., 2015), as previously discussed, this was replaced in this project with a short, network interview. This ensured participants had an opportunity to ask questions about the purpose of the research and to clarify any

misunderstandings (Cohen et al., 2018: 508). As these first network interviews were also the first opportunity to introduce myself to the participants, it was therefore important to establish an appropriate atmosphere (Cohen et al., 2018: 518). For this reason, it was decided that these initial, network interviews would not be recorded. Presenting a less threatening environment, responses were, as previously discussed, instead noted down within an adjacency matrix for later analysis and visualisation.

At the start of the second phase of the data collection, this lack of recording of the network interviews was briefly reconsidered and reflected upon. The primary reason for this was that, even in these initial interviews, participants began to discuss details specific to the interagency relationships they were reflecting on. However, conscious of the underpinning relational epistemology (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008) and the need to provide participants opportunities to discuss aspects they may not wish recorded, it was decided that there were more benefits to not recording these preliminary sessions. Although some detail was lost, participants were then provided an opportunity to further reflect on those relationships within the second stage of the research design, the more detailed, semi-structured interviews, which were recorded for later analysis.

In both the network interviews and semi-structured interviews another important feature in attempting to establish trust and rapport was in ensuring participants could see me. Conducted online, with video conferencing software, participants were regularly reminded that they could switch their cameras off, should they prefer. This was to provide them with an added security feature, which might help put them at ease. However, it was equally important that participants could see my body language and facial responses (Cohen et al., 2018: 540). As it was, all participants chose to keep their cameras on. Given the relational features of the research aims and design, the development of my relationships with the participants was a continual, ongoing consideration. Yet, there were additional limitations specific to each stage of the data collection process. These limitations, and the ways in which they were mitigated, is discussed in greater detail below.

6.3.3: Limitations of Methods

Reflecting on their individual network maps, Local Coordinators were, during the longer, more detailed interviews and focus groups, encouraged to consider the ‘network culture’

that underpinned the structure (Crossley et al., 2015). To do so, questions of inquiry were based around the five principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, including the first principle, ensuring the activity system was the primary unit of analysis (Engeström, 2001). However, the CHAT framework itself was not presented to the participants. Instead, questions were broadly aligned to the CHAT framework, whilst specific to each participants discussion. This semi-structured approach to the interviews and focus group enabled participants to focus on their networks and experiences in practice, rather than get distracted by an additional theoretical framework. Again, this was a judgement based on the 'interpersonal, interactional, communicative and emotional aspects of the interview' (Cohen et al., 2018: 518). As much as these interviews were meant to provide opportunity for professional reflection, by the end of this stage in the data collection, the success of this particular aim was not apparent. This led on to the development of the focus groups.

Although not part of the original research design, the focus groups were introduced in response to some of the challenges already discussed. Even following the semi-structured interviews, participants still appeared uncertain about the purpose of the interviews and which parties would have access to the data they were providing. To demonstrate how their data would be presented, the focus groups were introduced. Following yet another amendment to the ethical application (more of which below), participants were invited to an online group discussion, in which the main themes that had arisen from the interviews would be presented, illustrating this through some of their anonymised network maps and quotations. This provided an opportunity to validate the initial findings through a process of triangulation (Cross et al., 2009; Cohen et al., 2018), but, more importantly, helped further develop trust between the participants and myself. Once participants were assured how their data would be presented, and the broad themes that were being identified, there seemed to be greater willingness and openness to engage as the project moved into phase two of data generation.

With the introduction of the focus groups, this study was specifically designed to support participants in reflecting on their collaborative networks over time, however this aspect of the study was influenced by several factors. For example, in some instances, participants moved on from the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, with other Local Coordinators being recruited in their place. Although this impacted the longitudinal aspect

of the study, this also brought with it an opportunity to draw out information that may not otherwise have been available, for example, in relation to entering networks in which 'collaborative inertia' was dominant (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). However, it was not only the recruitment of Local Coordinators that impacted the data generated.

With three phases of data generation initially planned, each phase consisted of network and qualitative, semi-structured interviews, finishing with a focus group. However, soon after the second focus group, participants were informed that Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland would be closing its doors in March 2022. This left only a matter of weeks for Local Coordinators to effectively wrap up projects in their areas, say goodbye to their fellow network members, whilst having the added pressure of having to apply for other roles. Given such factors, I chose not to continue another phase of the research for fear of over-burdening participants or risk potential harm (Cohen et al., 2018). However, the rich data generated up to that point provided a wealth of information relating to how collaboration is understood at the local level and how it plays out in practice.

Many of the ways in which these limitations were reflected on and mitigated against reflect the underpinning relational epistemology (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008) of the project, as well as the underpinning focus on values. These values had to be more explicitly addressed within the ethical application process, prior to the commencement of data generation. The final section of this chapter will describe some of the ethical factors, with a focus on the ways in which this project was both ethically compliant and ethically good (Tobin and Begley, 2004).

6.4: Ethics

Ethical considerations permeate all aspects of the research process, from rationale, purpose and design, through to the analysis and dissemination of data. Indeed, many, such as Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007), argue that ethics is one of the primary tests of quality within any research project. Undertaking this research project required approval from the University's Ethics Committee. Yet, as Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007: 205) discuss, ethics should be seen as more than 'a series of boxes to be ticked as a set of

procedural conditions.' Ethics, as Tobin and Begley (2004) describe, also reflect the 'goodness' of the enquiry.

6.4.1: Ethical Compliance

To undertake this research project an application was submitted to the Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. As part of this process, information was required relating to the proposed methodology, the recruitment of participants and the methods of data collection and analysis. Additionally, it was necessary to ensure that participants would not be harmed or subject to unprincipled practices. As part of this, consideration had to be given to the ways in which the data would be stored, used and destroyed. Furthermore, before participants could ethically consent, it was important that they understood what the research was about, and their role in it. To establish informed consent, and as part of the application process, a Plain Language Statement (PLS) was created. The role of the PLS is ensuring all prospective participants are informed as to the nature of the research. The PLS can be seen in Appendix 1.

Although the creation of the PLS was necessary as part of the ethical application process, there were additional considerations relating to the content of this due to the nature of Social Network Analysis (SNA). Borgatti and Molina (2003: 341) describe how one of the main issues relating to informed consent in such studies is the relative 'newness' of Social Network Analysis. As they discuss, prospective participants are generally familiar with traditional surveys and questionnaires and have at least some understanding of the potential consequences of how the data they provide will be used. However, as SNA is still relatively new, even with the provision of PLSs, participants may not be fully informed as to the nature of the study before they consent. As Borgatti and Molina (2003: 341) argue, the generally accepted PLS and consent forms 'may not be adequate for protecting respondents in network research settings'. With that in mind, the PLS was developed and expanded to provide examples of network analysis to ensure that participants were fully informed. As suggested by Borgatti and Molina (2003) participants were provided at this stage with a sample network diagram (such as the one in Figure 6.3, below), to illustrate how their data would be used.

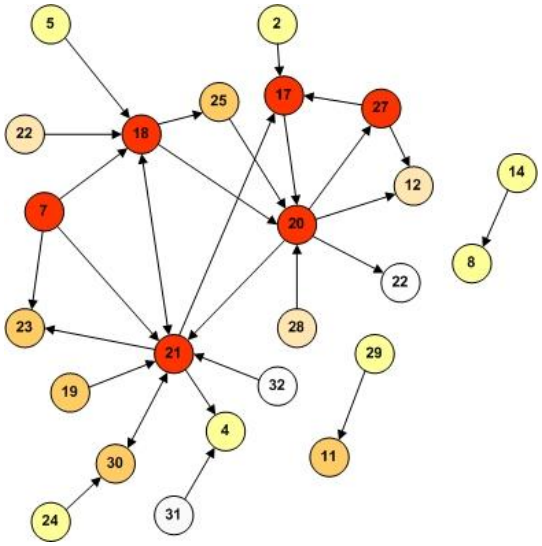


Figure 6.3: A sample network diagram, provided to participants.

Another common feature in ethical compliance for social research is ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of those who participate. This is an ethical factor that is complicated when considering network analysis, and where a balance has to be established between ethical compliance and ethical 'goodness' (Tobin and Begley, 2004). One of the important characteristics of network analysis is that the network data cannot be anonymised (Hennig et al., 2012). Participants may be identifiable through combinations of attribute data, such as the size or structure of the organisation (Borgatti and Molina, 2005). To address this issue, and to further comply with University guidelines, when analysing or disseminating any of the data from this study, all participants were replaced with a unique identifier. Each Local Coordinator (LC) was numbered (eg. LC1, LC2, LC3, etc.). The data was then coded based on the stage in which the data had been gathered; Network Interviews (NI), Qualitative (semi-structured) Interviews (QI) or the Focus Groups (FG). This was followed by either 1 or 2, depending on whether the data had been collected in the first or second phase. For example, LC2-QI-1 relates to a statement made from Local Coordinator 2, in the first semi-structured, Qualitative Interview. Similarly, LC4-FG-2 reflects a comment made by Local Coordinator 4 in the second focus group. Yet, considering the network relations, this did not remove the risk that participants may still be identified through a small number of attributes (Borgatti and Molina, 2005) or their position within the network (Hennig et al., 2012).

Having been granted ethical approval on the initial research design, as described above, I then had to apply for further amendments to the ethical application. The first of these amendments reflected the need to move data collection online, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions. Once this adaption had been approved, and once data generation had begun, I then had to apply for further amendments as I looked at introducing the focus groups. Yet, as much as ethical compliance was an ongoing area of concern, so too was the way in which ethical goodness underpinned the project.

6.4.2: Ethical Goodness

As Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007: 204) discuss, consideration of ethics, as well as being a process of compliance within academic research, should be informed by our values. Values, they argue, are personal constructs, influenced by social context. It was therefore important to consider, not only my own personal values, but how these might align with the aims of the project. In looking to explore collaboration within professional networks, from the perspective of the Local Coordinators, it was important that this collegiality was reflected within the research design itself, with an aim to do research 'with people' rather than 'on people' (Reason, 2002).

Researchers with a focus on collaborative enquiry are more concerned with practical outcomes, rather than theoretical understandings (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Indeed, some, such as Reason and Rowan (1981), argue for a 'new paradigm' based on collaboration between the researcher and participants. Grounded in a relational epistemology (Gallacher and Gallagher ,2008), the interpretivist approach adopted for this research design reflected the collaborative, relational aims (Cohen et el., 2018).

By ensuring the research was relevant to those involved, providing them with insights in relation to their position within their organisational networks, participation empowered, rather than weakened, those involved (Borgatti and Molina, 2003). Local Coordinators were provided with the opportunity to receive feedback in relation to their network position, thereby providing them an opportunity to reflect on and improve their network assets (Borgatti and Molina, 2005). This helped recompense participants for the time involved, as well as developing the collaborative nature of the inquiry (Groundwater Smith and Mockler, 2007).

By ensuring accurate representation of participants perceptions, Van Mannen (2011) claims that this further demonstrates that the research had been conducted in an ethical manner. As Bryman and Bell (2015: 422) discuss, 'collaborative research can be seen as a form of respondent validation'. This can involve participants being informed as to the findings of the data, to corroborate the researchers account and interpretation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Through consistent communication and collaboration, objectives and aims were clarified and aligned, ensuring that the research project would benefit those involved in the study (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

6.5: Summary

This chapter aimed to establish the study within the interpretivist paradigm. In doing so, the chapter began by describing both the positivist and interpretivist approaches to empirical enquiry, through consideration of their corresponding ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies (Bryman, 2008; Cresswell, 2013). This led on to discussion of a 'third research paradigm', specifically Mixed Methods Research (MMR) (Denscombe, 2008). Given the constructivist ontology, relational epistemology and value-laden nature of the project, and with the focus being on the qualitative understandings and perceptions of the participants, the chapter described in what ways the project is situated within the interpretivist paradigm.

From here, the narrative moved on to describe the methods of data generation, beginning with a brief reminder of the participants in the study. With data generation spread over two phases, each phase was made up of three distinct stages: the preliminary network interviews, the more detailed semi-structured interviews and finally a focus group rounding up each phase. The chapter described the ways in which a form of social network analysis, specifically ego-net analysis was used to structure the preliminary network interviews, with participants asked to name those other individuals or organisations they were working closely with, and then rating the interactions they perceived each to have with the others. The data provided by these initial network interviews was then formatted into network diagrams, illustrating each Local Coordinators professional networks and providing the basis for the more detailed semi-structured interviews.

Utilizing a semi-structured approach to the interviews, based around the principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 1999; 2001), participants reflected on the observations from their own static network diagrams. These 'network narratives' provided a framework through which qualitative accounts of 'network culture' could be developed and explored (Crossley et al., 2015), leading on to the final stage of each phase, the focus groups. Drawing together the emergent themes from the first two stages of data generation, participants were asked whether these themes were reflective of their own experiences in practice, effectively triangulating with the network and semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2018). Within the focus groups, multiple voices and perspectives generated new data and outcomes (Hydén and Bülow, 2003) with new opportunities for expansive learning being developed (Engeström, 1999; 2001).

Having described the processes of each phase of data generation, the chapter went on to reflect on some of the challenges and limitations of the research design. Some of the more common challenges associated with social network analysis, such as non-response or the accuracy of self-reported data (Borgatti et al., 2018; Wasserman and Faust, 1994), were mitigated given the focus on the ego-nets of participants. Not seeking to 'prove' or 'validate' participants claims, the value lay instead in exploring how each perceived their professional networks, and how collaboration itself was experienced. However, drawing out such qualitative data from these 'network narratives', required developing trust between myself as the researcher and the participants involved. The chapter went on to describe some of the challenges in establishing and maintaining this trust, such as the transition to online data generation following the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. As a response to this, focus groups, although not part of the initial research design, were introduced. This helped not only develop trust between myself and the participants, as they developed a better understanding of how their data would be used, but also provided opportunities for triangulation (Cross et al., 2009; Cohen et al., 2018).

The chapter concluded by identifying some of the ethical factors involved in the study. To ensure ethical compliance, it was necessary to provide participants with detailed information as to what the study was about and what would be required. However, as Borgatti and Molina (2003: 341) argue, the generally accepted Plain Language Statements and consent forms 'may not be adequate for protecting respondents in network research

settings', given some of the complexities involved in network analysis. Therefore, to ensure participants were fully informed before consenting, Plain Language Statements were developed to provide sample network diagrams to illustrate how their data would be used. Yet, consideration of ethics, as well as being a process of compliance within academic research, should also be informed by our values (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007: 204). To this end, the chapter went on to account for the value-laden nature of the research design, providing participants an opportunity to reflect on and improve their network assets (Borgatti and Molina, 2005).

Given the fully integrated mixed design (Hollstein, 2014) as illustrated in Table 6.1, the analysis of data was embedded alongside the generation of data. As each stage of data was generated, this would be analysed before moving on. This allowed for a continuous consideration of emergent themes, with each stage being driven by the analysis of the preceding stage (Cohen et al., 2018). The following chapter will describe how the data generated from these different stages was analysed, giving account of both the network data and textual data, the quantitative and qualitative. Beginning with consideration of the network data, the chapter will describe the ways in which this was visualised and identify some of the network metrics that were accounted for. This will be followed as the chapter describes how data from the interviews and focus groups was thematised, accounting for the elements of each activity system.

Chapter 7

Methods of Analysis

Having situated the study within the interpretivist paradigm, the previous chapter went on to describe the ways in which the data was generated across three distinct stages, the network and semi-structured interviews and the focus group. This chapter aims to:

- Describe the methods of visualising and analysing the network data, using Social Network Analysis
- Explain how Cultural Historical Activity Theory influenced the analysis of the 'network narratives'

Analysing the network data first involved cleaning it and systematising it, before further analyses could begin. The description of this cleaning process will lead into an explanation of the way in which this data was visualised into network diagrams. There are several basic approaches to visualising the network data, for example, attribute-based scatter plots, ordination and graph layout algorithms (Borgatti et al., 2018). The chapter will identify which of these approaches was selected and why.

This will be followed by consideration of the measures of analysis that were applied to the network data. These measures can be applied to the whole network or the individual actors, with several measures of centrality. The chapter will identify which descriptive network statistics were applied at this stage of the analysis, such as individual and group degree, density, components, and connectedness (Krackhardt, 1994; Borgatti et al., 2018). The chapter will also briefly reflect on which network statistics were not appropriate to this analysis, such as reciprocity, symmetry and prestige.

Beyond consideration of the network data, the chapter will go on to describe the methods used to analyse the textual data, from both the qualitative interviews and subsequent focus groups. Exploring these 'network narratives' (Crossley et al., 2015) requires an inductive approach to the analysis, permitting more detailed consideration of the social and cultural factors impacting the experiences of the participants (Thomas, 2006; Gale et al., 2013). The

chapter will move on to explore the framework selected to support this inductive approach. Drawing on the five principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) established by Engeström (2001), enabled detailed investigation into the 'network cultures' that underpinned the 'network structures' (Crossley et al., 2015). The chapter will conclude with a descriptive account of how this framework was applied.

Once the network data had been generated, it was necessary to analyse this first, to then discuss this analysis with the participant in the second stage of data generation, the semi-structured interviews. This discussion was then recorded, with the transcript from these recordings forming the basis for the second stage of analysis. Such sequential generation and analysis afforded the opportunity to revisit and refine questions, as well as pursuing emerging avenues of inquiry in further detail (Pope et al., 2000). The stages of data analysis are discussed in greater detail below.

7.1: Network Analysis

Before any analysis can begin, the data must first be cleaned. In the case of the network data, this process of data cleaning consisted of several important stages, to format the relational data sets.

7.1.1: Data Cleaning

The first step in the process of data cleaning began by creating a new dataset in which all ties were reciprocated. As the focus of the study was on the egonets of specific individual actors, it was only the perceptions from those individuals pertaining to their relationships that was gathered. The perceptions of those relationships from other actors within the network was not considered, which would eventually lead to undirected ties within the network maps. Before this however, it was important to ensure that the data within the matrix was symmetrized, with ties being reciprocated. For example, comparing an entry within the adjacency matrix (row 3, column 5), with its corresponding entry (row 5, column 3) and ensuring they are the same. This can be illustrated in Tables 7.1a and 7.1b, below. Table 7.1a presents the data from the first round of data collection from participant LC5 as it was gathered. Table 7.1b shows the same data once it had been symmetrized. Although symmetrizing is often a part of data cleaning (Borgatti et al., 2018), it was particularly

important in this instance as several analytical techniques, such as multi-dimensional scaling, assume symmetric data (Borgatti et al., 2018).

0	**4**	**2**	**3**	**4**
	0	3	4	3
		0	0	3
			0	1
				0

Table 7.1a- Data as it was gathered

0	**4**	**2**	**3**	**4**
4	0	3	4	3
2	3	0	0	3
3	4	0	0	1
4	3	3	1	0

Table 7.1b- Data after it was symmetrized

Once the data had been appropriately symmetrized, the next step in data cleaning involved dichotomizing the matrix. This involved converting the valued data to binary data. Having asked participants to rate relationships on a 6-point scale, the dichotomization was conducted at each of the different levels, as recommended by Borgatti et al. (2018). This resulted in several subsequent data sets, one for each level of interaction. This is demonstrated in the matrices presented below. Table 7.2a presents the binarized data of the data set presented above, in Table 7.1b, at the first level of interaction, associating. Taking this as the foundation, new matrices were then created, each with a different cut-off value based on the strength of interaction. Table 7.2b presents the same binarized data, at the fourth level of interaction, cooperating. As is not uncommon, dichotomizing with a high cut-off value reduces the density of the network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

0	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**
1	0	1	1	1
1	1	0	0	1
1	1	0	0	1
1	1	1	1	0

Table 7.2a- Data dichotomized at the level of association

0	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
1	0	0	1	0
0	0	0	0	0
0	1	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0

Table 7.2b Data dichotomized at the level of cooperation

Along with the original, valued matrix, the disaggregated data effectively led to seven distinct adjacency matrices, detailing the egonets of the participants, including their position within these networks. These matrices included the valued data, then one for each of the six levels of interaction. However, as Crossley et al. (2015) discuss, one of the primary interests for those exploring egonets is in considering the structure of the network when the ego is removed. To this end, each of the seven adjacency matrices were then recreated without the ego present, leading to an additional seven matrices to consider for each participant. Having successfully cleaned the data, the next step was in ensuring the datasets were in a format compatible with the software. The software chosen for this analysis was UCINET (Borgatti et al., 2002). From these UCINET files further analysis could be conducted, including visualising the matrices into network diagrams.

7.1.2: Visualising the Data

As Borgatti et al. (2018) discuss, visualisations can provide greater qualitative understanding than can be provided through the quantitative adjacency matrices. As Cowhitt et al. (2023) identify, there are three common types of network diagrams. The first of these, static network diagrams, visualise specific social contexts at single points in time. Alternatively, interactive network diagrams enable participants to move the nodes and ties of the network around. Finally, dynamic network diagrams visualise the development of networks over time. With interactive network diagrams being most suited to the analysis of large networks, and dynamic network diagrams most useful in relation to longitudinal data (Cowhitt et al., 2023), it was decided that, for the purposes of this study, static network diagrams would be most appropriate to support participants through the reflective process.

Drawing upon these static network diagrams throughout the subsequent interviews, allowed me to clearly describe and illustrate the networks to the participants, providing a focus for discussion and consideration. With nodes representing individual actors, and lines representing the ties between them, it was necessary to consider the layout of each visualisation, ensuring each reflected coherently the relevant information. Although some, such as Cowhitt et al. (2023) acknowledge that oversimplification or misreading of network diagrams can be problematic, the authors also recognise that such visualisations can be useful in generating questions. Given that the focus of this study was on participants' ego-networks, relationships and experiences, the static network diagrams seemed appropriate

as a tool for reflection. To support this, three basic approaches to visualising the network data were considered: attribute-based scatter plots, ordination and graph layout algorithms (Borgatti et al., 2018).

In the first of these, attribute-based scatter plots position nodes in relation to the attributes of the given actor (Borgatti et al., 2018). Alternatively, the second approach, ordination, positions nodes based on multivariate statistics techniques, such as multidimensional scaling (MDS). Here, the distances between nodes are based on known mathematical relations (Borgatti et al., 2018). For example, utilising MDS, I was able to coherently illustrate the strength of relations between actors, with strong connections placing nodes close to each other, and weaker relations positioned farther apart.

Yet, given the advantages of these two approaches, it was the third approach to visualisation, graph layout algorithms, that offered the most affordances. As Borgatti et al. (2018: 119) identify, there are a wide variety of graph layout algorithms, with the layout of the nodes and lines defined by the specific function being optimised. UCINET's NetDraw procedure (Borgatti et al., 2002) considers the function in relation to three specific criteria. The first of these essentially reflects MDS, as distances between nodes is considered. The second criterion NetDraw (Borgatti et al., 2018) accounts for, is that nodes should not obscure each other. In both attribute-based scatter plots and ordination, nodes may well be positioned on top of each other, obscuring much of the information. Finally, NetDraw (Borgatti et al., 2018) aims for lines (or ties) of equal length, making it easier to identify specific symmetries (Borgatti et al., 2018).

Given all three criteria, the graph layout algorithm offered by NetDraw (Borgatti et al., 2002) provided greater clarity in the visualisations than either attribute-based scatter plots or ordinance afforded (Borgatti et al., 2018). Borgatti et al. (2018: 120) acknowledge that such an approach to visualising network data risks losing some of the mathematical interpretability, as distances between nodes are no longer based on mathematical relations. However, given the way in which the network maps for this study were to be shared with, and understood by participants, graph layout algorithms, such as those provided by NetDraw (Borgatti et al., 2002), were considered to be the cleanest, most coherent approach to visualising the network data.

As with the variety of analysis measures, networks were visualised at all levels of interaction, both with ego present and then again, with ego removed. This distinction can be illustrated with the network diagrams below. Reflecting the data within the matrix in Table 7.1b, Figure 7.1a shows the corresponding network map. The ego (ie. The focus of the study) is presented as the black node, with the grey nodes representing the alters, with the lines between them reflecting the ties (in this case, associations). In comparison, Figure 7.1b shows the same network, at the same level of interaction, but with the ego removed. This invariably leads to, not only fewer actors within the network, but also fewer relationships.

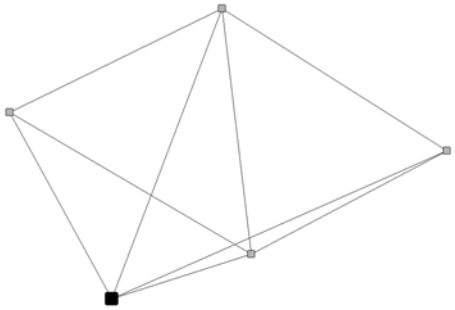


Figure 7.1a: Level 1, associating with ego

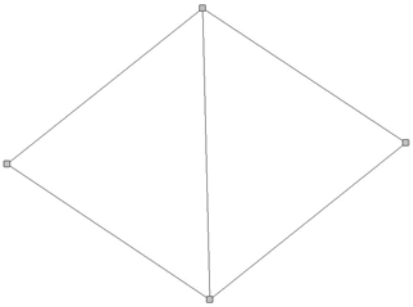


Figure 7.1b: Level 1, associating with ego removed

The network data that included ego was then further visualised, to illustrate the individual egonets, identifying only those alters that ego had direct contact with (Crossley et al., 2015). For example, although an ego may list 14 individuals within a network, they may only be in direct contact with four of them. It is these four that would make up the egonet. This can be seen in the network maps below. Figure 7.2a illustrates the whole network of participant LC5 at the third level, coordinating. Figure 7.2b however, illustrates, at the same level of interaction, only those alters the ego (in black) is in direct contact with.

