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Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

# A review of international experiences in relation to the implementation of a statutory duty for interagency collaboration to ensure the protection and welfare of children

## Executive Summary

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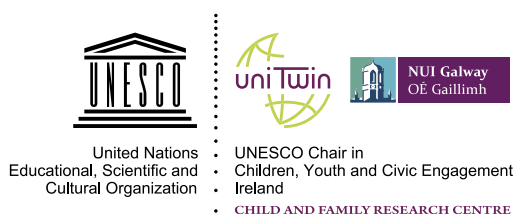
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# About the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) is part of the Institute for Lifecourse and Society at the National University of Ireland Galway. It was founded in 2007, through support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, Ireland and the Health Services Executive (HSE), with a base in the School of Political Science and Sociology, the mission of the Centre is to help create the conditions for excellent policies, services and practices that improve the lives of children, youth and families through research, education and service development. The UCFRC has an extensive network of relationships and research collaborations internationally and is widely recognised for its core expertise in the areas of Family Support and Youth Development.

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## Introduction

Effective interagency coordination and collaboration between agencies has become a key consideration in providing services to children and families. It is argued that the benefits of interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation are far-reaching, and that cooperation ensures a comprehensive response to concerns about children and young people. It aims to avoid gaps in service response and provides mutual support for professionals in complex cases (Health Information and Quality Authority, 2012).

In line with the Irish Government's commitment in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has undertaken an in-depth review of the Child Care Act 1991. As part of this a wide range of stakeholders were extensively consulted to collect their views on the legislation by means of a call for written submissions and a number of consultation events (DCEDIY, 2020). Effective collaboration among agencies working across the continuum of family support and children's services was repeatedly noted as critical to ensuring that children's needs are both assessed and met in a timely manner. By the very nature of the issue, it is clear that one agency alone cannot implement interagency cooperation. In line with developments in other jurisdictions, such as England and Scotland, submissions to the consultation suggested placing a legislative duty on agencies and bodies with responsibilities for children and families. Submissions also recommended incorporating a dedicated oversight group with representatives from all sectors.

## Research Aims and Objectives

Given that the consideration of a statutory duty of interagency coordination and collaboration in child protection and welfare was informed by stakeholders' views on current interagency collaboration in the Republic of Ireland, this report sought to explore international experiences on the duty for collaboration to identify key lessons and make subsequent recommendations to the Department.

The report, which was commissioned by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), derived from a multi-method study which:

- identified key lessons from experiences in other jurisdictions of a statutory duty for interagency coordination and collaboration, and
- considered context and drivers for reform, processes for implementation and changes in policy, as well as operational structures and models.

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The study also included:

- the review and consideration of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, resource requirements and the facilitators of and barriers to effective implementation, and
- the experience and impact of a statutory duty of interagency coordination and collaboration on all stakeholders, including service users and where possible children.

## Research Methodology

The aim of the literature review was to generate lessons on a duty to collaborate in child protection and welfare from academic and other publications. It included a focus on policy, effectiveness/ 'what works', and both 'grey' and academic literature.

Case studies were conducted to provide a more in-depth analysis of jurisdictions where a statutory duty has been introduced to underpin interagency coordination and collaboration; the cases examined related to the operation of a statutory duty to collaborate in these jurisdictions (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The case studies included a focus on practice contexts and evaluations of interagency collaboration in child protection and welfare. Interviews with key informants allowed for the exploration of ambiguities in policy and legislation as well as in the operation of interagency collaboration in the case study jurisdictions.

## Key Messages from the Literature

International discussions on interagency working imply that there is one specific way of working together to protect and support the welfare of children. However, there is no single model for multiagency working, with models reflecting varying degrees of integration across the different elements of collaboration, and in particular the remit and expected function of the multiagency approach (Bregu and Delaney, 2016, p. 9). Furthermore, approaches can be centralised or can use more localised structures, with degrees of prescriptiveness on how collaboration is implemented evident in both approaches.

While interagency collaboration with the use of available resources and expertise appears to be a relatively simple and pragmatic way of approaching child protection and welfare, evidence suggests that one of the first challenges relates to the definition of interagency working, both in general terms and within individual countries. This ambiguity in defining the concept leads to difficulties when conducting any jurisdictional review or international comparison, as what is considered interagency collaboration and how this translates into actions to protect children and provide for their

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welfare varies widely. Bregu and Delaney (2016) argue that this is partly due to the conceptual framing of 'multiagency working' within a country, but that it is also the result of how 'multiagency working' has developed within contexts, shaped by historical and cultural perspectives (p. 7).

