

**The Governance of Collaboration in Local Public Service
Delivery Networks**

**An Empirical Study of the Influence and Dynamics of Vertical and
Horizontal Coordination Tools in English Homelessness Services**

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics, October 2008

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Abstract

Multi-agency collaboration is often advocated as a means of tackling cross-cutting areas of public services and viewed as a solution to service fragmentation, with local agencies on the receiving end of government exhortations to collaborate. Yet there is relatively little research examining the effectiveness of policy tools and mechanisms aiming to stimulate local collaboration. This thesis examines the influence and dynamics of vertical and horizontal coordination tools, investigating their potential to enhance collaboration in local public service delivery networks and to reduce negative externalities. A theoretical framework is employed which synthesises models of policy implementation and bureaucratic decision-making. The empirical research is conducted in relation to organisations working with the homeless in England, and the research methods include a survey of Local Authorities and interviews with civil servants and frontline professionals. While governmental attempts to foster collaboration are partially effective, there are weaknesses with some of the policy tools employed, and limits to State control. Local actors' collaborative decision-making is influenced more by 'bottom-up' than by 'top-down' factors. Moreover, the competitive context in which service providers operate leads them to pursue strategies to promote their own organisational interests rather than working towards a dominant common interest. The strategies employed are broadly in line with a bureaucratic politics perspective, and include failure to share information, possessiveness over client outcomes and projecting an image of success rather than sharing problems. Nevertheless, formal collaborative mechanisms do have the potential to alleviate externalities associated with fragmented systems. With strong local management and appropriate central facilitation, they can help to meet client needs and to counter fragmentation, ultimately leading to better services.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have experienced homelessness, and to the committed staff in local services who work tirelessly to help improve the lives of those affected.

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List of Abbreviations

ACPO	Association of Chief Policy Officers
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CFOA	Chief Fire Officers' Association
CLG	(Department of) Communities and Local Government
DAT	Drug Action Team
DH	Department of Health
DIP	Drugs Intervention Programme
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EMIF	Ethnic Minorities Innovation Fund
GORs	Government Offices in the Regions
KLOE	Key Line of Enquiry
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LGA	Local Government Association
LHA	Local Housing Authority
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LSVTO	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Organisation
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of Parliament
NACRO	Crime Reduction Charity (formerly National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders)
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NHS	National Health Service
NOMS	National Offenders Management Service
NPM	New Public Management
ODPM	(The former) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PIU	Performance and Innovation Unit
PSA	Public Services Agreement
QUANGO	Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SP	Supporting People

Introduction

I Research context

Public policy issues which cut across the boundaries of government departments are commonly referred to as ‘cross-cutting’ or ‘wicked’ issues . These issues transcend departmental boundaries by virtue of their multi-dimensional nature, requiring holistic solutions which cannot easily be provided by single departments. Such matters span several government departments at the level of policy making and this is reflected at local level in the involvement of multiple local service providers. Because of the numerous actors involved, cross-cutting issues are increasingly recognised as requiring special coordination efforts at different levels of government.

This coordination ‘imperative’ is also influenced by the increasing fragmentation of the polity, affected by New Public Management reforms, where public services and government functions have been contracted out to private and voluntary sector organisations, now commonly characterised as the era of ‘governance’ or ‘networks’. In this context, some scholars have suggested that it has become increasingly difficult for government to control local actors, many of which fall outside of their line of authority and accountability structures. This has led scholars to characterise the current era as one of the ‘Hollow State’ or ‘Governing without Government’ .

In cross-cutting areas of public policy, and in policy fields affected by processes of fragmentation, governments in several OECD countries have pursued initiatives to enhance coordination . Such efforts are instituted in a variety of ways from the introduction of formal coordination structures such as partnerships, to laws governing interactions between key delivery agents, incentives and exhortations for agencies to work together, and cross-governmental policy programmes. In the UK such initiatives have been developed under the banner of ‘joined-up government’. These initiatives - or ‘tools’ of government - can be construed as examples of ‘meta-governance’, involving top-down, central state steering of multi-agency networks (Moseley and James 2008). However, policy actors involved in cross-cutting issues at ‘street level’ can also be said to pursue voluntary forms of coordination through informal interactions, mutual adjustments and information sharing, or through more formalised collaborative or contractual working arrangements developed from the ‘bottom-up’.

While the prevalence of cross-cutting issues in contemporary public policy and the corresponding need for coordination have been well-documented in research, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of government tools and strategies to enhance coordination at the local level. The promotion of multi-agency ‘collaboration’ amongst local service providers can be understood as one particular type of coordination initiative or meta-governance strategy pursued by governments, where collaboration itself refers to agencies working purposefully together on an issue of mutual interest or concern. Encouraging, incentivising or commanding agencies to collaborate is one possible method for governments wishing to enhance policy coherence for cross-cutting issues and to reduce ‘externalities’¹ or problems associated with fragmented delivery systems such as duplication of activities and gaps in service provision. Existing evidence presents a variable picture of government’s ability to mandate collaboration amongst local public service organisations, yet this is a strategy which is commonly used by governments both in the UK and elsewhere.

This thesis examines the influence of government steering of local collaboration in the English homelessness sector. A broad ‘tools of government’ framework is used to help delineate the particular mechanisms or ‘tools’ of vertical coordination used by government to stimulate local collaboration. The research also considers tools of coordination used at the level of central government. The influence of vertical steering is assessed using quantitative and qualitative evidence collected from local service providers. The evidence will contribute to the broader debate on ‘governing without government’. In particular, are local networks ‘self-organising’ or do central policy mandates to collaborate have influence over local actors? Does the network mode of service provision in this sector offer evidence of a loss of control and accountability? Does the stimulation of local collaboration by central government constitute an effective strategy for enhancing coordination in the fragmented polity?

Assessing the effectiveness of government coordination efforts requires an understanding of the wider factors contributing to local agencies’ decisions to collaborate in particular ways. Government steering is only one factor influencing inter-agency collaboration, and previous research has highlighted a range of other ‘contextual’ and ‘interpretive’ factors (discussed further in chapter one), including the wider policy environment, resources, the degree of interdependence, the possession of relevant skills and managerial competencies, and issues relating to organisational structure, culture and professional values. Moreover, the underlying context in which collaboration is promoted is

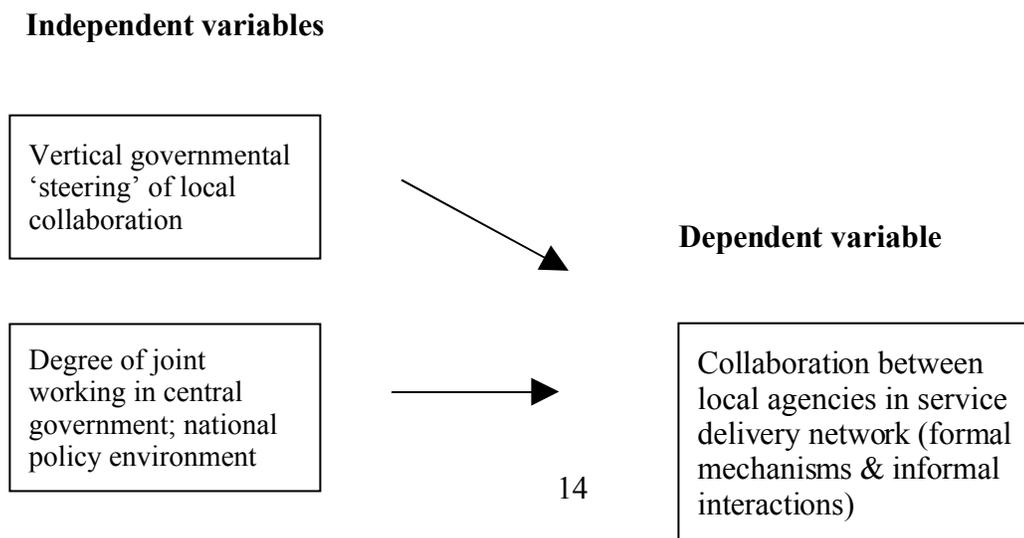
¹ A full definition is offered in chapter one; briefly, negative externalities refer to adverse consequences when one part of a system fails to consider the effects of its actions on another.

a terrain of differing and sometimes conflicting priorities, and uneven power and influence. Assessing the influence of government steering strategies to promote collaboration requires consideration of such factors which also influence organisational collaboration. In this analysis vertical governmental steering is considered an independent variable, which amongst other variables, may affect the degree of collaboration amongst local service providers, the dependent variable. The diagram below (figure I) outlines the framework for analysis within the present research.

Detecting variation in collaboration is a challenging task, and there are no existing validated measures of collaboration on which to base such an analysis. One of the contributions of the thesis is therefore to offer ways forward for assessing collaboration and investigating the influence of different factors. Two measures of collaboration are used, one assessing ‘formal’ dimensions of collaboration and another assessing ‘informal’ dimensions. Formal aspects of coordination refer to horizontal coordination tools or mechanisms which are developed to synchronise the work of different agencies, while informal aspects refer to the contact, interactions and communications between agencies in the course of daily work.

Although much has been written on forms of collaboration, very few studies have taken the approach of collecting systematic data across a single policy sector at a national level. The methods employed build on American studies which have utilised quantitative measures in an attempt to compare coordination efforts in different States, in fields such as economic development and mental health, as discussed further below. These methodological approaches provide promising avenues for mapping coordination across policy sectors and, to the author’s best knowledge, have not yet been applied to the study of public services in the UK context.

Fig I Framework for the empirical analysis



Local factors including
contextual &
interpretive issues



II Theoretical perspectives

In common with the subject of public administration itself, the study of collaboration is characterised by theoretical and disciplinary pluralism. The disciplines of political science, organisation theory, psychology, management, sociology and economics and their subfields have all made important contributions to the subject. Within these disciplines and subfields, theoretical perspectives such as exchange theory, inter-organisational theory, network theory, and rational choice theory have been employed as a basis for examining collaboration and cooperation more generally.

Since the focus of the thesis is the contribution of government to local collaboration, the theoretical framework employs perspectives predominantly from political science. However, reference is made to theories from other disciplines when they help illuminate particular aspects of the research questions. Two branches of political science theory are employed, notably theories of bureaucratic decision-making and theories of implementation, the selection of which is justified in chapter three. These theories have been influential within the fields of public policy and public administration generally, but have not explicitly been applied to the issue of inter-organisational collaboration in the context of public services. The research therefore makes a new application of these theoretical perspectives to the issue of collaboration and takes a novel look at the theoretical and empirical implications of these perspectives in this context.

Theories of bureaucratic decision-making

Two particular theories of bureaucratic decision-making are considered, namely rational-administrative and bureaucratic politics perspectives. Rational-administrative models of

decision-making suggest that policy is made and enacted through a rational process in which actors choose between alternatives in order to reach organisational goals, pursuing the strategies, or means, most likely and most efficiently to achieve these goals, or ends. In terms of explaining collaboration, the rational-administrative perspective would suggest that actors collaborate because they view this as the most appropriate and efficient way to meet client needs. Decisions are taken largely on technical grounds, with forms of collaboration selected according to the task environment and nature of problems addressed.

Models of bureaucratic politics, however, view decisions as occurring within a realm of struggles, compromises and negotiations. Following in the tradition of authors such as Allison and Halperin and more recently Peters, the bureaucratic politics perspective assumes that decisions are a product of a bargaining game between different sections or units within the polity, where the outcomes of the game favour the most powerful of these actors. This model is therefore more concerned with the distribution of power than with the rational application of rules. Where rules are followed, these are 'rules of the game' rather than rules of rational administrative decision-making. This perspective would suggest that collaboration decisions are motivated by agencies' desire to protect their turf, their resources and their position within the multi-agency network. From this perspective collaborative processes are likely to be characterised by negotiation, bargaining and compromise.

Theories of implementation

This research is also concerned with implementation issues, with collaboration conceived of as a policy which governments may seek to implement in relation to cross-cutting issues and in the context of fragmented service delivery systems. Two rival views of the policy implementation process are considered. In one view, the policy process proceeds in a top-down manner in which lower level policy actors neutrally implement the will of elected policy-makers. Writers from this perspective are concerned with the 'traditional' themes of public administration such as control, coordination and accountability. This perspective, which is most readily associated with Woodrow Wilson, affirms the politics-administration dichotomy and suggests that it is both possible and normatively desirable for governments to control bureaucrats.

In another view, the policy process proceeds in a more 'bottom-up' fashion, in which 'street level' actors shape and reformulate laws and policies. This view follows in the

tradition of Lipsky , Elmore , Goodsell and others. Writers from this perspective emphasise the discretion of lower level policy actors and many view the interpretation of laws and policies undertaken by ‘street level bureaucrats’ as essential to serving the public interest.

Decision-making theories and implementation theories are not viewed as opposing or mutually exclusive explanations, but rather examine different aspects of the policy process. This thesis examines the main factors affecting local actors’ collaborative decisions, with particular emphasis on the role of government steering, using a synthesis of these two branches of political science theory.

III Research questions

The research addresses the following key questions. The first is primarily descriptive while the second is explanatory, and third is more evaluative.

1. What is the nature of government steering of local collaboration?
 - (a) What vertical steering tools are employed by government to encourage local collaboration? How can these be classified?
 - (b) What is the extent and nature of collaboration in the multi-agency homelessness network? In particular, what is the relative strength of links between the different local agencies involved? What forms of collaboration, both formal and informal, can be observed?
2. What explains local collaborative patterns?
 - (a) What guides collaboration decisions? Are decisions amongst local actors to collaborate driven more by rational considerations or more by 'bureaucratic politics'?
 - (b) How influential are 'top-down' as compared to 'bottom-up' factors?
3. How *effective* are vertical and horizontal coordination tools in terms of enhancing collaboration and alleviating externalities associated with fragmented networks?

In order to address the explanatory and evaluative questions, it is necessary to examine a series of secondary issues. In relation to questions 2(a), actors' motivations for collaborating are investigated, including their motivations for developing particular coordination mechanisms. On question 2(b), the research considers the impact of vertical steering strategies in comparison to other more 'bottom-up' factors, including the relative influence of different vertical coordination tools. It is asked whether vertical steering tools result in greater collaboration and which tools are most effective. Addressing this question also includes assessing the extent to which local collaboration patterns and tools accord with those recommended in central policy guidance, or whether these are generated from the bottom-up. Question 3 which addresses the effectiveness of coordination tools in terms of alleviating externalities, involves examining the particular externalities affecting the homelessness sector from the perspective of those involved in the system.

IV The empirical setting

As already noted, this research examines these issues within the context of homelessness services. The English system is chosen as the particular locus for empirical investigation. Homelessness is a major facet of social policy within England and the United Kingdom more broadly, and is likely, given current economic turbulence, to become more important. It is a field where government in recent years has actively encouraged local agencies to collaborate. It is a domain where inter-organisational networks are pre-eminent, both because of the cross-cutting nature of the issue and because of the fragmentation of the housing and welfare system which provide services to homeless people, a fragmentation which has largely been created by New Public Management reforms. This thesis examines collaboration across the boundaries of the public, private and voluntary sectors, from which the main actors in the homelessness service delivery network are drawn. The research examines the impact of government steering approaches to collaboration used since New Labour came to power in 1997. Arguably, a multi-agency, collaborative approach to homelessness has been the cornerstone of Labour's approach to tackling homelessness in this period. The research is conducted principally at the level of 'street level bureaucracy' in order to investigate its motivations for collaborating, including local responsiveness to central policy mandates.

V Overview of data sources and research methods

The literature search strategy combines systematic searching of electronic databases using key search terms which operationalise the research topic,² and manual searching of relevant public administration and public policy journals and publications³. Relevant articles and publications were retrieved and citations contained in these sources were subsequently followed up. Searches were updated periodically throughout the course of the research. A search of the UK Index of PhD Theses has also been conducted to ensure the thesis did not replicate previous work. For practical reasons the literature review is confined to English language publications, although the scope of the literature consulted comprises contributions

² Databases included ASSIA, International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS), First Search and Web of Knowledge. Key search terms included collaboration, coordination, cooperation, multi-agency, inter-agency, network, homelessness, governance, meta-governance, using appropriate Boolean operators and search strings.

³ Journals hand-searched included *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Public Administration*, *Policy and Politics*, and *Public Policy and Administration*.

from a variety of OECD⁴ countries including the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the Netherlands.

The degree and nature of collaboration between agencies in the local homelessness network (both formal and informal) are assessed by conducting a survey of English local housing authorities (N=193)⁵. Surveys were completed by local authority officers with lead responsibility for homelessness. Local authority homelessness officers were asked to rank the degree of informal contact they had with other agencies in their local homelessness network and to indicate the range of formal coordination mechanisms in place in their authority with respect to homelessness services.

The nature of vertical steering is investigated using a combination of interview and documentary evidence. Interviewees included civil servants working in relevant government departments and street level bureaucrats working in local homelessness services (N=43). Documentary evidence included official publications such as the national homelessness strategy, the official ‘code of guidance’ for local authorities, local authority circulars, and select committee reports.