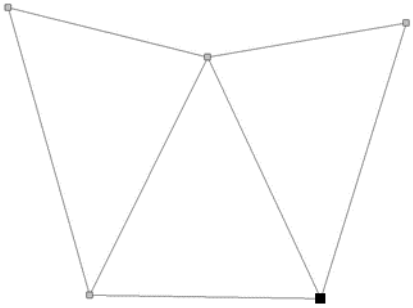


Figure 7.2a: Whole Network

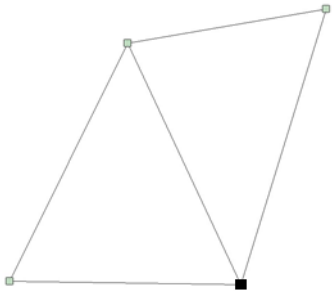


Figure 7.2b: Egonet

These egonet visualisations were then gathered alongside the variety of other visualisations, with the most salient information being selected to be shared with the participants during the second stage of data collection, the semi-structured interviews.

7.1.3: Whole Network Measures

Having converted each data set into the appropriate UCINET file (Borgatti et al., 2002), analysis of the network measures was applied at two levels: measures of the whole network and measures relating to the individual actors. Whole network measures were calculated first, beginning with the number of nodes and ties within each network. From these, a wide variety of whole network properties were calculated. Several of these measures reflected the cohesiveness of the network (Borgatti et al., 2018). For example, the density of the network can be expressed by considering the number of ties in the network as a proportion of all possible ties (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

Taking the data presented in Table 7.2a and Figure 7.1a as an example, there are nine ties present within the network at this level of interaction. This is out of a possible ten ties, given that the network is undirected, providing a density of 0.900, or 90%, reflecting a highly dense network. Comparing the density of each graph at each level of interaction, or over time, can illustrate the cohesiveness, or connectedness (Borgatti et al., 2018) of the network as it develops. Yet, as Borgatti et al. (2018) warn, the density of smaller networks is almost always higher than in large networks. For instance, with the example provided above, in a small network comprising ten actors, it is quite possible that each actor has ties to all others within the network. However, as the number of actors increases it becomes less likely that an actor will have ties to all other actors within the network. For example, a network comprising 1,000 actors will invariably have a lower density measure than a network of ten.

To account for this, other measures of cohesion were also considered, such as the average degree of the network. Average degree is calculated by averaging the number of ties each actor has (their individual degree). This measure of cohesion is especially useful when comparing the cohesiveness of differently sized groups or networks, where density can be less reliable (Borgatti et al., 2018). Again, taking the data from Table 7.2a and Figure 7.1a as an example, with a total of five actors within this network, each actors average degree (or how many other actors each has ties to) is 3.600.

Measures of cohesion, such as density and average degree, provide numerical understanding in relation to specific aspects of a network. However, as Borgatti et al. (2018: 176) identifies, these measures provide little information as to the way in which ties are distributed through the network. For this reason, Borgatti et al. (2018) claim that one of the simplest ways to think about cohesion is to consider the number and size of components in a network. The authors use the term component to describe what others have referred to as social groups, subgroups or cliques (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 251). The main premise is that a network with one component, in which everyone is in touch with everyone else, is more cohesive than a network in which there are several smaller groups, with few, if any ties between them. Components, or subgroups, can be identified through a variety of different properties, such as attributes or tie strength (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

To illustrate this concept, another example will be introduced. Table 7.3 and Figure 7.3, below, reflect the fourth level of interaction, co-operation, from the first round of data collection for participant LC2.

0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 7.3: Matrix of LC2 at level 4; cooperation

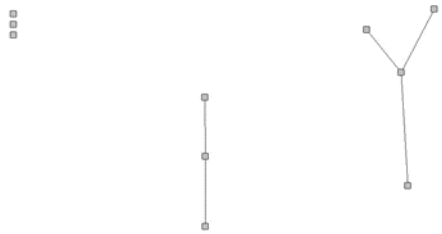


Figure 7.3: Corresponding network diagram

Although the network diagram in Figure 7.3 would initially appear to show two components, there are five separate components within this network, taking account of the three isolates, each one of which constitutes an individual component. For Borgatti et al. (2018), consideration of the size and number of such components within a network provides a measure of cohesion which takes account of the way in which ties, and relations, are distributed. However, the authors also conclude that this measure of cohesion is often not

sensitive enough to the task at hand. For example, although many networks may provide the same component ratio, they may still lack cohesion (Borgatti et al., 2018)

An alternative approach espoused by Borgatti et al. (2018) relates to the concept of 'connectedness' (Krackhardt, 1994). This measure relates to the proportion of pairs of nodes that can reach each other through any given path. In other words, the proportion of pairs of nodes within the same component (Borgatti et al., 2018: 178). Taking the network presented in Table 7.3 and Figure 7.3, above, as an example, the network has five components, with a component ratio of 0.444 and a connectedness of 0.200, indicating that this network is not well connected. Alternatively, looking at the network presented in Table 7.2a and Figure 7.1a, the network has only one component, a component ratio of 0 and a connectedness of 1, indicating that all actors are in the same component.

Given the range of whole network measures applied to the data, it is worth briefly reflecting on those that were not utilised. Due to the research design only reflecting the perceptions of the ego, the ties are undirected. Had other actors within the network been approached, this could have led to a directed network. Through such an approach, it may have been found that actor A felt they had a strong working relationship with actor B, but that actor B did not reciprocate those feelings. Such measures of reciprocity can lead to further avenues of investigation (Borgatti et al., 2018); yet, in this instance, given the undirected ties within the egonets, such measures were not appropriate. Similar measures that rely on directed networks, such as symmetry and prestige, were also discounted. But, where the whole network measures utilised, such as density, average degree, and component ratios (Borgatti et al., 2018), provided understanding of specific aspects of the network, further measures of analysis at the level of the individual actor developed this further.

7.1.4: Centrality Measures

Alongside examination of the network as a whole, one of the primary uses of social network analysis can be in the identification of the 'important' individuals within the network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 169). 'Important', or prominent actors, are generally located in strategic positions within the network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Such structural importance can be defined as centrality (Borgatti et al., 2018). Just as there are a variety of ways an actor may be 'important' within a network, viewed as a family of concepts,

centrality can be measured in a range of ways (Borgatti et al., 2018). The simplest centrality measure is an actors' degree or, the number of ties an actor has (Borgatti et al., 2018). Returning to Figure 7.2a, reproduced below, to illustrate this further, actors A and C can both be seen to have a degree of 2, as they are only in direct contact with two other actors. Actors D and E (in this case, the ego) each have a degree of 3, whilst actor B, with a degree of four is the most prominent figure within this network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

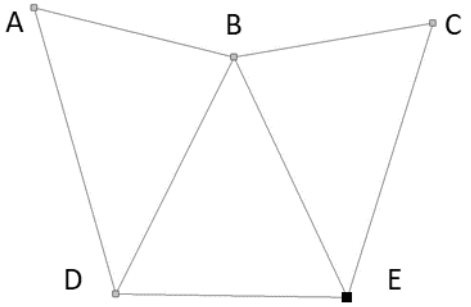


Figure 7.2a: Whole Network

Unlike similar whole network measures, such as average degree or density, centralization measures help quantify the variability between individual actors (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), for example, in comparing the prominence of individual actors. Yet, one of the criticisms of actor degree centrality is that it does not necessarily reflect the complexities or detail in ties (Borgatti et al., 2018). An example of this can be seen with an actor who has ties to three other actors who, themselves have no other ties. The degree of this actor would be the same as an actor who had ties to three prominent actors, each of whom had a wide range of additional ties.

To understand such nuance, eigenvector centrality can be measured across actors. As with degree centrality, eigenvector centrality counts the number of actors a given actor is tied to but weights each adjacent actor by their own centrality (Borgatti et al., 2018). Effectively, those actors with high eigenvector centrality have ties to actors who themselves are well connected, or prominent (Borgatti et al., 2018). In the example presented in Figure 7.4, below, although both actors B and C have a degree of three (in other words, each is directly tied to three other actors), actor B has a larger eigenvector centrality, as those actors B has ties with also have ties to others. With a degree of four and an eigenvector of 1.000, actor A

(in this case, the ego and focus of the study) is the most prominent within this particular network.

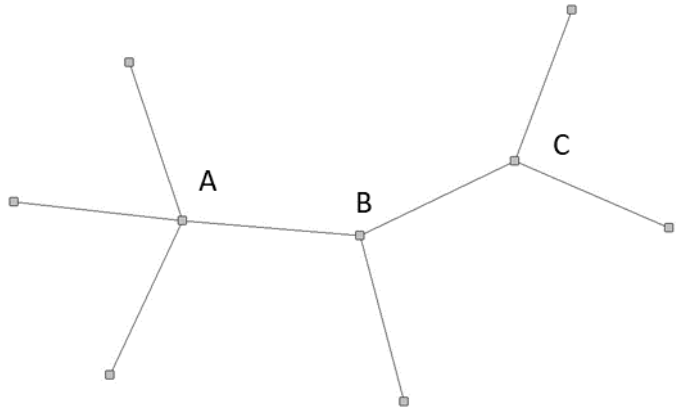


Figure 7.4: Eigenvector centrality

Yet, beyond consideration of those an actor has a direct relationship with another point of interest in social network analysis lies in exploring how distant or close actors may be in relation to each other. By measuring how close an actor is to all others in the network, closeness centrality helps identify how quickly a given actor can interact with all others (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Here, closeness centrality is defined as the sum of geodesic distances from an actor to all others (Freeman, 1979). The geodesic distance is described as the length of the shortest path between two nodes (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). For example, in Figure 7.4, above, the length of the shortest path (indeed, the only path) between actors A and C is 2. As the geodesic decreases in length, the closeness centrality of the given actor increases, demonstrating that this actor can reach all others within the network relatively easily (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

In considering paths within networks, another measure of centrality can also be helpful; betweenness centrality. In this measure, an actor is seen as important if they lie on the geodesics between others (Freeman, 1979). An actor has a high betweenness centrality when they lie along the shortest path between many pairs of nodes (Borgatti et al., 2018). This positions such actors in locations of strategic importance (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), making them influential in controlling flows through the network (Borgatti et al., 2018). This can lead to the identification of influence and power, as well as brokerage opportunities. Again, taking Figure 7.4 as an example, actors A and B both have high betweenness centrality (18 and 19 respectively), demonstrating their strategic importance to the

network. Removal of either of these actors would fracture the network, effectively splitting it into three or four components. The only other actor with a significant betweenness centrality measure is actor C, the removal of which from the network would isolate the two alters that C is in contact with. Removal of any other actor in the network illustrated in Figure 7.4 would not impact the overall network, thereby giving them a betweenness centrality measure of 0.

But, just as not all whole network measures could be applied to the undirected ties within the egonets of this research project, so certain centrality measures were also deemed inappropriate. For example, centrality is frequently discussed in relation to an actors' prestige, or their number of incoming of ties (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Yet, given that the ties in this study were undirected, they were not considered in relation to being outgoing or incoming, therefore prestige was not an accurate centrality measure in this instance.

For each participant, both Whole Network Measures and individual Centrality Measures were calculated at each level of interaction, across all 14 matrices. As previously discussed, these forms of analysis are useful in considering the structure of the network (Crossley et al., 2015). The analysis of such egonets help in providing an 'outsider view' of individual networks (Jack, 2010); yet, frequently such measures raise more questions than they resolve (Crossley et al., 2015: 107). To move beyond an examination of the structure of the network, it was important to establish the meaning each participant gave to those structures (Crossley et al., 2015). As Crossley (2008) identifies, network measures cannot be interpreted accurately without consideration of the narrative accounts of those embedded within the network. It was therefore important to analyse, not only the network data from each participant, but their interpretation of that data.

7.2: CHAT Analysis

The second phase of analysis consisted of content analysis of the textual data from the interview and discussion group transcripts. As with other forms of qualitative research, analytical categories were used to describe and explain specific phenomena within these 'network narratives' (Crossley et al., 2015). Yet, before these categories were applied to the textual data, the interviews themselves provided opportunities for the participants

themselves to analyse and interpret their networks, with the aid of the visualisations and network diagrams. As Crossley et al. (2015: 109) argue, within such qualitative approaches to network research, data analysis often begins at the same point as data collection. As participants provided information on their networks, they also began to analyse their relationships, providing subjective evaluations of these relationships and what they meant to them (Crossley et al., 2015). As Knox et al. (2006) identifies, it is in describing their networks that participants begin the initial, and important phase of network analysis.

This was followed by further analysis of these 'network narratives'. However, rather than adopting a deductive approach, in which 'prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses (are) identified or constructed by an investigator' (Thomas, 2006: 238), this project adopted an inductive approach to the analysis. Within an inductive approach, findings arise from significant themes inherent in the data and the researcher allows the theory to emerge. As Thomas (2006) argues, deductive approaches often obscure or ignore key themes, due to the presumptions in the data collection and the techniques of analysis imposed by investigators. Instead, inductive analysis establishes clear links between the research objectives and the findings derived from the data, ensuring that these links are both transparent and justifiable. Although applying the CHAT framework to the analysis of the data, this does not infer a deductive approach. Indeed, as Gale et al. (2013) argue, frameworks themselves are not aligned to either deductive or inductive approaches. Instead, the important thing to consider is that whichever approach is selected it appropriately reflects the research question (Gale et al., 2013). Given the focus in this study is on understanding Local Coordinators perceptions on practice, the inductive approach allowed for the unexpected, permitting more detailed consideration of the social and cultural factors impacting the experiences of the participants (Gale et al., 2013).

7.2.1: Identifying the Framework

The analysis followed five stages, reflecting the framework approach described by Pope et al. (2000). The first stage of analysis was in familiarising myself with the data (Pope et al., 2000). This familiarisation began as the data was cleaned, with transcripts checked against the recordings to ensure accuracy and remove unnecessary information (eg. times of statements). From this initial immersion in the data, key ideas and recurrent themes began to emerge (Pope et al., 2000). Once the data had been appropriately cleaned, the finalised

transcripts were sent out to the participants, providing them with the opportunity to amend or remove anything they would rather not include.

Although not a strict requirement, providing opportunities for the participants to reflect on their responses was an important ethical consideration. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007) argue that research should be transparent in its enactment and processes, with researchers being held accountable. By ensuring participants were afforded the opportunity to check and amend their responses before further analysis was conducted, this project ensured both transparency and accountability. Yet, Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007) go on to state that research should also be collaborative in nature. Given the focus of this study was specifically on the nature of such collaborative processes, collaboration between the researcher and participants had to be made explicit and so transcripts of both the recorded interviews and the focus groups were always returned to participants.

Following this, the next stage of analysis was in the identification of an appropriate thematic framework (Pope et al., 2000). Through consideration of the aims and objectives of the study, as well as issues raised by the participants, along with any recurring themes, an appropriate framework allows for the data to be examined and referenced. As previously discussed, the framework approach adopted in this analysis consisted of the five principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), as established by Engeström (2001). The first principle identifies the activity system as the primary unit of analysis, including consideration of the seven features of the activity system: the subject, community, rules, division of labour, mediating artefacts (also known as tools or instruments), the object and the outcome. These features were considered in relation to each other, along with the four other principles; multi-voicedness, historicity, conflicts and contradictions and expansive transformation. These five primary themes of CHAT (Engeström, 2001) were purposefully selected to explore the 'network culture' and support and develop the previous analysis of the 'network structure' (Crossley et al., 2015).

7.2.2: CAQDAS

Having identified an appropriate theoretical framework, the next stage of analysis consisted of applying the framework systematically to all the textual data. To support this stage of the analysis, computer software was used to enable complex organisation and retrieval of the

data. Such computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programs can assist in storing, indexing, sorting, and coding the qualitative data (Morse & Richards, 2002). CAQDAS can assist with multiple types of analyses, so that the underlying theories and relationships in the data are more easily recognised (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Although CAQDAS programs do not analyse the data, they can support the researcher in the process (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

Several software packages designed for qualitative data analysis exist, including NVivo (QSR International, 1999), ATLAS.ti (Muhr, 1997) and MAXQDA (VERBI Software (2019). The CAQDAS program selected for this analysis was Quirkos (Version 2.3.1, 2020). As well as sharing many of the features of similar CAQDAS programs, Quirkos was selected for this project specifically for its visual interface, enabling fast coding and retrieval of selected text and themes. This proved to be of particular significance during this stage of analysis, as the theoretical framework was applied to all textual data, indexing it systematically under the principles of CHAT, including the seven elements of the activity system (Engeström, 2001). It was at this stage the CAQDAS program proved particularly beneficial as single passages of text often encompassed several different themes, each of which had to be recorded (Pope et al., 2000). This can be seen with the example below:

> 'You never see them working together. Like, that would just not, I think, ever happen.'
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

Here the participant is reflecting on the relationship between two services within the local area. This example reflects the activity system, specifically in relation to the community, but also addresses some of the contradictions within and history of the network, thereby encompassing three distinct themes.

7.2.3: Charting and Mapping

Once the data had been indexed, the next stage of analysis involved charting the data (Pope et al., 2000). This included rearranging the data in the context of the selected thematic framework. However, rather than simply grouping the text by theme, charting the data involves 'a considerable amount of abstraction and synthesis' (Pope et al., 2000: 116). Once

again, the CAQDAS program provided substantial support in this stage of the analysis, with relationships between themes easily identified and comparisons drawn out. Although it was important at this stage to extract sections of text from their original context to identify patterns across the data, it was equally important that the 'story' of each participant was not lost (Bricki and Green, 2007). To avoid potentially losing any of the narrative context, it was necessary to also examine each case study individually, so that it could be established how specific themes may interrelate to particular cases (Bricki and Green, 2007).

For example, a recurrent issue that was often raised by participants was the impact of COVID-19, as the two examples below illustrate:

> 'I think at the back of our minds, we all did anticipate that we would be back in some sort of lockdown.'
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

> 'It's been horrible. It's the most ridiculous situation to be a youth engagement type person and not engage young people. It's surreal.'
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

Both of these examples identify some of the challenges inherent in attempting to navigate the pandemic. Taken together, these, along with many similar responses, help to identify a common issue amongst all participants. Yet, without considering such responses in isolation, the individual approaches to such a challenge may be lost, or the impact on each network may not be fully addressed. As Crossley et al. (2015) acknowledge, comparing and contrasting across cases can support more general theorisation; however, this should not come at the expense of each participant's 'network story' (Bricki and Green, 2007).

The final stage of analysis, as identified by Pope et al. (2000), involved the mapping and interpretation of the charted data. This included defining concepts, exploring the range and nature of the phenomena, and identifying associations between themes. As Pope et al. (2000: 116) acknowledge, this final stage of data analysis is greatly influenced by the original aims and objectives of the project, along with any emergent themes. As identified with the examples above, a theme that emerged early and was common amongst participants related to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on local services and networking

opportunities. It was only as the data collection moved on to other participants and phases of data collection that the range of this phenomena began to be seen. For example, one of the apparent commonalities of the pandemic was on the impact on the different activity systems. Most specifically, the pandemic appeared to impact two main features across activity systems, the community, and the objective, with a number of services, for example, changing their focus, and moving to food provision. It was only in this latter stage of analysis that such associations began to emerge (Pope et al., 2000).

7.3: Summary

Following on from discussion of the methods of data generation in the previous chapter, this chapter aimed to describe the methods of data analysis. Reflective of the different stages of the data generation process, the methods of data analysis also consisted of several parts. The data generated from the network interviews was analysed using Social Network Analysis. The narrative data from both the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups was analysed utilising the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework.

The chapter began by describing the ways in which the network data was cleaned, including the ways in which it was symmetrised, dichotomised, disaggregated and converted. From here, the narrative went on to describe how the network data was visualised. Although three approaches to visualising network data were available, the one selected for this project was graph layout algorithms (Borgatti et al., 2018). This approach provided greater clarity in the visualisations than either attribute-based scatter plots or ordinance afforded. Given the way in which the network diagrams for this study were to be used as a tool for reflection by the participants, graph layout algorithms were the cleanest, most coherent approach to visualising the network data. From the valued network data provided by the participants, individual visualisations were able to map all levels of interaction within the networks, identifying which actors Local Coordinators worked most closely with.

As well as the network diagrams, social network analysis provides several statistical measures, relating to both the whole network and the individual actors. The narrative went on to describe some of the measures considered in relation to the whole networks, such as density, average degree, the number of components and levels of connectedness (Borgatti et al., 2018). Beyond the whole network measures, several measures of individual centrality

were also described. Measures of degree centrality, eigenvector centrality, closeness centrality and betweenness centrality provide information on individual actors, allowing for the identification of the 'important' individuals within the network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 169). The network diagrams were then used as stimulus for discussion in the follow-up qualitative, semi-structured interviews. The narrative data from these interviews, and subsequent focus groups was then analysed.

The chapter went on to describe the way in which the data from the interviews and focus group transcripts were analysed. As Knox et al. (2006) identifies, it was in describing their networks that participants begin the initial, and important phase of analysing the structure of their networks. Data from the subsequent interviews and focus groups provided further information relating to the 'network culture' underpinning these structures (Crossley et al., 2015). Although utilising a framework for analysis, the approach was inductive, allowing as it does for the unexpected, permitting more detailed consideration of the social and cultural factors impacting the experiences of the participants (Gale et al., 2013).

The narrative moved on to describe the cleaning of transcripts and the ways in which these were then sent out to the participants affording them the opportunity to check and amend their responses before further analysis was conducted, ensuring the project was both transparent and myself, as the researcher, accountable (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007). From here, the chapter then went on to describe the identification of an appropriate framework for analysis, the principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), as established by Engeström (2001). This framework was selected to further explore the 'network culture', supporting and developing on the previous analysis of the 'network structure' (Crossley et al., 2015).

To support a systematic analysis of the textual data computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was utilised. Such programs assist in storing, indexing, sorting, and coding the qualitative data (Morse & Richards, 2002). The CAQDAS program selected for this analysis was Quirkos (Version 2.3.1, 2020), due to its unique visual interface, enabling fast coding and retrieval of selected text and themes. The final stage of analysis involved the mapping and interpretation of the charted data, including defining concepts, exploring the range and nature of the phenomena, and identifying associations between themes (Pope et al., 2000). Having set out the methods of data generation, and the ways in which this data

was analysed, the following chapters will go on to describe the findings from the analysis, identifying main themes across responses.

Chapter 8

Within the Network

Having described the methods of data generation and analysis, the following two chapters will discuss the primary themes that emerged through the analysis of the data. This chapter will begin by identifying and analysing the key themes relating to the factors within Local Coordinators' networks. The following chapter will then consider those factors that lay beyond the networks.

Firstly, in seeking to explore how collaboration plays out in practice, and how Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme sought to obtain a position of influence within established collaborative networks, three main themes emerged: surveying the existing networks, integrating within those networks, and influencing the objectives of the collaborative improvement process. These themes are illustrated in Table 8.1, below.

Survey the Network	**Establish Size and Shape**
	Inventory Subgroups
	Identify Influencers
Integrate into Network	**Build Relationships**
	Establish Position
	Situate Leadership
Influence Objectives	**Set the Agenda**
	Engage Stakeholders
	Advocate for Change

Table 8.1: Themes within the network and related categories

The chapter will begin by identifying what factors Local Coordinators had to consider when surveying existing collaborative infrastructures, such as the size of the network, along with the subgroups and individuals within them. This will lead on to identify how they integrated into those networks, as the analysis describes the ways in which Local Coordinators built relationships with network members, established their own position within the network and situated their own leadership approach. Finally, the chapter will explore the ways in which

Local Coordinators identified and influenced the objectives they wished to set, along with how they then engaged the relevant stakeholders and developed their own role as advocates.

Throughout this chapter, themes will be discussed, and points illustrated with network diagrams and quotes from participants. To ensure anonymity, all names and labels from the network diagrams have been removed, although these were maintained in the follow up semi-structured interviews, to support the reflective process. To provide greater clarity, some generalised stakeholder types that were identified across the full set of the six neighbourhoods are listed in Table 8.2, below.

8 Primary Schools
3 Secondary Schools
1 Early Years Service
1 Out of School Care Service
7 Youth Organisations
8 Children and Families Support Services
16 Community Organisations
2 Local Authority Services
4 Housing Associations
3 Food Provision Services
2 Church Groups

Table 8.2: Summary of Stakeholder Types Across Six Neighbourhoods

Similarly, both network diagrams and quotes have been assigned identifier codes for clarity. As each Local Coordinator was randomly assigned an identifying number, each code will begin with this. This will then be followed with initials indicating the stage of data generation: NI indicates the initial Network Interviews. QI indicates the semi-structured Qualitative Interviews. FG indicates the Focus Group. Finally, the code will conclude with a number indicating whether the data was generated in the first or second phase. For example, LC5-NI-2 would indicate that the related network diagram was generated from the network interview of Local Coordinator 5 in the second phase. Similarly, LC3-FG-1 would indicate a quote that came from Local Coordinator 3 in the first focus group.