Gilbert (1997) suggested that it is important to consider the different typologies of national child protection systems as these relate to conceptions about child abuse and the best way to protect children. For instance, variations in the manner in which child welfare or protection systems respond to concerns about child abuse impact on the nature of multiagency working, as does the characterisation of systems as either child protection oriented or family service oriented. In the last decade, approaches to child protection have become more complex than those operating in the early/mid 1990s. Child protection-oriented countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada have now adopted some elements of the family service orientation while countries previously operating within a clear family service orientation now respond to increasing concerns about harm to children (e.g., Nordic and continental European countries; CES, 2013). This has led to the emergence of a third orientation, which is child focused (see Gilbert et al., 2011; McGregor and Devaney, 2020a; 2020b).

A key issue that emerged from the literature across all sectors is that interagency approaches are heavily contextualised, meaning they take their form, focus and mechanisms from the policy-making and service-delivery frameworks they are situated in, but also from the substantive problems they aim to resolve. There is also a need to distinguish between interagency working at the levels of coordination, planning and decision-making on the one hand, and service delivery on the other. This helps to develop clearer objectives, targets and mechanisms of interagency working.

## Case Study Findings

The following section will provide examples of interagency collaboration in five jurisdictions; Northern Ireland; England and Wales; Canada; Australia; and New Zealand. Given that literature is rather descriptive in nature and sheds little light on the actual experiences of the duty to collaborate in the international context, seven key informants from these jurisdictions were consulted for in-depth consideration. Jurisdictions were chosen on the basis that a statutory duty had been introduced to underpin interagency coordination and collaboration. Further, inclusion also depended on the identification of key informants who were willing to participate in semi-structured interviews and discuss, if possible, the general context; specific legislative provision; operating procedures/processes; performance measure (where available); expert view; and lessons generated from their relevant jurisdictions. Due to the research team's inability to speak languages apart from English and German, the case studies are reflective of the experiences in English-speaking jurisdictions.

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## Northern Ireland

Under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is responsible for putting in place children's services on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. The 1995 Order provides statutory underpinning for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which is a multiagency strategic partnership consisting of senior leaders of all key statutory and non-statutory agencies.

The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 requires the Northern Ireland Executive, under statutory mandate, to promote interagency cooperation, and requires certain named bodies to cooperate. The Act also states that the Northern Executive must adopt a strategy to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

Under the Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 the Safeguarding Board is required to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of measures by each member with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Members are required to collaborate with the Board as well as with each other. The legislation is supported by a policy framework focused on safeguarding children.

The following key points were highlighted by informants from Northern Ireland:

- A statutory duty to cooperate and to make accountability arrangements is required.
- However, legislation is insufficient if not accompanied by a framework that guides practice.
- Collaboration needs commitment throughout relevant departments and agencies at all levels.
- An independent chair is necessary for a neutral and objective approach.
- Interagency collaboration will support the services that are in place but is not a panacea for the wider structural issues that impact negatively on children, young people and their families.
- A long-term approach to ensuring child protection and welfare is recognised as everyone's business and viewing the safeguarding of children in a positive manner is emphasised.

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## England and Wales

Under the Children Act 2004 children's services authorities must make arrangements to promote cooperation with key partners and local agencies, and pool together goods and resources to improve the wellbeing of children in their area. The Act also places a duty on a number of agencies, including a children's services authority, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The 'Every Child Matters' policy was developed to promote accountability and integration of key services around the needs of children. In line with this policy and the 2004 Act, local authorities had to set up children's trust arrangements that brought together key organisations with a focus on achieving the five national outcomes. The 2004 Act also set up Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in each local area.

In 2010 the UK Government removed the requirement to set up children's trusts and withdrew the statutory guidance. In 2017 it replaced LSCBs with Local Safeguarding Partners, where only the three main bodies bear (joint) responsibility for safeguarding children and making local arrangements. The *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidance document was updated to reflect those changes.

The following key points were highlighted:

- The ingredients for successful collaboration involved the legislative duty to collaborate, five key national outcomes, the 'Every Child Matters' policy, funding and the National Centre for Leadership (which trained leaders).
- Leadership that makes a difference is important and such leadership involves personality as well as attributes which can be learned and taught through multidisciplinary development. This style of leadership can be combined with developing an inclusive culture.
- Review and evaluation are important but they should be used to help learning and not to blame organisations. Outcomes are hard to measure on structures that are implemented only for a short period of time.
- Emphasis is placed on legislation, guidance and leadership to effectively implement the duty of collaboration.