The relative influence of top-down and bottom-up factors is addressed through interviews with staff in relevant local agencies, as well as the survey and documentary evidence. Interviewees were principally managers and practitioners in local services involved in tackling homelessness including public, quasi-public, voluntary, and private sector agencies⁶. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of vertical coordination tools, the local picture, assessed through the postal survey, is compared to the official picture contained in government publications. Comparisons between local authorities undergoing different forms of vertical steering are also made in order to assess the relative influence of different steering strategies.

VI Thesis structure

Chapters 1-4 outline the research context, theoretical perspectives, hypotheses and methodology. Chapter one sets out the context of the research, discussing contemporary debates on governance and coordination, and then outlines the rationale for, and the key

⁴ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

⁵ 193 responses were received from 354 English authorities. The sampling frame is discussed in chapter four.

⁶ Public sector bodies included the local housing authority, and statutory health, social and criminal justice services. Voluntary sector agencies included frontline homelessness agencies, housing advice and support services, and other relevant agencies such as drug and alcohol projects. Quasi public and private bodies included housing associations and independent landlords.

factors affecting collaboration. Chapter two provides a conceptual review of forms of collaboration pursued both at the level of central and local government, including both formal and informal methods, and vertical tools or strategies used by governments to stimulate local collaboration. It also reviews existing empirical evidence and debates around the ability of governments to mandate collaboration between local agencies. Chapter three discusses the two branches of theory which provide the framework for analysis, and presents rival hypotheses on the antecedents of collaboration flowing from these theoretical models. Chapter four sets out the empirical context of the research and provides a detailed research methodology for addressing the study hypotheses.

Chapters 5-9 present the empirical findings. Chapter Five examines ‘externalities’ in the homelessness system from the perspective of local actors. Such externalities may provide a rationale for collaboration from a rational-administrative perspective. The chapter then outlines the main factors affecting collaboration, drawing on qualitative interview evidence, and using the framework set out in chapter one to structure the analysis. It also examines the level of local support for collaboration, a factor which is likely to affect central government’s steering strategy. Chapter Six discusses the steering attempts of the UK Government to stimulate collaboration in service delivery networks in English local authorities, discusses the strength of this policy agenda from the perspective of street level bureaucrats, and examines the degree of collaboration at the level of central government, which itself is considered a form of vertical steering. Chapter Seven presents quantitative data to assess the nature and extent of collaboration in the service delivery network and uses this to investigate the influence of government steering and other relevant factors on local collaboration. Chapters Eight and Nine complement this quantitative evidence, by examining the dynamics and perceived effectiveness of horizontal and vertical tools through a qualitative analysis of interview data.

While references to the theoretical framework are made throughout, Chapter Ten draws together the evidence on local collaboration and discusses this in detail in relation to the framework. It revisits the core questions of the research, namely, do rational-administrative or bureaucratic politics perspectives provide a more convincing explanation of why actors collaborate? Are top-down or bottom-up perspectives of the policy process more persuasive in explaining collaboration? This chapter considers the implications for the wider debates around government’s steering capacity in the era of governance, and implications for policy and practice.

Chapter 1: The rationale for and factors affecting collaboration

Chapter Overview

This chapter sets the context for the research questions which were outlined in the introduction to this thesis. The first section (1.1) begins by discussing the enduring interest with the issue of coordination in public administration, both within scholarship and within practice. The next part of this section considers why interest in the notion of coordination has been revived in the contemporary context. It then outlines the concept of service delivery networks, and discusses reasons why they are sometimes characterised as ‘self-organising’. The first part ends by highlighting the implications of recent developments in public services in terms of four key issues, namely, accountability, democracy, power and control. The second section (1.2) suggests that collaboration and joined up government may be considered forms of ‘meta-governance’ used by governments to counter perceived negative effects of fragmentation in the current context of public services. It then presents definitions of collaboration and outlines the key ‘drivers’ of this, including top-down and bottom-up factors. It subsequently discusses the rationale for collaborating both at the level of local public services and central government. This section ends by suggesting that governments increasingly are exhorting local agencies to collaborate and provides an outline of the approach used recently in the United Kingdom. The last part (1.3) outlines key factors affecting collaboration which are characterised as interpretive and contextual. Government steering is one of the factors included within this framework.

1.1 The search for coordination in a fragmented landscape

1.1.1 Coordination: a recurrent theme in public administration

Effective coordination of bodies involved in the work of government is a recurrent theme in the public administration literature and an enduring challenge in practice. Various definitions of coordination have been put forward in the literature, with some emphasizing coordination as a process and others seeing it as a desirable end-state . Fundamentally, coordination involves attempting to synchronise the parts of a system, so that they work in an integrated rather than a fragmented manner. At its most basic level, coordination involves active consideration of the effect that the activities of organisational units have upon each other, with the aim of attaining ‘whole system effectiveness’ . Coordination issues arise both between and within organisational units, although this thesis is concerned with the former case.

Coordination in the context of public administration includes both ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ coordination. The vertical dimension focuses on relations between tiers of government, and between governments and other global institutions, while the horizontal dimension is concerned with relationships between agencies, departments or units operating within a single tier or level.

Coordination challenges within government, either at central or local level, stem from the functional differentiation of government’s work into departments. The necessarily wide-ranging scope of governmental action requires a division of labour between departments, yet this sometimes gives rise to negative externalities or systemic performance effects . Externalities, as understood by economists, are a form of market failure. Mueller states that externalities occur when “the consumption or production activity of one individual or firm has an unintended impact on the utility or production function of another individual or firm”. Applying this idea to the public sector, externalities can be understood as the unintended consequences of the actions of one part of the public sector on another. Common externalities are contradictory policies and practices, duplication of activities and gaps in public services. These problems have been referred to respectively as the problems of incoherence, redundancy and lacunae . Coordination of government, at whichever level, is arguably about attempting to minimize such externalities.

Similar arguments have been made for *collaboration* in the context of public management⁷. Huxham and Macdonald, for instance, argue that collaboration is often promoted to address problems arising when organisations act without reference to one other. Such problems, they suggest, include repetition (duplicating activity), omission (leaving gaps in activities), divergence (diluting activity across a range of activities) and counter production (pursuing conflicting activities).

Governmental attempts to counter coordination problems have appeared in various guises in the context of British public administration, both at the level of central and local government. For instance, Chadwick's local government reforms of the 1830s and Victorian public health policies can be viewed as an attempt to improve horizontal integration between local public services. The Haldane Inquiry's report of 1918 made influential recommendations on the organisation of central government departments along functional lines, in order to improve coordination. Similarly, Churchill's experiments with ministerial 'overlords' in the early 1950s aimed to enhance coordination across central government departments. Arguments for corporate planning in the 1960s and 1970s were based on a perceived need for improved strategic coordination, as were the centrist coordination reforms attempted by the Heath government, including an experiment to create 'super-ministries'. Callaghan also attempted to tackle coordination problems in the field of social policy by introducing the Joint Approach to Social Policy programme in 1976. In the 1970s joint committees were introduced to provide mechanisms for coordinating the work of different local public and voluntary sector bodies in areas such as economic development and community care.

In the 1980s, concerns to avoid an 'implementation gap' between government policy and administrative practice can also be considered a 'vertical' expression of the coordination problem, in this case to ensure that civil servants and frontline public service workers were acting in synchrony with central policy makers. British local government reforms initiated under the Thatcher era were partially oriented towards reducing duplication, downsizing bureaucracy and increasing control over local government. As discussed further below, over the last decade or so, the coordination problem has been re-articulated in a number of ways, most notably in discussions of 'multi-level governance' and 'joined-up' government.

The common theme of such reform programmes is that they view organisational restructuring or tinkering as the answer to coordination challenges, although the motivations

⁷ Collaboration can be viewed as a strong form of coordination. See section 1.2 below for a full elaboration of the concept of collaboration.

for developing new structures or altering those which already are arguably as much related to politics and pragmatism as to ‘rational’ or ‘scientific’ principles.

1.1.2 Coordination in the ‘differentiated polity’: multi-level and multi-agency

Discussions of coordination have heightened in recent times due to an increasingly complex policy landscape. The decentralization and devolution of government and growing influence of supranational bodies and other aspects of globalisation have stimulated interest in multi-level and inter-governmental coordination . In the UK, processes of devolution, as well as enhanced powers for local authorities, have created sub-national and regional tiers with coordination roles distinct from Westminster. At the European level, the growth of new governance institutions has resulted in the dispersal of authority upwards beyond the level of the nation state. Such downward and upward processes imply a ‘de-centred’ state where coordination processes take place between and within different levels.

Within national governments, processes of state fragmentation and specialisation have taken place throughout OECD countries, with an ever-larger number of bodies involved in the business of both central and local government, many of which are autonomous or semi-autonomous from government . Coordination, in the contemporary climate, therefore, involves not only achieving synchrony between parts of government, but doing so with bodies that are at arm’s length from, or even independent of, national governments.

The process of fragmentation and growth of autonomous or semi-autonomous bodies involved in the work of government within nation states are commonly characterised as one part of a larger ‘new public management’ reform programme. This wave of reforms sought to inject managerialist and private sector principles into the public sector and swept a number of Western liberal democratic countries during the 1980s and 1990s . Although the term ‘new public management’ (NPM) exaggerates the cohesiveness of differing reform trajectories of affected countries , is an accepted label to describe the thrust of changes occurring in many OECD countries during the 1980s and 1990s. Rooted in managerialist philosophies and new institutional economics , NPM reforms sought to downsize bureaucracy through processes of disaggregation, and to enhance efficiency through privatisation and the introduction of competition into the public sector through internal markets. Thus large multi-objective public sector bureaucracies became divided into several smaller single-objective organisations, a process known as specialisation ⁸ (Verhoest, Bouckaert, and Peters 2007).

⁸ A process which can occur both vertically and horizontally

NPM reforms were also part of a neo-liberal agenda to re-affirm the politics/ administration dichotomy between policy makers and bureaucrats, to counter a perceived erosion of the boundaries between these two distinct spheres in which bureaucrats were viewed as wielding undue influence over the policy process.

In the UK, these processes have resulted in an exponential growth of executive agencies⁹, quasi-autonomous non-governmental bodies ('quangos') and other non-departmental public bodies operating at a national level . The growth of such bodies has decentralised much of the work of government away from the Core Executive , and relocated this work to bodies operating 'beyond the constitutional framework' (Flinders 2004: 892).

At the level of local public services, marketisation has created significantly increased involvement of the private and voluntary sectors and local quangos within the delivery of public services (Wilson 2003; Walker, O'Toole, and Meier 2007), with local government taking on the role of purchaser or commissioner of services in addition to its provider role. While local bodies besides the elected local authority have always played a role within public services in the United Kingdom, the growth in such bodies in the last three decades means that elected local authorities now 'share the local turf' with several other bodies with varying degrees of governmental power . Moreover, the state's relationship with many such bodies has changed since the establishment of the welfare state . Prior to this, the majority of private, voluntary and community organisations providing services such as social welfare, housing and health operated outside of the state's domain. The establishment of public welfare systems in modern democratic states has brought such agencies more firmly within the realm of government, even if not all services are directly provided by the public sector.

The growth of non-elected bodies at the level of local government is not simply a consequence of reforms generated by central government. Fragmentation has also been stimulated by local government itself. As discussed by Stoker (1991), local government in the UK historically has innovated and experimented through the creation of bodies to tackle social and economic problems such as inner city economic development partnerships and arm's length agencies including community businesses, enterprise boards and cooperative development agencies.

Taken together, such processes of fragmentation, specialisation and 'autonomisation'¹⁰ fall under the umbrella term of 'governance' . The notion of governance, as used in the field of public administration, refers to the involvement of bodies from outside

⁹ Through the introduction of the 'Next Steps' programme

¹⁰ Autonomisation refers to the increasingly independent nature of many of the bodies involved in the work of government, in terms of their relationship to government.

the traditional public sector in the work of government, such as those from the private sector and civil society. Collectively such bodies are argued to form ‘inter-organisational networks’.

Rhodes’ well known application of the governance perspective to the British context characterises the British State as a “disaggregated” and “differentiated” polity. This model describes a system where Westminster and Whitehall no longer dominate, and where public services are delivered in multi-organisational policy networks involving complex contractual arrangements. Rhodes describes this transition as a move from *government* to *governance*, where governance equates to “self-organising, inter-organisational networks (ibid, p. 53)”. Policy networks, according to Rhodes, comprise public, private and voluntary sector organisations and are characterised by interdependence and blurred organisational boundaries.

1.1.3 Service delivery networks as a mode of governance

The governance perspective suggests that networks are new and distinct modes of governance which operate alongside, or instead of, markets and hierarchies. In relation to public service delivery, terms such as ‘service delivery networks’, ‘policy service delivery networks’ and ‘implementation structures’ have variously been used to characterise the multi-organisational networks increasingly involved in the delivery of public policies. These networks have become a central object of analysis for contemporary analysts of public policy and administration. Implementation theorists, conventionally interested in issues such as central-local government relations and the relationship between policy makers and administrators, are increasingly shifting their focus towards such cases.

Implementation, these scholars would argue, is no longer simply a matter of getting things done in conventional hierarchical bureaucratic systems. Instead, getting policy into action involves coordinating inter-dependent networks of agencies. Wilson (2000, p. 279), for instance, states that “it is no longer acceptable to see central-local relations purely in terms of central government and local authorities”. Instead, it is necessary to investigate the “networks, alliances, and partnerships between elected and non-elected bodies, voluntary organisations and private business (that) operate at local level, albeit within a framework set down by the centre.”

The rise of service delivery networks can be explained in two ways. First, they can be regarded as a somewhat inevitable consequence of the New Public Management style reforms and processes of state fragmentation already described. Because of the greater use of contracts with private sector providers, the growth of hybrid forms of provision such as public-private partnerships and the increasingly prominent role of the voluntary sector, public services take place through complex configurations of services resembling networks.

Secondly, they may be viewed as emerging spontaneously, in response to issues which require multiple-agency involvement, particularly those issues which are ‘cross-cutting’, as briefly described in the introduction. Cross-cutting concerns of modern government, according to Peters, are ‘no longer seen as operating just within their own defined policy domain’. Examples include the environment, social inclusion, community development and regeneration. Such issues do not ‘respect’ organisational boundaries, and tackling them involves consideration of the wide range of contributing dimensions. Service delivery networks can be seen as emerging in response to such issues, and have been

described as ‘the patterns of interaction that emerge around policy problems and resource clusters’ .

1.1.4 Service delivery networks as self-organising

Governance theory discusses the difficulties facing governments in terms of their ability to control networks, and raises the prospect that service delivery networks may, to some extent, be ‘self-governing’ or ‘self-steering’, resisting central control . This view is influenced by network theory which regards networks as self-organising for a number of reasons.

First, the morphology of inter-organisational networks is horizontal rather than vertical. Relationships are less formal than in conventional bureaucratic structures, with fewer authority-based relationships . There is rarely a clear, coordinating actor, and as such, hierarchical strategies of coordination have limited relevance . As discussed by Hanf , much coordination of networks results from the interactions between members, rather than as a consequence of purposeful steering by a decision-maker. Furthermore, network membership is voluntary rather than mandatory, and decisions about participation are fuzzy, based on consent and negotiation, or ‘consensual self-selection’ . Rather than membership being pre-arranged or pre-decided by an authoritative body, members join if they perceive the issue involved to concern to them.

In addition, most network theorists assume that the patterns of interaction which emerge are based on the desire of individual actors to lever in valued resources and services provided by other actors. The relationships or ‘ties’ that bind networks are therefore primarily exchange-based. However, exchange is not always immediately reciprocated, because actors possess unequal amounts of resources. The recipient therefore becomes indebted to the donor until the debt can be discharged in some way . The consequence of indebtedness is that relationships tend to be more enduring. Exchanges are sometimes intangible or difficult to quantify, and it may not always be clear when a debt has been discharged. For instance, relationships often involve exchanging information rather than material goods. Such patterns of reciprocity tend to stabilise networks, with relationships becoming institutionalized, and network actors becoming embedded in networks.

The stability of networks is also influenced by the fact that actors may be reluctant to exit a network when they have invested their own resources, since exiting the network before these have been re-paid may be more costly than remaining within it. Networks also have a

tendency to inhibit entry to new members, becoming socially ‘closed’ . Networks are governed by the ‘shadow of the future’. Because they are relatively stable over time, there is a good chance that actors will meet again. This regulates the behaviour of actors, who become concerned about their reputation, learning that cooperative behaviour will be rewarded by others. This principle is supported by game theory, from which experimental research suggests that repeated interactions generate cooperative rather than competitive behaviour .

As a consequence of the features above, the nature of rewards and sanctions are somewhat different in networks as compared to other governance structures. Network behaviour is regulated through actors’ reputational concerns and according to norms of reciprocity rather than through legal sanctions. Due to the enduring nature of relationships and the repeated interactions involved, actors cannot afford to ‘pull a fast one’. Network members will only behave favourably to another network member if that member’s previous behaviour warrants this, for example if past history suggests that some reciprocal benefit will ensue. So, sanctions are normative rather than legal, and relationships are based on reputation, interdependence, trust or even altruism and friendship .