Table 8.3, below, provides an overview of when interviews and focus groups were conducted, and when the different phases of the study ran. As can be seen, the initial interviews were spread over several months as Local Coordinators were gradually employed across the six neighbourhood sites and time given for them to develop initial relationships before data generation was conducted.

	From	To	Focus Group
Phase 1	October 2020	April 2021	June 2021
Phase 2	September 2021	December 2021	January 2022

Table 8.3: Overview of Phases

An overview of the network diagrams that were developed over the two stages of data generation is presented in Table 8.4, below. Although initially planned to consider the development of Local Coordinators ego networks over time, this was only possible in certain instances. As can be seen, network data was not available in phase two for the first two neighbourhood areas as the initial Local Coordinators left the organisation. Although these roles were subsequently filled, this was not in enough time for the second phase of network interviews. Nevertheless, both new Local Coordinators were able to come along to the final focus group and share their own experiences in seeking to obtain positions of influence within established networks. Similarly, in area five, the Local Coordinator was unable to attend the second network interview but was able to come along to the final focus group. In the final neighbourhood area, two Local Coordinators worked in the area over the two different phases, with LC4 working initially in the area, and LC6 then establishing their own role.

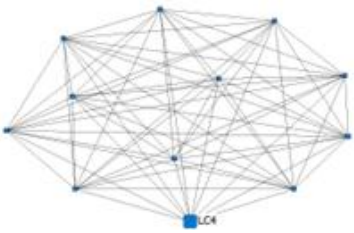
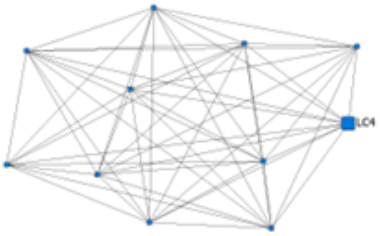
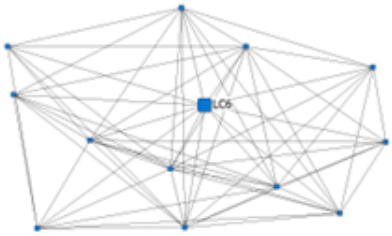
Neighbourhood Area	Phase 1	Phase 2
1		No Data Available
2		No Data Available
3		
4		
5		No Data Available
6		

Table 8.4: Ego network overview

The chapter will begin by identifying some of the factors Local Coordinators had to first account for when surveying the initial networks, such as the size of the network they were entering. The chapter will describe some of the challenges related to network size, before moving on to describe in greater detail the other factors that Local Coordinators had to account for, such as the subgroups and individuals within those networks.

8.1: Networks of Interest

As Local Coordinators entered communities, they had to identify precisely which professional networks existed within the local area. This varied across participants experiences, with some inheriting network relationships, whilst others had to be established. Participants had to identify which services or individuals within local communities would align with their work and goals and, from there, whether or not current networks existed. Commonalities across participants responses related to aspects such as the size of the network, the number of actors, along with the strength of the relations between them.

8.1.1: The Expanding Network

On entering a neighbourhood, the first thing Local Coordinators had to consider was the size of the network of services and organisations available as they sought collaborative partnerships between diverse stakeholders (Brandsen and van Hout, 2006). Take, for example, the network below, in Figure 8.1. The larger node represents the ego, LC1, with the alters representing the other services and organisations within the area that they initially developed collaborative ties with. In total, there are eighteen services, with each service having strong ties (at this level of interaction) to almost all other services.

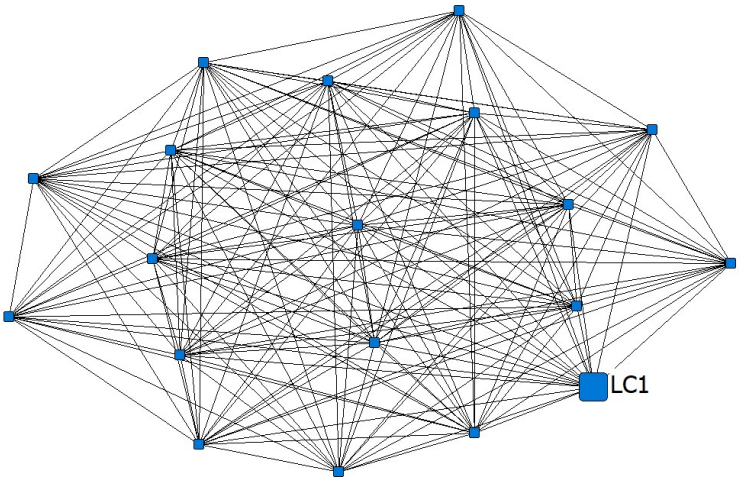


Figure 8.1- LC1-NI-1; associating

Compare this to the network illustrated below, in Figure 8.2. Here, the larger node represents the ego, LC5, who in comparison to LC1 above, had entered an entirely different network. With only four alters, each representing a service in the area, the size of the network is significantly smaller. The reduced number of actors in a network can limit the resources available, including social capital (Crossley et al., 2015). Within the activity system, such resources reflect the mediating artefacts, instruments or tools as discussed by Vygotsky (1978) and, therefore, Local Coordinators had to familiarise themselves with the organisations early in their roles, along with the size and structure of their network.

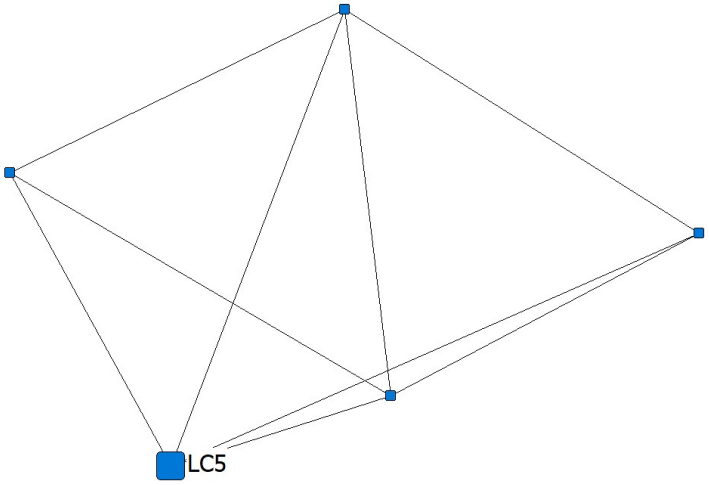


Figure 8.2- LC5-NI-1; associating

Although smaller networks, with fewer actors, had consequences in relation to the tools, or resources, available, some of the participants identified issues in relation to the larger networks.

> 'When there are so many different people involved, I think… the work becomes a lot more complicated and, like, takes longer to figure out.'
>
> (LC6-FG-1)

This quote from LC6 illustrates the complexities involved in integrating into larger networks. The more actors involved in a network, the more time it takes to familiarise yourself with the individuals and their relationships. Yet, as Local Coordinators became more embedded in their roles, the number of stakeholders, partners and organisations they worked with increased, expanding their collaborative networks. This can be illustrated in Figures 8.3 and 8.4, below. Figure 8.3 illustrates the network of LC3 in the first phase of data collection, in which there are seven other actors in the network, along with the Local Coordinator. By the time of the second network interview, and as they became more adept at integrating, LC3's network had expanded to include ten other actors along with the Local Coordinator, as seen in Figure 8.4. Both figures show the network at the first of interaction, associating (Himmelman, 2002).

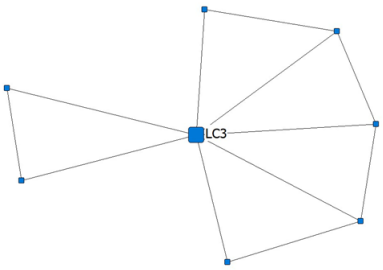


Figure 8.3- LC3-NI-1

8 Nodes, 12 Ties

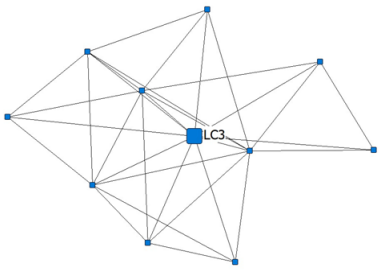


Figure 8.4- LC3-NI-2

11 Nodes, 32 Ties

As well as more members, networks also had more relationships, as illustrated in Figures 8.5 and 8.6 below. Figure 8.5 presents the network of LC4 from the first phase of data collection, at the third level of interaction, coordinating (Himmelman, 2002). At the same level, Figure 8.6 presents the network of LC4 in the second phase. In the first phase, in Figure 8.5, LC4 was in a network with eleven other actors, with 52 ties, or relationships, between them. Compare this to the network shown in Figure 8.6, illustrating the same Local

Coordinator at the same level of interaction, in the second phase of data generation. Here, the ego network has grown larger, with a total of 26 other actors working alongside the Local Coordinator. In this instance, the number of relationships, or ties, between these actors has also grown, from 52 ties in phase one, to 172 ties in phase two. This demonstrates that the more people involved in collaboration, and the more integrated the Local Coordinator became in the network, the more complex the work became.

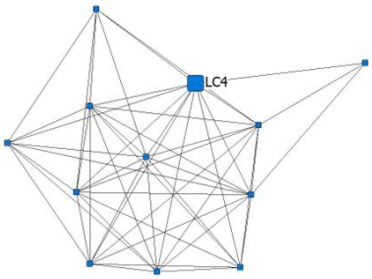


Figure 8.5- LC4-NI-1

12 Nodes, 52 Ties

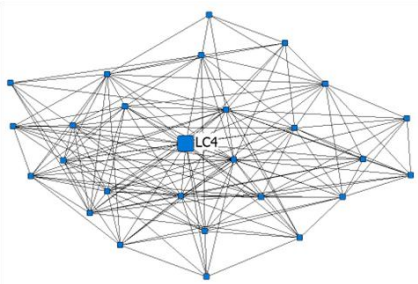


Figure 8.6- LC4-NI-2

27 Nodes, 172 Ties

Yet, despite these complexities, it was common amongst participants that their ego networks grew the more integrated they became. This could be indicative of the developing trust between network members, for, as Huxham and Vangen (2004: 194) argue, trust is rarely established from the outset but rather develops over time. Thomson and Perry (2006) develop this by claiming that trust is closely related to the concept of reciprocity, in which partners may only demonstrate willingness to collaborate if they see that same willingness in others. As partners interact and the collaborative relationships develop over time and with experience, this 'tit-for-tat reciprocity' may develop into stronger long-term commitments (Thomson and Perry, 2006:27). In the case of the Local Coordinators, this reciprocity and developing trust led to larger ego networks with more members. However, as the ego networks grew, relationships between network members also changed and developed as Local Coordinators then went on to reflect on additional factors they had to consider when surveying the collaborative network. For participants within large networks, for example, an important task was in identifying the sub-groups, or networks-within-networks (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

8.1.2: Networks within Networks

When reflecting on their collaborative networks, Local Coordinators within larger networks had to inventory the smaller social groups or cliques that were embedded within it, as LC6 described:

> 'I think what's been challenging about working in communities that are a bit larger, that have more players involved in the network, is that there are networks within the larger community network, and so we are tapped into certain of those that we kind of gained entry to at the beginning of the program. But we've been having to figure out if those are the most appropriate… smaller networks to be part of or if we need to join other ones or create our own.'
>
> (LC6-FG-1)

The concept of sub-groups, or networks-within-networks, is one of the major concerns for many network theorists, with many subgroup definitions and measures related to subgroups (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 249). Components, for example, are subgroups of nodes, all of whom are linked to every other through some path (Crossley et al., 2015: 12). This can be seen with the example below. Figure 8.7 illustrates the same ego network as in Figure 8.1, at a more complex level of interaction. Whereas Figure 8.1 illustrated a dense ego network at the most basic level of interaction, Figure 8.7 illustrates the same ego network at the more detailed stage of cooperation, in which actors share information, resources and alter activities to achieve a common purpose (Himmelman, 2002). As can be seen, what was a large, dense ego network initially, is split into several components. Three actors at this level of interaction, have no ties to any others. Each of these actors is a separate component, meaning there are five distinct components, or subgroups, in this instance.

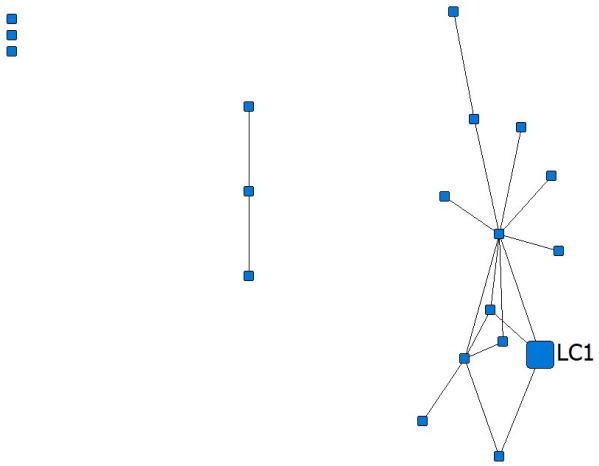


Figure 8.7: LC1-NI-1; cooperation

Yet, as LC6 described, the challenge lay in not only inventorying those subgroups but identifying which of those had the best 'collaborative fit' (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123). As Local Coordinators came into their roles, they were introduced to individuals and services within their respective areas that Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland had already started to form working relationships with. As LC6 demonstrates however, there remained some doubt as to whether these were the most effective relationships to be developing; a point picked up on by LC4:

> 'We were sort of given some relationships to maintain and carry forward and I don't think organically those are the relationships that would have formed.'
>
> (LC4-FG-1)

Whether maintaining existing relationships or attempting to forge new ones, an important aspect of surveying the larger network was when Local Coordinators had to inventory the sub-groups, or networks-within-networks that existed (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Furthermore, in seeking to understand their networks further, Local Coordinators also had to identify the individual actors with which their ego network consisted. Not only that, but they also had to consider which of those individuals may be the most influential.

8.1.3: Identifying Gatekeepers

Within social network analysis, influential actors are often identified as those with high centrality, who are often located in strategic positions within the network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 169). Take for example, the individual discussed by LC4, below:

> '… she historically has driven the network… She's held in fairly high regard.'
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

Within the network diagram in Figure 8.8 below, the individual LC4 describes is node, A, which can be seen to be one of the central figures. There are several measures of centrality; one of the simplest being the degree, or number of ties a node has to others. Node A, below, has a degree of 10, with ties to 10 other actors. Compare this to node B, who has a degree of 3 and the influence of A can begin to be seen. However, centrality is more than the number of ties an actor may have. If an actor lies along the shortest path between other actors, they are identified as having a large 'betweenness centrality' (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Borgatti et al., 2018). An actor reaches maximum betweenness if they are positioned along every shortest path between every pair of nodes (Borgatti et al., 2018: 201). Node A, below, has a betweenness centrality of 0.968, providing them with considerably more influence than node B, with a betweenness centrality of zero, indicating this actor is not along any shortest path between others.

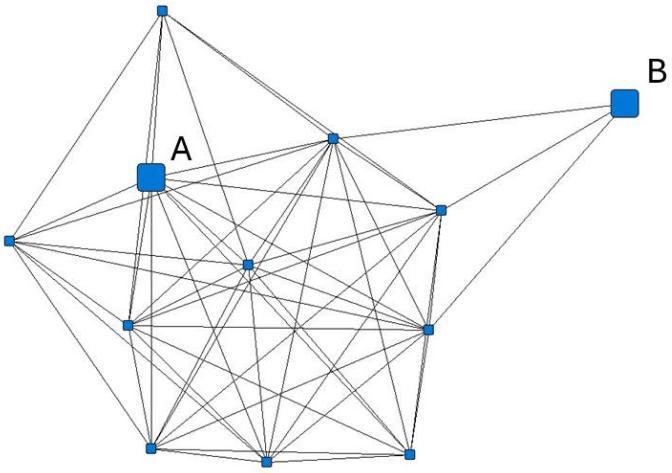


Figure 8.8: LC4-NI-1

The advantage of being positioned along shortest paths between others is the level of 'interpersonal influence' one can have (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 189), reflecting the concept of bridging social capital and providing opportunities for brokerage (Crossley et al,

2015: 35). As described by LC4, actor A had 'driven' the network, with the ego network diagrams demonstrating this influence.

However, consideration of the ego network data alone provided an incomplete picture of what was being described. Although actor A had been an influential, central figure within the network, LC4 went on to describe that this individual was seeking to step back from some of their responsibilities. Although there remained the possibility that this could harm the network given their influential role, by considering and reflecting on the division of labour, LC4 was able to anticipate the needs of the community and strengthen their own ties within the network. It became apparent that consideration of the ego network structure could only fully be understood in relation to the larger network culture (Crossley et al., 2015), with the Local Coordinator anticipating changes and developments and identifying potential areas for their own role to develop. Yet, before considering their own roles further, Local Coordinators had to account for other influential figures within their networks.

Although some individuals within a network can provide opportunities for brokerage and increase the flow of social capital (Crossley et al, 2015: 35), this is not always the case. As illustrated by LC4, below, some can demonstrate alternate behaviours.

> 'It comes through that certain people are in the network simply through association, but, like … there are other people who don't think they have a voice at the table. Or aren't actually welcomed on a network because of the gatekeepers to those networks. And I think being aware of that and making sure that you can manage that relationship with whoever the gatekeeper is, is important.'
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

Such an observation reflects the 'dark side of collaboration' (Chapman, 2019), as LC4 begins to describe the pretence of constructive association, before then recognising that some individuals (in this case, the gatekeepers) may be seeking to enhance their own authority, power or status, at the expense of others. For this reason, identification of these gatekeepers and centralised individuals was important for Local Coordinators, in order that they could anticipate problems and plan for change. This included being aware of any tensions or strained relationships within the network, along with any individual agendas.

As can be seen, reflecting on their ego networks was an important priority for Local Coordinators. The size of the ego network was an ongoing consideration. Although each Local Coordinator saw their ego networks grow and develop over time, they had to be careful that this did not add layers of complexity. When ego networks became too large, Local Coordinators began to inventory the sub-groups within them, seeking out those with the best 'collaborative fit' (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123). It was also important that the individuals within the network were accounted for, particularly those with influence. So, in summary, when seeking to obtain a position of influence within established networks, Local Coordinators had to engage in three main activities: surveying the size of the ego network, inventorying the subgroups and identifying the influential individuals. These three factors are illustrated in Figure 8.9 below:

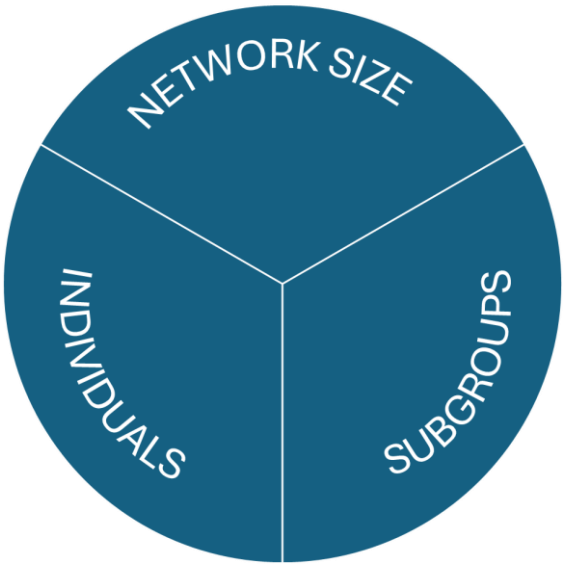


Figure 8.9: Network factors

These three factors related solely to the collaborative networks. Yet, Local Coordinators also had to regularly reflect on their own roles, as they sought to integrate into those networks. The following section will move on to identify how Local Coordinators understood their roles and the factors they had to consider when looking to integrate more fully into established networks.

8.2: The Role of Champions

Having 'looked outward' at their networks, surveying the sub-groups and identifying the influential individuals, Local Coordinators then had to consider how best to integrate into those networks and obtain a position of influence. Alongside developing a greater understanding of the networks, they also had to build relationships, establish an influential position and situate their own leadership, ensuring reach across all sub-groups. Additionally, they had to consider how best to influence the objectives of the network through setting an agenda, engaging relevant stakeholders and advocating for change.

8.2.1: The Ties That Bind

Having reflected on the larger network of actors, Local Coordinators had to consider the types of relationships they wished to develop with those collaborative partners, along with how they perceived the relationships between other network members. Such relationships can often be understood by exploring the cohesiveness of the networks, through such measures as network density. The density of the network is defined as the number of ties in the network as a proportion of all possible ties (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), or as a ratio of the number of ties present, to the maximum possible (Borgatti et al., 2018). In this study, the focus was on how Local Coordinators perceived the relationships between those other actors within the network. For example, re-visiting the network of LC1, in Figure 8.1 below, there are eighteen nodes or services. As LC1 reflected on the relationships they observed between these services, the density was measured as 0.971, demonstrating a dense network, in which social cohesion is high.

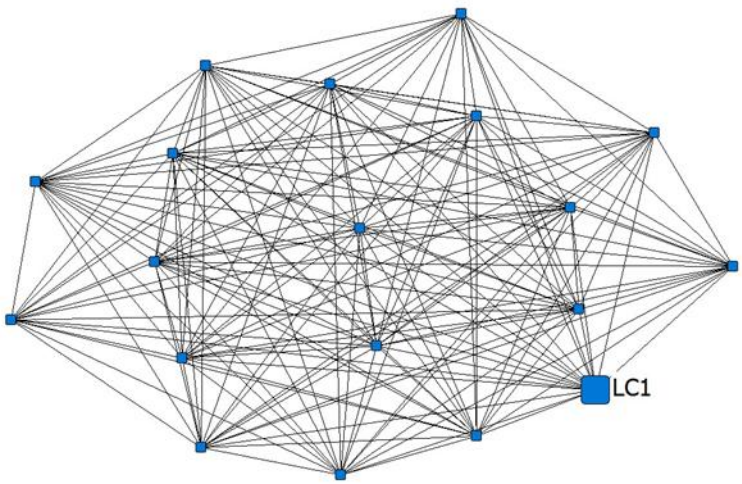


Figure 8.1- LC1-NI-1

Compare this to network of LC5, in Figure 8.2 below, in which there are only four other nodes, the size of the network is significantly smaller. Yet, with a density of 0.9, the way in which the Local Coordinator understood the interactions between these services is not so dissimilar, with almost every actor in direct contact with every other.

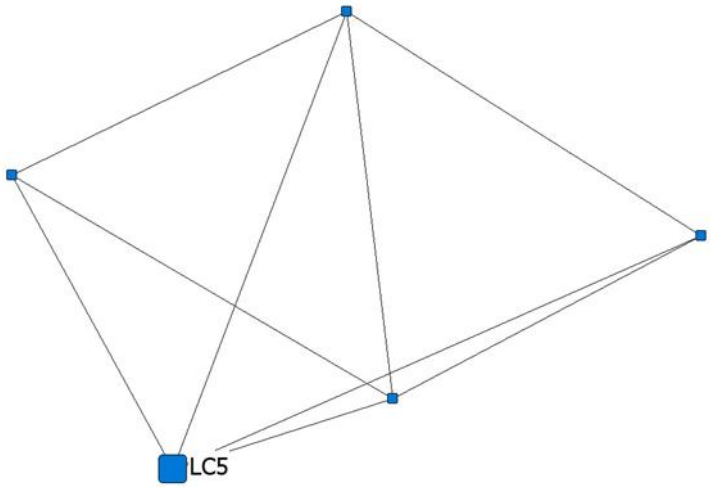


Figure 8.2- LC5-NI-1

Yet, as Local Coordinators spent more time building trust between network members (Huxham and Vangen, 2004; Thomson and Perry, 2006), and as new network members came onboard, the cohesiveness of the networks was impacted. As well as more members, networks also had more relationships, as illustrated when revisiting Figures 8.5 and 8.6 below. Figure 8.5 presents the ego network of LC4 from the first phase of data collection, at the third level of interaction, coordinating (Himmelman, 2002). At the same level, Figure 8.6 presents the ego network of LC4 in the second phase. In the first phase, in Figure 8.5, LC4 was in a network with eleven other actors. With 52 ties, or relationships, between these actors, and with an average degree of 8.667, the ego network at this phase is already complex, with many actors perceived to be in direct relation with most others. This is reflected in a density measure of 0.788, and a closure measure of 0.859, illustrating the cohesion or 'knittedness' of how the Local Coordinator perceived the network (Borgatti et al., 2018: 174).

Compare this to the ego network shown in Figure 8.6, illustrating the same Local Coordinator at the same level of interaction, in the second phase of data collection. Here, the ego network has grown larger, with a total of 26 other actors working alongside the

Local Coordinator. In this instance, the number of relationships, or ties, between these actors has also grown, from 52 ties in phase one, to 172 ties in phase two. Although when visually comparing the two maps it may appear that the second network is denser, this proves not to be the case. With an average degree of 12.741, the Local Coordinator did not perceive the actors in this network in as close contact as those from Figure 8.5. This is reflected in a density measure of 0.490, and a closure measure of 0.597, both of which demonstrate that, although larger, this ego network is not perceived to be as cohesive as that from phase one. Yet, this is perhaps not altogether surprising as Borgatti et al. (2018: 175) acknowledges that 'densities are almost always lower in large networks than in small networks.'