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## Canada

Canada's provinces and territories have jurisdiction over child welfare; policies are similar but do vary. Interagency agreements therefore differ from one province to the next. In Ontario, child welfare services are funded by the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services and the government mandates community-based non-governmental organisations to deliver services. Child welfare agencies are community based, with some focusing on child protection and others on child and family services. The child welfare system takes a residual approach, with the state involved only as a last resort.

The Toronto First Duty (TFD) demonstration project was designed to test the feasibility and effects of a universal model for integrating childcare, kindergarten, family support and other services in school-based community hubs. Findings from the project have helped to change provincial policy in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada through promoting universal, integrated service systems for early childhood (Corter et al., 2012, p. 7). A single important cluster of policy changes in Ontario came about partly because of the pilot research on integrated services, showing the feasibility and positive outcomes of integrating services. The policy move is argued to be a clear success in terms of child development/learning outcomes, parent satisfaction and parent labour participation.

The following key points were highlighted:

- Evidence of the benefits of integrated working is necessary and must be publicised.
- Such knowledge needs to be mobilised in an accessible format to governments, the relevant professional groups and the public, parents in particular.
- Knowledge mobilisation in Ontario has involved government at the community, municipal and provincial levels to ensure its involvement in particular efforts.
- Key ingredients for success are partnerships of people who agree on a vision as well as evidence of the importance of recognising that a long-term approach is necessary.

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## Australia

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 was developed by the Council of Australian Governments and uses a public health approach to place children's interests at the centre of all policy and legislative development.

Australia has adopted a public health model of child protection. This model focuses on promoting the welfare of all children through investment in primary prevention programmes (Health Information and Quality Authority, 2020, p. 76). The focus of the public health model is that primary services are the largest component of the service system, promoting the welfare of all children, with secondary and tertiary services focusing on providing targeted services to children who are identified as being potentially at risk. Investment in primary prevention programmes has the greatest likelihood of preventing progression along the service continuum and of sparing children and families the harmful consequences of abuse and neglect (Health Information and Quality Authority, 2020, p. 78).

Child protection policies and practices are under continual development in each jurisdiction. There has been an increasing national focus on early intervention and family support services to help prevent families entering or re-entering the child protection system and to minimise the need for more intrusive interventions. Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that try to help families in a more holistic way, by coordinating service delivery and providing better access to different types of child and family services (Library of Congress, 2019, p. 31).

The following key points were highlighted:

- Collaboration in Australia is relatively new and is a work in progress.
- Its geographical size as well as its significant rural–urban divide is different to the Irish context. While urban areas arguably have made progress, collaboration in the rural context is lagging.
- Clear and detailed expectations on the outcome of collaboration is advocated.
- Child welfare and protection needs to be a shared responsibility. This approach can be supported through pre-service and in-service cross-sectoral training.
- Collaboration is seen as a solution to difficulties in child protection and welfare services. It aids understanding and a comprehensive approach to responding to the needs of children and young people. However, while collaboration provides many benefits it is also costly in terms of time and effort.

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## New Zealand

Since 1995, intersectoral collaboration, 'joining-up' government, regional coordination, local services mapping, local partnerships, and collaborative strategic planning have all become part of social service delivery and governance in New Zealand (Atkinson, 2007, p. 5). Initiatives address integrated service delivery and aim to improve services that require the input of more than one agency. Many different arrangements have been created between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, community groups, church groups and Iwi/Māori organisations that assist in the coordination of services. While positive effects of increased coordination and collaboration were observed, concerns were raised about the negative impact of this influx of collaborative initiatives. While collaborative processes may be effective in the long term, they require considerable investment of time and resources and there are limits to the capacity of agencies to actively participate in and sustain collaborative activity (ibid., p. 8).

The following key points were highlighted:

- Special consideration should be given to how government and non-government sectors negotiate and work together.
- Important factors for consideration when aiming for successful collaboration include power dynamics; the funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for outputs which may include hours spent at multiagency meetings; and the refusal of government agencies to share information with non-government partners.
- Interagency collaboration is required across a continuum of services. This includes universal and targeted services that work with children and young people from an early age onwards. Both a strategic and an operational focus are required.
- Recycling the approaches or models used in other jurisdictions is not recommended, but rather a collaboration model that works for specific context and time.