This brief depiction of networks provides some indication of why they are sometimes regarded as self-organising. Networks are flat structures, with no clear leader to take on organisational responsibility. They tend to emerge voluntarily around an issue when actors perceive the need to pull in resources from other actors. Moreover, they are sustained by interdependencies and norms of reciprocity rather than by legal or other vertical controls. Applying these insights from network theory to the governance of service delivery networks, it is possible that they are bound together by processes of interaction, exchange and reciprocity rather than by some form of deliberate steering from above, casting doubt on the ability of government to exercise control over them.

1.1.5 The implications for accountability, democracy, power and control

The implications of the trend towards the involvement of autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies in government and the growth of networks in the context of public services have been characterized in various ways. Particular concerns have emerged amongst scholars of governance around the issues of accountability, democracy, power and control .

The fragmented polity erodes accountability and democracy according to some perspectives. The institutional complexity of network modes of governance means that

responsibility becomes fragmented and elusive (Rhodes 1997; Newman 2005). For instance, where several organisations are involved in providing different aspects of a service, responsibility for the outcomes becomes diffused amongst the parties involved, making it difficult to hold any particular agency to account. Such forms of service delivery are particularly vulnerable to accountability problems because they lack a central coordinator or a clear line of authority, making it difficult for the service user or citizen to identify any avenue of redress for expressing any grievances. Frequently the service user becomes the coordinator in such cases, having to resolve issues of institutional complexity on their own. Such problems have led Rhodes (1997) to suggest that self-organising networks pose a threat to democratic accountability because they become autonomous and resist central control, leading to 'governing without government'.

In the context of British local government, the use of quangos appointed by ministers rather than elected local authorities to deliver key public services arguably obscures accountability towards citizens. particular measures have been introduced to hold quangos to account, such as According to Wilson , the sheer volume of 'quangocrats' now exceeds the number of local elected councillors, with an increasingly large share of public money vested in quangos. Examples of areas of local public services where local quangos have come to dominate service provision, as documented by Wilson , include housing, health and education. Although mandatory publication of membership of quango boards and annual reports, annual public meetings and the extensive use of performance monitoring, it can nevertheless be argued that the use of quangos ultimately leads to government by appointment and removes public services from political democratic accountability structures.

Also in the British context the plethora of partnerships in the current environment poses specific accountability challenges. Formal partnerships can be seen as a distinct subset of quangos, operating at arm's length from government . Empirical studies suggest that accountability arrangements, such as public access to board meetings, papers and information, transparency of decision-making processes, codes of conduct and the inclusion of elected participants, are often lacking in formal partnerships (Sullivan and Skelcher *ibid*). One recent study of partnership boards in two areas of England, for instance, found that while partnerships are often strong on *upward* accountability towards inspectors, auditors and funding bodies such as government departments, they are weak on *downward* accountability towards the public or the local community . While partnerships are often purportedly committed to community involvement, these authors found that participation by communities tends to be merely consultative rather than participatory. Furthermore, it can also be argued

that because partnerships tend to be located outside of the formal structures of member organisations, they are to a certain degree removed from the accountability structures of their member organisations, floating between organisations.

Finally, the growth of private sector bodies delivering public services means that accountability is increasingly based on economic rather than political models with individuals viewed more as consumers and less as citizens, with inevitable consequences for the economically disadvantaged and less powerful sections of society.

In relation to control and power, as noted in the introduction, some of the more pessimistic interpretations have discussed the rise of the ‘hollow state’ or of ‘governing without government’. These perspectives suggest that government, as the ‘principal’, is losing control over its ‘agents’. This is explained by the fact since the institutions through which it seeks to enact policy are only at arm’s length from government, these bodies fall outside of the direct control of central government.

While proclamations about the hollow state and self-organising networks are helpful in drawing attention to the changing nature of the state, they provide a somewhat exaggerated picture of developments. The degree to which the state’s power has diminished is a moot question. A more mainstream and arguably more realistic interpretation is that the State’s role has undergone changes, but that the State remains central to all forms of governance. This perspective acknowledges the persistence of hierarchy in the context of markets and networks. Indeed, some analyses of recent reforms in the United Kingdom suggest a re-assertion of hierarchy, partly in response to the growing complexity of the public sector.

A persuasive interpretation is that the state’s role is now less based on command and control than on coordination and steering. Since many of the organisations to be coordinated fall outside of the public sector, the government’s coordination strategy has to move from an authority-based to a persuasion-based approach in which it ‘steers’ from a distance.

Indeed, growing recognition of the inherent limits of top-down control within multi-actor policy settings has led to a search for new appropriate tools of governance. Such tools are often described as ‘informal’, ‘soft’ or ‘light touch’, and contrast with the traditional, formal tools of government (see chapter two for a full discussion of government policy tools). These involve exerting *indirect* influence over implementing actors. As one commentator has put it, governments that use contractors to provide services can ‘negotiate, create incentives, or threaten non-renewal of contract, but they cannot command’. In an era of ‘third party government’ where the State has limited control over service provider agencies, it has been suggested the today’s public managers need to learn the skills of

incentive creation and collaboration, since issuing orders as in a conventional hierarchical system is no longer a viable option . Moreover, new modes of accountability may be required in the fragmented polity, with traditional accountability mechanisms associated with representative democracy less applicable in an environment dominated by non-elected institutions (Rhodes 1997; Flinders 2004). Such views acknowledge the importance of networks within the context of public services but suggest that these operate in the ‘shadow’ of hierarchy , since it is still the public sector that sets the overarching framework for action .

In relation to service delivery networks, since government does not possess the authority or legitimacy to govern some of the actors involved, with actors answerable to other stakeholders, governance becomes as much about managing relationships between organisations as with managing organisations directly. All this has led to calls for new instruments of ‘network governance’ capable of exercising leverage over networks and influencing relations between actors (Salamon 2002; Rhodes 1996). Accordingly, it has been suggested that government’s ‘toolbox’ has become more ‘horizontal’ in recent decades Ringeling (2002, p. 592).

1.2 Collaboration as ‘meta-governance’

This thesis responds to this call and is concerned with how the State coordinates and exercises control over networks of service providers in the age of governance. A variety of approaches for exercising leverage over networks have been documented in the literature, including merging agencies, reorganising boundaries and using performance systems to align organisational objectives (the full range of approaches is discussed in chapter two).

The focus of the thesis is with one particular example of network leverage, namely, *the stimulation, by central government, of collaboration between lower level bodies involved in public service delivery*. This is a type of ‘meta-governance’, which has been defined as the government of governance . Meta-governance involves government or other parts of the state facilitating or steering new forms of governance such as networks. As a shorthand, the term ‘meta-governance tools’ is sometimes used within this thesis to refer to the vertical tools of government used specifically for the purposes of stimulating local collaboration. This form of meta-governance can be viewed as a strategy available to governments which responds to the concerns of the need to be able to influence relations between actors, rather than merely to exercising control over actors.

Meta-governance can also be seen as one response to the coordination difficulties and externalities arising in service delivery networks. To ensure these networks operate in a coordinated manner, the horizontal relationships between local agencies become a focal point for governments. Governments frequently enjoin agencies involved in delivering public services to collaborate as a means of achieving coordinated policy outcomes. New Labour's 'joined-up government' programme has been one example of this, the characteristics of which are discussed further below. In the field of human services where coordination difficulties routinely arise, collaboration has for a long time been deemed important, and in recent years agencies in this field have come under increasing pressure to collaborate.

1.2.1 Definitions of collaboration

Collaboration is usually seen as a mode of operation which involves organisations or individuals working together towards some common purpose. For instance, Huxham (1996: 1) has described collaboration as 'a very positive form of working in association with others for some form of mutual benefit'. Collaborations between organisations, or 'inter-organisational collaborations', she suggests, at the very least involve individuals from one organisation working with individuals from another. At most, they involve complete organisations working in harmony. Similarly, for Sullivan and Skelcher (2002: 1), collaboration in relation to public policy, is 'a way of working with others on a joint project where there is a shared interest in positive outcomes'. These definitions indicate that a major reason for collaborating is to fulfil some mutual interest. A third definition is offered by Agranoff and McGuire who define collaborative management processes as "the process of facilitating and operating multi organisational arrangements to solve problems that cannot be solved, or solved easily, by single organisations." This definition suggests that effective problem solving for certain issues requires the input of more than one organisation, implying a degree of interdependence between the organisations involved.

All three of the above definitions view collaboration as a process or form of working across organisational boundaries. For present purposes it is sufficient to define inter-organisational collaboration as *a process in which organisations actively and jointly work together across organisational boundaries*. As will be discussed in chapter two, there are differing degrees of collaboration and numerous forms of collaboration.

1.2.2 Drivers of collaboration: mandated versus voluntary

The drivers of collaboration may be divided into two main categories: top-down and bottom-up forces. Bottom-up collaboration tends to be voluntary in nature, while top-down collaboration is usually led by government edict or incentive. As already noted, there is much evidence of collaboration being driven from the top-down in the UK context. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that bottom-up pressures have influenced the growth of collaborative modes of governance, with local authorities playing a major role in their initiation, in fields such as urban regeneration (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002) and transport. Goss has attributed the increased local emphasis on collaboration to a growing focus on service outcomes, improved strategic management capacity at local level, better understanding of the wishes of local people and an increasing tendency for local authorities to consider the needs of local communities.

When collaboration is directed authoritatively from above, a super-ordinate administrative body, usually central or local government, specifies to lower level agencies the nature of relationships and linkages they should have with other agencies. Alexander has referred to this as the 'mandated framework', which is distinguished by legal-political mandates rather than voluntary interactions. Examples of authoritative strategies available to executive or legislative bodies are to create new programmes of agencies, to legislate in order to formalize previously informal links between agencies, or to reorganise agency boundaries and linkages (Hudson 1997). Alternatively, governments can use softer, incentive-based strategies, by creating conditions which facilitate collaboration. This is often achieved by altering the way in which financial resources are allocated in order to bring agencies into a desired set of relations or by central policy making bodies using exhortation in the form of powerful 'calls to action'. Vertical tools for promoting local collaboration are discussed in more detail in chapter two.

Within the bottom-up voluntary category of collaboration, agencies come together for a range of reasons, some of which may be altruistic and others more instrumental in nature. On the altruistic side, agencies may have a shared vision they wish to work towards or a conflict to resolve (Gray 1996); alternatively there may be a desire to enhance participation, address power relationships, empower marginalized groups or in some other way, affect change (Huxham 1996). Agencies may also be brought together by a genuine desire to work to alleviate social problems, and regard a holistic, multi-agency approach as the best method. This has been termed the 'moral imperative' argument and suggests that there is a moral

necessity to collaborate in order to achieve desired outcomes. Similarly, agencies may be motivated to work together in an attempt to increase the seamlessness of services for the citizen or service user .

Booth (1988, see Hudson 1995, p. 236) calls the altruistic bottom-up voluntary perspective the 'naïve position'. Hudson (ibid) suggests that the naïve position is underpinned by an assumption of altruistic rationality which presumes that agencies will come together for the good of the community they serve, and because they believe they are more likely to efficiently attain their ends by working collaboratively rather than independently.

However, voluntary collaboration may be driven by more instrumental considerations, including the ability to access resources held by other organisations, share risk and achieve economies of scale, or simply because an agency cannot achieve its aims by working alone . These factors, which can be powerful motivators for collaboration, are highlighted in exchange-based perspectives of inter-organisational relations and networks. These perspectives suggest that actors enter into processes of interaction and collaboration in order to lever in resources held by other organisations . The resources sought may be informational, technological, knowledge-based, human or financial.

1.2.3 The rationale for collaboration in public service delivery networks

While the above description outlines different drivers of collaboration generally, this section discusses the rationale for collaboration within public service delivery networks. Specific reference is made to human services networks, a category to which the homelessness network investigated in this thesis can be considered to belong.

In service delivery networks, where it takes several agencies to deliver a single public service, there is arguably a strong need for inter-organisational coordination. Usually each agency provides one component of the 'package' and relies on others to contribute others. This characteristic of service provision is particularly prevalent in human services networks . In contrast to situations where a single agency provides the entire service, coordination must take place not simply within an organisation but between organisations. Although the organisations remain as distinct entities, collaboration across boundaries may help to ensure that the different components are delivered effectively. Without collaboration of this nature, a range of externalities may occur.

Broadly, these fit into the three categories identified above, notably incoherence, over-provision (redundancy) and under-provision of services (lacunae). These problems often occur due to problems such as agencies' failure to share information, to agree on their respective roles and responsibilities and to have in place appropriate formalized procedures at key points within the service system. Due to the complex configuration of services, and the lack of a coordinating body in many cases, such problems are commonplace.

Typical examples of *incoherence* in human services networks occur when policies and procedures of different agencies counteract each other. At an operational level, the provision of contradictory information and advice to clients by different agencies is one example. At service planning level, the policies and practices of some agencies can openly undermine the attempts by others to achieve desired outcomes. For instance, one recent British study found that the hasty discharge of elderly patients from acute hospital wards to increase bed spaces left social services departments to cope with large numbers of elderly people prematurely back at home, and in need of additional rehabilitation .

Under-provision of services takes a range of forms. First, actual gaps in services may occur when agencies mistakenly assume other organisations are providing a service which they are not . Since no agency has clear oversight of all services, agencies collectively fail to detect the gap in provision. Such a problem implies a lack of coordination at the service planning stage. Secondly, from a client's perspective, they may be unable to access existing services. This may be a partial consequence of the difficulty of negotiating a complex and fragmented service system. However, it may also be caused by organisations' failure to inform clients of the correct details of available services and to make appropriate referrals, perhaps due to a lack of knowledge about other local services. Similarly, clients can 'slip through the cracks' between services when agencies fail to share relevant client information with each other in a timely manner.

Third, under-provision can also occur when agencies shift responsibility for clients onto other agencies. Examples have been found in some areas of human services where clients with complex needs are 'dumped' onto other agencies when staff feel ill-equipped to deal with the issues at hand or when clients' problems seem intractable . Such problems are particularly acute for clients with co-morbid conditions, such as simultaneous mental health and addictions problems, where there is dispute over which problem takes precedence . When these problems occur, it is often unclear which agency is ultimately accountable for which aspect of the client's care. Examples of patients and clients who experience gaps in services because of straddling systems of care abound in the human services. Examples have been

identified in areas as diverse as adolescents with eating disorders , antenatal psychiatric care and managed care for the elderly .

Over-provision refers to the duplication of services and activities by more than one agency in the same area. Over-provision may be a consequence of a lack of joint planning at an area level. Funding arrangements are also a cause of duplication, with overlapping funding streams resulting in the same type of project work being funded under different schemes in one geographical area. At operational level, agencies may be unaware that work has already been carried out with a particular individual, resulting in duplication. A frequently cited example of this is the repeated assessment of the same clients by different agencies. Consequently, clients are forced to repeat their ‘story’ to several agencies .

The potential problems of incoherence, redundancy and lacunae serve to illustrate why human service systems and other service delivery networks are often the target of coordination efforts. Local level, horizontal coordination involves agencies agreeing on devices or strategies which will minimize systemic effects and enhance the functioning of the service system as a whole.

1.2.4 The rationale for collaboration in central government

As discussed above, the collaboration ‘imperative’ applies equally to central and local levels, and a discussion of collaboration in central government is highly relevant to questions of government steering of local collaboration. If central actors are poorly coordinated, the capacity of local actors to collaborate is likely severely to be curtailed. For instance, conflicting targets, messages and priorities pursued by different government departments can act as impediments to *local* cooperation (PIU 2000). The differing accountability requirements of local bodies towards their corresponding regulator can also impede local collaboration. In addition, because local collaborative projects are often funded and tightly controlled by central civil servants, coordination problems between civil servants at central level will often keenly be felt by those working at local level .

Collaboration in central government in the UK typically refers to both collaboration between ministers and collaboration between civil servants . As central government becomes dispersed, a degree of collaboration is also arguably necessary between other parts of the government machinery such as executive agencies and regulatory bodies . Further forms of central government collaboration are discussed in chapter two.

However, collaboration in central government is challenging for a number of reasons. Most importantly perhaps is the tendency for departmentalism or ‘silo-thinking’ (Kavanagh and Richards, 2001; Page, 2005). At the root of the problem is the functional separation of the work of government into departments. The problem of departmentalism involves ministers and civil servants concentrating on their own narrow departmental remits without consideration of how their actions affect of the wider system of government. The pursuit of one policy without consideration of the effects on other parts of government can lead to a number of externalities or ‘spillover effects’.

Three recent examples of policy incoherence at the level of UK central government serve to illustrate. Firstly was the failure on the part of the former Department for Education and Employment to consider the impact of introducing a universal school leaving age on the social security bill . Secondly, also in the field of education, was the impact of the introduction of school league tables which led schools to exclude unruly, under-performing pupils by schools and resulted in higher juvenile crime rates . A third example illustrates that the problem of negative externalities applies as much to the vertical relationships between central and local government as to horizontal relationships between agencies or departments. In this example, James found that the introduction of an electronic record system by the UK Benefits Agency impacted negatively on the ability of local housing authorities to housing administer benefits efficiently.