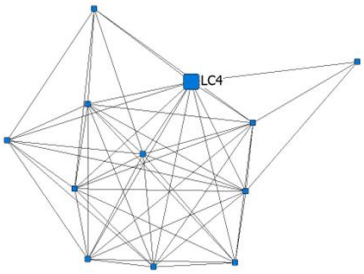


Figure 8.5- LC4-NI-1

12 Nodes, 52 Ties

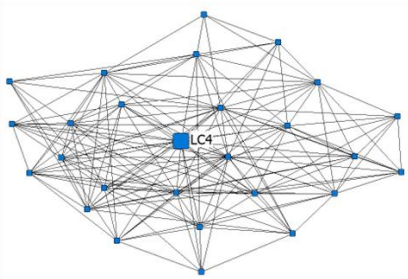


Figure 8.6- LC4-NI-2

27 Nodes, 172 Ties

In smaller networks it is generally easier to have ties to all other members, but as the network size increases, with more members coming on board, this becomes increasingly challenging. This was an issue identified by LC4:

> 'I think there's a sweet spot and I think most people miss it on the way up. But where you have the right amount of people and the right people around the table … and then it expands beyond that, and you spend more time trying to organise and facilitate the actual networks without them actually doing anything.'
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

As networks become larger, and correspondingly less dense, more time is also required to facilitate such networks. In recognising this, LC4 reflected on the importance of identifying the 'sweet spot', in which the network was neither too small nor too large. This reflects the previous observation from LC6 in which they argued that the larger the network, the more complex the work becomes. Also, as Kanavidou and Downey (2023) notes, actors in

networks with high densities may have fewer opportunities to develop relationships with external collaborators, limiting the opportunities available. To account for the changing relationships, Local Coordinators had to ensure that all network members were aligned, with activities coordinated towards a common goal (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). With less cohesive networks, Local Coordinators had to reflect on the strength of the collaborative relationships they formed.

8.2.2: Building Collaborative Relationships

The level of involvement described by LC4 above relates, not only to the Local Coordinators position within the network, but the strength of ties they sought to develop. Utilising the scale of interaction (repeated in Figure 8.10, below), Local Coordinators rated the strength of relationships of all pairs of actors that they perceived within the network. The strength of their own relationships, or ties, often impacted the resulting activities; an issue Local Coordinators seemed all too conscious of.

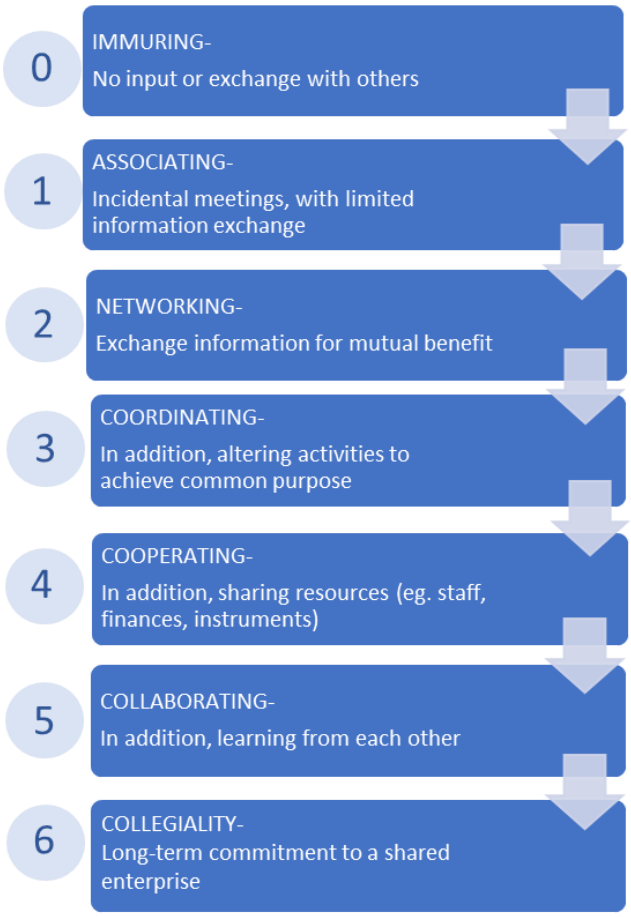


Figure 8.10: The Scale of Collaborative Interaction

Most Local Coordinators agreed that the later levels of interaction were not desirable. As LC3 described:

> ‘I don't know if we'll ever get to six because long term's... and five might be- well… I don't know. I think four is probably where most of the works going to get done.’
>
> (LC3-QI-2)

This was reflected within the related network diagrams, in Figures 8.11, 8.12 and 8.13, below. As the largest node, these diagrams illustrate the position of LC3 at three levels of interaction; level 1, associating; level 3, coordinating and level 6, collegiality. As can be seen in Figures 8.11 and 8.12, the Local Coordinators position within the network remained central at levels 1 and 3.

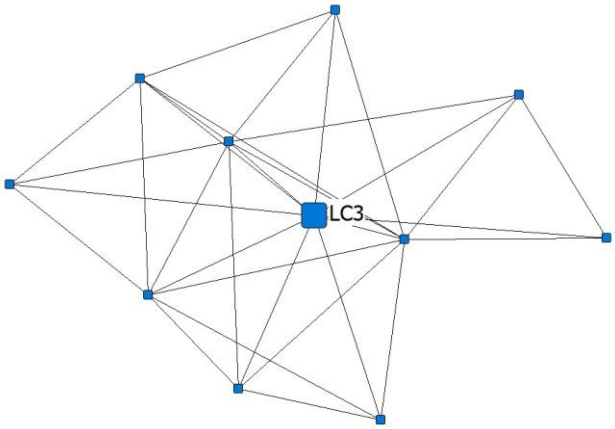


Figure 8.11: LC3-NI-2-Level 1, Associating

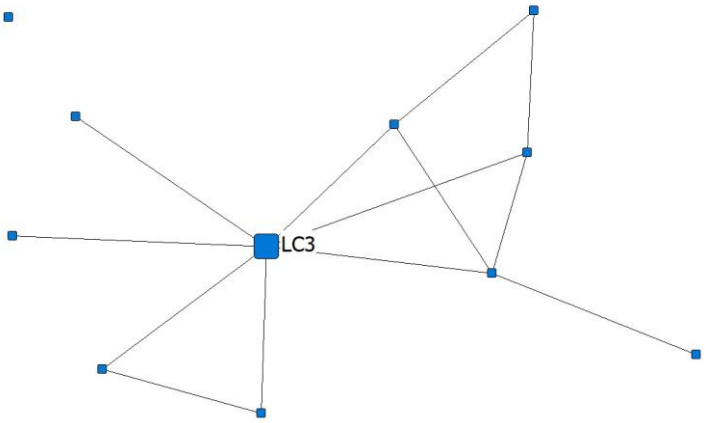


Figure 8.12: LC3-NI-2-Level 3, Coordinating

As the relationships became stronger, and more complex, the Local Coordinator became less central until, by level 6 they were one of seven isolates, with only two pairs working at this detailed level of interaction.

Figure 8.13: LC3-NI-2-Level 6, Collegiality

This pattern was one seen in other Local Coordinators network diagrams, as illustrated in Figures 8.14, 8.15 and 8.16, below.

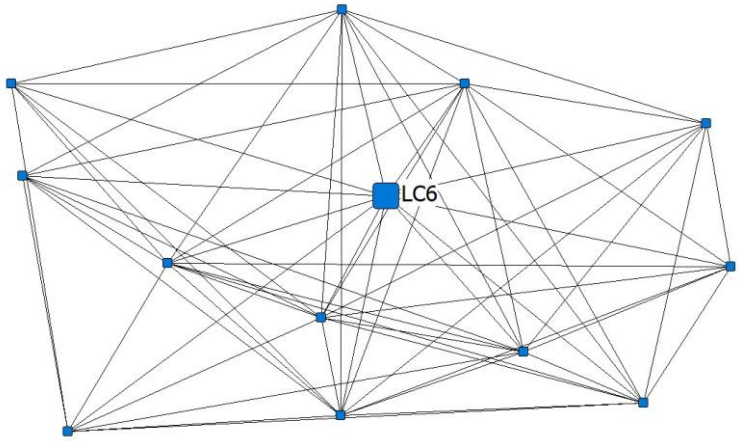


Figure 8.14: LC6-NI-2-Level 1, Associating

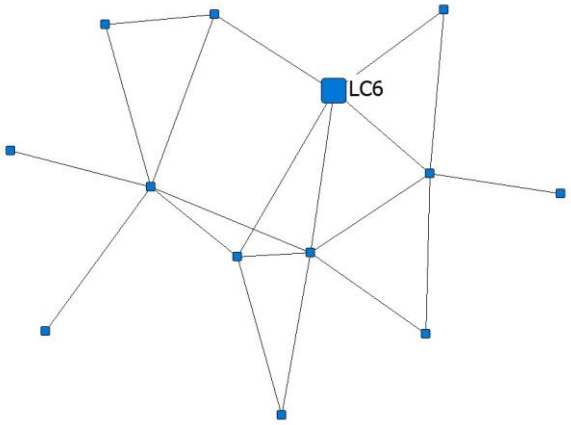


Figure 8.15: LC6-NI-2-Level 4, Cooperating

Figure 8.16: LC6-NI-2-Level 6, Collegiality

As the levels of interaction became more complex, LC6's position within the network became increasingly peripheral until, like LC3 previously, by the last level, they were one of several isolates. LC6 went on to explain:

> 'Realistically, this is probably the best place for me to be at this level… It's easier to have a lot more interaction kind of at the lower level, and then, as you go up it becomes trickier for those stronger relationships to be reinforced as much.'

(LC6-QI-2)

The reason for this 'trickiness' was further explained in the subsequent discussion group.

> 'Being in those middle levels of like facilitating connections, but not being the decision maker, or the figure of authority… I just don't think that's the remit of what we do. So that's kind of why I think that our most successful work happens at those

> levels where we are doing a lot of the connecting and bringing people together and not necessarily being the decision-making figure.'
>
> (LC6-FG-2)

As Influential Champions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012) and Adaptive Leaders (Heifetz et al., 2004), the Local Coordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland clearly understood their role in supporting and facilitating the networks, whilst not being a 'decision-making figure'. Yet, there was another advantage in judging their levels of interaction appropriately, as LC4 went on to describe:

> 'I think to be successful but impartial within the network, you have to remain at three or four because if you become too aligned to anyone at the sort of five and six level then you become involved in their local politics and the relationships involved there because you become a close associate of them as an individual or an organization.'
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

To appropriately support the community, LC4 recognised the importance of remaining impartial, rather than being too closely involved with any individual service provider. Maintaining weaker ties with a greater number of partners was seen to be more effective than stronger ties with fewer. As several Local Coordinators identified, it was the middle levels of interaction that were seen to be the most beneficial. This could be reflective of LC4s previous comment, that there is a 'sweet spot' to be found when making effective partnerships happen. These 'sweet spots' were generally to be found at those middle levels.

With a clear understanding and awareness of their role as facilitators, Local Coordinators positioned themselves strategically within their networks, being aware of their own position and the relationships they formed. As LC4 identified above, Local Coordinators had to remain impartial, building a broad number of relationships to best support the network and work towards collaborative improvement. However, another key feature in their roles was in identifying how best to provide that support and facilitation.

8.2.3: Positioning the Ego

Beyond the relationships that were formed, Local Coordinators had to reflect on their own position within their networks and establish where they would ideally position themselves. For example, in the ego network diagram in Figure 8.17 below, LC4 is situated on the periphery of the network. This is not altogether unexpected as new actors enter already established networks, in which relationships between others have already developed. Presented as the larger node, LC4 is not in a weak position within the network, with a degree centrality of 8 and a betweenness centrality of 1.3.

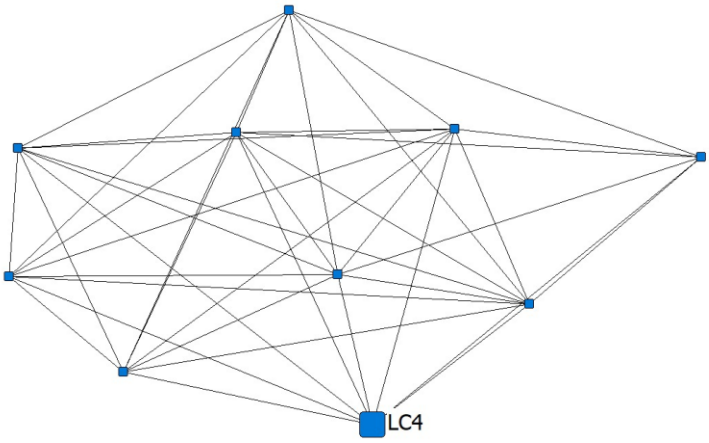


Figure 8.17: LC4-NI-1, with Ego

However, given the large centralities of others within the network, LC4 could be removed leaving the network essentially intact, as can be seen in Figure 8.18, below. With the removal of the Local Coordinator from the network, the structure remains very similar, although some nodes do now have weaker ties to the rest of the network. Nevertheless, the size and structure remain essentially unchanged, indicating that the Local Coordinator is not a required figure.

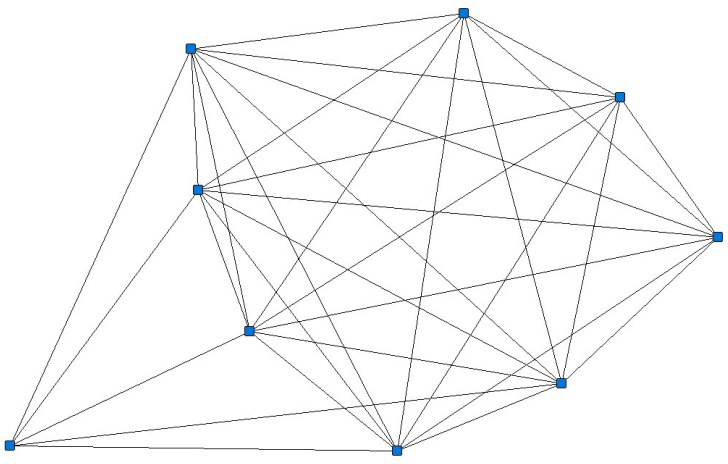


Figure 8.18: LC4-NI-1, with Ego removed

In comparison, the ego network diagram in Figure 8.19, below, demonstrates a more centralised presence within the network. Although the ego network is significantly smaller in size, the Local Coordinator is more fully embedded. With a degree centrality of 7, LC3 is in direct communication with every other actor in the network. However, with a betweenness centrality of 14.5, LC3 lies along the shortest path between many others, situating them in a position where brokerage can be levered (Borgatti et al., 2018).

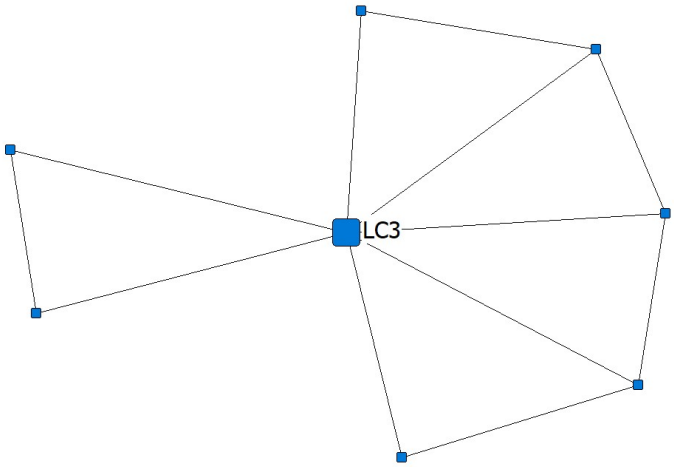


Figure 8.19: LC3-NI-1, with Ego

The importance of LC3 to this network can once again be illustrated by considering how the ego network might look with the Local Coordinator removed. This is presented in Figure 8.20, below. Without the Local Coordinator, the network fractures into two distinct components, limiting the interactions between actors. Even in considering the larger component, most actors are disadvantaged with the removal of the Local Coordinator. Those on either end of the larger component would now have to navigate through three other actors in order to interact; previously they would have only had to go through the Local Coordinator. It would initially appear that this puts the Local Coordinator in an advantageous position, with opportunities for brokerage (Crossley et al., 2015).

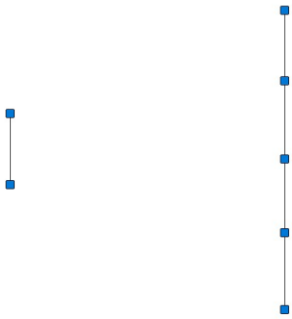


Figure 8.20: LC3-NI-1, with Ego removed

However, on reflecting on their own positions within their networks, Local Coordinators had to identify when they should be a central figure within the network and when they should remain on the periphery. This could fluctuate even within the one network, as LC4 describes:

> 'I do tend to just let things play out and then deal with smaller groups to make things happen afterwards. I'm really keen to not promise anyone anything in case I can't deliver it. So, I try and sort of sit out of the big discussions and then once something's been planned, I say, right, how do we do it.'

(LC4-QI-2)

This approach was evidenced in the related ego network diagrams, as the Local Coordinators position changed as the network became smaller in the more detailed levels of interaction. Figure 8.21, below, illustrates the position of LC4 in the network at the second stage of interaction, networking, in which partners exchange information for mutual benefit (Himmelman, 2002; Chapman, 2019). This network is made up of 26 other actors (excluding the Local Coordinator), with a total of 307 ties, or relationships, between them. With an average degree of 22.741 and a density measure of 0.875, the ego network at this level of interaction appears very cohesive. In such a large, dense network, the Local Coordinator (highlighted as the largest node in the network map) lies on the periphery. Although being only one of two with ties to all other network members, with a degree of 26, LC4 also has the lowest closeness centrality, or the sum of the shortest paths between themselves and others.

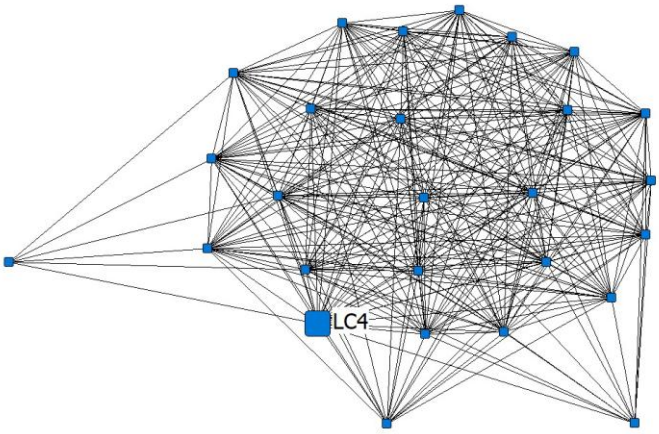


Figure 8.21- LC4-NI-2; networking

Compare this to the network diagram in Figure 8.22 below, showing the same ego network, with the same actors, at a later level of interaction, level four, cooperation, in which activities are altered towards a common purpose and resources shared (Himmelman, 2002; Chapman, 2019). At this level of interaction, two actors have dropped out the network, becoming isolates, leaving a main component made up of 24 actors, excluding the Local Coordinator. With 66 relationships, or ties, between actors, the average degree is only 4.889. Combined with a density of 0.188, the network at this level of interaction can be seen to be far less cohesive. The Local Coordinator however plays a far more central figure. With a degree of 11, LC4 has the second highest number of ties to other actors in the network. Although closeness centrality can be problematic in disconnected networks, such as the one above, other centrality measures also reflect LC4s position (Borgatti et al., 2018).

Betweenness centrality, for example, is a measure of how often a given node sits along the shortest path between others and is often seen in relation to the potential for controlling flows through networks, such as the flow of capital (Borgatti et al., 2018). With a betweenness centrality of 32.419, LC4 demonstrated significant ‘interpersonal influence’ in comparison to most others in the network (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). This was also reflected in their eigenvector centrality measure, which considers not only the number of adjacent nodes, but accounts for each of those node’s centralities. In this instance, LC4 had an eigenvector centrality of 0.950, evidencing that, although not having ties to all network members, the ties they had were to other central figures within the network, again demonstrating their strong ‘interpersonal influence’ (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

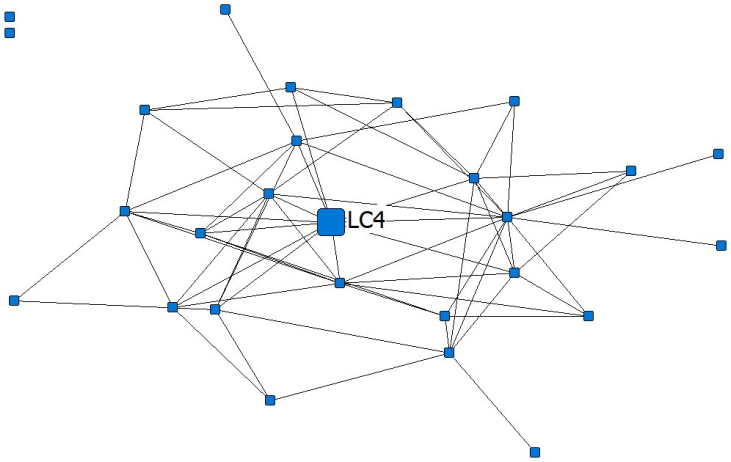


Figure 8.22- LC4-NI-2; cooperation

Reflecting on their changing position within the network, be it central or peripheral, LC4 later stated:

> 'I organize, facilitate the planning group, facilitate the wider network thing. But I don't take a leadership role in the terms of dictating the work of the network or of the direction of the network… I think you can be both. I think you need to be integral to the work that's going on to really influence it. But I don't think that has to be the same as being central.'

(LC4-FG-2)

Here, LC4 defined centrality in terms of supporting and facilitating the network but distinguished this from setting the objectives or aims. The themes LC4 identified reflect those discussed by LC6 previously. As much as LC4, when discussing their position within their network, distinguished between being a central figure in terms of facilitating the network, but peripheral when setting the agenda, LC6 similarly observed that such a balance also impacts the strength of the relationships formed. This is reflective of the Adaptive Leaders described by Heifetz et al. (2004) and a key feature of the role of the Influential Champion (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). The ways in which Local Coordinators understood their own leadership role will be discussed later in the chapter. However, how they chose to position themselves within their collaborative networks was also influenced by uncertainty relating to the tools, or resources available, as LC4 explained:

> ‘It’s trying to find that balance and get people on side but also manage the fact that you might pull out in a year and a half…It’s like trying to strike a balance for there being work for you still to do, but also for the people not being reliant on you. And that’s the hardest part- probably the hardest part of the job.’
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

The need to plan for their own absence from the project invariably related to the funding position, not just of the Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland initiative, but the role of the Local Coordinator more specifically. With relatively short-term funding available, Local Coordinators had to plan for their own withdrawal or removal from the project. As one Local Coordinator stated:

> ‘All the rhetoric around like sustainable communities… and all the rest of it, it’s like a complete hypocrisy because there’s no sustainable funding.’
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

As will be discussed in the following chapter, this funding uncertainty impacted other features of the network, including the relationships that could be established. But, even when attempting to obtain a position of influence within these larger networks of services, Local Coordinators had to plan that they may not be there for any sustained period of time. Despite this apparent conflict and contradiction in their activity systems, between the resources, or tools available and the objectives that could be set, by taking account of this discrepancy, Local Coordinators were able to consider the future division of labour when planning collaborative activities (Engeström, 2001).

By taking account of their own role and position within their networks, Local Coordinators were more able to effectively plan for their own absence. Given such uncertainties, many Local Coordinators, when reflecting on the position they would like to be in the network, rarely saw themselves as central, recognising that the collaborative networks may continue without them. The disparity between attempting to establish themselves in a network, or in some instances, attempting to establish a network, whilst also planning for their own absence led Local Coordinators to consider how best to initiate change in what could be a potentially short period of time. This led to questions around their own professional

identities, their roles as Local Coordinators and how they understood their own leadership potential.

8.2.4: Leading From Within

Understanding, and explaining their own role to other network members initially proved to be a challenge for some participants.

> 'One of the things that I still struggle with a little bit is when people say, what is it you do… It's taken quite a long time for me to have confidence to be able to answer that question.'
>
> (LC5-FG-1)

> 'I totally agree. It was a challenge initially to- yeah, what do you do, when you don't know what you do and in reality, at that point, you've done nothing… You sound like charlatans.'
>
> (LC4-FG-1)

This lack of clarity in relation to the role of the Local Coordinator was further reflected with the language used. Participants reported that terms such as 'children's neighbourhood', 'place-based approach' or 'collective impact' were overly complex, requiring further explanation and unpacking. As a tool, language is arguably one of the most important elements of an activity system, enabling the effective interactions between others (Vygotsky, 1978). In this instance however, the language adopted proved to be a barrier to effective introductions with network members. For this reason, several Local Coordinators opted for a task-based approach to relationships development. Choosing to develop relationships by focusing on such activities, LC3 explained:

> 'The more I can do… the more I'll be known and the more I'll get to meet people…. People trust you a lot more if you're seen to do rather than talk.'
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

With a focus on 'making things happen' (Huxham and Vangen, 2004: 198), LC3 aimed to demonstrate transparency between their values and actions, reflective of an authentic

leadership approach (Coleman, 2011; Carroll and Orr, 2023). In doing so, they sought to develop trust between themselves and fellow network members (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017).