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## Discussion and Issues for Consideration

### Context

While not explicitly expressed in all jurisdictions, a statutory duty of interagency coordination and collaboration in both family service-centred systems and child protection-centred systems was seen to be driven by a number of factors including: changes in government; research and/or serious case reviews; clear evidence of lack of harm prevention or inadequate protection of children due to fragmentation of services; and difficulties in information sharing between agencies. The impact of public and political attention on the grave consequences of a lack of coordination and collaboration in child protection and welfare services has also been highlighted.

Policymakers across jurisdictions realise that a holistic view of childhood and a 'whole of government' approach is necessary to ensure the protection and welfare of children through increased attention to risk, early intervention and a continuum of care. Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that aim to help families in a more holistic way, by coordinating service delivery and providing a wide range of child and family services. Reviews and consultations with stakeholders across a number of jurisdictions emphasised the need for coordination and collaboration on a multidisciplinary and interagency basis.

### Legislative Measures

Legislative measures regarding a statutory duty of interagency coordination and collaboration take various forms across jurisdictions. Guidance documents to outline the specific aspects of coordination and collaboration and to address previously identified systemic weak points often complement the legislation. Other countries focus on legislative measures relating to case coordination, such as case conference models or networks of services, and leave strategic coordination to government policy. Although a legislative framework appears to be the foundation for effective interagency coordination and collaboration in many instances, the scope and interpretation arguably varies.

### Implementation

#### Evaluation

Evaluations in the jurisdictions reviewed are somewhat limited and are not routinely conducted. Where evaluations are conducted, they are not widely available, are primarily written in the jurisdiction's language, tend to be localised, and focus on specific issues that collaborative working is trying to address. In addition, evaluations appear to focus on measuring outputs and processes rather than outcomes. This may be because many jurisdictions are either still in the implementation phase or have moved on to a new model of collaboration. Furthermore, the potential to measure the effectiveness of interagency collaboration as it relates to children and families has been questioned, as neither baseline data nor data on comparable non-collaborative practices is available.

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## **Governance**

Similar to the scale of variety in the legislation, a number of operational structures and models are used internationally to implement and oversee effective interagency collaboration, both at national and local levels. Variations are arguably due to the geographies of jurisdictions and previous systemic orientations and structures, as well as the centralised or decentralised style of governance. The UK and Northern Ireland for instance have introduced centralised models whereas other jurisdictions, such as Nordic countries and the Netherlands, have taken a more decentralised approach.

Many jurisdictions have introduced collaborative practice models for joint service delivery to address child abuse, alongside their family-oriented services; examples include the Children's Advocacy Centres (Sweden), Sure Start (England) and Barnahus (Norway). Others have enhanced their preventive family support through models such as Family Group Conferencing (New Zealand) or the creation of Local Houses of the Child (Belgium) or Child and Family Centres (Netherlands) to provide a broad continuum of care. There are also different layers of collaboration such as co-location of services and common assessment frameworks or methods.

Internationally both legislation and operational structures are everchanging and aim to address the question of how much centralised direction and prescription is needed to achieve effective interagency collaboration and coordination. Desired collaboration cannot be expected without direction and guidance, while over-prescription can be equally problematic.

## **Resources**

Resource requirements for both centralised and decentralised approaches related to funding and wider measures of support and commitment from government and national and local agencies. Interagency initiatives such as coordination structures and posts as well as programmes rely on such supports to be effective.

## Barriers to and Facilitators of Effective Interagency Collaboration

Despite the difficulties around capturing what makes interagency collaboration effective, the combination of literature and case studies identified a number of repeatedly mentioned soft and hard barriers to effective collaboration for both centralised and decentralised approaches. Associated facilitators of effective collaboration related to both system and practice level were also emphasised.