A number of commentators have suggested that such externalities have been exacerbated by New Public Management reforms. For example, Pollitt argues that the emphasis on performance, outputs and targets has led central bodies to become even more narrowly focused on their own performance, rather than on wider systemic performance. In a similar vein, Ling (2002) suggests that the incentive structure during brought in by New Public Management reforms have been geared towards departmental objectives instead of system-wide objectives. It has also been argued that increasing fragmentation caused by reforms such as the creation of Next Steps Agencies has led ministers to become more ‘departmentalist’ in a bid to maintain control over their policy areas (Kavanagh and Richards 2001).

1.2.5 Central exhortations for local collaboration in the contemporary policy context

This section considers how the drive to encourage local collaborative working is manifested in the contemporary UK policy context. As noted by Sullivan and Skelcher (2002), partnerships have been a popular tool of collaboration used by the UK government for some time, and there has been growing use of central government directed partnership initiatives in fields including urban regeneration, community safety and health and social care since the late 1970s. The use of horizontal governance approaches such as partnerships, joint working and collaboration, however, have become far more prominent under New Labour. The emphasis on joined-up working between local service providers underpins central policy frameworks affecting local government, including the modernizing government white paper of 1999 (Cabinet Office 1999) and the 2006 local government white paper (CLG 2006c). In one interpretation, fairly typical of other analyses, Labour's first term in office was characterized by a 'hegemony of joined up governance'.

The 'brand' of joint working which has developed in the UK under New Labour is generally regarded as a fairly top-down one in comparison with other countries, although examples of governments mandating inter-agency collaboration from the 'top-down' can be found elsewhere including in Canada, Japan, the USA and the Netherlands. The drive to encourage partnerships by New Labour coincided with a highly prescriptive, top-down model of policy implementation pursued in their first few years in office. Consequently, rather than leaving local agencies to initiate joint working, the government vigorously pursued this agenda through a range of coordinating mechanisms and policy tools.

For instance, dedicated pump priming grants and funding streams were established to support multi-agency projects, and 'Beacon Awards' introduced to reward innovations in 'cross-cutting' work. As discussed by Asthana, Richardson and Halliday (2002), a variety of area-based initiatives such as Health Action Zones, Sure Start, Employment Zones, Education Action Zones and New Deal for Communities were established to encourage multi-agency approaches, and Local Strategic Partnerships were set up to consolidate partnership working. Indeed, one estimate suggests there to be as many as 5500 types of centrally-driven partnership body operating at sub-national level across the UK.

Cross-cutting Local Area Agreements and Local Public Service Agreements, both types of central-local compact, are further examples of central initiatives which have been introduced to enhance coordination at local level. In addition, a recently reinvigorated government compact with the voluntary sector aims to promote the involvement of this sector in public services delivery and policy, and to improve partnership working between the public and voluntary sectors.

Although the practice of collaboration between agencies dealing with cross-cutting issues has a long history in the UK, there is increasing pressure from government for service providers to formalize their collaborative arrangements, with a growing tendency to make joint working mandatory . This trend is evident in a number of other countries including Australia, New Zealand and the USA . In the UK a range of policy sectors have been on the receiving end of exhortations to collaborate with other sectors, including health and social care , and the social welfare and criminal justice sectors .

Recent integration measures in the field of criminal justice include the merging of police and probation into the National Offender Management Service, and the establishment of Crime and Disorder Partnerships which compel various local bodies to work in partnership . In the health sector, the 1999 Health Act placed a duty on NHS bodies to work in partnership, for example through more joint commissioning between primary health care and social services, particularly in relation to services for older people. In addition, financial incentives for joint working in the area of intermediate care were provided through a national performance fund . In social care, the structure of children's services has been altered with the creation of Children's Trusts, in an attempt to ensure that efforts to protect and promote the wellbeing of children and young people are more coordinated. The Children Act 2004 also introduced mandatory cooperation between social services departments and other key bodies to prevent child protection failures. As this thesis will demonstrate, homelessness is another policy field influenced by the growing tendency for multi-agency working to be mandated and promoted by government.

The examples above illustrate the commitment of central government to a strategy of partnership or collaboration at local level. However, although the plethora of partnership programmes and initiatives cited suggests a centrally driven approach, the strategy for encouraging joint working has, according to Stoker , altered as the limitations of this approach have come to be known. The initial approach used by New Labour to drive forward joined-up local government has been criticised and provides useful learning points about the difficulties of steering collaboration from the top-down. Particular problems reported by 6 et al. (2002) include the speed and volume initiatives introduced across local public services in the UK, unrealistic expectations about how quickly results could be attained, and the design of bidding arrangements which meant that agencies tended to band together in the pursuit of additional funding rather than because of any real desire to collaborate.

Despite the plethora of partnership programmes and pervasiveness of political rhetoric on joined up governance in the UK, assessments of the implementation of

partnership working in local authorities have indicated slow or mixed progress to date . For instance, evidence from a recent meta-evaluation of the sweep of UK local government reforms under the ‘modernizing government’ agenda shows few indications of stronger collaborative working between the public and private sectors, and little effect of increased partnership working on user satisfaction. The report calls for government to provide further incentives and opportunities to enable local authorities to make more fundamental and radical changes to cross-boundary working, in order to enhance collaboration, particularly at the operational level . Hambleton et al. (1995) have also documented unimpressive results from early attempts at inter-agency collaboration in the UK, such as the introduction of joint financing and joint planning in community care.

Disappointing results have also been reported in other settings. For instance, Weiss , summarizing research studies of programmes aiming to enhance service integration in the United States, reports that the common theme of these evaluations is one of ‘frequent frustration, conflict, and disappointment associated with these programmes’ . The research she summarises suggests that few such attempts lead to greater coordination in terms of the number of inter-agency linkages made. Weiss questions why policymakers continue to promote attempts to foster integration in the face of such ‘overwhelming evidence’ of implementation failure, concluding that much of the appeal lies in the symbolic and expressive content of the coordination message. Hill and Lynn (2003) similarly report a high rate of failure in terms of efforts in the North American context to produce lasting and productive collaboration in the field of human services. A similar concern is raised by Davidson , who, investigating inter-agency relationships between housing and social services departments in the UK, notes that ‘commentators on the effects of coordination are almost wholly pessimistic, yet coordination continues to be promoted as a means of providing greater rationality in the delivery of services’ . The challenges of *government mandated* or ‘top-down’ collaboration are discussed further in chapter two.

The next section considers the key factors affecting collaboration generally, both obstacles and enablers. The challenges highlighted go some way to explaining why collaboration is often problematic. They also help explain why governments may encounter challenges when attempting to promote it.

1.3 Key factors affecting collaboration

The key factors affecting collaboration can be classified in various ways, however, there is reasonable consensus amongst researchers about the main issues that hinder and facilitate it. The broad distinction first made by Halpert (1982) and subsequently employed by Alexander (1995) between *interpretive* and *contextual* factors affecting collaboration provides a parsimonious classification, and is illustrated in figure 1.1 below¹¹. Such factors can be considered explanatory or independent variables influencing collaboration. Where such factors are present, collaborative endeavours are more likely to meet with success; conversely, where these are lacking, collaboration may be more challenging. The factors listed are consequently considered antecedents of collaboration. This framework is used in subsequent empirical chapters to guide the analysis.

Fig 1.1 Antecedents of collaboration

Interpretive antecedents

- Domain consensus
- Trust/ positive history of collaborative working
- Goal congruence
- Mutual understanding

Contextual antecedents

Intra-organisational:

- Decentralised structure, devolution of decision-making to frontline staff
- Number of organisational levels
- Broad range of services provided, complex tasks
- Competent trained staff, although not overly professionalised
- Culture: cosmopolitan/ pluralist world view
- Sufficient resources

Inter-organisational/ environmental:

- Compatible organisational structures, e.g. coterminous geographical boundaries/ compatible IT systems, timetables, planning frameworks & funding regimes
 - Interdependence
 - Fragmentation/ volatility of political, economic or service system
 - Geographical proximity
 - Presence of 'boundary spanning' individuals/ collaborative leadership
 - Facilitative policy environment, including well-coordinated central government units/ 'joined up' government policy/ collaboration in central government
 - Government mandate to collaborate
-

(Adapted from Halpert 1982 and Alexander 1995)

1.3.1 Interpretive Factors

¹¹ Halpert and Alexander's frameworks are based on comprehensive literature reviews of inter-organisational coordination generally and provide more extensive lists of factors; the adapted framework below focuses on those factors which are most relevant to *collaboration* specifically and which are supported by further research as discussed below).

Interpretive factors relate to attitudes and values held by staff in organisations, including the perceptions and images that they hold of those in other organisations . Four core interpretive factors affecting collaboration identified in the literature include domain consensus, goal congruence, trust and mutual understanding.

The first factor, domain consensus, indicates agreement over the respective territory and roles of different organisations involved. Greater consensus in this regard implies that agencies will not feel that other organisations are ‘invading’ their field of work. While agencies may wish to protect their own territory , they may also wish to relinquish some of the less desirable tasks to other agencies, either because they are difficult to resolve or less glamorous. Where the activities of agencies are very distinct, there is less potential for disagreement over domain . As discussed by Hudson (1995), establishing consensus over domain is a difficult process, requiring different professionals to resolve disputes over who is responsible for what. A similar point is made by Stoker (1991) who suggests that there are some areas which are ‘accepted action spaces’ dominated by particular agencies or local authority departments in which their role and decisions are left unchallenged, but other areas of ‘debated territory’ where a number of agencies or departments claim involvement. Disputes over territory, according to Alexander (1995) are one area where legal or political mandates are often used in order to specify the domain and roles of the different actors involved.

In relation to the second factor, goal congruence, or similarity of goals, where goals are similar organisations are more likely to identify with one another, resulting in greater cooperation. However, goal congruence is not always possible in service delivery networks, since agencies are often brought together by virtue of the fact that the different agencies involved provide different functions and services. Their overarching aims and goals are therefore different. When attempting to provide a service in collaboration with other agencies, however, it may be important for those involved to attempt to align their aims as closely as possible, or at least to acknowledge their differing aims. The ‘implementation failure’ of a number of large scale, multi-agency public sector projects has been attributed in part to a lack of clarification over aims from the outset . Goal congruence is similar to the notion of inter-organisational homogeneity discussed by Hudson . This is the extent to which organisations are structurally and functionally similar. Where organisations are similar in these respects, collaboration is more likely, although when they are too similar, the relationship may become competitive. In the case of service delivery networks, agencies with

very similar remits may jostle for position as they compete for funding or clients, and too much overlap may create organisational redundancy.

The third interpretive factor, trust, is regarded as a vital component in the process of collaboration. A number of empirical studies have demonstrated a positive association between trust and collaboration. Trust in this context is important because the actors involved are in a position of vulnerability or uncertainty. Collaboration is an inherently risky activity, since the benefits of collaborating are not always clear from the outset. The benefits are often fairly intangible and may only emerge over time. Furthermore, in order to attain the benefits of collaboration, actors are reliant on the participation of other actors, yet they have few mechanisms for enforcing participation. Becoming involved in collaboration can be a highly resource-intensive process, and so unless there is a degree of trust, actors may feel the cost-benefit trade off is too uncertain to risk becoming involved.

However, trust is something which can only develop over time. Therefore committing to inter-agency collaboration can initially involve something of a 'leap of faith'. Once actors become embedded in processes of interaction, trust can develop. As observed by Gray (1996, p. 66): 'trust ensues when members' interests are heard and acknowledged as legitimate by others'. Additionally, once agencies develop a reputation for 'fair dealing' or 'principled conduct' they are more likely to be trusted (Cropper 1996). As Cropper states, trust at the inter-organisational level develops when there is 'shared experience of expectations met' (ibid, p. 96). Consequently, agencies becoming involved in collaborative projects have been advised to begin with small-scale, achievable tasks which can help quickly to build trust, which provides a firm basis for subsequent interactions. When an organisation has a history of successful collaboration with another, future attempts to collaborate are considered more likely to succeed.

The fourth interpretive antecedent, mutual understanding, refers to awareness of the constraints, pressures and priorities of other organisations. Several case studies have highlighted this factor, and suggest that tensions between agencies involved in collaborative processes often stem from a lack of awareness and understanding of these issues.

There is some evidence to suggest that problems associated with interpretive factors may be exacerbated when a range of professional groups is involved, where there are differences in language and terminology, culture, values or world view, management strategies and working practices, and where core business and priorities differ. One of the difficulties of achieving collaboration is an unwillingness to surrender organisational autonomy and a fear of having to adapt to the working practices and institutional norms of

another organisation, and consequently professionals can engage in ‘turf guarding’ behaviour

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1.3.2 Contextual Factors

Contextual factors are the more ‘objective’ factors which exist within an organisation (*intra-organisational* factors) or its wider environment (*inter-organisational* and wider environmental factors). In the case of service delivery networks, the environment includes other organisations within the network but also central government agencies, pressure groups, clients, the economic climate and so forth.

At the *intra-organisational* level, a number of contextual factors may affect an organisation’s propensity to collaborate. As discussed by Halpert (1982) and Alexander, organisations which are decentralized are more likely to be open to collaborating with other organisations than those which are centralised. According to Alexander (*ibid*), this may be a reflection of decentralised agencies’ prior experience of coordinating internal units. Second, collaboration is considered more problematic where it must take place across organisational levels. In the context of public services it is frequently the case that policy responsibilities overlap between tiers of government, creating problems of communication, conflicting mandates and competing priorities. Third, organisations which provide a broad range of services which engage in complex tasks are more likely to engage in collaboration than highly specialized organisations with a narrow focus. Fourth, organisations with well-trained and competent personnel may be more predisposed to collaborate, since they are likely to be more confident, seeing interactions with other organisations as posing less of a threat. Although expert competence may enhance collaboration, highly professionalised organisations where members are affiliated with professional bodies and where recruitment and promotion procedures are based on professional credentials may be less likely to collaborate. Fifth, in cultural terms, organisations with a cosmopolitan and pluralist world view which support innovation will be more open to collaboration than those with a more parochial outlook, concerned predominantly with local and internal issues. Organisations with a ‘collaborative culture’ are also adaptive, responsive, and confident enough to devolve decision making downwards to frontline staff (Newman 1996, cited in Sullivan and Skelcher 2002).

An additional *intra-organisational* antecedent of collaboration is the level of organisational resource available, either specifically for collaborative work or in more general terms. Inter-agency collaboration is a high cost process, and is likely to require additional resources, both financial and human. Despite this, collaboration is something which is often ‘tacked on’ to agencies’ core work by governments without any additional

existing funds. Where local authorities are under financial strain, for instance experiencing budget cuts, becoming involved with external organisations comes to be seen as something of a luxury. Such pressures are particularly acute in smaller local authorities or public agencies which command fewer resources. When there is little spare capacity in the system, and in fields where there is a constant pressure on resources, collaboration is less likely to occur.

At the *inter*-organisational level, contextual factors affecting collaboration include compatibility of organisational structures and processes, the level of interdependence between agencies, the degree of fragmentation, geographical proximity, the presence of boundary spanners and government policy or mandate. Clashing organisational structures and processes include timetables, planning frameworks, funding regimes, IT systems and differing geographical boundaries have been shown in previous research to differences pose considerable practical difficulties in relation to collaboration. The level of interdependence between agencies is a key antecedent of collaboration. As noted above, interdependence can stem from the need to lever in material resources held by other agencies, including financial resources, equipment, or human resources including the expertise of other agencies' personnel. Agencies may also be interdependent in the sense of being reliant on the actions of other agencies in order to fulfil their own objectives. Resource interdependence has been shown to be one of the most important motives for cooperation within networks. Studies from this perspective indicate that as network actors become engaged in patterns of exchange, they develop a norm of reciprocity. Indeed, network theory holds that such norms and processes of exchange are the key agents which bind networks together in the absence of hierarchy. Related to this, a fragmented or volatile political or economic system is likely to enhance the likelihood of collaboration, since this enhances agencies' sense of mutual dependence (Alexander 1995).

Geographical proximity is sometimes considered a facilitator of collaboration, particularly in the context of human services where shared premises can make a significant practical difference to agencies' ability effectively to undertake day-to-day tasks in a collaborative manner (Alexander 1995). The presence of 'boundary spanning' individuals is also considered an important facilitator of collaboration. These individuals have particular abilities which assist the process of inter-organisational collaboration, as discussed further in chapter two. There is also a growing literature which highlights leadership qualities which may act as facilitators of collaboration. Several attributes of collaborative leadership have been identified, including the ability to build consensus, settle disputes, mobilise partners,

‘play the politics’ where necessary, as well as the ability to develop structures and systems that facilitate collaboration .

Lastly, government promotion of collaboration either through incentives or forms of exhortation may be regarded as a further environmental antecedent of collaboration. Conversely, central government policies can often impede collaboration. In the UK, for instance, there has been criticism that government promotes joint working and the sharing of best practice between agencies yet situates them within a framework of competition, for instance through performance league tables tied to funding, and competitive bidding arrangements .