As understandings of the role of the Local Coordinator developed, they began to focus on providing the local services and organisations the assistance needed to establish and maintain an effective network of provision. This is in keeping with Kania and Kramer's (2011) original concept of collective impact and, specifically, the importance of a backbone organisation. It was commonly agreed amongst Local Coordinators that a third party was needed to develop the network, due in no small part to the constraints on other network members.

> 'There has to be a glue. It doesn't necessarily need to be us, but there has to be something that keeps them together, because otherwise they just do their own thing.'
>
> (LC3-QI-2)

This was an issue experienced by LC6, who explained:

> 'So, there are a lot of different members in that group, but I think there's been reluctance for any of them to kind of, like, step up and take on that more organizational role. So, I'm filling that gap right now, I'd say.'
>
> (LC6-QI-2)

Such an approach demonstrates Local Coordinators awareness of the needs of the community. If services are expected to form effective communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002), support is required in relation to the organizational aspects of such network approaches. In recognising the ways in which constraints on network members limited their engagement with network activities (Nowell and Harrison, 2010), Local Coordinators demonstrated constitutive leadership through understanding the contexts within which members operated (Coleman, 2011). This is also reflective of the role of the 'reticulist', as Local Coordinators identified the constraints that influenced individual and collective behaviours (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002b). In such instances, the Local Coordinator, as the subject within the activity system, supported the community through the division of labour, making it easier to work towards the objective of collaborative engagement.

A related feature in their role as Local Coordinator, and one already touched upon, related to the increasing size of the network and the importance of inviting new network members. However, rather than only expanding the network it was important that participants identified the most appropriate partners, as LC7 described:

> 'We're not the experts in every single thing that children and young people want to develop or change, you know. So, I think the powerful thing about our role is bringing the people to the forefront that can actually help make these changes.'

(LC7-FG-2)

Again, this reflects the role of the 'reticulist', as Local Coordinators sought new network members based on similar interests and goals (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002b). In some instances, this was an area in which participants could draw on their own connections, ones from within other activity systems, as LC4 describes below:

> 'There was a small planning group of like eight people that I was invited on to, which is where I met some of the people … so actually that was really useful.'

(LC4-QI-2)

In the example above, the interactions with the community led to favourable outcomes and subsequently impacted other activity systems. Utilizing existing ties to establish new relationships, expanding their own networks, was an approach also taken by others, as LC6 describes:

> 'I think I'll probably start with the people that already know my name and face a little bit.'

(LC6-QI-2)

Starting with those connections already established, Local Coordinators developed their collaborative networks to achieve the larger objective. In doing so, the focus turned to political leadership, as Local Coordinators prioritised the development of strategic relationships, drawing on their interpersonal skills (Coleman, 2011). This was further evidenced as LC6 reflected on the connections they would need to make going forward.

Having established that the local children and young people did not feel safe in their neighbourhood, and had poor relations with the police, they went on to state:

> ‘So, this is something that's come up across multiple groups and an area where, as you can see from my networks, I don't have strong links to community policing. So, that's something that I want to reach out to a bit more over the next couple of months.’

(LC6-QI-2)

Ensuring the right partners were round the table required Local Coordinators to expand their original networks to address local needs. Such an approach reflects the role of the network leader, as described by Hadfield and Chapman (2011), in which expertise or network gaps are identified, before action is taken to address those gaps. This aspect of network leadership was also recognised by LC3, who went on to state:

> ‘As well as the youth engagement, I think we should be joining up opportunities.’

(LC3-QI-1)

The ability to ‘join up opportunities’ can be seen with the following ego network diagram, in Figure 8.23, below. Within this ego network, eight actors, including LC3, form one component.

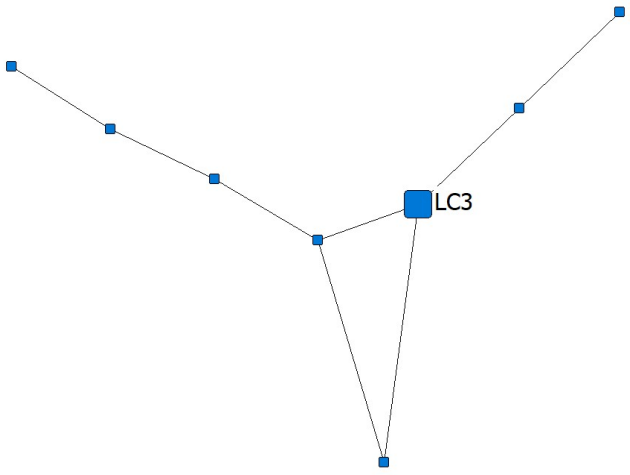


Figure 8.23: LC3-NI-1

Yet, when LC3 is removed from the network, relationships become more fragmented, as can be seen in Figure 8.24, below.

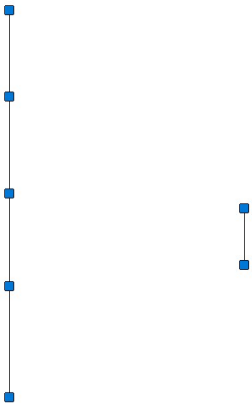


Figure 8.24: LC3-NI-1, with Ego removed

Without the Local Coordinator, the network fractures into two components, one of five actors and one of two. By drawing these components together, LC3 found themselves in a position of brokerage, providing opportunities for the network to draw on a larger pool of resources and social capital and demonstrating network leadership (Hadfield and Chapman, 2011).

In their role as Influential Champions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), Local Coordinators demonstrated a multitude of leadership styles and behaviours. Yet, a central feature of leadership is the concept of vision, along with the ability to secure members commitment to work together towards that vision (Bush, 2003; Giltinane, 2013). It was important, therefore, that Local Coordinators had a clear understanding of the objectives they wished to establish, with an awareness of the larger contexts in which to develop positive visions for the future (Senge et al., 2015). Through understanding the cultural and relational contexts in which their collaborative networks were situated (Chapman et al., 2017), Local Coordinators had to regularly reflect on the vision, aims and objectives that could be established.

8.3: Championing for Change

The initial aim of the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme was to improve outcomes for children and young people living in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty, addressing inequalities in areas such as education, health, and housing, by developing and applying evidence-based approaches within a Scottish context (CNS, online).

Identifying the priorities distinctive to each area, Local Coordinators were tasked with developing local solutions and context-specific responses, supporting partnerships and developing collaboration across services (CNS, online). Being contextually and demographically different, each neighbourhood presented unique challenges for Local Coordinators, as they aimed to enable and facilitate collaboration between local organisations.

However, utilising a capabilities approach to service delivery, Local Coordinators took this further, aiming to engage directly with the children, young people and families within local areas in co-developing and co-producing the delivery of services. Given that many children in Scotland continue to feel that their views are not respected, particularly in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty (Scottish Government, online b), Local Coordinators aimed to develop local solutions with an underpinning focus on the rights of the child (UNCRC, 1989). This was an aspect of their roles that participants seemed united on.

> 'The core business of CNS is youth participation. Youth participation at a community level.'
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

However, before supporting youth participation, participants first had to identify the priorities distinctive to each area in order to establish clear objectives. This was to prove more challenging than originally planned.

8.3.1: Establishing the Objective

Given the increasing size of networks, Local Coordinators had to mitigate the risks associated with less cohesive networks by developing the ties, or relationships within their networks. With this aim in mind, it was important to identify a common agenda between network members. Initially, several Local Coordinators sought out those with a similar focus on youth participation. As LC3 observed:

> 'A number of diverse organizations are seeking youth advisory groups.'
>
> (LC3-QI-2)

In recognising this, LC3 was able to approach such organisations and offer support. Through identifying an initial common objective with network members, LC3 was able to develop their ties to the community, thereby strengthening their activity system. The establishment of this initial objective reflected the common value-base and moral imperative between network members (Fullan, 2008), which was then able to be developed into a more coherent vision (Clark, 1994).

From the broad, shared aims, LC3 was then able to more effectively engage with network members, and, in doing so, secure their commitment to the larger vision (Giltinane, 2013). From here, they were then able to identify specific projects and activities network members were engaged in and in which they could offer support. Working with others towards specific objectives enabled LC3 to develop relationships and strengthen ties with individual network members.

> ‘And you know it was such a pleasure working on that together, phoning each other, right, have you done this, have you done that. Emailing basically saying I’m doing this, I'm doing that. It was just lovely. It's the way it should be, you know…. You’re all doing it for the same reasons.‘
>
> (LC3-QI-2)

Working towards a common objective, and with a clear division of labour, the Local Coordinator was able to work with network members, not only achieving tangible outcomes, but developing the relationships and ties within their own professional networks. Through their common value-base and moral purpose (Fullan, 2008), LC3 was able to provide authentic leadership by supporting network members and demonstrating transparency between their values and actions, thereby establishing trust within the network (Coleman, 2011; Fry and Whittington, 2005).

Identifying the shared objective of youth participation with other stakeholders was also reflected within other Local Coordinators experiences.

> ‘You know, I'm kind of, like, pushing for this, but I think they also want it too, to incorporate the views of kids and young people… I could also tell, like, the people in

> the area who either had more time or felt that their goals were more aligned to CNS were easier to communicate back and forth with.'
>
> (LC6-QI-2)

In this instance, the Local Coordinator was able to identify those stakeholders with the best 'collaborative fit' (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123) based on their shared interest. The establishment of a common agenda is one of the primary conditions of the collective impact approach, with network members sharing a vision for change (Kania and Kramer, 2011). However, identifying a common agenda or shared interest was only one approach to developing networks and relationships, as LC4 explains:

> 'It just has to be common ground between you as humans and that creates more pro-active relationships, I think. So, whether it's music or sport, or community development or food or whatever it is. It's just about finding that common ground that links you ... then turn that into something a bit more productive.'
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

For LC4 the focus was in identifying commonalities between themselves and network members, with a greater focus on developing relationships with the community, than on specific objectives. This is reflective of the argument put forward by Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Wood and Gray (1991), who state that network members can have common or differing interests, especially at the beginning of a collaborative venture, but that these interests will inevitably develop and align as the relationships develop. In this sense, even the objectives of the collaborative network may be emergent, manifesting and developing throughout the process of collaboration (Himmelman, 2002; D'Amour et al., 2005). As was previously established with the developing trust between network members, similarly, objectives may not be clearly established from the outset but rather develop over time (Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

In their role as Adaptive Leaders and Influential Champions (Heifetz et al., 2004; Hanleybrown et al., 2012), Local Coordinators had to recognise and manage these emergent factors, whilst seeking to develop the communities of interest (Fischer, 2001). In doing so, they aimed to expand the size of their networks, bringing new members onboard, whilst

also being conscious of the impact and challenges this may bring. Some of these challenges were evident in the relationships and ties between network members. As is commonly recognised, 'densities are almost always lower in large networks than in small networks' (Borgatti et al., 2018: 175). The larger the network, the weaker the ties. To account for this, Local Coordinators embraced the emergent nature of properties, such as trust and objectives, allowing these to develop over time.

With a common focus on youth participation, Local Coordinators were able to identify new network members, and stakeholders with a similar focus. However, as Local Coordinators were soon to realise, what initially appeared as a simple objective, proved far more challenging than anticipated.

8.3.2: The Challenges of Engagement

To represent children and young people, Local Coordinators first had to engage them. This proved challenging as school buildings remained shut and classes moved to online, due to the lockdown restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges not only impacted the relationships between Local Coordinators and the other services within the area (as will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter), but also the opportunities with which to engage the local children and young people. Due to these limitations, Local Coordinators were faced with the decision of starting a change initiative without the input of local children and young people or wait until restrictions had eased.

> 'I guess I'm cautious. I don't want to just, for example, restart a youth club if the reason that it stopped was that all the kids were, like, it's boring, you know. You want to make sure that whatever we're adding is the right thing.'
>
> (LC5-QI-1)

In some instances, Local Coordinators were able to engage with local children and young people online, facilitated by their school. In one example, the Local Coordinator was able to lead workshops with children in primaries 6 and 7, asking their thoughts on their community, considering what was good in the area and what the challenges were.

> 'We're in (the local) primary remotely and I've been doing workshops, with the P6 and 7s about community; what the best things in our community are, what

challenges there are in the community, and then we come up with a group agreement to try and tackle some of those issues.'

(LC4-QI-1)

As well as helping to establish relationships with the local children and young people, these workshops provided an early insight into possible priority areas for development, helping establish preliminary objectives. In this example, the Local Coordinator was able to adapt to the new rules of the activity system by considering alternative tools with which to engage the community and establish clear objectives. It was only through effective communication strategies that community members were able to enhance connections, demonstrating the network leadership capabilities of LC4 (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017).

As the situation developed, and as lockdown restrictions began to ease, other Local Coordinators began to consider alternative ways with which to engage the local CYP.

'My thinking right now is to run tasters. Then off the back of that get some feedback and then start building up these things with young people running it, calling the shots, saying what it is that they want.'

(LC5-QI-1)

In aiming to engage the community of children and young people, LC5 aspired to support them in establishing the rules, objectives and division of labour of their activity system. Through engaging them in activities, either online or face-to-face, Local Coordinators were seeking the multiple voices of the local children and young people to establish a greater presence within their respective communities. One thing that participants seemed to agree on was their own role in facilitating that process.

'It would be good to have a group that could challenge things and whatever, but I'll just wait and see if they come to that conclusion themselves and then we'll see where we go with that.'

(LC4-QI-1)

As illustrated by LC4, Local Coordinators were aware of their own role, as subjects within the activity systems, and shared a determination that their own aims and objectives did not

influence the direction the community wished to go in. The common feature was that Local Coordinators felt their role was to facilitate and support the voice of local children and young people to initiate and influence change within their communities. In this way, these network leaders overcame barriers to facilitate discussion, helping local children and young people share knowledge and ideas, creating space for innovation and leveraging the potential within the local networks (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017).

8.3.3: Advocating for Change

Identifying youth participation as a key priority led several participants to approach established community networks in their role as advocates. In such instances, engagement with local children and young people had not been previously considered, as LC4 describes:

> 'So, (the network) was already happening and I just sort of went along and said, 'What about the children and young people? Like, this is meant to be for the community', and everybody was sort of like, 'Aw, shit!'
>
> (LC4-QI-2)

Recognising that they had not been consulting children and young people, the network altered its approach to consulting the community and, with the support of the Local Coordinator, began work in this area. Here, the relationship was formed, not by a common aim, but through the Local Coordinators role as advocate. Initiating the discussion led to more inclusive aims for that individual network, whilst drawing them into the larger professional network of the Local Coordinator. This was an experience familiar to other Local Coordinators, with LC5 recounting a similar experience of developing their network by approaching services and organisations as an advocate for children and young people.

> 'It wasn't even that they'd realized that was a weakness themselves, but I think they'd always just discounted working directly with children and not even considered that, because they knew their limitations. So, when you open up that possibility of, like, well, we could consult with kids here, they suddenly were really excited about it, and it gave them a lot of new potential. So, I think that's been really positive for them.'
>
> (LC5-FG-2)

As both LC4 and LC5 identified, advocating on behalf of children and young people can lead to positive outcomes, as more stakeholders align their aims and work, leading to positive outcomes. By offering to support such services in their engagement with children and young people, participants embedded themselves further into their networks and communities as relationships formed and strengthened. This required a political leadership approach, with Local Coordinators demonstrating awareness of the policy agendas and strategic relationships of local collaborative partners (Coleman, 2011). Adopting such a leadership approach, Local Coordinators increased the size of their networks, bringing more actors onboard, whilst also developing the cohesiveness of those networks by strengthening the ties between actors (Borgatti et al., 2018).

In summary, as Local Coordinators reflected on their position within their networks, often seeing a peripheral position more advantageous than a central one, they were as equally strategic in the strength of ties formed. Although often not seeing themselves as central figures within the network, nevertheless, Local Coordinators demonstrated a variety of leadership styles and behaviours. This was evident not only in their commitment to youth participation and in their engagement with children and young people, but in their developing role as advocates.

When reflecting on their own role within their collaborative networks, Local Coordinators focussed on three key factors, building relationships with network members, situating their own leadership approach and influencing the objectives they hoped to establish within the network. These are illustrated in Figure 8.25, below:

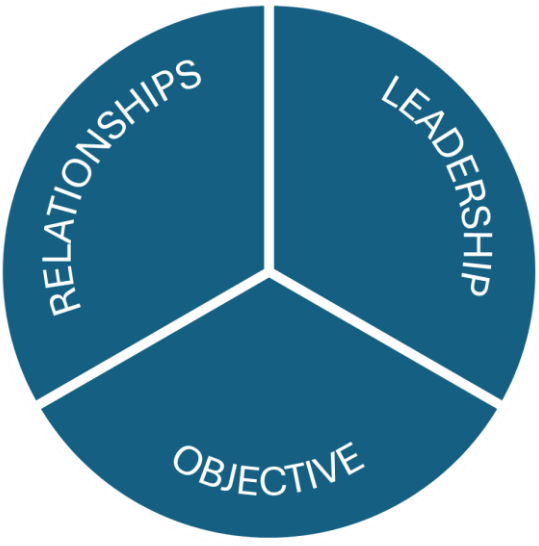


Figure 8.25: The Role of the Network Leader

As the size of their networks developed, and consequently the densities within those networks decreased (Borgatti et al., 2018), Local Coordinators aimed to account for this by focussing on the strength of relationships they formed. Whilst recognising their role in supporting and facilitating the networks, Local Coordinators were careful not to align too closely to any one partner, nor to become a 'decision-making figure' (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Such concerns led them to reflect on their own role within the network, and just how central a figure they should be. Understanding the larger contexts of their networks, Local Coordinators demonstrated a variety of leadership styles, as they developed their understanding of the objectives they wished to establish (Senge et al., 2015).

8.4: Summary

This chapter introduced the primary themes that Local Coordinators reflected on when seeking to establish themselves within collaborative networks. These themes essentially related to the factors they had to think about in relation to the network itself, along with the factors they had to consider relating to their own role. Seeking to develop collaborative partnerships between diverse stakeholders (Brandsen and van Hout, 2006), Local Coordinators first had to survey the networks, learning the size of the networks they were entering into or establishing, as this impacted the capital available (Crossley et al., 2015). Although identifying the challenges that came with large networks, nevertheless, Local Coordinators invariably found the size of their networks increasing over time.

As networks grew, Local Coordinators found themselves focussing more on inventorying the sub-groups, or networks-within-networks', seeking those with the greatest 'collaborative fit (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Gitlin et al., 1994). At the same time, they also had to identify which individuals within the network may be the most influential. The focus here was on identifying those with the greatest levels of 'interpersonal influence' (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 189), however they also had to account for those seeking to enhance their own authority, power or status, at the expense of others (Chapman, 2019). In summary, when entering networks, Local Coordinators focussed on three key features: the size of the network, the subgroups within it and the influential individuals.

This led to consideration of how best to integrate into those networks, with Local Coordinators firstly reflecting on the cohesiveness and density as they sought to build relationships with network members. As networks grew in size, ties between network members lessened, with densities in larger networks commonly lower than in smaller networks (Borgatti et al., 2018). With less cohesive networks, Local Coordinators had to reflect on the strength of the collaborative relationships they formed. Careful not to align too closely to any one partner, nor to be seen as the 'decision-making figure', these relationships were invariably influenced by the ways in which Local Coordinators situated their own leadership within the network. Although frequently reluctant to be seen as a central figure, nevertheless, Local Coordinators demonstrated a variety of leadership styles and behaviours in their role as Influential Champions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

As part of this, another key feature that was regularly reflected upon lay in the objectives they wished to establish and prioritise. Although working in contextually and demographically different areas, Local Coordinators were aligned in their focus on youth participation. With such a focus, they were then able to identify specific projects and activities network members were engaged in which reflected the common value-base and moral imperative and, in doing so, set a clear agenda for network members (Fullan, 2008). This then led to engaging local children and young people, before then developing their role as advocates, adopting leadership styles and behaviours that demonstrated awareness of the policy agendas and strategic relationships of local collaborative partners (Coleman, 2011). In summary, Local Coordinators focussed on building relationships, situating their own leadership and influencing the objectives of the collaborative networks.

In drawing together the three themes Local Coordinators reflected on when surveying their networks, along with the factors they considered when integrating and influencing those networks, a model of collaborative action begins to develop, as can be seen in Figure 8.26, below:

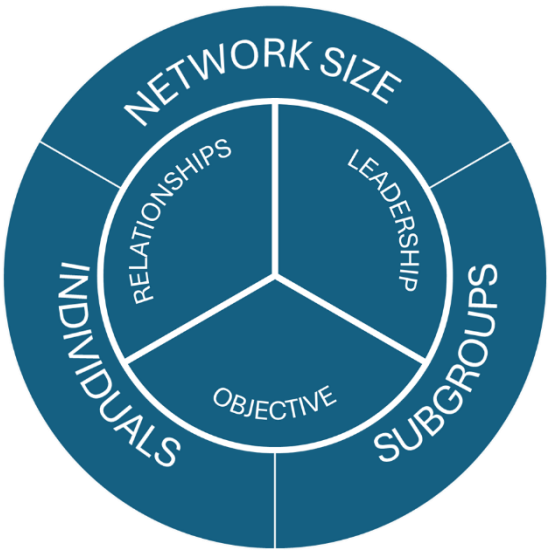


Figure 8.26: Collaborative networks and the network leader

When surveying the network, Local Coordinators had to learn the network size, inventory the subgroups and identify influential individuals that made up those networks. At the same time, in seeking to integrate into those networks, Local Coordinators had to build relationships with network members, situate their own leadership approach and influence the objectives they hoped to establish within the network. Yet, beyond these six interrelated elements, several other factors had to be accounted for. In recognising that these networks did not operate in isolation, it was important to reflect on some of the factors that were external to the network and those within it.

The following chapter will explore these factors in greater detail, developing the model of collaborative action that has been built up throughout this chapter. Taking account of aspects such as time constraints and availability of resources, the chapter will go on to identify what else Local Coordinators had to consider when seeking to develop collective impact with collaborative action (Kania and Kramer, 2011).

Chapter 9

Beyond the Network

Having analysed and discussed the factors that Local Coordinators had to account for within their collaborative networks, this chapter will go on to identify and analyse those factors that lay beyond the network, yet still influenced the collaborative process. Being conscious of their position and relationships with other network members, Local Coordinators had to understand the contextual factors that influenced the network, including reflecting on past events and the history of the network. Furthermore, Local Coordinators also had to navigate additional constraints, such as tracking the resources available and negotiating tensions within the network. These themes are illustrated in Table 9.1, below:

Understand the Context	**Reflect on Past Events**
	Identify Future Outcomes
Navigate Constraints	**Track Resources**
	Negotiate Tensions

Table 9.1: Themes beyond the network and related categories

The chapter will begin by discussing the ways in which Local Coordinators had to identify and understand the context within which the collaborative network was situated. This included looking back at past events that had shaped network relations, as well as looking ahead to consider all potential outcomes of the collaborative activity. Just as one of the foundational principles underpinning Cultural Historical Activity Theory relates to the history of the activity system, similarly one key feature that Local Coordinators had to reflect on was the history of their networks. The chapter will examine how such historical factors influenced network relationships, adding another level of complexity in relation to the network culture (Crossley et al., 2015).

Although Local Coordinators found it important to look back at the history of the network, they also identified the importance of looking forward, to consider the potential outcomes of the collaborative activity. The chapter will move on to discuss how Local Coordinators identified such outcomes, beginning with the immediate outcomes and 'early wins'

(Hanleybrown et al., 2012). This will be developed as the chapter considers the importance of intangible outcomes, such as the development of trust and relationships, as these are often the genuine source of collaborative success (Itami, 1987). This will be followed by describing the ways in which Local Coordinators aimed to avoid collaborative inertia (Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

From here the chapter will move on to identify two key additional factors that Local Coordinators had to navigate, beginning with tracking the resources they had available to them. Access to certain resources, or the lack of them, impacted network members and the relationships between them, with Local Coordinators identifying ways to leverage such circumstances to best support the network, developing relationships and further embedding their own role as Influential Champions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). The chapter will conclude by discussing some of the additional constraints and tensions that Local Coordinators had to navigate, both within the network and beyond. By reflecting on such tensions, Local Coordinators were better able to mitigate them, leading to expansive transformation of the networks and activity systems (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). Throughout the chapter, the model of reflection introduced in the previous chapter will continue to be developed.

9.1: It's About Time

Given some of the complexities involved in developing collaborative networks, such as establishing 'common ground', or reflecting on their own position and role within the network, Local Coordinators inevitably were presented with challenges in establishing effective communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002). Some of these challenges have already been touched upon, such as dealing with the 'dark side of collaboration' (Chapman, 2019), identifying those network members who sought to enhance their own authority, power or status, at the expense of others. In such instances, participants often focussed on those network partners with greater 'collaborative fit' (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123). However, it was important that Local Coordinators understood the wider context within which the network members had to navigate, in order that they could anticipate problems and tensions. This chapter will begin by discussing the ways in which Local Coordinators

reflected on the history of their networks and the past events that shaped network relations to better understand those challenges.