**Table 1** Barriers to and facilitators of interagency collaboration

Barriers	Facilitators
Ineffectiveness of protocols and guidelines, i.e., too broad or vague in outlining processes of collaboration	Joint working arrangements and creation of a joint good-quality protocol that has a high-level review and sign-off as well as high-level engagement in writing
Misconceptions about information sharing and confidentiality as a result of protocols lacking clear guidance and procedures but also differing organisational cultures	
Lack of resources such as necessary funding, staffing and time	Programme funding, agencies' commitment to allow for time and funding for coordination
Lack of accountability, i.e., no ability to hold others accountable to the demands of their role in collaborative efforts	Strong leadership and management which is reflective, enabling but also directive
Lack of organisational support, e.g., appropriate supervision and training	Monitoring and supervision as well as initial training and ongoing professional development
Mistrust between agencies and subsequently among their workforce	Trust and an understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities
Professional rivalry, power relations and status differences, e.g., social work and statutory services status more privileged than family support or NGOs	Relationship building
Differing organisational cultures and history, with their own work practices, agendas and individual language	Meaningful joint training with emphasis on shared knowledge helps to develop a shared language, understanding and vision as well as personal connections
Different definitions of child endangerment and work practices, e.g., general health practitioners and child protection/welfare	
Insufficient role clarity and high expectation of other professionals leads to tension and conflict	
Insufficient or ineffective communication and not listening to each other due to lack of meaningful connections with other professionals	

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## Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting are critical to make the duty of interagency coordination and collaboration visible and to ensure the long-term success of collaboration initiatives, plans and actions. Monitoring and reporting can help to demonstrate accountability and commitment to stakeholders as well as to show that resources have been allocated and used wisely and have resulted in the desired processes and subsequent outcomes.

## Service Provider and Service User Experiences

A body of robust, systematically accumulated evidence on the experience and impact of a statutory duty of interagency coordination and collaboration on children and families does not exist. The limited available data on service provider perspectives indicates positive experiences overall, with service improvement relating to collaboration and coordination noted in Scotland, Australia and New Zealand as well as Sweden. However, the extant research demonstrates increased workload for professionals and general issues with capacity for interagency working within relevant agencies.

## Recommendations

### Legislation, Policies and Guidance

While a legislative basis for the duty to collaborate appeared to be an important first step for many jurisdictions, it nonetheless requires specific wording to ensure clarity and consistency in its implementation. If opting for centralised governance, this should include naming agencies and the particular structures that are required for interagency coordination and collaboration. In terms of an approach which favours the use of local structures and governance, an independent person or organisation should be nominated and funded to lead and coordinate interagency efforts.

Regardless of the specifics of legislation in terms of either approach, it should ideally be accompanied by appropriate policies and guidelines which detail how to achieve effective interagency working across the domains of child protection and welfare. Policies need to outline what is to be achieved, while guidance should clearly specify the issues of concern, who is to be involved to attend to these issues and how it is anticipated that any problems will be addressed through collaboration. Effective policies and guidance have to be clear and realistic, to mandate leadership for interagency collaboration and to list involved agencies. They also need to reflect lines of accountability, the statutory requirements, the scope of each agency, and guidance on information sharing, but also the resources available to support the collaboration.

It is important to adequately resource interagency collaboration and recognise that this can save resources over the long term by avoiding duplication and fragmentation. At the same time, interagency collaboration

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needs to be measured, and appropriate: not every initiative or action requires interagency collaboration. Furthermore, it is not a replacement for inadequate service provision and is intended to act alongside a sufficient range of responsive services.

### **A Common Agenda**

For agencies to work together successfully, there is a need to share, at all levels, a common commitment and purpose which professionals can refer to in their working practice to more effectively support the protection and welfare of children and their families. A shared vision or mandate which is understood and accepted by all relevant personnel is required. To drive the common agenda, a national campaign should be created and marketed to promote joint responsibility and a collective voice.

### **Shared Language and Understanding**

The development of a shared language and understanding is necessary as effective interagency collaboration is often hindered by the use of different terminologies. Differences in professional training, types of assessment, intervention tools and professional language should not be a barrier to effective interagency collaboration. There is a need for greater awareness among staff from different professional groups and agencies that meaning given by one group will frequently need clarification by others, and assumptions about common understandings should not be made.

### **Leadership and Organisational Culture**

International interagency models suggest that leadership and associated skills are a key element in achieving effective collaboration. Interagency working must be anchored with the leaders of the respective agencies, with senior managers modelling a commitment to collaboration. Ideally, leaders should be enthusiastic, have a clear vision, possess attention to detail and have the ability to create strong networks and alliances which involve all necessary stakeholders.

Organisational culture should value and support collaboration, providing professional development in order to enhance both leaders' and practitioners' collaborative competence. Consistent and effective supervision and training is argued to be crucial to guide practitioners through the complexity of collaboration.