In summary, core ‘ingredients’ of successful collaboration highlighted in existing literature include both interpretive and contextual factors . Generally speaking, the more abundant these properties, the greater the level of collaboration is likely to be. However, any one of these ingredients alone may not be sufficient to enhance collaboration, and empirical studies suggest that combinations of these factors need to be present . Furthermore, these factors may act as inhibitors or facilitators of collaboration, depending on the circumstances. For instance, while under some circumstances resource constraints may inhibit the capacity of organisations to collaborate, in others this may compel agencies to cooperate, as emphasized in exchanged-based perspectives.

In light of the factors affecting collaboration, a number of commentators have sought to generate advice for practitioners involved in collaborative endeavours . These analysts highlight the need to generate trust, mutual understanding, open communication, information sharing and to craft a sense of common purpose. They also suggest that in order to minimise the negative effects of cultural and organisational differences, those involved in collaborative endeavours need to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the role, skills and prior training of others in the network and how these may impact on their professional values. These scholars also highlight the need to find ways of allowing agencies to enhance their understanding of the priorities of other agencies and the constraints within which they are working. Within formal partnerships, attention to partnership size, linkages at appropriate levels, careful selection of a lead agency and attention to the dynamics and make-up of multi-agency boards or steering groups are considered important.

The discussion above illustrates that collaboration is a complex, time consuming and resource intensive process. Whilst a lack of collaboration is usually the focus of discussion, there are also potentially negative consequences of over-collaboration, in terms of the diversion of time and resources away from agencies’ core business. In addition, there may be

costs to organisational autonomy , and the benefits usually take time to emerge. For these reasons, academics and other commentators have urged public sector managers to be cautious about the number of partnering arrangements to which they commit themselves, and to enter into them only when the benefits will outweigh the costs .

Conceiving of collaboration as a ‘policy’ that governments may wish to implement, the evidence suggests that implementation is unlikely to be straightforward. The policy is concerned with changing the relationships between actors, which is a time consuming and difficult business. A range of factors affect the willingness and ability of agencies to collaborate with others, including both interpretive and contextual factors. A variety of antecedents may be required for collaboration to proceed including some combination of goal congruence, domain consensus, trust, sufficient resources, interdependence and the presence of boundary spanners. While government can influence some of these factors, others are clearly local issues which can only be determined by those on the ground.

Chapter 2: Horizontal Collaboration and Vertical Meta-Governance

Chapter Overview

While the previous chapter introduced the rationale for collaboration in local public service delivery networks, this chapter provides conceptual clarification, and classification, of the main forms of collaboration. It also outlines and classifies vertical coordination tools used to foster collaboration in local networks, characterising these as forms of ‘meta-governance’. The chapter begins (section 2.1) by considering the horizontal dimension, and outlines levels and varieties of collaboration. Section 2.2 classifies formal coordination tools used to ‘join-up’ central and local government. It also discusses issues governing horizontal tool choice. The third section (section 2.3) discusses informal collaboration and the role of the individual. The chapter then considers the vertical dimension (section 2.4), and outlines vertical tools for joining up local public services (section 2.5). This section also contains a discussion of issues governing horizontal tool choice. The last section (2.6) considers existing empirical evidence which has investigated the influence of government-driven collaboration.

2.1 The Horizontal Dimension: Conceptualising Collaboration

How, then, can collaboration best be conceptualised and how might it be evidenced? As discussed in chapter one, collaboration at a very general level is usually seen as a mode of operation which involves organisations or individuals working together towards some common purpose. It has been defined as *a process in which organisations actively and jointly work together across organisational boundaries*.

2.1.1 Levels and varieties of collaboration

There are many varieties and levels of inter-organisational collaboration, and despite attempts to classify these, there is no universally agreed or consistent framework. Terms such as cooperation, collaboration and coordination are often used interchangeably within the literature, and mean different things to different authors. Nevertheless, most analysts agree that there is a spectrum of collaboration, moving from weak links at one end to stronger forms of integration at the other. As illustrated in figure 2.1 below, several authors view collaboration as a strong form of coordination.

Fig 2.1 Spectrum of collaboration

Author (s)	<i>Level of integration</i> →					
	Weak				Strong	
Cropper 1996	Wide Networks	Loose alliances		Tight federations		Novel organisational entities
Sullivan and Skelcher 2002	Loose networks of informal, ad hoc relationships	Limited agreement to share information	Agreement to undertake activities jointly	Agreement to constitute formal governing body	Federal Structure	Merger into single organisation
Kooiman 2003	Networking	Coordination	Cooperation			Collaboration
Cigler 1999	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination			Collaboration
Leutz 1999; 6 2004, 2005	Linkage		Coordination (eg sharing information in a planned manner)			Full integration
Mandell 1999	Linkages/ Interactive Contacts	Intermittent coordination/ mutual adjustment	Ad hoc/ temporary task force activity	Permanent/ regular coordination through formal arrangement	Coalition (interdependent actions)	Collective structure (joint & strategically interdependent actions)
Crawford and Jones 1996; Barton and Quinn 2001	Multi-agency working					Inter-agency working
Rogers 1974	Acquaintance	Interaction	Information exchange	Resource exchange	Overlapping board membership	Written agreements
Reid, 1964	Ad hoc coordination					Programme coordination
Scharpf 1994, 1997	Negative coordination					Positive coordination

Depending on their location on the spectrum, the nature of collaborative activities is likely to differ. Similarly, the degree of institutionalization and formalization of interactions between organisations will also vary. Examples of high spectrum collaborative activities or ‘coordination tools’ relevant to implementation networks include the establishment of new multi-agency programmes, bodies, boards or teams, joint written agreements, joint commissioning, legal partnerships and jointly provided services. These tools move beyond simple information sharing into the realm of establishing common goals. Fritz Scharpf’s distinction between positive and negative coordination is helpful in underlining the difference in approach between the two ends of the spectrum. Negative coordination has fairly limited aspirations and involves ensuring that policies, practices and procedures do not interfere with those of other units or organisations. Positive coordination, however, is more ambitious, involving the pursuit and utilization of joint strategies in order to improve system-wide effectiveness.

Higher end collaborative activities are usually more costly and there is arguably a greater need for active network management, involving network design and the diagnosis and management of disagreements. These more highly integrated varieties of collaboration may yield greater benefits, and enhance inter-organisational support, but they also increase the likelihood of conflict. They are highly formalised, implying greater commitment, cooperation and compromise from participating organisations, and often the selection of a central organisation to lead the collaboration. Membership of collaborative structures at this end of the spectrum is likely to be more stable than ad-hoc. These forms of collaboration are also likely to entail greater loss of autonomy, affecting the internal working practices and standard operating procedures of the organisations involved, thus institutionalising joint activity.

At the lower end of the collaborative spectrum, agencies may come together to work on a common area of concern, however joint activities are unlikely significantly to alter the work carried out by the individual agencies concerned, and only limited cooperation is required. As stated in one analysis, ‘multi-agency work is grafted onto existing practices, making joint working as non-threatening as possible’ (Barton and Quinn 2001, p. 51). Such collaboration is often referred to in the literature as ‘informal coordination’. Varieties of this include discussions and information exchanges, either through informal channels of communication via telephone, e-mail and written correspondence, or through face-to-face contact in ad-hoc consultation meetings and events. These ‘loose’ forms of collaboration are more reliant on individual relationships and interactions than on established rules, designated roles or jointly agreed operating

procedures. According to Hudson (1987, p. 179), this type of informal, tacit collaboration is more common than highly formalised joint working in social welfare contexts.

Examples of collaborative activity in the context of human services include multi-agency case planning for service users, often at transitional points where clients move from one system of care into another, as well as the coordination of service use for clients, and sharing client information between agencies in a planned manner (Leutz 1999). Applying the 'spectrum' of collaboration to the field of human services, weak forms of collaboration include inter-agency referrals and ad-hoc information sharing between agencies. Joint forums or bodies whose main purpose is to share information and consult may also be considered relatively weak forms of collaboration. These activities may take place without affecting existing organisational arrangements or structures. Moderate level activities include the establishment of boundary spanning posts for linking agencies together, case management posts and planned or routinised client information sharing between agencies (ibid). Such moderate level procedures imply a degree of formalization, since rules, policies and procedures may be written down, and processes established to deal with points of friction. However, they are less formal, authoritative and contractually binding than those in fully integrated versions of collaboration. Strong collaborative activities in this context include multi-agency teams, joint commissioning and joint management boards (Hambleton et al. 1995; Leutz 1999).

It is a recurring theme in the inter-organisational relations literature that agencies tend to resist the tightest forms of collaboration. There is a general preference for weaker forms, since these are less costly, they allow organisations to maintain more of their independence and pose less of a threat to standard operating procedures. However, the stronger forms of collaboration may yield greater potential benefits.

In summary, there are both degrees of collaboration and several different varieties of collaboration. In addition, the distinction is often made between formal and informal collaboration, with the former implying structural, procedural, binding arrangements and the latter based on spontaneous, ad-hoc interactions and individual relationships. Formal collaboration tends to involve the employment of horizontal coordination 'tools' or 'instruments'. The next section considers methods for classifying these tools.

2.2 Formal tools of collaboration

Horizontal coordination tools are employed both in local service delivery networks and at the level of central government. Since one of the core aims of the present research is to

identify and classify the tools of collaboration employed at both central and local level, each of these levels is considered in turn.

2.2.1 Classifying formal horizontal coordination tools at local level

Numerous coordination tools or mechanisms can be employed at local level to join up agencies. These tools may be used to structure interactions between the parties involved and increase the congruence of their activities. As such, they can be conceived of as instruments of network management. These have been classified in a number of different ways. The following discussion attempts to bring some order to the diverse array of horizontal coordination tools.

One means of classifying coordination tools is to distinguish between the organisational level at which they are pursued. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) provide a framework which distinguishes between coordination processes and activities at strategic, governance, operational, practice and community levels. In this framework strategic activities include creating partnership boards, steering groups and other stakeholder groups. These groups define the vision and key themes of collaboration. Governance level coordination includes joint accountability and performance systems, which normally exist alongside the performance and accountability systems of individual organisations. Operational level coordination refers to organisational structures and processes such as pooled budgets, joint planning and commissioning of services, integrated delivery, formal or informal agreements, information sharing and staff secondments. Practice level coordination refers to the skills and abilities required of the workers involved. Finally, community coordination methods include programmes and funding designed to enhance community involvement and public information strategies.

In the context of human services¹², including areas such as child welfare, mental health, learning disability, care for the elderly, and homelessness, strategic and operational levels of collaboration may also be defined. Strategic or “policy-level” tools include coalitions, planning authorities and welfare councils involving officials and executives from relevant funding agencies or service providing organisations. According to Agranoff (1991, p. 536) efforts at this level must be made if collaboration is to be secured further ‘down the line’. For instance, executives at the apex of organisations involved in a collaborative endeavour are responsible for making the decisions about resourcing and supporting operational coordination structures and mechanisms. Coordination efforts

¹² Human services have been defined as those whose mission is to “promote and protect the well being of individuals, families and other social units through mandatory or voluntary interventions in their lives” (Hasenfeld 1983, see Hill and Lynn 2003, p. 78).

such as joint budgeting, joint service commissioning and the establishment of reviewing groups or task forces are likely to stem from this organisational level.

There are numerous varieties of operational tools and these are sometimes classified into two further subcategories: one relating to administrative functions and the other to frontline service delivery. Administrative tools include joint information and monitoring systems, single applications forms or processes, jointly agreed referral agreements, designated posts for forging inter-agency links and coordinating services ('boundary spanning' posts) and joint staff training. Operational tools relating to service delivery include co-location of services, interagency teams and joint case management. Co-location involves delivering multiple services from one location, such as the one stop shop approach to provide clients with services all under one roof (Leutz, 1999). Inter-agency teams involve regular meetings between practitioners with different professional backgrounds and from different agencies to coordinate services for individual clients. Joint case management typically entails devising multi-agency service plans for individuals with multiple needs or problems.

An additional means of classifying forms of collaboration is according to the 'mode' of interaction or activity involved. This is the principal framework adopted within the present study. Van De Ven et al. distinguish between group, personal and impersonal modes of coordination, with each mode containing a range of coordination tools. Although developed in the context of intra- rather than inter-organisational theory, it nevertheless provides a useful organising framework for classifying coordination mechanisms. Indeed, Alter, and Alter and Hage have subsequently used this scheme to analyse inter-organisational relations. The classification draws on earlier work by March and Simon and Thompson.

Impersonal modes are a means of achieving 'coordination by plan' (March and Simon 1958), or by 'programming' in Van De Ven et al.'s terminology. This form of coordination is pre-established or determined in advance of the situation in which it is to be applied. They are therefore 'anticipatory' forms of coordination, taking place at the planning stage (Alexander 1995). Impersonal modes involve the use of codified, standardised blueprints for action. These blueprints are 'impersonally specified' and provide a set of formal rules governing the roles of participants. They imply little need for verbal communication or application of human discretion since the rules are previously codified. Examples include standardised information and communication systems, policies and procedures, formalised rules, pre-established plans, agreements, contracts and schedules.

Personal and group modes are two forms of achieving 'coordination by feedback'. Coordination by feedback involves the transmission of new information and therefore cannot be determined in advance. They are 'adaptive' forms of coordination, occurring in 'real time' (Alexander 1995). With both group and personal modes participants make mutual adjustments as they receive new information, implying the need for face-to-face contact. Personal modes of coordination are based on linkages between individuals, either vertically in a chain of command or horizontally usually through a designated coordinator without formal authority over other participants. Group modes include committee or staff meetings, which are either scheduled or unscheduled. Scheduled group meetings are typically routine, planned staff meetings, while unscheduled group meetings are impromptu and informal, organised to tackle work related problems as they arise.

Such classifications which specify different modes of coordination and associated tools are helpful for bringing some analytical bite to fuzzy notions of 'joined up government'. Similar schemes can also be applied to the context of central government, as discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 Formal horizontal tools for joining up central government

As discussed in chapter one, collaboration employed at the level of central government is a potential stimulant to local joined up working. Where central government policies are joined up, local services themselves are more likely to be coherent. Where central policies are not joined up, the conflicting mandates of government departments may promote incoherence at a local level. This section considers the major forms of collaboration in central government. As with local level collaboration, strategies and tools for coordinating action can be placed along a continuum. At one end informal networks play a role, as highlighted by Hecló and Wildavsky whose influential work emphasised the importance of informal cross-Whitehall contacts to treasury-based civil servants. Recalling Scharpf's notion of *negative coordination*, this concept provides some insights into the nature of contacts at this weaker end of the spectrum. He suggests that this type of coordination involves 'bilateral clearance negotiations between the initiating department and other units whose portfolios might be affected – but whose own policy options are not actively considered' (1994, p. 39). This is in contrast to *positive coordination* which is an altogether more ambitious affair, involving joint strategies pursued by multiple departments. Approaches at the weaker end of the continuum are largely 'personal' modes of coordination, involving face-to-face contact and the movement of personnel around the system.

A number of initiatives in the UK context have sought to formalise inter-personal networks and contacts at the level of central government by designing such interaction into the system. For instance, one of the aims of establishing the Senior Civil Service was to increase the movement of civil servants around different government departments and bodies. Such approaches can help break down cultural and organisational barriers by providing staff with exposure to different policy fields, professions and departmental cultures and can be considered a form of boundary spanning. Various formal 'coordinating networks' have also been created within the Treasury and Cabinet, such as the Permanent Secretaries group, the Civil Service Management Board and the Principal Finance Officers networks. Other examples of personal coordination modes employed in recent years have included the use of external policy advisors, and field visits to local government by central civil servants, as well as the use of government ministers or sponsors to lead on cross-cutting policy projects that fall outside the usual remit of their own department (Kavanagh and Richards 2001; PIU 2000). Such efforts serve to create more cross-departmental horizontal contact at the individual level, or in the case of field visits, to enhance vertical integration between local and central government.

At the other end of the spectrum are various formal coordination tools, exhibiting differing degrees of integration. In order to aid comparability with coordination tools used at local level, these can be categorised into group and impersonal modes. Group modes used in the UK context include the establishment of new central units to enhance coordination at central level and inter-departmental working groups or task forces. These units provide a forum for structuring interactions, where a range of actors from different departments can become involved in devising, implementing and evaluating policy.

Central units created over recent years in the UK include bodies based in the Cabinet Office which provide strategic leadership and generate advice on joint working, such as the Performance and Innovation Unit, the Delivery Unit and the Office of Public Service Reform (PIU 2000; Better Regulation Task Force 2002). Other units have been established to work on single cross-cutting issues, such as social exclusion, rough sleeping and regional coordination. Inter-departmental working groups have been used in a variety of policy areas. One example is the field of criminal justice where the Home Office, the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Crown Prosecution Department engage in joint policy appraisal and planning . A second is the inter-ministerial working group coordinating the Sure Start initiative for children . Such examples might fit within Sharpf's notion of positive coordination. Typical procedures in this category are 'multilateral negotiations in intra- or inter-ministerial task forces whose mandate include consideration of all policy options of all participating units' .