9.1.1: Network History

Although some, such as Thomson and Perry (2006), argue that there is often too strong a focus around the antecedents and preconditions that influence collaboration, Local Coordinators found themselves having to account for the history that impacted their collaborative networks. In reflecting on the organisations within their own network for example, LC2 identified that not all network members interact directly. This can be seen in Figure 9.1, below, in which two organisations (here labelled nodes A and B) were not in direct communication, with each having to go through at least one other actor to contact the other.

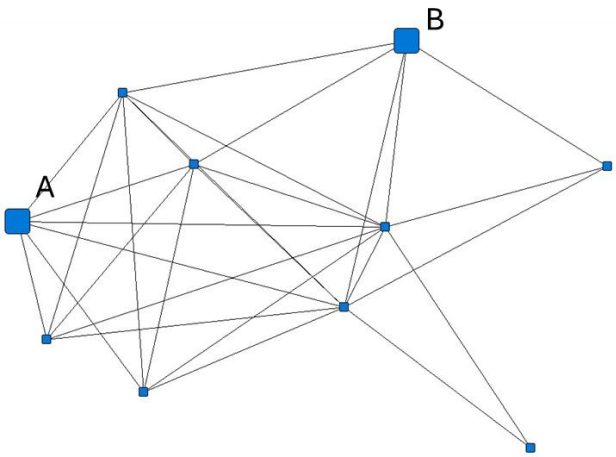


Figure 9.1: LC2-NI-1; Associating

As expected, the structure of the network changed as the level of interaction became more complex. Nevertheless, both organisations remained in the same network over the next two stages of interaction; networking and coordinating, as illustrated in Figures 9.2 and 9.3, below.

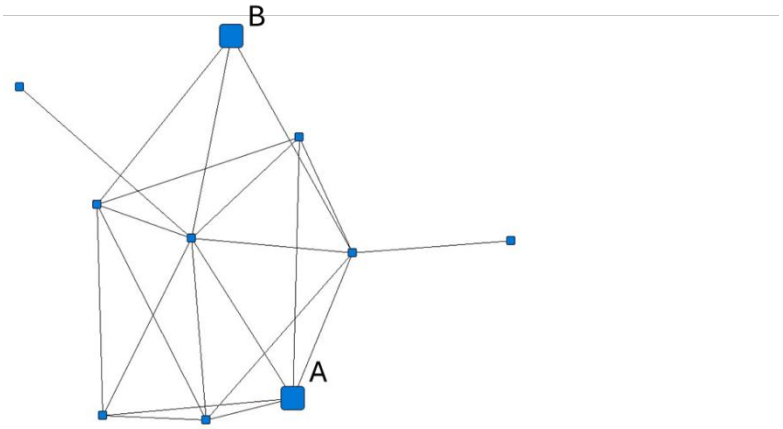


Figure 9.2: LC2-NI-1; Networking

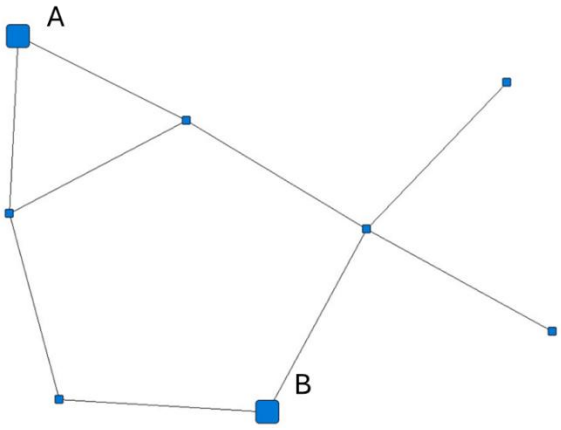


Figure 9.3: LC2-NI-1; Coordinating

As interactions became increasingly complex, the size of the network invariably decreased, yet nodes A and B continued to navigate within the same network without direct interaction up until level four, at which point the network fractured into several components. In discussing the relationship between these two alters, LC2 claimed that:

> ’You never see them working together. Like, that would just not, I don’t think, ever happen.’
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

Reflecting on the reasons for this lack of direct engagement, the Local Coordinator went on to describe how, although the two organisations were generally working towards the same overall objective (to improve outcomes for children and young people), the manner in which they went about it was substantially different.

> ‘Yeah, like, there are loads of history and politics. And because I'm quite new… I don't know the ins and outs of all the histories there. But I know, like, for example, (service A) and (service B) have very different approaches, even though they have a similar ethos.’

(LC2-QI-1)

Citing the ways in which the two organisations altered their focus during the pandemic to emergency food distribution, for example, LC2 reflected on the opposing ways in which the work was promoted. Although both services appeared to share the same value base, or sense of urgency (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), the alignment of individual aims was not straightforward. The agreement of common aims, shared goals and individual agendas can be challenging as some of these aims and agendas may be implicit, whereas others may be deliberately concealed (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

This contradiction in LC2’s activity system could be seen to lie between the community and the rules. The approach taken by one part of the community would appear to contradict the (potentially unwritten) rules of another, despite them working towards the same objective (Engeström, 2001). With a developing awareness of the history of the network, LC2 chose not to explicitly address such tensions, as such ‘open discussion can unearth irreconcilable differences’ (Huxham and Vangen, 2004: 192). Instead, they chose to focus on those within the network with greater ‘collaborative fit’ (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123).

Similarly, other Local Coordinators also understood how the history of the network could impact their own roles and levels of influence. As LC6 went on to state:

> ‘Like, in our role we actually don't have the authority in the community... Like, we don't have the historical, longstanding presence in the community, and that's not what Children's Neighbourhoods is trying to be...’

(LC6-FG-2)

Accounting for the history of the networks and larger communities enabled Local Coordinators to situate themselves appropriately within the local contexts. This was especially important for those Local Coordinators who were entering areas in which CNS had already been established. As LC7 described:

> ‘CNS don't have a fantastic reputation in (that area) either. So, I've had to overcome kind of hurdles of that and building up that relationship again and trying to fix the issues that have happened before… There's been quite a high turnover of staff in the area.’
>
> (LC7-FG-2)

This was an issue also encountered by LC8, who explained:

> ‘I'm in a similar situation … where there's been two Coordinators before… So again, it's kind of repairing relationships, building trust.’
>
> (LC8-FG-2)

As Huxham and Vangen (2004) identify, should the impact of collaboration be less than hoped for or expected, relationships may be damaged, with partners less willing to collaborate in future activities. With an awareness of the history of their communities and collaborative networks, both LC7 and LC8 recognised that it was important to invest in challenging relationships, rebuilding trust between the community and the background organisation (D’Amour et al., 2005; Kania and Kramer, 2011). However, in some instances it was not only the history the network had with CNS that proved challenging, but the ways in which those communities had experienced similar university initiatives. As LC4 explained:

> ‘I think that universities historically have went and extracted information, took what they needed and disappeared from these communities, and we were told that we had to manage that reputation and we have to be aware of it, and that we had to build relationships that not only were based on us as individuals, but also try to repair some of the relationships with the university.’
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

Rebuilding trust and repairing reputational damage, relating to both CNS and the larger university, was an important challenge for some Local Coordinators, as they sought to develop positive relationships with the local networks and community members. Doing so required reflecting on the history of those networks and communities, to better understand the challenges they faced (Engeström, 2001). Although aspects such as trust are often seen to be emergent properties that develop throughout the process of collaboration (Huxham

and Vangen, 2004; D'Amour et al., 2005); it was only possible when Local Coordinators took the history and preconditions of the networks into account (Henneman et al., 1995).

Yet, it was not only the history of the networks that Local Coordinators reflected on, but frequently their own history as well. For example, one Local Coordinator described their involvement in a youth network, ten years' previously.

> 'It fell apart because key players, myself and one or two other people, literally left… and the rest of the people followed on and nobody else had the drive or determination or whatever.'

(LC3-QI-1)

Reflecting on the challenges of maintaining such networks, LC3 identified that it is often down to individuals to continue the collaborative process. This reflects the thoughts of Henneman et al. (1995: 108), who argue that 'only the persons involved ultimately determine whether or not collaboration occurs'.

Other Local Coordinators also reflected on the similarities and differences between CNS and former projects they had worked on. For example, LC8 described their previous role in a community development initiative:

> 'I was working in a community for eight years so it would be much more embedded… and I definitely would get up to those higher levels (of interaction). Like, a level where you're working really, really, really intensively with an organization. But CNS is very different.'

(LC8-FG-2)

In this instance, the Local Coordinator identified the impact that shorter-term projects, such as CNS, can have on the relationships that develop, and the centrality of their own role within the collaborative network. This is a factor that will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. For the Local Coordinators however, it was important to regularly reflect on their own history, along with the history of the communities and networks they were navigating in. Drawing on their past experiences, and reflecting on the history of their networks, led to the formation of new approaches, effectively developing into expansive learning cycles (Drinka, 1994; Engeström, 2002).

9.1.2: The Small Wins

As previously discussed, the funding uncertainty experienced by Local Coordinators impacted not only their relationships with other network members, but also the objectives that could be established. Although collective impact does take time (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), the funding model applied to the CNS programme seemed incompatible with setting long-term goals. As LC4 explained:

> 'We have to be looking at how can we be making the biggest impact that we can right now… It's trying to strike a balance of getting small to medium victories…'
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

Such aims reflect the collective impact approach, which, although may be gradual, should focus on some 'early wins', so that network members begin to see the value of working together (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). Given some of the challenges already discussed Local Coordinators had to carefully consider how to most effectively make 'the biggest impact'. In some instances, they recognised that the biggest impact, given the situation, may be nothing more than the establishment or development of network ties (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). For example, at the start of the pandemic, LC2 created their own online space in which network members could engage, enabling communication between them.

> 'We check in at the little online forum I've been facilitating…people are talking to each other that have never spoken to each other before.'
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

Similar approaches were taken by other participants, with LC4 noting:

> 'It's been a lot easier to have those conversations after you've put a few small wins in place.'
>
> (LC4-FG-1)

Other participants took alternative approaches to establishing 'small to medium victories'. For example, as previously noted, LC7 began their role following on from two other CNS representatives who had worked in the area. This led them to identify that the most

important and immediate outcome that should be prioritised given the situation, was in the re-establishment of the relationship between CNS and the local community.

> ‘So, I've had to overcome kind of hurdles of that and building up that relationship again and trying to fix the issues that have happened before… Whilst trying to get outcomes and whilst trying to build up my own relationships, my own networks and build my own trust.’
>
> (LC7-FG-2)

In this example, LC7 demonstrated a commitment to the development of network ties, whilst being conscious of the constraints. This reflects the complexities inherent in the role of the Local Coordinator, as successes (or lack of) influenced the relationships within the network that could then developed.

However, some participants found the lack of precise outcomes problematic.

> ‘There isn't that much of a model of what your outcomes should be… Like, it is becoming clearer what people see the role as but it isn't clear what tangible or emergent outcomes you really should be looking for.’
>
> (LC8-FG-2)

The lack of such specific, expected outcomes is not altogether surprising given that agreeing on shared goals can prove challenging as network members attempt to align each of their own individual and organisational agendas (Huxham, 2003). Collaborative endeavours need to be continually evaluated in relation to their outcomes (Cooper et al., 2016). Yet, as LC8 identified, the unclear focus on outcomes was, at times, a challenge. In this way, participants often focussed on emergent outcomes, such as the development of trust and ties within the network, aligning with the collective impact approach. However, as time went on, they became aware of an increasing need for more tangible outcomes.

9.1.3: A Tangible Focus

Local Coordinators described the tensions they felt between the small, emergent, ‘early wins’, for example with the development of network ties (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), and the expectations for more concrete outcomes. As LC8 explained:

> ‘There isn't that much of a model of what your outcomes should be. And that's fine if you've got a long time, and you can let that emerge... But if you've only got a year, you kind of need a model where someone says, right, this is what you should do, that's what you should do.’
>
> (LC8-FG-2)

However, although tangible outcomes are necessary, it is frequently the intangible outcomes that prove to be the genuine source of collaborative success (Itami, 1987). An overemphasis on the tangible, material outcomes can lead to lack of consideration around the intangible benefits (Arya and Zin, 2007).

One of the primary conditions of the collective impact approach is on the establishment of a common agenda (Kania and Kramer, 2011). For Local Coordinators, such objectives had to be established in partnership with the community and network members, including developing a mutual understanding of the issues. It was only by establishing a shared value base, or sense of urgency (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), that a shared vision could be established, leading to the identification of shared aims and goals (Henneman et al., 1995; D’Amour et al., 2005). Therefore, the importance of the, often intangible, ‘early wins’ was important to acknowledge as it was only in the development of network ties that clear objectives could be established, leading to more measurable and tangible outcomes.

Despite this, Local Coordinators perceived a change in the expectations around measurable, tangible outcomes, as LC4 went on to describe:

> ‘If they had said to you, you have a year and a half, and we want you to hit these outcomes, I think the approach… would have been very different… But we were essentially told that we didn't have any hard outcomes in the first instance, and we had all the time in the world. So, your approach to that is very different, do you know what I mean.’
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

The increased pressure placed on participants to quickly produce concrete outcomes invariably led to a changing dynamic between participants and network members, as LC4 went on to explain:

> ‘We went very, very quickly from being a community asset that was offering support and capacity … to an organization that was extracting and needing things from people and fast… For me it's changed the job itself actually. What the job is and what it feels like. But also, the perception and your place within the community, when you change from being someone who builds capacity and helps other organizations, to someone who consistently needs to extract.’
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

With an increasing pressure to produce measurable outcomes, participants relationships with their respective communities altered. This was a point developed by LC6, who went on to state:

> ‘I agree, I think that, from the beginning, we had a much different impression of what the trajectory of the program would look like, than it ended up being and now we're really on the back foot trying to, yeah, as people have said, produce something tangible to then garner more funding to keep it going.’
>
> (LC6-FG-2)

The comment from LC6, above, indicates that, at least some of the reason this changing focus on tangible outcomes came about, was the need to acquire funding and financial resources to sustain the CNS programme. Although Hanleybrown et al. (2012) argue that at least two to three years of funding is required for collective impact initiatives, given the length of time it can take to embed such approaches, even this may not be enough to establish long-term change.

It is beyond the scope of this study to identify why funding could not be sustained. Although the funding situation shaped many aspects of Local Coordinators experiences, it should be noted that such issues may have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as funding streams were redirected. However, regardless of the reasons, Local Coordinators observed a change in focus as time went on, in which measurable, tangible outcomes were prioritised over the emergent, intangible outcomes. This led to a tension in their activity systems, as their role within CNS conflicted with the needs of their communities and networks.

The changing rules within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland led to an outcome in which their relationships with their respective communities and networks changed significantly. This contradiction between Local Coordinators' two systems of activity is illustrated in Figure 9.4, below.

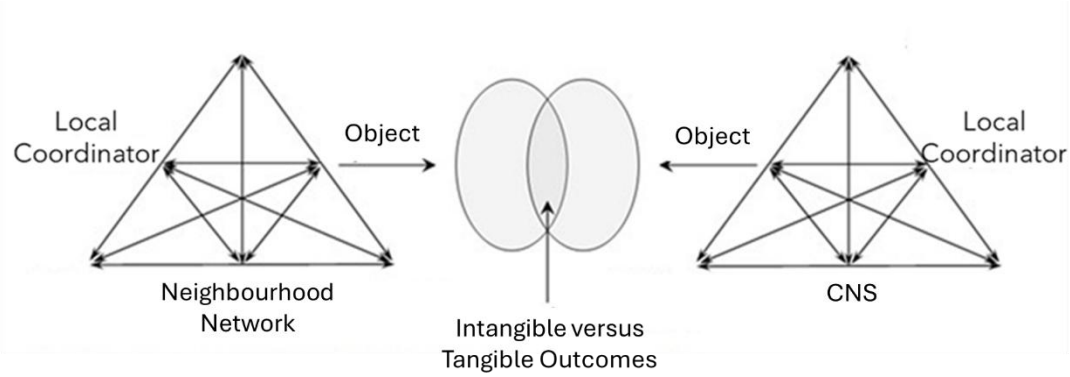


Figure 9.4: Contradictions between two interacting activity systems.

The sudden demand for tangible outcomes, as opposed to the emergent outcomes favoured by Hanleybrown et al. (2012), reflected the inherent tensions between the different systems. Relating this back to the concept of collective impact, these contradictions, and tensions stemmed from, and subsequently impacted two of the necessary pre-conditions. Pressures from the anchor funder led to a changing role for Local Coordinators, one less aligned to their positions as Influential Champions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). In such instances, Local Coordinators, as subjects, attempted to align the different activity systems, leading to the development of new understandings and outcomes (Engeström, 2001: 136). This was when they began to reflect on whether the outcomes achieved were positive or negative; whether they had embedded collaborative advantage or developed collaborative inertia.

9.1.4: Avoiding Inertia

Whether tangible or intangible, participants had to regularly reflect on the outcomes achieved and consider whether those outcomes were positive or negative; whether they reflected collaborative advantage or collaborative inertia (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004). As discussed in Chapter 2, collaborative advantage refers to positive outcomes of the collaborative endeavour, although these may not necessarily be those initially hoped for or expected. Collaborative advantage can often present itself in less

obvious forms, such as in the development of network ties (Huxham, 2003). This can be seen in LC2's establishment of an online forum to facilitate communication between network members during the pandemic. As illustrated above, this led to the establishment of new network ties.

In a similar vein, LC4 identified that one specific network in the community appeared to have a narrow remit, with only a few network members involved.

> 'I thought, well, if it's going to tie in with the work I'm doing it has to have a wider remit because I've got a wider remit. So that was kind of my suggestion to make that a bit more all-encompassing… As time went on, I just kept inviting people along.'
>
> (LC4-QI-2)

By extending the scope of the networks original remit to include a broader range of services, the size of the network increased as more local services and organisations identified an alignment with their own objectives. This reflects the importance of establishing a common ground with network members, as discussed in the previous chapter. There, Local Coordinators identified that establishing at least some commonality was more important than a specific common goal or objective, as interests will align as the relationships develop (Huxham and Vangen, 2005; Wood and Gray, 1991). In this sense, even the objectives of the collaborative network may be emergent, manifesting and developing throughout the process of collaboration (Himmelman, 2002; D'Amour et al., 2005). Such network development is reflective of collaborative advantage, with a focus on the process of collaboration rather than the physical output.

To further strengthen network ties, and to develop trust, Local Coordinators acknowledged the importance of their own role and how they were viewed by network members. One of the consistent themes across their experiences was the importance of being seen to follow through on commitments.

> 'You know, they notice these things. And, they make their own mind up, you know, 'You've always came and whenever you've said you'll be somewhere, you'll be there. You've tried to help wherever you could'.
>
> (LC3-QI-2)

> ‘I think just following through with commitments … is probably the most important thing.’
>
> (LC4-QI-2)

> ‘I would just say that when you're going into these networks of building the relationships, being genuine and, you know, following through with what you're saying you are going to do, and you actually do it... So, I would say, just the genuine side.’
>
> (LC7-FG-2)

As the extracts above indicate, a key factor in establishing a professional reputation is in demonstrating a commitment to activities and partners, reflective of an authentic leadership style (Coleman, 2011). ‘Being genuine’, as LC7 describes, involves developing trust between themselves, as subjects within the activity system, and the larger community. As Miller (1997) and D’Amour et al. (2005) discuss, trust is a key factor in establishing collaborative relationships. Yet, as LC4 described, it is necessary to carefully weigh the promises and commitments you make:

> ‘Under commit and over deliver.’
>
> (LC4-FG-2)

To invest in the relationships, and establish trust between network members, it was important that participants reflected on the activities or tasks that were agreed to. Although successful outcomes can lead to more trusting relationships between the subject and community, an overcommitment to tasks, or an inability to complete activities can, as Local Coordinators acknowledged, lead to a lack of trust, weaker network ties and, inevitably, collaborative inertia (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). However, in some instances, what began as less favourable relationships developed into something more positive.

> ‘It’s actually going a lot better, the relationship. At the start it was a bit tougher, and things are going a bit better. I think I put some boundaries into place, but I’ve also supported a lot of the stuff she was wanting to do.’
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

> ‘Initially she didn’t want anything to do with me, but I had a second phone call, and I talked her round.’
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

Investing in relationships with individual network members, including those relationships that were initially less positive, Local Coordinators were able to develop trust amongst network members and strengthen network ties. These positive outcomes, although perhaps not always planned for, reflects the concept of collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). However, when the outcomes are negligible, when the rate of output is considered too slow or, when the cost of collaboration is just too high, collaborative advantage can instead become ‘collaborative inertia’ (Huxham, 2003; Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Such inertia can be illustrated with the quotation below:

> ‘I spent a lot of time trying to nurture that (relationship) and get something out of it and nothing came from it.’
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

Having identified an influential figure within the network, LC3 invested time attempting to develop the relationship, only to be met with resistance. Despite numerous attempts at engagement, communications remained sporadic and fragile. Appreciating that this was one relationship that could not be developed, the Local Coordinator had to establish other routes into the network, with network members who were willing to work towards a shared vision and with greater ‘collaborative fit’ (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123).

Local Coordinators experiences of collaborative inertia varied. For example, as previously noted some participants found themselves in communities and networks that had an established history with Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland.

> ‘There's been quite a high turnover of (CNS) staff in the area. And that was the legacy in the area and when I came in in post, I didn't really see any difference, or anything that really happened before.’
>
> (LC7-FG-2)

Reflecting the 'often disappointing output' of collaborative endeavours (Huxham, 2003: 401), the previous lack of outcomes led to network members' collaborative inertia, with partners disappointed in the lack of success and less willing to collaborate in future activities (Lank, 2006; Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Aware of such risks, Local Coordinators aimed for positive impacts and outcomes, seeking to embed collaborative advantage within the network, rather than risk collaborative inertia. In doing so, participants often focussed on intangible, often emergent, outcomes, such as the development of trust between network members. When participants did focus on the more tangible outcomes, the primary aim was to seek out the 'small to medium victories' and ensure that they were seen to 'be genuine', by following through with their commitments.

In summary, when reflecting on elements beyond the immediate network, Local Coordinators had to understand the larger context within which the collaborative network was embedded, including reflecting back on the history that shaped the current network, and looking ahead to identify all potential outcomes. Accounting for these, the model of collaborative action that was introduced in the previous chapter can be developed thus:

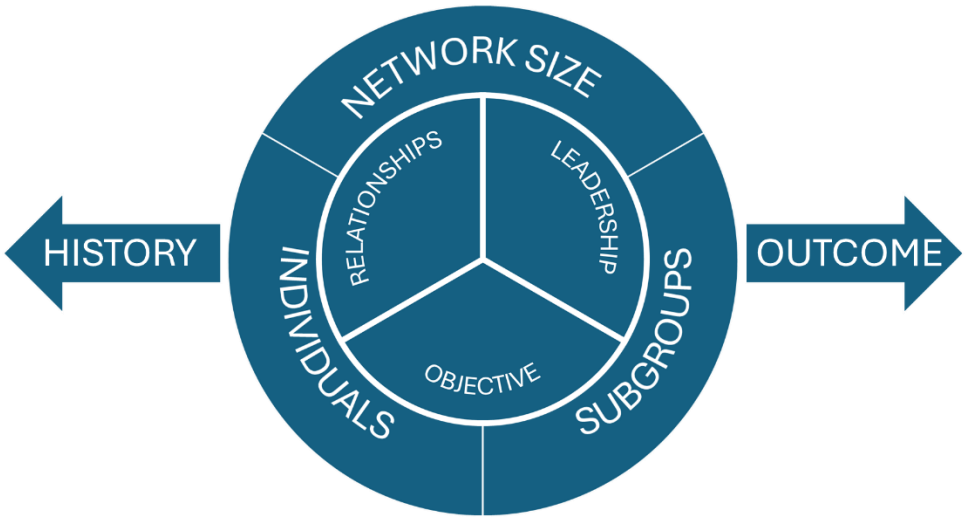


Figure 9.5: The Wider Context

The second half of this chapter will go on to account for the final elements that Local Coordinators regularly had to account for which lay beyond the immediate network yet continued to influence collaborative action. These last elements include tracking the resources, or lack of, that were available to network members, along with negotiating any tensions between the different network elements.

9.2: Collaborative Constraints

As previously noted, Local Coordinators had much to account for in relation to their collaborative networks and their own roles within them. This was further developed when reflecting on the related historical factors, and when identifying the potential outcomes. The second half of this chapter will move on to consider the additional constraints that Local Coordinators had to navigate; tracking the resources available and negotiating network tensions.

9.2.1: Tools and Resources

As has already been indicated, one of the most common challenges Local Coordinators had to navigate was a lack of specific resources, specifically financial capital, and time. As mediating artefacts, instruments, or tools (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström, 2001), these resources proved crucial in the relationships that formed, the objectives that could be established and the outcomes that could be achieved. The first of these resources reflects the funding uncertainty which, as well as impacting the objectives that could be established, also influenced the relationships that formed. Describing the ways in which some network members were dissuaded from future engagement based solely on the uncertainty of future funding, one participant observed:

> 'We do get asked in meetings, like, about our funding situation and… I sometimes feel that impacts how people… peg you.'
>
> (LC5-QI-1)

This was an experience shared by other participants.

> 'Straight away that relationships gone because they're not going to invest their time and energy into you if you're only going to be there for a year.'
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

In such instances, the limited funding available also limited the size of the network and the community, restricting future objectives. Local Coordinators relationships with network members was impacted by the lack of certainty around funding and subsequently influenced many of the relationships that formed. For this reason, Hanleybrown et al. (2012)

argue that the preconditions for collective impact should include adequate financial resources, to support the role of the influential champions when developing a sense of urgency.