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## Relationship Building Through Training for Joint Working

Although effective collaboration frequently requires formal structures and meetings to clarify roles and resolve disagreements, these structures and meetings should be as unbureaucratic as possible in light of the demands already placed on professionals. Strong personal relationships were identified as crucial to foster an understanding of the differences between sectors; clarify the specifics of collaboration and communication with collaborative partners; develop shared knowledge, a shared vision and a shared language; and establish the necessary trust among stakeholders for openness. Organisational cultures need to value and support relationship building and collaborative learning, which can be achieved through joint training. Increased joint training opportunities are required pre-service (while practitioners are undertaking their professional education), and in service (when qualified practitioners are working alongside each other). Jointly prepared protocols, physical proximity to other agencies as well as the use of common tools and web-based resources were found to enhance the effectiveness of collaboration.

## The Relationship Between the Statutory and the Community/Voluntary Sector

The relationship and collaboration between statutory agencies and the community/voluntary sector have repeatedly been described as strained (e.g., in Poland and Australia) due to power dynamics, unequal status and funding. It is essential to have a balanced and respectful relationship between the statutory and community/voluntary sector, underpinned by an understanding and appreciation of each other's role. Time and trust are required to build such relationships, which can be facilitated and supported through an inclusive approach where all partners are viewed as equal and as fundamental to the provision of a continuum of helpful, accessible services for families. This involves working to a common agenda which is supported by meaningful joint training and the promotion of a joint responsibility to ensure an effective continuum of support to children and their families.

## Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are important to track the benefits of collaboration for both practice, and children and families. While international examples, despite being fragmented, were able to capture the outputs and processes of collaboration during the implementation phase, outcomes for children and families and the more long-term effects of collaboration on practice are yet to be explored systematically. Clear indicators need to be developed to measure how collaborative working benefits children and families. In addition, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be integral to and embedded in interagency collaboration models to track progress over time.

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## Conclusion

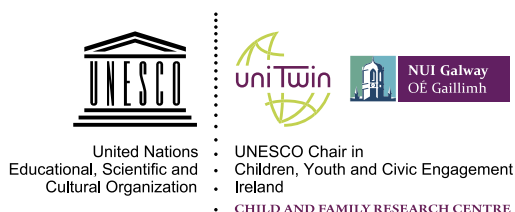
A statutory duty to enhance interagency collaboration is one of the commonly used tools to enable effective interagency collaboration and coordination. Initial impact of the duty to collaborate on jurisdictional systems is mixed and direct hard evidence of its impact does not exist. Qualitative data from key informant interviews demonstrated a statutory duty or framework to be useful but not a panacea for ensuring effective interagency collaboration and coordination for child protection and welfare. In Northern Ireland, for example, it compelled people to work together, while in England and Wales, the duty of cooperation and the coordination structures were important for achieving a holistic approach to child protection and welfare. In Australia, the national framework was instrumental in ensuring the creation of more policies at state level, whereas the duty in New Zealand helped to bring people together for a prolonged time.

Data suggests that the duty of interagency collaboration and coordination is necessary but is insufficient as a standalone measure. Northern Ireland highlighted that while an overarching strategic framework and legislation can compel agencies to collaborate, it is difficult to encompass every agency and to mandate the same task to each. Thus, joint protocols and associated guidance are important as they specify tasks for the collaboration. In the UK, the legislative duty was just one of the ingredients to ensure interagency coordination and collaboration. In addition, policy, a common agenda, funding and leadership were identified as equally crucial. Similar to Northern Ireland, Australia pointed to joint protocols but also joint training as critical factors. The latter was echoed by New Zealand where joint training was required to help develop a shared language, understanding and vision as well as personal connections.

Overall, there is clear evidence that effective interagency coordination and collaboration between agencies to provide services to children and families has become a key government objective across the globe. As noted, interagency collaboration is not a panacea but rather provides a more coordinated response to child protection and welfare. While there are promising approaches, no ideal interagency model was identified, as integration across the multiple elements of collaboration varies. Further, it was found that collaborations differ in terms of the remit and expected function of the multiagency approaches; such approaches are determined by national/local contexts and the structures created but also by the specific issues that interagency working is trying to address. However, although no ideal model of interagency coordination and collaboration was identified, there are nevertheless 'key ingredients' of promising approaches which should be given consideration when thinking about the introduction of a statutory duty to collaborate.

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