Impersonal modes in the context of central government include three related techniques, namely the provision of incentives for ministers and civil servants to encourage joint working, the alignment of performance regimes to ensure that departments work towards harmonious rather than conflicting objectives and the use of financial tools such as joint budgeting arrangements. In relation to incentives, a number of commentators have highlighted the importance of providing these to ensure that ministers and officials are rewarded for delivering cross-cutting rather than narrow departmental objectives . There has been some modification of the incentive structure of civil servants and ministers in recent times to achieve this .

With regards to the alignment of performance systems, one method is to deploy cross-cutting or joint targets. In the UK some cross-cutting targets and objectives have been set for departments and executive agencies under the Public Services Agreement (PSA) regime . PSAs are essentially contracts between central departments and the Treasury, in which money is allocated in return for meeting specified objectives. Another financial tool used by the UK Treasury to promote central joint working has been the creation of pooled budgets in various policy areas such as criminal justice, drugs and

children's services , developed in the context of the Treasury's cross-cutting policy reviews under the Comprehensive Spending Review

In summary, the three 'modes' of coordination discussed above provide a useful organising framework for classifying the horizontal collaboration tools at central and at local level. It is likely that effective collaboration may need a combination of different coordination modes, since each mode offers a different type of collaborative benefit. Impersonal devices are arguably the most binding of the modes, involving the greatest compulsion. They involve intervention into the design of an inter-organisational system to ensure that formalised arrangements are in place. As noted above, personal coordination can be 'designed in' to the system in an attempt to formalise inter-personal contact. However, personal modes are often rather informal and sporadic in nature. Because of the interactive nature of personal and group based modes, they offer greatest opportunity for feedback. They are iterative and dynamic coordination modes which may be highly appropriate in circumstances where discretionary decision is required.

Figure 2.2 below outlines the horizontal coordination tools typically employed by bodies both at local and central government level, providing examples of UK initiatives.

Fig 2.2 Modes of horizontal collaboration in central and local government



	Ad-hoc, informal links	Routinised, formal links	
	Personal modes	Group modes	Impersonal modes
Horizontal tools: Central government	Movement of civil servants around departments; Informal networks; Coordinating networks; Field visits; Ministerial sponsoring of cross-cutting groups	Inter-departmental working groups; Central coordination Units; Task Forces	Cross-cutting targets (e.g. through PSAs); Incentives; Pooled budgets
Horizontal tools: Local government	Boundary spanners; Staff placements or Secondments; Information Sharing; Informal contacts	Jointly provided Services; Co-location/ one-stop shops; Joint staff Training; Multi-agency groups/ forums	Joint budgets, Joint local performance Indicators/ targets; Joint protocols; Joint information, Monitoring/ assessment systems

Although much has been written about the various ‘joining’ up’ initiatives instigated by recent governments in the UK, there has been relatively little in-depth empirical work which systematically identifies and classifies the coordination tools used in different policy areas at central government level, and even less examining the *effectiveness* of these mechanisms (for an exception see James 2003a). Much previous work has focused on the rationale for collaboration or has been concerned with charting the trend towards the increased policy emphasis on this. More empirical analysis of the patterns of coordination mechanisms and assessment of their effects may lead to insights about how collaboration can be enhanced at central government level. This study provides an opportunity systematically to map out and assess the coordination tools and modes used in one policy sector, at both central and local level, building on the classification scheme discussed above.

2.2.3 Issues governing horizontal tool choice

There are a range of possible explanations as to why agencies may choose to adopt or develop different horizontal coordination tools. One explanation which has been very influential within studies of inter-organisational coordination is the ‘contingency theory’ perspective associated with authors such as Burns and Stalker , Woodward and Lawrence

and Lorsch¹³. According to these applications of contingency theory, the choice of coordination mechanisms is governed by the nature of the task environment. This literature links specific coordination modes with variables relating to the organisational environment in which they are used. These approaches are generally prescriptive and suggest that horizontal coordination tools can be chosen to fit particular contexts. They are also fairly 'rationalistic' in orientation, implying that tools can be selected in a calculated and technical manner.

For instance, March and Simon (1958) contend that coordination by 'plan' is only applicable in stable and predictable situations where there can be standardised or routinised responses to situations arising. By contrast, coordination by 'feedback' is more relevant in situations which are more variable and unpredictable, where it is impossible to generate a standard response. In these situations contingencies may arise which are unanticipated, and instructions must be given to alter activity in order to adjust to the issues arising. This mode of coordination suggests the need for problem solving.

Van De Ven and colleagues (1976) postulate that choice of coordination mechanism is associated with three key variables, namely the degree of *task uncertainty*, *task interdependence* and *unit size*. Greater *uncertainty* implies the need for *group and personal methods*, since tasks only become understood as they are executed, and there is no 'typical' task or case requiring attention. Consequently, roles, schedules and priorities change and develop as these tasks are addressed. Greater *interdependence* also requires the use of coordination mechanisms such as *group and personal methods* which involve horizontal contact between members of different units. In contrast to impersonal methods such as plans and rules, these methods allow participants to make mutual adjustments. In the case of group methods adjustments are made simultaneously, while with personal methods adjustments are made sequentially. *Larger unit size*, however, points to the need for *impersonal* coordination mechanisms, since larger group size is associated with lower group cohesion, greater complexity of organisational tasks and costs of coordination. Impersonal methods are the least costly coordination methods and so tend to prevail in larger settings. Empirical testing of these hypotheses in Van De Venn and colleagues' study of employment units provided support for their accuracy.

Alter and Hage further develop the above framework in the context of inter-organisational human services networks using contingency theory. They contend that 'it is generally recognised that the nature of the work and the task determines the most effective methods of coordination' (Alter and Hage 1993, p. 93). Their research finds evidence that *greater task scope*, which is defined as 'the degree to which tasks are

¹³ Alternative theoretical perspectives commonly applied to inter-organisational settings are discussed in Chapter Three

variable and require a multidisciplinary or multidimensional approach' (1993, p. 117), is related to the use of *group* modes. Lower task scope is related to the use of *impersonal* methods. They also find that *task volume*, that is, 'the average number of units that must be coordinated sequentially by a worker' (1993, p. 121) is positively associated with the use of *personal* modes. Lastly, their research indicates that greater *task uncertainty*, defined as 'the extent to which task processes or interventions have knowable outcomes' (1993, p. 119), is associated with *group modes* while *low uncertainty* is associated with *impersonal modes*.

An alternative perspective to the contingency theory approach is to view horizontal coordination tool choice as more of an irrational, disorganised or even 'political' issue. Rather than selecting tools to fit the organisational task environment, those involved in local public services may choose these for political reasons or to further their own interests. Political accounts of tool choice have been used in relation to the analysis of 'vertical' policy tools used by government, but not previously in relation to horizontal coordination tools. The distinction between political and rational-technical decision-making strategies is discussed further in chapter three which provides the theoretical framework for the empirical research which follows.

2.3 Informal collaboration and the role of the individual

Although collaboration is often conceptualised as involving the use of formal tools, there is another perspective which sees the individual as pre-eminent in sustaining collaboration. From this point of view, individual members of organisations help to join up services, facilitating the transfer of information and enhancing coordination by virtue of inter-personal contacts and relationships that they develop. The role of formal 'boundary spanners' who have a remit to forge inter-agency links was mentioned above. However, collaboration may occur more informally between existing personnel, through inter-personal, telephone or written contact, or through meetings and events, either planned or ad-hoc. Such collaboration falls at the lower end of the collaborative spectrum discussed above. It has been suggested that in inter-organisational settings informal contact is perhaps the most common coordination device there is. Informal collaboration in the context of human services at the operational level typically involves sharing client information, making referrals to other agencies, 'signposting' clients to other services or problem solving in relation to individual cases. Informal collaboration at a managerial or strategic level may involve sharing information, joint problem solving

or ad-hoc discussions around service planning. In order to assess the extent of collaboration in different settings some empirical studies therefore employ contact or interaction between individuals in organisations as a measure of collaboration. This approach is used in the present research, as discussed further in chapter four.

Previous literature suggests that individuals who are particularly adept at maintaining collaborative relations may possess certain abilities, often referred to 'reticulist' or 'boundary spanning' abilities, such as the ability to forge alliances, settle disputes, achieve compromises and build consensus . Additional personal qualities include perseverance, single mindedness, the capacity to handle change, take risks and adapt to other organisational cultures . As one commentator has stated, these people possess the 'relational and inter-personal attributes required to build social capital' (Williams 2002, p. 106), performing the role of informal networker and facilitator. Such people are likely to be trusted by all the parties involved, thus facilitating collaboration. It could be argued that sustaining collaboration across boundaries depends on harnessing the skills of these people. Indeed, it has been suggested that competencies of this nature are crucial for today's public sector managers (Rhodes 1996; Huxham 2000) and there is a growing literature on collaborative leadership (see Huxham and Vangen 2000; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002 for reviews).

Such individuals are sometimes characterised as 'network managers'. These individuals are often self-selecting rather than officially designated. Their roles are likely to include 'crafting a common purpose', 'co-aligning' the action of diverse participants and mobilising others to implement specific programmes or solve problems .

Despite the importance of the individual in facilitating collaboration, over-reliance on key individuals with strong collaborative capacities, either formal boundary spanners or informal networkers, brings its own risks. As Goss (2001) has noted, the individuals employed to forge collaborative relationships are often corporate managers or project managers from the 'new' parts of public sector organisations, such as the performance or strategy team or the chief executive's office. These boundary spanners may quickly and skilfully be able to agree shared objectives and draft joint strategies, but they lack operational authority and day to day responsibility for service delivery. Consequently, the partnership working generated by these people can often be of a 'virtual' nature, 'no longer connected to mainstream delivery or to the mass of middle managers who make things happen on the ground' (Goss 2001, p. 93). In addition, collaboration which hinges on the input of key individuals can stall when these people change position or job. In a field such as human services which is characterised by high staff turnover, this may be particularly problematic. From a service user perspective, reliance on informal

communications as a means of joining up services may result in poor service quality. As demonstrated when high profile child or public protection failures occur, systemic failure is often attributed to a lack of communication between professionals. These are among the reasons why informal coordination is often underpinned by formal collaborative mechanisms (Alexander 1995).

The distinction between formal and informal collaboration has been made by a number of authors. Formal collaboration tends to be based on jointly agreed rules and contracts, while informal collaboration is more voluntary in nature. Twenty five years ago Mulford and Rogers suggested that there was little empirical research on informal collaboration, or on the relative effects of informal as compared to formal collaboration. In the same volume Rogers made the case for more research investigating the 'less obvious' forms of collaboration, including the interpretive meanings held by those involved, arguing that the majority of existing research focused almost entirely on formal, highly quantifiable types of transactions. To some extent this gap has been filled, and Smith, Carroll and Ashford (1995) document a growth in articles on informal aspects of cooperative inter-organisational relationships. The increasing interest in informal interactions is paralleled by a growth in network-based studies to which the idea of voluntary interactions is central. There has been a steady growth in empirical research on both informal and formal varieties of collaboration, although relatively little research examining the interplay between these two issues.

There is, however, a growing interest in the dynamics of inter-organisational working and the way in which formal and informal forms of cooperation may be inter-related. For instance, Ring and Van de Ven discuss how formal collaboration based on rules and contracts may develop over time into informal collaboration. Similarly, Gulati finds that as partners engage in repeated alliances, trust develops, and this begins to replace formal legal relationships. Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) argue that there are various phases in formal partnerships, thus acknowledging the evolutionary and dynamic nature of formal collaboration. The methodology used in this research permits analysis of both formal and informal aspects of collaboration and the relationship between these two dimensions.

2.4 The Vertical Dimension: Meta-governance of Collaboration

In chapter one it was suggested that collaboration between local actors can be regarded as a 'policy' pursued by governments. More specifically, it may be regarded as a 'meta-policy'. Meta-policy making has been described as 'setting and changing the systems and

structures within which the processes which are concerned with substantive policy outputs occur'. Privatisation and the establishment of new agencies can be considered two examples. Ham and Hill argue that while political science is often concerned with the 'big' examples of meta-policy, such as struggles over nation building and the design of constitutions, other types of meta-policy are often overlooked. In particular, they draw attention to issues of meta-policy concerning the relationships between government units. Meta-policy making is also concerned with *designing* policy-making systems, or in Dror's terms 'policy-making on how to make policy' (Dror 1968, see Ham and Hill *ibid*, p. 89). In network settings, the process of engaging in meta-policy making and implementation can be labelled 'meta-governance'. As noted in chapter one, this refers to government coordination of horizontal networks of agencies from a range of sectors, and supplants traditional notions of purely hierarchical government.

Another important term used in the public policy literature which helps to define the policy strategies of interest to the present study is the notion of 'procedural' policy and its associated instruments or tools. Howlett and Ramesh (2003, p. 91) suggest the procedural tools are used to 'alter aspects of policy deliberations'. Howlett suggests that they can be used to 'manage state-societal interactions'. These tools are fundamentally about altering or manipulating the policy process, at whichever level of government or society. Examples include government reorganisations and the creation of advisory committees. Procedural tools contrast with substantive tools, which are concerned directly with the provision of government services or goods.

The former category of instruments is of more interest in the present study and is a highly appropriate object of study in the context of research relating to network management. Indeed, Howlett (2000) has discussed the link between procedural instruments and network management. Drawing on the work of Dutch network scholars, he suggests that manipulating the policy process is often a question of manipulating the links between policy network actors by using procedural instruments in order to change the number of actors and the nature of relationships between them. Procedural instruments, he contends, are often used by governments to alter policy processes in a manner which allows them to 'retain their legitimacy or capacity to act' (Howlett 2000, see Howlett & Ramesh 2003, p. 102). Network management, in Howlett's view, is one form of procedural policy tool.

2.5 Vertical tools for joining up local public services

Various meta-governance ‘tools’ can be employed in a bid to increase collaboration between local public services. The approaches can be divided into three broad categories, namely, authority-based, information-based and incentive-based strategies . This classification is similar to that which is employed by De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof , who discuss legal, communicative and financial governance instruments in relation to the management of networks. The categories employed are broadly representative of the range of tools in government’s tool-shed ¹⁴ . The tools of government in this case are used specifically to manage linkages between local organisations by attempting to bring them into a collaborative relationship. Employing government tools in this way responds to exhortations in the governance literature for the need for public managers to learn the skills of network management. While the threefold classification was originally developed in relation to ‘substantive’ policy instruments as discussed above, it is possible to use the same broad categories in discussions of ‘procedural’ instruments which aim to alter or manipulate policy processes. The section which follows briefly summarises the three categories of tools, providing examples and outlining their ‘behavioural assumptions’ .

2.5.1 The tools of government: authority, incentives and information

Generally speaking, authoritative tools include the use of regulatory devices in form of rules, standards, permits, prohibitions, laws and executive orders . These are command and control or ‘enforcement’ techniques which utilize punishments for recalcitrant behaviour and are common for regulating the economic and social realm. They are based on the assumption that the hierarchical and legitimate authority of government is sufficient to mandate desired behaviours either in lower tiers of government or in society more generally, without the addition of other incentives . In the context of hierarchical democratic government, authority tools suggest that lower level officials are responsive to government authority and are committed to obeying laws and regulations because of the legitimacy of government. Authoritative tools can be regarded as coercive in nature, although some authoritative tools are more coercive than others. Additional varieties of

¹⁴ Minor differences exist in tools of government classification systems. For instance Hood (1983) identified four major tools of government, namely ‘Nodality’ (the location of government at the centre of informational & social networks, enabling it to collect and disseminate information), ‘Authority’ (government’s possession of legal or official power to demand, forbid, guarantee, adjudicate), ‘Treasure’ (government’s stock of money or exchangeable goods) and ‘Organisation’ (government’s stock of people and workers, land, buildings, materials e.g. computers and equipment).

regulation involving less direct involvement of government include delegated regulation and the use of advisory committees and other bodies to perform regulatory functions.

Information-based strategies often involve exhortation or persuasion. Such approaches make a normative appeal, based on government's legitimacy, in order to encourage certain types of behaviour. Public information campaigns are one example of an information-based tool with normative content. As noted by Howlett and Ramesh (ibid) and Hood (1983), information devices can involve either providing information to, or withholding it from, governed subjects. Information-based strategies are fairly indirect or even weak, are relatively cheap to administer and unlikely to provoke much resistance on the ground. This type of tool is linked to Hood's concept of 'nodality'. Government, by virtue of its nodal position in a network, is able to act as conduit for, and repository of, information. Not only can government disseminate information, it can also collect it¹⁵. In relation to local government, central government is in a unique position to collect information from across the country and disseminate this information in the form of 'good practice' guidance. In relation to local networks, local government itself is in a good position to act as a node. A variety of information tools can be used by government to communicate policy intent to local authorities. Nixon highlights a range of information or communication-based devices which are common in the context of central-local government relations in the UK, including local authority circulars, the publication of advisory literature, consultations and statutory inspections, the presence of representatives of government departments at local level and finally formal or informal meetings.