However, reflecting the place-based nature of their roles, some Local Coordinators described the ways in which such resource-based tensions were not an issue in areas that had historically had very little investment in services or provision.

> 'I don't think you're going to step on any toes, because I think people are just going to be pleased that you're doing stuff.'
>
> (LC5-QI-1)

Mirroring some of the elements Local Coordinators previously discussed, once again, the size of the network was seen to influence the objectives that could be established. Just as larger networks were seen to be more challenging in terms of identifying the appropriate sub-groups or individual network members (Wasserman and Faust, 1994), so too it impacted the ways in which new members were welcomed. This also further highlights how developing a clear understanding and knowledge of the history of the network can provide further detail as to the relationships that may be established. As Local Coordinators sought to establish themselves in the networks, they had to take cognisance of, not only the size of the network, but the historical factors that shaped network relations. Taking account of this 'historicity' (Engeström, 2001) enabled Local Coordinators to effectively establish their presence, whilst accounting for the specific needs of the collaborative network.

Yet, Local Coordinators also recognised that the limited pool of resources, or tools, also limited the objectives they could realistically set. Describing another unintended consequence of the funding model, LC4 stated:

> 'If they looked at, maybe 3 years, the whole approach to tackling the community work would be completely different because you've got a bit of time to actually implement things.'
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

The uncertainty around funding not only impacted Local Coordinators own position, as subjects within the activity systems, influencing their relationships with some members of

the community, but also heavily affected the objectives that could be set. In this way, funding, as one of the primary tools within each activity system, could be seen to impact multiple other features of the activity systems and collaborative networks.

However, such limitations were not only a constraining factor for the Local Coordinators, but often impacted community and network members as well. In such instances, Local Coordinators were, at times, able to offer support. This is evident in the example below, in which LC4 describes supporting an organisation with funding applications that they had previously not had time to arrange.

> 'What they don't have is the time to sit down and plan and sit down and apply for funding and so that's why the conversations I've been having is, you could be doing so much more here.'

(LC4-QI-2)

As previously noted, time is an important factor for networks and the development of collaborative relationships (Vangen and Huxham, 2006). Here, LC4 demonstrated their awareness of the time constraints on other network members, with them, as subject, supporting the community through the division of labour (Engeström, 2001). In this way, by identifying the lack of resources that impacted network members, the Local Coordinator was able to develop relationships and embed themselves further within the network.

As a constraining factor, time impacted not only network members, but importantly, the Local Coordinators themselves. The uncertainty around the future of the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme was one they seemed all too conscious of.

> 'There's only one of me and CNS is not a program that, at this point in time, is explicitly committed to the long term in the community.'

(LC6-QI-2)

Without this 'explicit commitment', Local Coordinators had to adopt a:

> '… Strategically cautious approach, to make sure that the role is not too critical in the community because of the nature of how the program has been right now.'

(LC6-QI-2)

For many, this 'strategically cautious approach' was reflected in Local Coordinators own roles within their networks. As previously identified, as Adaptive Leaders (Heifetz et al., 2004), they were careful in supporting the network, without leading the agenda. Purposefully positioning themselves on the periphery of their networks ensured that the longevity of the network could be maintained. As a constraint, time, much like funding, was a key factor in the shaping of relationships and activities.

> 'I'm now looking at designing things and sort of shaping relationships into a way that they're sustainable if I'm pulled out in March so that actually (the projects) don't disappear, that there will still be something that continues to go on. But actually, what I'm doing is designing myself out a job.'

(LC4-QI-2)

One Local Coordinator, relatively new in position, reflected on the ways in which time proved to be a constraint that had to be accounted for even when attempting to embed themselves in the local networks and community.

> 'I've only been in post, kind of three and a half months but I feel… like, I've totally rushed it too, you know. Usually, it takes at least six months to a year to build up a solid kind of foundation in relationships and networks. I feel as if I've rushed through to try and get all the networks, so that we can try and then get outcomes. So… Time is a biggie. It's been so challenging.'

(LC7-FG-2)

In such instances, time, as an instrument, tool or resource, impacted the subject's relationship with the network, along with the objectives that could be established. Reflecting on the difference having more time could make, LC6 stated:

> 'I think if we had like a 10-year plan or something, I would say that for, like, the first two years it would make sense for me to play a lot more of a central, visible, clear leadership role and then over the course of the next five years slowly kind of wean people into the more delegated leadership roles and back out responsibly.'

(LC6-QI-2)

The reflections of LC6 indicate that, given more time, their initial position within the collaborative network may have been more centralised with a more embedded leadership role.

As a key resource, time constraints greatly inhibited the role of the Local Coordinator. Yet, the time constraints placed on participants was due in no small part to the uncertain funding of the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme. As a collective impact approach (Kania and Kramer, 2011), Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland had to establish three pre-conditions: influential champions, a sense of urgency and an anchor funder (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). The funding received however, was not, in this instance, enough to develop and sustain long-term change.

> 'We were always told were funded up to March, and we kind of knew that and there's been kind of informal statements about … we'll probably stay beyond that, but these have been informal.'
>
> (LC3-QI-2)

> 'It's a shame because if we had longer funding committed, there's probably things that I would be doing that are much more long term and would have a much bigger impact, but I'm to hesitant to get involved.'
>
> (LC4-QI-2)

The uncertainty around funding, and the future of CNS, impacted the time Local Coordinators felt they had to work to. However, as demonstrated, they were, in some instances, able to support network members working under similar constraints. Although challenges such as the lack of specific resources influenced the work and role of the Local Coordinators, the same issue could be leveraged to develop network ties. However, it was important that Local Coordinators were able to identify instances in which such issues led to constraints, contradictions or tensions within the collaborative network.

9.2.2: Negotiating Network Tensions

As the fourth principle of Cultural Historical Activity Theory, the identification of contradictions and tensions within and between activity systems is important, as these can lead to transformation of the system and 'innovative attempts to change the activity'

(Engeström, 2001: 137). For Local Coordinators, the identification of tensions within their collaborative networks was as equally important.

> '…the direction that (she) was trying to take it in wasn't necessarily a direction that the rest of the community thought it had to go in.'

(LC4-QI-1)

This quotation demonstrates that within networks, tensions arise as LC4 recognised that members of the collaborative network could not agree on an objective. Such a division may lead to other fractures within the activity system, such as impacting the resources available, the division of labour or, most obviously, the outcome (Engeström, 2001). Identifying when the objectives of individual network members did not align was important to acknowledge, as network leadership involves managing such tensions, to best leverage the potential within the network (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017). Yet, it was equally important for Local Coordinators to recognise when they did not have a strong relationship with all network members, to avoid further tensions and fractures in their activity systems.

The consequences of such network tensions became all too apparent for LC3, as they tried to align network members towards a common goal.

> 'This one that spiked me… is very influential. And everybody admits he's a problem. But he's making no effort with me… (he) is very influential. Everybody admits he's a problem… It's about basically- if it's his baby, it's fine. If it's not his baby, it's not fine.'

(LC3-QI-1)

Conflict within teams and networks is an issue acknowledged by many. Tuckman and Jensen (1977), for example, identify the importance of 'storming', whilst Drinka (1994: 100) sees 'confronting' as being the most important stage in the development of the collaborative team, arguing that, in interdisciplinary teams, 'conflict marks change'. Yet, such perspectives indicate that, when managed effectively, such conflicts can be productive. This was not to be the case for LC3, who later went on to reflect:

> ‘I've not had a lot of dealings with (him)… I haven't had any conflict with him because I haven't really needed to albeit I feel as if I should at least have another discussion with (him).’
>
> (LC3- QI- 2)

Theorists such as Sicotte et al. (2002) and Engeström (2001) argue that conflict within collaborative networks, if articulated openly, has the potential to enhance collaboration, which may develop into expansive learning cycles. In the case of LC3, however, the initial tensions inherent in the relationship were avoided, rather than confronted, as the Local Coordinator chose instead to focus on relationships with other network members, ones more suited to the planned activities and determined to be of greater ‘collaborative fit’ (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123). Through open articulation of the network relations, the Local Coordinator was able to establish a shared history and background experience with other network members (Drinka, 1994). This itself can lead to an increased capacity to learn and develop, as network members use their past experiences to form new approaches (Drinka, 1994; Engeström, 2001).

Yet, this was not the only example of tensions within the collaborative network and between network members.

> ‘It becomes apparent that they do have relationships with each other, but the relationships maybe aren’t as good as what they maybe were or what they should be.’
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

This observation from LC3 suggests a possible deterioration of relationships or, at the very least, indicates the potential for future collaborative activity. Although uncertain as to the reasons for the current lack of engagement, LC3 identified a structural hole in the network and, thereby a possible source of leverage (Borgatti et al., 2018). In some instances, however the reasons for the lack of interaction are more obvious.

> ‘There’s very limited crossover, in my experience, between different organisations because there’s just not enough of them.’
>
> (LC5-QI-1)

Here, the lack of interaction is directly related to the size of the network within the area. As previously identified, the size of the network directly impacts the resources available, including social capital (Crossley et al., 2015). Although there are challenges involved in larger networks, such as identifying the most appropriate sub-groups, there are equal challenges inherent in working within smaller networks. In this instance, rather than network tensions, there appeared to be a lack of network relationships as so few network members existed.

Reflecting on the tensions between network members often led Local Coordinators to acknowledge that the collaborative network was not a homogenous unit, and that contradictions could be present within different elements of the activity system. As the subject, they had to establish strong collaborative relationships with the community. In doing so, they often had to negotiate tensions and contradictions within the network and related activity system, such as a conflict of rules, a lack of resources or issues around the division of labour. However, there were other tensions that lay beyond the network itself that still had to be accounted for.

9.2.3: Responding to the Pandemic

As previously discussed, from mid-March 2020, in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Scotland, along with the other nations within the UK, went into 'lockdown', effectively closing all but essential businesses, with the Scottish Government asking the public to work from home where possible (SPICe Spotlight, 2022). The closure of educational and children's services proved particularly contentious, adversely impacting the economy, employment, and education (OECD, 2020). Nevertheless, schools, along with other children's services had to adapt to legal requirements and public health advice, with many schools reluctant to engage during such stressful circumstances (Todd and Rose, 2022). With many services shutting down or reluctant to engage, activities lessened, with fewer opportunities for Local Coordinators to develop network relationships.

> 'Everything has stopped for the pandemic… (the) relationships haven't stagnated, they've just gone dormant.'
>
> (LC5-QI-1)

> ‘We’re just not in a position to commit to anything.’
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

> ‘If I could have had this two or three months of actually going out and doing stuff- and I’ve got things good to go, activities I could do- I’d have got my name out there a lot more.’
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

Nevertheless, the risks associated with the pandemic were all too clear to Local Coordinators.

> ‘The infection rate and the death rate and everything, (in this area is) one of the highest in the city.’
>
> (LC2- QI-1)

With services closed, or having to adapt, Local Coordinators found themselves with few tasks or activities they could become involved with to develop collaborative relationships further. In seeking to establish new relationships and their own presence within their networks, some Local Coordinators opted, given the challenging circumstances, to leverage their own historical networks.

> ‘So, we were colleagues. When I first started, I didn’t really bother making much of an effort with her because I know her but then it started, over time, to make sense.’
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

> ‘I did a youth participation model… and I’ve actually got the girl who I used to work with… to come and do it with me.’
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

Once again, this was an opportunity for Local Coordinators to reflect on their own professional history, leveraging prior collaborative relationships to mitigate the adverse circumstances. There was little doubt however, that the impact of the pandemic, along with national and international responses, was initially perceived by the Local Coordinators as being a significant barrier in the development of relationships and establishing their

presence within the community. Although necessary for public health, the lockdown restrictions effectively changed societal rules and norms, impacting many systems of activity, including those of the Local Coordinators (Engeström, 2001). This led to greater challenges in establishing stronger ties with the local community and network, as objectives shifted, and activities altered.

Through reflecting on the tensions brought about by the pandemic and closure of services, some Local Coordinators altered their own activities and objectives, to support network members through challenging times. Adapting to the shift to home-working, one Local Coordinator responded to the enforced change by creating their own online space in which network members could engage. Recognising the gap in such provision they were able to facilitate communication between network members, thereby creating opportunities for further engagement. Given that collaboration is a process that involves 'mutually beneficial interaction' (Thomson and Perry, 2006: 23), providing network members with a forum through which they could regularly communicate, even in challenging times, proved beneficial. However, although initially well received, attendance at the online forums soon began to drop.

> 'As things have got a bit crazier and restrictions have got tighter and all the infection rates have gone up, it's got less and less and less…. We had to cancel the last one… because everyone's got COVID.'
>
> (LC2-QI-1)

Maintaining interest and enthusiasm from all network members proved to be a challenge, not just in the online forums. As restrictions began to ease, some of the relationships that had been established began to change.

> 'I think, in some respects, I've actually moved back the way a little bit… I feel as if it's just become a little bit more complicated. Whereas at first everybody was very positive, I feel, probably because they're now starting to think a lot more about what they're doing so the focus isn't necessarily on me anymore.'
>
> (LC3-QI-1)

Once again, as the rules within the activity system began to change, the interactions between the different elements of the collaborative network also changed (Engeström, 2001). As restrictions eased, services altered their activities, with those within the networks reconsidering their initial objectives. At the same time, Local Coordinators were faced with additional challenges when trying to establish their presence, challenges that would impact the relationships that formed.

However, despite the inevitable challenges participants faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions, upon further reflection, one Local Coordinator observed:

> 'In the pandemic, for me that opened up time to have conversations and for people just to be able to jump on- because they had an hour in the afternoon and were working from home- to have those initial chats. So that now when you bump into them in the street… I know who they are, it's not just a name. So, for me, I think there's real benefits to the fact that everybody switched to home working.'
>
> (LC4-QI-1)

Although the pandemic forcibly changed the rules the community had to work to (Engeström, 2001), it brought with it additional affordances, such as greater time in which to develop relationships. Given that collaborative endeavours are often 'painfully slow' (Vangen and Huxham, 2006: 3), the extra time investing in the relationships with fellow network members facilitated later collaborative activities.

To summarise, as Local Coordinators navigated the constraints beyond the network that influenced the collaborative activity, as well as reflecting on the history and identifying possible outcomes, they also had to track the resources, or lack of, that were available. As well as this, negotiate contradictions or tensions that made the collaboration challenging. In some instances, these tensions lay within the network, such as the relationships between network members. However, at other points, these tensions lay beyond the network, such as balancing resources or navigating global pandemics. In recognising these tensions, Local Coordinators were better able to mitigate them, leading to expansive transformation of the networks and activity systems (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999).

Accounting for both the resources available, along with identifying any tensions that underpinned the collaborative network, Local Coordinators regularly reflected on and responded to many elements that impacted the success of the collaborative activity. These final two elements develop the model of collaborative action for network leaders that can be seen in Figure 9.6, below:

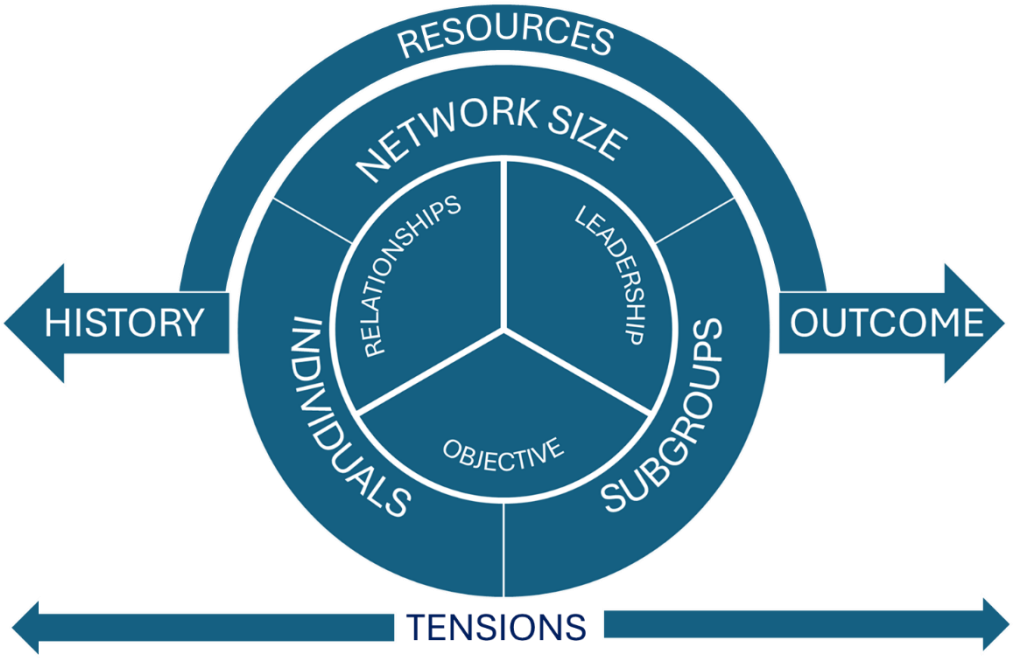


Figure 9.6: A Model of Collaborative Action for Network Leaders

Such a model illustrates the multiple factors Local Coordinators had to account for and respond to when seeking to obtain a position of influence within established networks. From the initial survey of the network, including the size, subgroups and individuals, they also had to integrate effectively into those networks, building relationships, establishing their position and situating their leadership approach. They then had to understand the context that shaped the network, by reflecting on the shared history between network members, and identifying potential outcomes of the collaborative activity. Additionally, Local Coordinators regularly had to navigate constraints, tracking the resources available and negotiating any tensions, both within and beyond the network, that could impact or influence the collaborative activity.

The model of collaborative action (as illustrated in figure 9.6) identifies the factors network leaders need to consider when entering or establishing bounded communities and

networks. Accounting for factors that were relevant to both social network analysis and activity theory, themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups with Local Coordinators, reflective of their experiences in establishing collaborative networks. Despite the geographical and contextual differences between their experiences, the model illustrates the complexities involved in developing such relationships. From identifying the network, and understanding the individual roles within it, as well as accounting for additional factors, collaboration can be seen to be a complex phenomenon that includes a variety of interweaving factors. The model of collaborative action provides a structure through which to account for such complexities.

It should be noted however that the model is not linear and does not have a clear starting point from which to begin. For the Local Coordinators in this study the most logical approach was in first identifying the network, before considering their own role then reflecting on the additional factors that would go on to shape the collaborative process. However, for individuals who are in the later stages of collaboration, or for those in different collaborative contexts, the priorities to reflect against may vary and change at any point in time. It is down to the individuals involved to identify priority areas and focus on those factors that are most relevant to the context and situation. This means that, although the model can be applied to a broad variety of contexts, the ways in which it reflects each collaborative network will fluctuate and change in ways that are appropriate to the task and individuals involved.

9.3: Summary

This chapter introduced the additional themes that Local Coordinators had to account for when seeking to obtain a position of influence within established networks. Understanding the larger context included reflecting on the history of the network and identifying possible outcomes of collaborative activity. Identifying that some relationships within their networks were not as conducive as they may have been, it was important that Local Coordinators reflected on the history of the network to understand the causes of such tensions. In doing so, they acknowledged that although network members may share the same overall objective, including a sense of urgency (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), individual agendas may be more implicit, with others being deliberately concealed (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). This

also led to recognising when communities and networks may have had previous attempts at collaborative activity, but where the impact had been less than hoped for leaving network members less willing to collaborate in future activities (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Yet, beyond the history of the network, Local Coordinators also reflected on their own history, drawing on their past experiences, leading to the formation of new approaches and expansive learning cycles (Drinka, 1994; Engeström, 2001).

However, as well as looking to the past, Local Coordinators also had to look to the future and identify the potential outcomes of the collaborative activity. This often began by identifying some initial 'early wins', enabling network members to see the value of working together (Hanleybrown et al., 2012). With outcomes of collaboration frequently appearing intangible, such as the development of network ties, Local Coordinators described the increasing focus on establishing tangible, measurable outcomes. Nevertheless, the relational outcomes remained a key focus, particularly the establishment of trust between network members as such factors are vital in maintaining and developing collaborative relationships (D'Amour et al., 2005). Knowing that collaborative inertia remained a risk, Local Coordinators aimed for positive impact and outcomes (Huxham and Vangen, 2004).

The relationships that were formed within the network were, however, influenced by external factors, and it was important that Local Coordinators navigated these larger contexts, such as tracking the resources that were available. With uncertainty around future funding, Local Coordinators found some relationships with network members constrained. However, they also identified that similar issues impacted other partners within the network, and, in such instances, they were able to support network members through a division of labour, further developing those relationships and their role as Influential Champions (Engeström, 2001; Hanleybrown et al., 2012).

This then led to negotiating tensions, both within the network and beyond, that may impact the collaborative activity. Negotiating the relational tensions between network members enabled Local Coordinators to focus on those members with greater 'collaborative fit' (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123). Similarly, although Local Coordinators experienced tensions beyond the network, such as the restrictions that came about as a result of the pandemic, they were able to focus on the opportunities it presented, such as in supporting network members

with communication strategies or utilising the time provided to facilitate network relationships.

In drawing together the activities of the Local Coordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland that have been discussed over the last two chapters, a model of collaborative action for network leaders had been developed, as seen once again in Figure 9.6, repeated below.

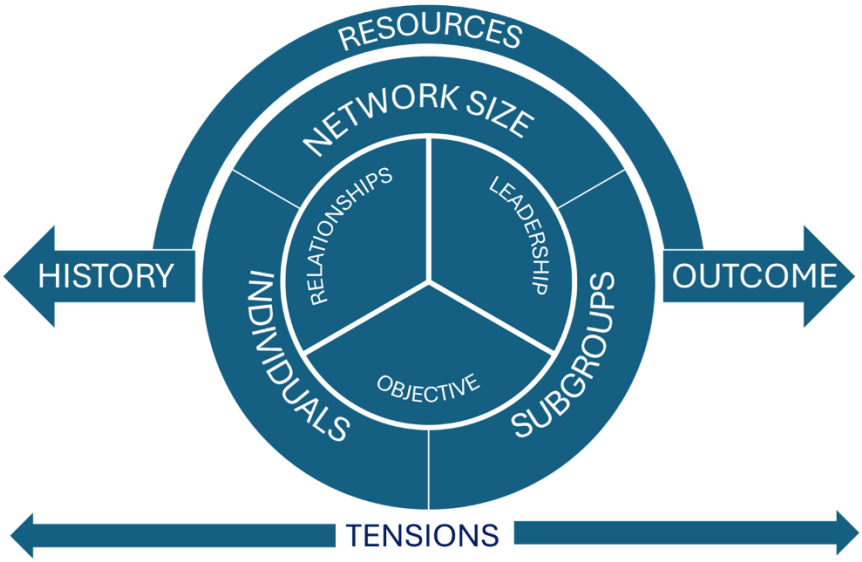


Figure 9.6: A Model of Collaborative Action for Network Leaders

The model takes account of those factors that Local Coordinators actioned within the network, as well as accounting for factors that lay beyond the network. Through critically reflective practice, they were able to integrate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, using these effectively when seeking to embed collective impact with collaborative action (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2022; Kania and Kramer, 2011).

The following chapter will move on to address the final principle of Cultural Historical Activity Theory and consider what has been learned from this study and the ways in which this learning might develop to expansive transformation (Engeström, 2001). It will consider the main findings of the study, before then reflecting on the potential impact. From here, the chapter will consider which parties may be interested along with the ways in which the findings may be disseminated. The chapter will conclude by considering what other questions this study raises and potential avenues for future research.

Chapter 10

Towards Collaborative Action

Drawing on the perceptions and experiences of Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, this study aimed to explore how collaboration is understood at the local level and identify how it plays out in practice. Results indicate that, for the participants involved, collaboration is a complex phenomenon, and individuals seeking to collaborate need to engage in several related activities, such as surveying the collaborative network, integrating into it and seeking to influence the objectives and collaborative activities. At the same time, they also need to account for influences beyond the network, such as historical factors and future outcomes, along with consideration of the available resources and network tensions. This final chapter will summarize the main aims, methods and findings of the study, before then reflecting on the significance of the research, and considering potential avenues for future study.

10.1: Summary of the Research

Set in a backdrop of a global children's rights agenda (UN, 1989; 2015) Scotland's national approach is ongoing, with children's rights, and the CRC in particular, prominent in national policy and legislation (Tisdall, 2015; Gadda et al., 2019). Yet, given the complexities of embedding children's rights in practice, the inherent challenges are often seen to be too great for any one organisation or service to handle on their own (Tisdall, 2015). Acknowledging this the Scottish Government seek to promote collaborative working (Scottish Government, 2017a), a theme that is heavily reflected within many of the professional standards across children's services (GTCS, 2021; CLD Standards Council, 2022; SSSC, 2016). Given the strong focus on collaboration and partnership working across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017a) this study aimed to establish a greater understanding of collaboration, with greater consideration of the ways in which it plays out in practice. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- Identify what factors individuals need to consider when entering or establishing a collaborative network,

- Discuss how individuals understand their own role within such networks,
- Examine the challenges or barriers to collaborative improvement, and
- Reflect on the outcomes of collaborative improvement.

Focussing on Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme (CNS, online), the study sought to understand their experiences and perceptions of embedding collaborative improvement within local areas. Launched in early 2018, Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland aimed to improve outcomes for children and young people living in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. Describing themselves as an 'impartial, backbone organisation' (Leman and Watson, 2018), CNS sought to support service delivery, by ensuring services were co-ordinated, working towards 'collective impact with collaborative action' (CNS, online; Kania and Kramer, 2011). Being the visible presence of the programme, a Local Coordinator was based in each neighbourhood to support partnerships and develop collaboration across services (CNS, online). It was the perception of these individuals' experiences of collaboration that this study aimed to explore.

Adopting an open systems approach to cross sector collaboration, Kania and Kramer (2011: online) define collective impact as 'the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem'. Taking account of such systems perspectives, and with an underlying focus on the networks surrounding Local Coordinators, this study drew on two frameworks to elicit participants' reflections on collaborative networks and systems, Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Engeström, 2001). Aligning such frameworks led to consideration of the research design and the specific methods used to generate and analyse data. Situated firmly within an interpretivist paradigm, this small-scale qualitative study engaged participants in a reflective process, drawing out their experiences of cross-sector collaboration.

Beginning with short, preliminary network interviews, Local Coordinators identified individuals or services that they were working with in their local areas, before rating how they perceived the interactions between them. In doing so, participants constructed their own ego-networks, or ego-nets, otherwise known as 'the network of contacts (alters) that form around a particular node (ego)' (Crossley et al., 2015: 18). Visualising this data led to

the creation of static network diagrams, which formed the basis for follow-up interviews and focus groups, providing further detail relating to the cultures that underpinned the 'network structures' (Crossley et al., 2015). Network data was analysed with consideration of measures of analysis such as individual and group degree, density, components, and connectedness (Krackhardt, 1994; Borgatti et al., 2018). The textual data, or 'network narratives' (Crossley et al., 2015), were then analysed in relation to the five principles of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engeström, 2001), to examine how collaboration is understood at the local level and identify how it plays out in practice.

10.1.1: Surveying

Although the experiences of each Local Coordinator varied, given the geographical, relational and contextual differences, several commonalities were identified as they reflected on their collaborative networks. To begin with, each Local Coordinator had to survey the network of services available within their local communities. In some instances, Local Coordinators were entering into previously established networks, whereas, for others, the challenge came in forming networks. Although the challenges inherent in working in larger networks were commonly recognised, the more established Local Coordinators became in their roles and communities, each found the size of their network increased. During these times, Local Coordinators focussed on relationship formation and development, by attempting to identify some commonality or 'common ground' between themselves and fellow network members. This was often not a specific shared goal or aim, as objectives of collaborative networks can manifest and develop throughout the process of collaboration (Himmelman, 2002; D'Amour et al., 2005).

At the same time as establishing commonalities between network members, and as part of the initial surveyance, Local Coordinators also had to inventory the sub-groups, or networks-within-networks (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Yet, it was not only inventorying the subgroups but establishing which of these were the most influential that proved challenging. This then led to consideration of the individuals within the networks as Local Coordinators reflected on those who had the most 'interpersonal influence' (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Although such influential figures within a network can provide opportunities for brokerage and increase the flow of social capital (Crossley et al, 2015: 35), this was not

always the case. Identification of gatekeepers, brokers and centralised individuals was important for Local Coordinators so that they could anticipate problems and plan for change.

10.1.2: Integrating and Influencing

From the initial survey of the network, Local Coordinators then had to establish how best to integrate within those networks. This began as each considered the strength of relationships or ties between themselves and fellow network members, as they sought to build relationships with other network partners. However, rather than being too closely aligned to any one individual service provider, Local Coordinators stressed the importance of remaining impartial. Maintaining weaker ties with a greater number of partners was valued more than stronger ties with fewer, and it was working at the levels of coordinating and cooperating that Local Coordinators reported were most effective (Himmelman, 2002; Chapman, 2019). This led to consideration of their own position within the network as they aimed to establish trust between themselves and influential individuals. Although being a central figure may seem like an advantageous position, with opportunities for brokerage (Crossley et al., 2015), Local Coordinators favoured central positions only in terms of supporting and facilitating the network rather than being a central, decision-making figure. Rather than imposing their own agenda, they chose to support network members in the identification of their own solutions (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), demonstrating an understanding of the power within the network and their own role (D'Amour et al., 2005).

This approach aligns with their role as Adaptive Leaders, developing local actions and achieving transformational change, suited to the local context (Heifetz et al., 2004; CNS, 2021b). Such an approach led Local Coordinators to consider how best to situate their own leadership within the network, ensuring reach across all sub-groups. In doing so, Local Coordinators demonstrated a multitude of leadership styles and approaches, such as authentic leadership through demonstrating transparency between their values and actions, or constitutive leadership through understanding the contexts within which other network members operated (Coleman, 2011). Similarly, as they sought out new network members with similar interests and goals, they adopted the role of the 'reticulist' (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002b). However, it was important that Local Coordinators had a clear understanding of the objectives they wished to establish, with an awareness of the larger contexts in which to develop positive visions for the future (Senge et al., 2015).

Beyond integrating effectively into their networks, Local Coordinators had to consider how best to influence those networks to ensure network members work together towards such objectives. Through understanding the cultural and relational contexts in which their collaborative networks were situated (Chapman et al., 2017), Local Coordinators had to regularly reflect on the vision, aims and objectives that could be established. Identifying youth participation as a key priority, several participants approached established community networks, engaging these external stakeholders and inviting them into the established network. Through such engagements, Local Coordinators developed their own role as they advocated for local children and young people to have greater input into the matters affecting them (UN, 1989). Offering to support such services in their engagement with children and young people, thereby once again supporting the network through the division of labour, Local Coordinators developed their role as advocates, increasing the size of their networks, bringing more actors onboard, whilst also developing the cohesiveness of those networks by strengthening the ties between actors (Borgatti et al., 2018).

10.1.3: Navigating Constraints

Having surveyed the size and shape of their collaborative networks, before then integrating into them and influencing the objectives, Local Coordinators also had to account for the other factors that impacted the effectiveness of their collaborative networks. This began with consideration of the history of the communities, networks and individuals. Recognising such history was important for Local Coordinators, particularly when seeking to identify instances of collaborative inertia (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). Developing their understanding of the history of their respective networks enabled Local Coordinators to account for this when seeking to develop relationships. Although trust is often seen to be an emergent property that grows throughout the process of collaboration (Huxham and Vangen, 2004; D'Amour et al., 2005); this was only possible when Local Coordinators took the history and preconditions of the networks into account (Henneman et al., 1995).

From looking back at the history of the networks, Local Coordinators then had to look ahead and identify all possible outcomes of the collaborative process. This included celebrating the small, emergent, 'early wins', such as the development of network ties (Hanleybrown et al., 2012), whilst also recognising the need for more tangible outcomes. Although objectives may be emergent, developing throughout the process of collaboration (D'Amour et al.,

2005), it was important that Local Coordinators recognise that when the outcomes are negligible or when the cost is too high, collaborative advantage can instead become 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). To avoid this, Local Coordinators also had to navigate two final elements, or contributory factors to the collaborative network, the resources they had available and the identification of tensions between elements.

In reflecting on their experiences, Local Coordinators agreed that tracking the resources available to them proved crucial in the relationships that formed, with some network members dissuaded from future engagement based solely on the uncertainty of future funding. However, this was not the case in areas that historically had very little investment in services or provision, once again highlighting the need for Local Coordinators to account for the history of the networks and communities they were embedded within. Doing so led some Local Coordinators to identify opportunities to support network members who, themselves were limited with the resources they had available. By supporting the network through the division of labour (Engeström, 2001), Local Coordinators once again demonstrated adaptive leadership, supporting the network, without leading the agenda (Heifetz et al., 2004).

Yet, for every stage of the reflective process, Local Coordinators had to take cognisance of contradictions and tensions between different elements in order to negotiate such tensions and best leverage the potential within the network (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017). In some instances, these tensions were manifest between network members, with Local Coordinators having to judge whether openly articulating such tensions would enhance the network, or whether it would be more beneficial to simply focus on those members with greater 'collaborative fit' (Gitlin et al., 1994: 123). However, tensions that lay beyond the immediate network also had to be accounted for, such as the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this situation could not be planned for, instantly changing the rules the communities and networks had to work to (Engeström, 2001), it brought with it additional affordances, such as greater time in which to develop relationships. Through openly reflecting on such tensions and challenges, Local Coordinators were better able to mitigate them, leading to expansive transformation of the networks and activity systems (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999).

10.1.4: Towards Collaborative Action

Despite the geographical, relational and contextual differences in their experiences, the ways in which each Local Coordinator obtained a position of influence within their established network can be illustrated in the model of collaborative action for network leaders, illustrated in figure 10.1, below.

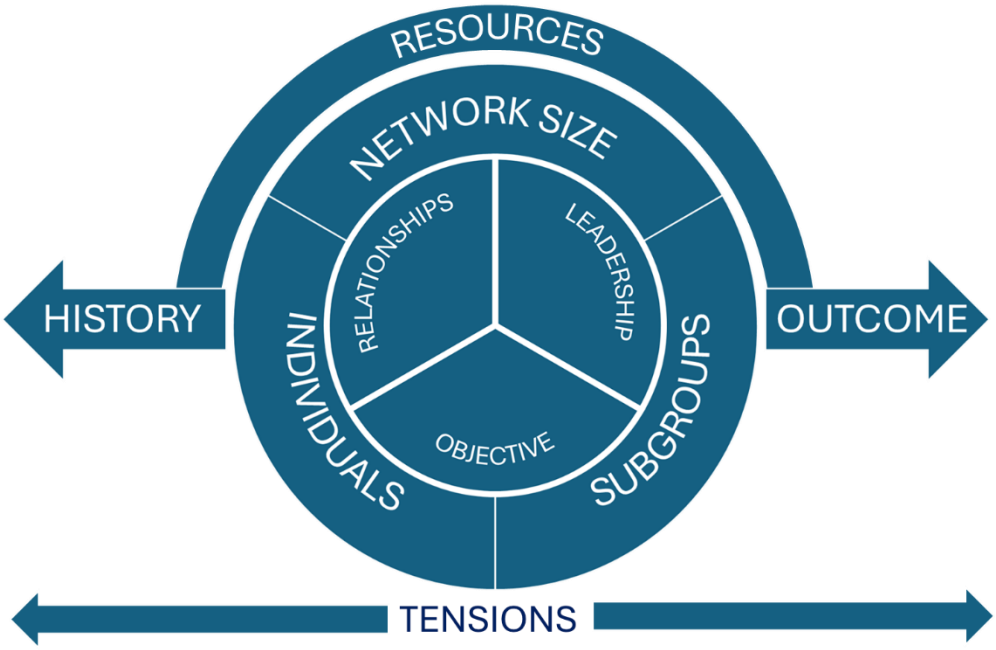


Figure 10.1: A Model of Collaborative Action for Network Leaders

Local Coordinators began by surveying the networks that surrounded them, learning the size and shape, inventorying the subgroups and identifying influential individuals and brokers. From here, they then had to integrate effectively into those networks by building relationships, establishing their own position and situating their own leadership approach. This then led to considerations of how best to influence the network, as Local Coordinators aimed to set the objectives, engage relevant stakeholders and advocate for change. Finally, Local Coordinators had to account for related factors, such as reflecting on the history of the network, identifying the possible outcomes of the collaborative activity, along with tracking resources and negotiating tensions. In doing so, Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme developed their capacity to lead and influence change within established and bounded communities and networks.

10.2: Significance of the Research

The focus of this small-scale, qualitative study was on the perceptions and experiences of the Local Coordinators within the Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme. This study never aimed for statistical-probabilistic generalizability, which is most commonly applied to quantitative research (Smith, 2018). Instead, the value of this qualitative research was in revealing the breadth and nature of the phenomena under study, in this instance, the ways in which collaboration plays out in practice (Lewis et al., 2014: 351). To this end, the originality of this study comes through naturalistic generalizability (Smith, 2018), with the results being relevant to anyone seeking to collaborate or obtain positions of influence within established networks. This is further developed when considering the transferability of the study (Tracy, 2010), and how these results may transfer to other contexts (Smith, 2018). In this way, the study will be of significance to any individuals, services or sectors in which collaboration is understood to be a fundamental aspect of their roles, for example, teachers, or practitioners in youth work, community development or childhood practice (GTCS, 2021; CLD Standards Council, 2022; SSSC, 2016). Although collaboration is a term with a plethora of definitions, 'each having something to offer and none being entirely satisfactory by itself' (Wood and Gray, 1991: 143), this unique study clearly establishes the actions individuals must engage in when seeking to develop their capacity to lead and influence in established and clearly bounded communities.

This novel study will also be of significance to policymakers, particularly at a time when the Scottish Government have embedded children's rights into Scots law with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Given the complexities involved, embedding children's rights in Scotland is a challenge (Tisdall, 2015), and one too great for any one organisation or service to handle on their own. As policymakers acknowledge the importance of cross-sector collaboration in the promotion of children's rights, it is important that they recognise the ways in which individuals obtain positions of influence within established networks, to identify potential challenges and the factors that shape collaborative action.

Furthermore, this innovative study will also be of significance to researchers, in what could be described as analytical generalizability, in which established concepts or theories are re-examined (Lewis et al., 2014; Smith, 2018). In this study, understandings of participants network structures were supported with consideration of the network cultures (Crossley et

al., 2015). To this end, the study drew together both Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Engeström, 2001). The alignment of these frameworks has potential in future network studies, in which the cultural and historical factors that underpin networks are to be examined, providing greater understandings of network cultures (Crossley et al., 2015).

Finally, it is important to consider how the participants felt about the study, and whether they saw it as being of significance to them. Designed to support them through a process of on-going reflection, the aim had been 'to give something back to the participants' (Cohen et al., 2018: 137) and aid them in upholding their professional standards through regular reflection (CLD Standards Council for Scotland, 2018). The novel approach to reflection was described by one participant in the final discussion group:

> 'I think it's been really, really useful. I think, as we go along, seeing the relationships mapped out the way that you've done it has been really useful for analysing and reflecting on your own place within networks. And actually, I've sort of referred back to that, going into new spaces.'
>
> (LC4-DG-2)

Utilising the ego-network diagrams as tools for reflection was effective, supporting Local Coordinators to consider their own collaborative networks, using these as prompts for more detailed interviews and discussion groups (Crossley et al., 2015), to fully capture participants experiences and perceptions of collaboration.

In summary, although this small-scale, qualitative study focussed on the experiences and perceptions of a few, the findings are applicable and of significance to many. For individuals seeking to obtain positions of influence within clearly bounded communities and who aim to develop their capacity to lead as an outsider, this study demonstrates the actions that need to be taken, along with the factors that need to be accounted for. By establishing how Local Coordinators positioned themselves as influential leaders, this study develops the discourse around collaboration, providing clear insight into the actions individuals can take to embed themselves in bounded communities.

10.3: Concluding Thoughts

Given that collaboration is a term with a plethora of definitions, 'each having something to offer and none being entirely satisfactory by itself' (Wood and Gray, 1991: 143), this study did not seek to redefine collaboration. Although some, such as Wood and Gray (1991) and Thomson and Perry (2006) aim for a universal definition of the term, indicative results from this study suggest that collaboration is a complex, multi-faceted process, involving not only the individuals involved but a complex range of cultural and historical factors, all interrelating within and between collaborative networks and activity systems. This small-scale, qualitative study demonstrates the nebulous, intangible nature of collaboration and, in doing so, provides avenues for future research.

The results of this study may be developed or explored further in several ways. For example, researchers may draw on the alignment of Social Network Analysis and Cultural Historical Activity Theory to explore collaboration in different contexts. This could include identifying how individuals' perceptions of their networks change over time, or how different network members perceive collaboration. Similarly, alternative methods may be used to explore collaborative cultures within alternative activity systems, such as those of policymakers or stakeholders. Experiences and perceptions will always vary, but 'only the persons involved ultimately determine whether or not collaboration occurs' (Henneman et al., 1995: 108). Supporting 'the persons involved' though a process of ongoing reflection can lead to expansive learning and transformation (Engeström, 2001), whilst drawing out new understandings of collaboration and the role of individuals within collaborative networks.

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University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

Title of Project: **Collaboration in Practice: Perceptions of Multi-Agency Collaborations**

Researcher: **A. Craig Orr**

Supervisor: **Chris Chapman/ Claire Bynner**

You are being invited to take part in a research project into the nature of collaboration.

Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

I hope that this sheet will answer any questions you have about the study.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to find out about the nature of collaboration across services and organisations who work with children and young people. The focus of the study will be on the participants' perceptions of collaboration based on their experiences in practice, including identification of facilitators and barriers.

2. Why have I been chosen?

You are being asked to take part because, due to your position as Local Co-ordinator with Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland, you have a unique perspective on the relationships between the local services and organisations who work with children and young people.

3. Do I have to take part?

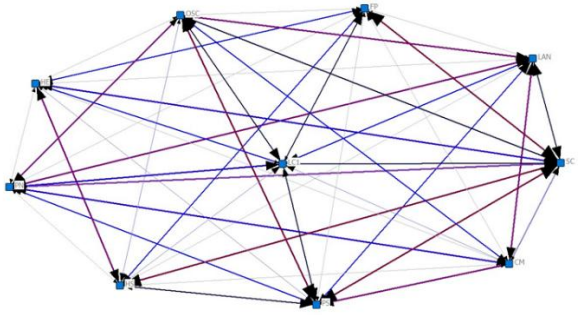
Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to take part in this study. If you decide not to take part, this will not impact your role or relationships within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland. You may choose to stop your participation in the study at any time. You will be able to withdraw up until the data has been de-identified.

4. What will happen to me if I take part?

Data collection will consist of two separate phases.

If you agree to take part, I will first ask you to list the relevant services and organisations within the local area. I will then ask you to reflect on how you perceive the relationships between these services to be at present, before asking you to consider how you feel these relationships should ideally be. This first phase of data collection will take between 20- 30 mins. These initial interviews will be conducted online, via Zoom. These interviews will not be recorded. Rather, the information you provide will be transcribed, before being adapted to matrixes and network maps, such as those illustrated below.

	PS	LAN	HS	CM	PN	SC	FP	HE	OSC	LC1
PS	0	4	2	1	3	6	1	1	5	3
LAN	3	0	1	5	5	4	1	2	3	4
HS	4	1	0	1	1	3	3	5	1	2
CM	5	5	1	0	5	3	2	1	4	2
PN	3	5	1	3	0	5	2	1	3	5
SC	6	4	6	1	2	0	6	5	2	2
FP	1	1	3	1	1	6	0	4	1	1
HE	2	1	5	1	1	3	3	0	1	1
OSC	6	5	2	3	5	4	1	1	0	4
LC1	4	3	2	2	3	4	4	3	4	0



In the second phase of data collection, during an interview, I will ask you to reflect on these maps and consider in what ways the network might best be supported and developed. This may include consideration of challenges and barriers, as well as identifying facilitators and opportunities. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. This interview will take between 60-90 minutes. Again, these will be conducted over Zoom. The audio of these interviews will be recorded for future transcription and analysis.

Following each phase of the research, you will then be invited to a discussion group, providing you with the opportunity to see how your data is being represented and address any concerns you may have. This will also be an opportunity to seek your views and opinions on the emerging themes. All local co-ordinators within Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland will be invited to the discussion group, to identify and discuss the similarities and differences in their experiences. The maximum number of participants within each discussion group will be six. As with the interviews, these discussions groups will take between 60-90 minutes and conducted over Zoom. The audios of these discussion groups will be recorded for future transcription and analysis.

5. Will the information that I give you in this study be kept confidential?

In order to avoid storing any data on the Cloud, the PC/Mac version of Zoom will be used, with users signing in using their University of Glasgow email. Users will log in at https://uofglasgow.zoom.us with the domain uofglasgow.

In addition, any automated backups of audio or files stored in the User Account will be deleted immediately once files are downloaded and encrypted.

The data will be stored securely at the University of Glasgow, with access to computer files available by password only, and hardcopies of data being stored in a locked cabinet.

Access to the data will only be available to myself, as the named researcher, and, where applicable, supervisors and examiners.

However, confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee due to the size of sample or in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others.

The names of all individuals and organisations will be replaced by randomly generated numbers and codes. In all reports and publications no individuals will be identifiable.

Your **personal** data will be retained by the University only for as long as is necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval, 05/12/2022. After this time, personal data will be securely deleted.

Both paper and electronic copies of **research** data will be retained for 10 years after completion of the project, adhering to University of Glasgow Research Guidelines. All paper copies will be shredded. Electronic copies will be deleted

6. What will happen to the results of this study

The results of this study will be made available to peers and/or colleagues as part of a PhD thesis submission, though may also contribute towards journal articles or conference papers. Participants can also request a copy of the manuscript should they wish.

All participants will receive a written summary of the findings and I may also present the information to colleagues.

7. Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee

8. Who can I contact for further Information?

Should you require further information about this study, please contact a.orr.1@research.gla.ac.uk or my supervisor, Chris.Chapman@Glasgow.ac.uk

Alternatively, should you have any concerns about this study or wish to pursue a complaint you may wish to contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

--- End ---

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project:

Title of Project: **Collaboration in Practice: Perceptions of Multi-Agency Collaborations**

Researcher: **A. Craig Orr**

Supervisor: **Chris Chapman/ Claire Bynner**

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be what's known as the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in this research project. This privacy notice will explain how The University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why we need it

We are collecting basic personal data such as your name and contact details in order to conduct our research. We need your name and contact details to arrange interviews and ensure regular communication between the researcher and yourself throughout the data collection and analysis process.

We only collect data that we need for the research project and all personal data will be de-identified with the names of all individuals and organisations being replaced by randomly generated numbers and codes.

For further information, please see the accompanying **Plain Language Statement.**

Legal basis for processing your data

We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research we will be relying upon **Task in the Public Interest** in order to process the basic personal data that you provide. For any special categories data collected we will be processing this on the basis that it is **necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes**

Alongside this, in order to fulfil our ethical obligations, we will ask for your **Consent** to take part in the study. Please see the accompanying **Consent Form**.

What we do with it and who we share it with

All the personal data you submit will only be processed by myself. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe:

The data will be stored securely at the University of Glasgow, with access to computer files available by password only, and hardcopies of data being stored in a locked cabinet.

Access to the data will only be available to myself, as the named researcher, and, where applicable, supervisors and examiners.

The names of all individuals and organisations will be replaced by randomly generated numbers and codes. In all reports and publications no individuals will be identifiable.

Both paper and electronic copies of research data will be retained for 10 years after completion of the project, adhering to University of Glasgow Research Guidelines. All paper copies will be shredded. Electronic copies will be deleted

Please consult the **Consent form** and **Participant Information Sheet** which accompanies this notice.

What you will receive?

As a participant, you will receive the following information on research outcomes:

You will receive copies of the network data you provide, including the adjacency matrix and network maps.

You will receive a transcript of any recorded interview that you took part in, should you wish.

You will receive a copy of the thesis when finalised, or a summary if preferred.

What are your rights?

GDPR provides that individuals have certain rights including: to request access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and to object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the processing of the personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.

If at any point you believe that the information we process relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.

Please note that as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see UofG Research with personal and special categories of data.

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the webform or contact dp@gla.ac.uk

Complaints
If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) https://ico.org.uk/

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or relevant School Ethics Forum in the College.

How long do we keep it for?

Your **personal** data will be retained by the University only for as long as is necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval, 05/12/2022. After this time, personal data will be securely deleted.

Your **research** data will be retained for a period of ten years in line with the University of Glasgow Guidelines. Specific details in relation to research data storage are provided on the **Plain Language Statement** and **Consent Form** which accompany this notice.

--- End of Privacy Notice ---

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: **Collaboration in Practice: Perceptions of Multi-Agency Collaborations**

Researcher: **A. Craig Orr**

Supervisor: **Chris Chapman/ Claire Bynner**

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up until the data has been de-identified, without giving any reason.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

- All names likely to identify individuals or services will be de-identified, with names being replaced by randomly generated numbers and codes.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- Both paper and electronic copies of research data will be retained for 10 years after completion of the project, adhering to University of Glasgow Research Guidelines. All paper copies will be shredded. Electronic copies will be deleted
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online. In all reports and publications no individuals will be identifiable.
- I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I understand that interviews will be conducted online, via Zoom.

I understand that discussion groups will be conducted online, via Zoom.

I understand that the PC/Mac version of Zoom will be used, to avoid storing data in the Cloud.

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded via Zoom.

I consent to discussion groups being audio-recorded via Zoom.

I understand that any automated backups of audio files stored in the User Account will be deleted immediately once files are downloaded and encrypted.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant …… Signature ……

Date ……

Name of Researcher ……Signature ……

Date ……

Appendix 4: Indicative Questions

Below are some of the questions that were asked in the semi-structured, qualitative interviews:

- Are the network diagrams reflective of your experiences?
- What is different?
- Has anything changed since?
- Who are you working most closely with currently, and on what?
- What challenges have you come across?
- Are there any relationships you would like to develop?
- What are your next steps?

Below are some of the indicative questions that were raised in the following Focus Groups:

- Would you say these themes are reflective of your experiences?
- How have these manifested in your networks?
- What issues have been raised?
- Are there other commonalities you can identify across your experiences?
- What else is important in developing your networks?
- What other challenges have you come across?