Incentive-based tools, sometimes labelled 'treasure', 'inducement' or 'exchange' usually take the form either of subsidies (positive incentives to reward compliance) or charges (negative incentives for failure to comply). Subsidies take a variety of forms including grants, tax breaks, and the provision of land and loans, while charges include levying taxes and fines (Howlett and Ramesh ibid). Therefore, once again, government can either collect or distribute this resource (Hood 1983). However, incentives may also be non-financial, for instance the conferment of freedoms for high performing institutions or other status-enhancing rewards. The assumption behind the use of incentives is that, in the words of Schneider and Ingram (1990, p. 515) 'individuals are utility maximizers and will not be positively motivated to take policy-relevant action unless they are influenced, encouraged, or coerced by manipulation of money, liberty, life, or other tangible payoffs'.

One subset of incentive based tools is the 'capacity-building' variety. These tools involve the provision of technical or financial assistance and are aimed at enhancing the abilities required to implement a particular policy. They are used where there is a

¹⁵ This relates to Hood's conception of government as both 'effector' and 'detector' (Hood 1983)

perceived need for particular knowledge, skills or resources. Technical assistance may take the form of guidance, training or visits by specialists¹⁶. Additional resources include the provision of grants, loans, subsidies, vouchers, facilities, equipment or personnel which are directly aimed at building capacity. Although capacity building tools are here classified as one form of incentive-based tools, Schneider and Ingram (ibid) suggest that capacity tools are a category in their own right because they are based on a fundamentally different premise to incentives. According to Schneider and Ingram, capacity building tools assume that participants will participate in the desired activity if they have sufficient capacity to do so. This is in contrast to incentives which assume that actors are utility-maximisers who will only act in the desired way if they are coerced, encouraged or manipulated into doing so. In practice, however, it is often difficult to distinguish between incentives and capacity tools and they are here treated as belonging to the same broad group.

2.5.2 Issues governing vertical tool choice

As with horizontal coordination tools, several scholars have sought to move beyond vertical tool classification to consider the issues governing tool choice. Although this literature does not constitute an entirely coherent or consistent body of work, there are nonetheless a number of common themes running through the literature on tool choice. Some explanations focus on political factors while others privilege technical issues in which tools are matched to the nature of the job at hand. Many accounts acknowledge the complexity of tool choice, suggesting that decisions are based on a mix of political and technical considerations.

One perspective falling into the ‘political’ school of thought suggests that there is a general preference in liberal democratic governments for the least coercive tools such as exhortation and other information-based tools, because they are less likely to encounter resistance (Doern 1981, see Howlett and Ramesh 2003), less costly (Hood 1983) and easier to operationalise in administrative terms. They are also more politically acceptable in countries with a conservative/ non-interventionist leaning. Others have suggested that the legal traditions of different countries affect the policy tools commonly used. Ringeling (2002) for instance notes that the ‘Roman Law’ system which operates on the European continent uses a formal system of laws while the Common Law system found in the Anglo-Saxon world uses a system of case law and judicial judgments.

¹⁶ Clearly there is some overlap here with information-based instruments, although this type of capacity building tool is a specific form of information provision aimed at technical capacity rather than mere exhortation

Others suggest that tool choice is dependent on individual preference and other cognitive factors such as past experience of particular tools. As pointed out by both Hood and de Bruijn and ten Heuvelhof, instrument choice is not always a fully rational process. These authors stress that government bureaucrats tend to be committed to particular instruments which have worked for them in the past. In Hood's words, each government agency holds its own 'store of experience and folk wisdom about what works in its own particular area' (ibid, p. 137). Similarly Linder and Peters (1989) suggest that policy actors in different sectors are committed on a cognitive level to different forms of policy intervention. Salamon is sympathetic to this explanation, suggesting that different tools are common in different substantive policy areas. De Bruijn and ten Heuvelhof (ibid) argue that choice of tool may also be affected by the skills which actors possess, since policy actors may have the skills required to design and use some instruments and not others.

The more 'technically' oriented perspectives rest on the assumption that optimum policy tools can be selected according to the implementation context. In this sense they adopt a contingency theory or rational systems approach, as discussed above. These accounts link insights from implementation theory with more mainstream policy science approaches. Applying this perspective to the choice of policy instruments, the argument follows that there is no one best type of policy tool but that a range of factors come into play when deciding on this. Tools must 'fit' the implementation context and the broader environmental circumstances in which the policies are enacted. A number of variables or contingent factors are thought to influence tool choice. In particular, issues such as the degree of fit between the values of policy designers and implementers, the level of capacity in a sector and the degree to which knowledge of the implementation context is held mainly at ground level, are regarded as significant variables. Ingram and Schneider (1990) have made perhaps the most significant contribution in this respect, and others have followed in a similar vein.

Ingram and Schneider (1990) place particular emphasis on the degree of discretion required in policy design in different contexts and put forward a number of hypotheses. They suggest that when there is low support for a policy at ground level and conflicting values between statutory designers and implementers or target groups, an authoritative, 'strong statute' approach in which policy is designed by policy makers and assumed to be faithfully reproduced by implementers, is unlikely to work (1990, pp. 82-83). In such contexts, they hypothesise that tools which build commitment such as incentives or capacity-building are likely to be more effective.

When there is high support for a policy at national level but some conflict or variation at local level, Ingram and Schneider advocate a 'Wilsonian' approach. Following from Woodrow Wilson's preferred approach, this approach has overlaps with a strong statute approach since it involves the specification of clear goals at national level, but leaves discretion to allow local bureaucrats the freedom to decide on how this is achieved (1990, p. 77).

They also contend that the strong statute approach is inapplicable when information levels are poor, because policy designers do not have sufficient knowledge to specify in detail the actions required. Policy design in this context should allow wide latitude at the local level, that is, a 'grassroots' or bottom-up approach to policy-making, in which local experimentation is encouraged to build knowledge in the policy area (1990, pp. 83-84). Government may also use information-generating (or detection) tools such as task forces, pilot studies and mandatory evaluations to improve policy learning. Similarly, Wilsonian approaches will lead to poor practice since mandating the attainment of clear goals under statute in conditions of uncertainty or ignorance may lead to the specification of inappropriate, overly ambitious or flawed goals. This is likely to provide incentives for local agencies to work towards the most achievable targets or engage in 'goal substitution'.

A number of authors have made specific reference to the policy tools appropriate in complex implementation and policy-making environments. For instance, Linder and Peters (1989, p. 51) suggest that where a range of client groups are served by an organisation, regulatory instruments may be needed to ensure all groups are served in an even-handed way. In addition, where non-governmental actors such as think tanks are involved in shaping government policy, they may have some influence over tool selection, being committed to certain types of instruments.

Bressers and O'Toole (1998) propose a model of instrument choice linked to policy networks. They suggest that features of policy networks including the level of cohesion and interconnectedness influence tool choice. Cohesion refers to the extent to which network actors share similar objectives or at least empathise with each others' objectives, and high cohesion is usually related to shared values and worldview. Interconnectedness refers to the intensity of actors' contacts or interactions. Where there is high cohesion and inter-connectedness between government and its targets, there is little need for 'normative' instruments such as regulations and persuasive information campaigns, since parties share similar values. They suggest the emphasis is likely to be on 'supportive' instruments, the equivalent to capacity building tools, including information, education and subsidies. Less well-connected systems with high cohesion

are likely to involve similar mechanisms but require the use of intermediaries to support implementation efforts. Networks with both weak cohesion and weak interconnectedness rely on instruments which make a normative appeal. Where there is strong interconnectedness, tools involving bilateral or multilateral arrangements such as covenants are expected. While Bressers and O'Toole's hypotheses relate mainly to policy networks at the level of policy formation rather than implementation, the approach nevertheless draws attention to the potential variables that can be considered in selecting tools in complex policy environments.

Similarly, Howlett and Ramesh (2003) provide a model of tool choice linking subsystem complexity with state capacity. Subsystem complexity relates to the breadth of the policy target. State capacity refers to the ability of the state to intervene and is associated with the availability of financial resources and the degree of trust and legitimacy in government. Where there is a broad range of target groups, but low state capacity, low-cost information-based tools such as exhortation alongside institutional reorganisation are likely to be used. When a broad target group is combined with high state capacity, treasure-based tools are more common as well as the involvement of interest groups through consultations and advisory committees.

By contrast, where target groups are narrow and state capacity is low, authoritative tools such as regulation, alongside financial incentives directed at altering the organisation of specific policy actors, are common. Finally, narrow target groups and high state capacity are associated with substantive instruments such as public enterprises and direct state provision, and procedural instruments such as evaluations, public hearing and reviews.

Despite the range of theories about policy instrument choice, few of these have been tested empirically, and there have been calls for more research with explanatory power to help specify the conditions under which different tools might be selected (Bressers and O'Toole 1998). A similar observation has been made by Alexander (1995) with respect to the choice of coordination tools in inter-organisational settings. He notes that although there is a repertoire of coordination strategies and tools available to policy makers wishing to influence inter-organisational working, there is little systematic evidence on which to base decisions about tool selection in different inter-organisational contexts.

The present study provides an opportunity to investigate the operation and perceived effectiveness of different vertical and horizontal coordination tools in the context of human services delivery networks, and to test out some of the research hypotheses developed by previous scholars. In particular, the research considers one

‘politically-orientated’ perspective on horizontal tool choice and one a ‘technically-oriented’ perspective, as discussed in chapter three.

2.5.3 Tools for steering collaboration

Applying the above concepts to the meta-governance of collaboration in local settings, authoritative tools include making collaboration mandatory through legislation and other forms of regulation, or reorganisation. Such mandates typically specify the parts of the system which need to be coordinated, for example between particular agencies and in relation to specific issues. Mandates can take the form of laws which require agencies to merge organisational procedures or introduce new organisational arrangements aimed at enhancing integration. Alexander refers to two such varieties, including ‘bilateral government’ in which regulations or laws are introduced to control the interactions of two parties, and ‘relational contracting’ in which contractual frameworks are set up between whole ‘classes’ of parties. A related concept is the idea of a ‘covenant’. These are formally negotiated agreements between government and other sectors, which provide a framework within which target groups operate (Bressers and O’Toole 1998, p. 228). They provide a potential means of building legitimacy to target non-governmental actors which lie outside of direct government control. In the context of collaboration, agreements between central government and the private sector or voluntary sector groups allow government indirectly to influence service delivery agencies outside of the public sector.

Mandatory collaboration may also involve creating multi-agency forums or planning boards in which governed actors are required to participate. This can be regarded as a form of group coordination. These bodies provide a forum for interaction, allowing actors to communicate in order to enhance mutual learning and negotiate shared purposes. Such measures are aimed at improving interaction between policy actors, and are a form of ‘process management’, one type of network management. Similarly, government can tamper with organisational boundaries, re-arranging these, creating or abolishing units, and merging agencies. Klijn and Koppenjan (ibid) refer to this as ‘network constitution’, aimed at changing the structure of a network. This was a technique adopted by the UK government in relation to Community Care policies in the 1960s and 70s, when Joint Consultative Committees were created which compelled local and health authorities to work together.

Additional authoritative tools include various methods of monitoring. These do not necessarily involve mandating collaboration but nevertheless make use of government

authority to regulate behaviour. For instance, local authorities may be required to publish multi-agency plans or strategies to demonstrate joint working with other agencies. Their progress on collaborative working may be assessed and monitored by central government in a variety of other ways, including the use of evaluation, inspection, audit, field visits or via other routine reporting mechanisms used between central and local government. In the UK joint or cross-cutting targets for local agencies has been one method of monitoring.

Information-based devices involve government attempting to persuade agencies of the need to collaborate. There is some overlap with authoritative devices since persuasion based approaches are based on the legitimate authority of government. Tools which may be deployed include the use of practice guidance to promote joint working, containing suggested modes of collaboration and outlining strategies for their effective use. However, more indirect informational approaches include the use of rhetoric about joined-up government within political discourse. Stoker labels this the ‘cultural-persuasive technique’, in which government uses its moral authority to promote and extol the virtues of joined up working. As illustrated above, persuasion or exhortation has been a common strategy for promoting collaboration in UK public services.

In incentive-based strategies government funding is the principal tool or lever for promoting collaboration. In such a strategy, evidence of collaboration may be a prerequisite for agencies to receive funding. The UK government has initiated numerous competitive funding streams to this end, as discussed in chapter one. Several of the area-based, cross-cutting programmes established by government in recent years require local agencies to work in partnership. Financial incentive-based approaches have also been used in the USA in the context of human services networks, where service integration attempts have been made since the 1960s. In the Netherlands, incentives have been provided in the form of additional personnel for those agencies that enter into collaborative links with other agencies.

Capacity-building tools used for enabling collaboration may involve the provision of money for ‘boundary spanning’ posts to facilitate the process of local joint working, or even land or premises for co-located services. Technical assistance might include visits by specialist advisors to provide advice on collaboration, involving either local actors stimulated into action through incentives, or national actors brought in from national level organisations including government departments. Other technical assistance may take the form of the provision of multi-agency or inter-professional training either provided by national organisations or coordinated and funded nationally but delivered locally.

In practice, combinations of authoritative, information based, incentive based and capacity building approaches are likely to be necessary. For instance, De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof argue that combinations of regulatory and financial instruments are common in policies aimed at changing the relations between actors. Others have found that exhortations to collaborate are unlikely to be successful without the provision of resources to back them up . Similarly, creating new bodies or merging existing ones is likely to need require some form of monitoring or new legislation to facilitate this process. Figure 2.4 categorises the meta-governance approaches according to their mode of coordination and type of vertical tool.

Fig 2.3 Modes of vertical coordination for stimulating local collaboration

	Tool type		
	Authority-based	Information-based	Incentive-based
Impersonal	Monitoring, Legislation	Central guidance, Policy exhortations	Targets, Joint targets
Personal	Inspections, Joint inspections	Direct contact, Advisory visits	
Group	Network constitution/ Management	Conferences, Workshops	Incentives for joint bidding, Funding streams rewarding joint working

2.6 Can governments mandate collaboration?

In relation to the implementation of collaboration, there is something of a consensus in the literature that inter-agency collaboration is unlikely to happen of its own accord, and that some level of central government intervention is required to steer the process . The obstacles to and challenges of collaboration discussed in chapter one highlight the reasons why agencies may be reluctant to collaborate.

As discussed above, central government can seek to induce collaboration between local actors in a number of ways, using authoritative, information-based, incentive-based or capacity-building approaches. Some studies have found a positive association between government intervention to specify inter-agency relationships and the degree of

collaboration. For instance, Aldrich found that the extent of collaboration (i.e. perceived cooperativeness of inter-agency relationships, the frequency of interactions and the standardisation of transactions) was increased when the relationships between two organisations were mandated under federal statute (Aldrich 1974b, see Aldrich 1976). He argues that inter-organisational cooperation does not usually occur without the intervention of governmental or review bodies that are ‘involved on the funding or input side’ of the system.

However, the case is not clear-cut, with other studies suggesting a more limited impact of mandated collaboration. In one such study, comparisons were made between nine school districts in five states of the USA . In each context state laws regarding collaboration differ, with some imposing detailed requirements for joint action between specified local agencies and others providing no requirements and some disincentives for voluntary joint action, and the rest falling somewhere in between. The study revealed variability in compliance with legal mandates to collaborate. In some cases districts complied with state law, although with varying degrees of enthusiasm for the task. In others, compliance was poor or entirely absent. It is not possible to discern from the study the reasons behind these differing responses to legal mandates. However, the research suggests that when agencies did not wish to collaborate, the law had little impact in altering their behaviour. This led the author to conclude that legal mandates were neither salient nor decisive enough to dominate local decisions about whether or not to work collaboratively.

Further research on the effectiveness of ‘top-down’ strategies is considered in chapter three. As discussed in chapter one, there have been debates within the British literature in particular on the extent to which collaboration is something which government can impose from the top-down, partly in response to the nature of approaches employed in the UK. However, there has been little in the way of systematic analysis of the effectiveness and limitations of government steering attempts.

The next chapter presents a theoretical framework to structure the empirical analysis of the ‘implementation of collaboration’, where collaboration is conceived of as a meta-policy which governments may seek to implement in local public service delivery networks.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Chapter overview

This chapter presents and conducts preliminary evaluation of rival perspectives for explaining the ‘implementation’ of collaboration. These perspectives provide the overarching theoretical framework for the research. As briefly outlined in the thesis introduction, two rival models of bureaucratic decision-making are considered, as well as two rival theories of policy implementation. The first part of the chapter (3.1) provides a justification for selecting these particular theories to structure the analysis. The second part (3.2) outlines the ‘rational administrative’ perspective and discusses how this might be applied to explain collaboration. The third part (3.3) examines the contrasting perspective of bureaucratic politics and its application to collaboration. The fourth part (3.4) considers both top-down and bottom-up conceptions of the policy process and their application to the research question. The last part (3.5) presents four potential explanatory models which combine the decision-making and implementation theories, and the rival hypotheses flowing from each of the models. Subsequent chapters empirically investigate these models.

3.1 Justification for the theoretical framework

The first of the two contrasting decision-making theories is the rational-administrative perspective. It is selected because it seems to capture well how collaboration is ‘sold’ or justified by government to the local agencies amongst which it is promoting collaboration. As this chapter will discuss, the collaborative initiatives and structures often proposed by governments, such as joint commissioning and joint budgeting, are based on a ‘rational-altruistic’ model of collaboration. This rationalistic and optimistic conception of collaboration assumes that those governments seek to influence will be motivated to collaborate because they see this as a means of serving the interests of clients and helping them to attain their ends more efficiently (Hudson 1995). A further reason for selecting the rational-administrative model is that the research focuses on the ‘tools of collaboration’, and much of the literature on this subject, particularly that which is influenced by economics, is inherently rationalistic (Howlett and Ramesh 2003). As discussed in chapter two, this influential branch of the policy tools literature assumes that tools are selected in a calculated mean-ends manner.

The bureaucratic politics perspective provides a challenging and relevant counterpoint to the rational-administrative perspective. This position, as the following discussion will illustrate, views decisions as motivated by a different set of influences, including the promotion of organisational interests, and directs attention towards issues of power. It therefore relates well to alternative conceptions of collaboration which highlight the reasons why agencies often do *not* collaborate, or why they find it difficult to do so. The bureaucratic politics perspective also accords with the more political strands of the ‘tool choice’ literature briefly discussed in chapter two.

Implementation theory provides the second dimension of the analytical framework. This strand of public policy theory is chosen because it helps to illuminate the main research question, namely the stimulation of collaboration in local areas by central government. As noted above, this in itself can be considered an implementation problem, where collaboration is the ‘policy’ to be implemented. Top-down and bottom-up implementation theories are employed as they are perhaps the most useful way of highlighting challenges in the implementation process. While the top-down model may be considered an ideal type, the bottom-up model draws attention to reasons why practice frequently deviates from the ideal type. These two rival perspectives provide a useful framework for examining the challenges of governmental steering from the top-down in the context of service delivery networks.

Naturally, other theoretical approaches would illuminate different aspects of collaboration and account for collaborative action, or inaction, in different ways. Neo-institutionalist theories, for instance, could help to explain the challenges of collaboration in terms of organisations' developing their own regularised procedures, norms and values. These institutional forces could potentially serve to entrench organisational cultures making their members resistant to active collaboration and change involving other organisations. Alternatively, theories of public choice may help to account for a lack of collaboration by focusing on the pursuit of individual self-interested behaviour at the expense of collective action. However, given the aims of the research, the theories of decision-making and implementation outlined above provide a useful framework for analysis, and can account for key themes relevant to the research such as control, coordination and accountability.

Two additional literatures with broad relevance to the thesis which were *not* selected to shape the theoretical framework are those on policy networks and central-local government relations. Since these streams of literature would have been obvious candidates for inclusion, a brief comment is warranted on their exclusion from analytical framework.

The policy network perspective is principally a means of characterising the policy making process, and has been very influential within British political science . It emphasises the way in which different interests and groups have influence over policy. Some of the most promising work develops typologies of networks and uses these to explain variation in policy style across sectors, subsystems and countries . Other work has attempted to link policy networks with policy outcomes . However, the present study does not attempt to address questions of this nature.

The policy networks literature also provides rich detail on the complex interactions occurring in the policy process, including conflicts, negotiations and resource exchanges. However, as Dowding (ibid) suggests, many of the features of the policy process identified from the networks perspective, including bargaining games, cooperative strategies and resource differences, are generic to public policy rather than specific to policy networks. This calls into question the added value of a policy networks perspective on top of the bureaucratic politics perspective already employed in the thesis, which itself accounts for power issues and strategies amongst interacting units. Furthermore, the policy network perspective largely focuses on policy formulation rather than implementation. Since the present research is concerned with implementation, the literature relating to implementation networks, reviewed in chapter one, bears more direct

relevance. The policy networks perspective would have been more apt had the aim been to understand the development of national homelessness policy.

The central/local relations literature is principally concerned with characterising the relationship between central and local government. Previous comparative work has examined dimensions such as the functions of local government, the degree of access of local authorities to central government and the discretion available to local authorities. The power relationship between central and local government has always been a focal point, and is a feature of more recent work, such as Rhodes' power dependence model. Other parts of this literature have sought to assess trends in the degree of control of local government by the centre. While this thesis makes reference to changing central-local government relations in the context of governance, it does not explicitly focus on the power relationship between central and local levels; nor does it attempt to provide an in-depth account of the nature of central-local relations. This would have taken the research in another direction. The concern was to provide policy relevant analysis on the nature of instruments appropriate to steering local collaboration. In view of this, implementation theory and the tools of government literature were more relevant.

3.2 Collaboration as rational administration

One way of viewing inter-agency collaboration within the context of local public services is as a rational response to the fragmented polity and to the cross-cutting nature of policy problems, as discussed in chapter one. From this perspective collaboration is more likely to resolve cross-cutting issues such as homelessness than 'silo-working' or working alone. The means, or tools, of collaboration in this view would also be selected along rational or technical lines, according to the rational-administrative perspective.

3.2.1 Introducing the rational-administrative perspective

The rational administrative perspective, sometimes also labelled the 'rational', 'rational-comprehensive' or 'legal-rational' perspective, is a highly influential view of bureaucracies which dominated classical public administration. Stemming from the work of Max Weber, the rational administrative perspective is based on the premise that bureaucracies are apolitical, operating as machines through the mechanistic and rational application of formal organisational rules and routines. This view places faith in the

possibility of a science of administration, in which organisational systems can be designed to maximise efficiency.

Weber argued that bureaucracies can be distinguished from other organisational forms because of their 'rational-legal' character. According to this view, bureaucracies are governed according to legitimate hierarchical authority, legitimacy which is itself derived from the use of accepted and impersonally specified technical rules or norms. Because of this perceived legitimacy, the rules are applied in a rational manner by trained and impartial personnel who act not according to their own interests or values but according to the rule of hierarchy. Weber also notes that in bureaucracies, administrative acts, decisions and rules are usually formalised and codified in writing.

Formal organisation theory and its derivations such as systems theory and scientific management theory are based on similar assumptions about organisations more generally. As noted by Jordan, organisational problems are regarded as stemming from structural inadequacy, in particular failure of authority or hierarchy. Organisational objectives are achieved through the pursuit of coordination and control, and through the application of consistent and predictable rules.

The rational-administrative perspective assumes that politics and administration are separable, and indeed normatively advocates this separation, as famously articulated by Woodrow Wilson. In terms of government action, bureaucracies are viewed as tools, or means, for achieving the policy objectives set by government. By consciously altering and redesigning administrative machinery, it is considered possible to improve on their efficiency in terms of meeting policy makers' clearly articulated goals.

Herbert Simon's early work on decision-making is also a major contribution to the rational administrative perspective in the context of public administration¹⁷. Simon contended that the study of administration should be as concerned with decisions as with actions, and proposed the concept of efficient administrative rationality which would explain administrative decision-making in an ideal world. He asserted that an administrative decision is 'correct if it selects appropriate means to reach designated ends', and also that 'the rational administrator is concerned with the selection of these effective means'. The process of selection involves consideration of all possible alternatives and their consequences, and pursuit of the one that is most likely to achieve the desired ends. As far as possible, the scientific study of administration is concerned only with facts, and not values.

¹⁷ As will be shown below, Simon was ultimately highly skeptical of the 'purely' rational perspective. Although rational administration was presented as an ideal, he demonstrated through a series of articles and books the limits to pure rationality.

The parallel here with Weber's ideal type of the impartial and trained administrator able to make rational decisions is clear. The type of rationality characterised above is sometimes described as 'synoptic', implying that decision makers have a comprehensive overview of the range of all available options. Although Simon conceded that such synoptic, rational decision-making is difficult to achieve in practice, he argued that the environment of bureaucracies should be designed to assist administrators to make decisions in this way.

The rational-administrative perspective can be criticised from a variety of angles. First, the machine image and the idea of a mechanistic application of rules are undermined by subsequent studies which highlight the discretionary nature of much bureaucratic action. Moreover, the assumption of clear specification of rules governing bureaucracies underplays the ambiguities often found in policy mandates. In cases where goals are only vaguely defined, rational notions of means-ends calculations lose relevance.

Second, the emphasis on impersonally specified rules and written documentation underestimates the importance of informal aspects of bureaucracy. These formal underpinnings of bureaucracy are challenged by the alternative conception of the 'informal organisation' (Barnard 1938, see Jordan 1994). In this view, formal organisations are built on a system of informal internal communications, based on unauthorized and unofficial relationships. These relationships are largely immune from management control and serve the interests of the individuals involved rather than their parent organisations.

Third, as a number of critics have noted, rational calculations of the nature described in the 'pure' rational model rest on tenuous assumptions about the decision-making process, and are disputed by empirical evidence. In particular, the notion that decision-makers possess all the information required to select the best and most efficient course of action, and have sufficient time to process this information, is doubtful. In addition, decision-makers have cognitive limits which make it difficult to anticipate the consequences of different courses of action. The question of whose goals or ends the decision-maker acts according to is also unclear. For instance, individual goals may differ from collective or organisational goals. Lastly, the idea that it is possible to separate means from ends is also disputed.

Such problems¹⁸ led Simon to argue that administrative decisions, unlike economic decisions, are not purely rational but are only 'good enough', or 'satisficing'. He also developed the concept of 'bounded rationality'. Both concepts acknowledge the

¹⁸ Lindblom (1965) levels many such criticisms at the 'synoptic ideal'.

cognitive limits on decision-makers when making rational choices. Drawing on insights from cognitive psychology, Simon argues that the process of generating alternatives falls well short of identifying all possible courses of action. The number of alternatives considered is affected by the time constraints available to decision-makers, the costs of considering different courses of action, and limits to information. The search for alternatives, according to Simon, is more accurately described as a 'heuristic search aimed at finding satisfactory alternatives, or alternatives that represent an improvement over those previously available' (Simon 1997, p. 292). When evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of different courses of action, decision-makers do not usually possess the relevant information to make the perfect choice. The scientific knowledge on which the decision-maker draws is therefore itself imperfect, making the choice of which course of action to take a matter of selecting the best possible course of action according to the best available knowledge. Rationality in this variant is therefore limited or 'bounded' rather than pure or synoptic.

According to Simon, since only bounded rationality is possible, and because of the costs of searching for the 'optimal' solution, the decision-maker settles for a satisfactory or 'satisficing' solution. Simon poses the question of how the decision-maker sets the levels of criteria that define satisfactory. Again drawing on psychological theory, he suggests that decision-makers set themselves aspiration levels that, if reached, they will be satisfied with.

Boundedly rational versions of rational choice theory have been influential in public policy analysis because they seem to capture better the empirical reality of administrative and policy decisions than does the synoptic ideal. Recognition of the inherent limits to pure or synoptic rationality also led to the development of Lindblom's influential incrementalist model of decision-making. In this perspective, decision-making occurs through the method of 'successive limited comparisons'. In the context of policy formulation, this equates to policy makers proceeding in incremental steps, through a succession of small changes, learning from past experiences the likely results of policy decisions, and modifying policies in light of this.

In later work Lindblom postulates that policy decisions are the outcome of 'partisan mutual adjustment'¹⁹. This in itself is a form of coordination and can be achieved without a central coordinator. The argument made is that people coordinate themselves without rules that fully prescribe their relations to one another. Although in practice policy decisions are made in an environment containing a mix of central

¹⁹ His analysis focuses on 'policy decision makers' in the government process in the US context, including those in administrative agencies, the Legislature and Executive, and interest group and party leaders.

coordination and partisan mutual adjustment, the latter is presumed to be very strong or dominant in Lindblom's work. Attempting to describe how policy decisions are made, he suggests that they are a result of partisans coordinating their decision. This is achieved by actors adapting their individual decisions in response to the actions of those around them ('adaptive adjustments') and seeking to elicit desired responses from other decision-makers ('manipulated adjustments'). The term 'partisan' implies that each actor makes decisions to serve their own ends which are not necessarily shared by other actors. In other words, there is no dominant common purpose. However, through the process of partisan mutual adjustment, partisans will move towards agreement on values and decisions.

Lindblom's work anticipates some of the themes picked up in the bureaucratic politics model, discussed further below, particularly his contention that manipulated adjustments include elements of negotiating and bargaining. Negotiating, he suggests, refers to 'X' and 'Y' actors seeking to induce particular responses from one another in a variety of ways. Bargaining, however, explicitly refers to actors seeking to induce particular responses from each another using either conditional threats or promises.

Rather than being synoptic or comprehensive, decision-making about complex policy problems in this perspective is fragmented, disjointed and incremental. Policy decisions are made without considering all possible options, and rather than aiming to *solve* problems, decision-makers pursue strategies to *cope* with them. Lindblom states that 'problem solving cannot be synoptically accomplished but must be strategically pursued' (1965, p. 151).

The criticisms and alternative perspectives outlined above illustrate the limitations of the purely rational-synoptic ideal as an accurate model of decision-making. Yet although the rational-administrative perspective is rarely viewed as truly representative of the reality of modern bureaucracies, it serves as an influential ideal type. Indeed, the rationalist tradition has been described as the 'mainstream' approach to policy analysis. As noted by Ham and Hill (1993), it has been extremely influential over attempts to improve the machinery of government in various countries. Numerous studies of public administration have taken up the challenge of identifying administrative tools, or means, to suit particular ends. Many theories of policy instrument choice, as well as theories of systems management, follow in this tradition.

3.2.2 Applying rational-administration to the implementation of collaboration

From a rational-administrative perspective, policy makers would articulate the values and objectives of the collaboration policy, while neutral implementers or bureaucrats would search for the most efficient means or administrative ‘tools’ for delivering these objectives. Objectives would be shared by government departments that behave as a unified actor, implying that government departments are ‘positively coordinated’ (Scharpf 1994), pursuing common strategies to enhance whole system effectiveness. The approach used by government would therefore be one of a rational planning. Tool selection by bureaucrats would be based on a logical and scientific calculation of the tools most likely to achieve the policy which has been already specified by the policy makers, in the most efficient and effective manner according to the context. Local agencies would be motivated by solving the issue to which the collaboration policy relates, rather than by self-interest or by their personal values.

As outlined in chapter two, there is a large prescriptive literature on policy instrument choice which matches particular instruments to particular circumstances. The more rationalistic contributions to this literature suggest that governments choose policy instruments according to technical criteria. Although these accounts focus on the instruments of government or ‘vertical tools’, they may also be applied to the selection of horizontal coordination tools.

Much previous work on collaboration, particularly within organisation theory, adopts an implicitly rational-administrative perspective. Booth (1988, see Hudson 1995, p. 236) argues that much of the early rhetoric on collaboration in health and social care, upon which collaborative service models such as joint commissioning have been built, takes a ‘naïve position’. This position, he suggests, has two underlying assumptions. First, that organisations are likely to collaborate for altruistic reasons, that is, to meet the needs of their service users; and secondly, that they will collaborate for rational reasons, that is, ‘when it can be shown that that they can achieve the same ends more efficiently by working together rather than separately’. The naïve model that Booth describes may be considered a fusion of public interest and rational means-ends motivations. Hudson (1995, p. 247) sums it up as the ‘rational-altruistic’ model of collaboration, and expresses doubt that this model is realistic. He suggests that the model is only relevant where agencies have common goals, a systemic overview of client needs and problems, consensus about what these problems are, and agreement on the best methods for tackling them, conditions which he implies are unlikely to occur.

The literature on selection of horizontal coordination instruments is also rationalistic. As discussed in chapter two, Van De Venn et al. (1976) and Alter and Hage (1993) postulate that choice of coordination mode would be related to issues such as the

level of task uncertainty, the degree of interdependence and the size of the setting or number of units to be coordinated. Such analyses imply that mechanisms of collaboration can, or should, be chosen according to the nature of the problem at hand and the context.

Taking a rational-administrative approach to local multi-agency collaboration, where there are several agencies involved, impersonal coordination modes would be considered the most administratively efficient. Where the task environment is uncertain or unpredictable, group and personal coordination modes may be adopted since inter-agency decisions need to be taken in 'real time' rather than specified in advance. Situations of high interdependence between agencies would also imply the need for group and personal modes involving face-to-face contact.

3.3 The bureaucratic politics of collaboration

In contrast to the rational administrative approach stands the bureaucratic politics approach. In this view the bureaucratic process is regarded as involving bargaining, competing interests and compromise, and the bureaucracy is *not* simply a tool of government employed by decision-makers to reach their goals. While the machine image is often used to characterise Weber's model, images such as 'opposing indirectly or covertly, distorting, altering orders, maligning by gossip, foot dragging, sabotage' conjured up by Dexter (see Jordan 1994, p. 76) perhaps best sum up the bureaucratic politics perspective. The bureaucratic politics framework can be applied to facilitate understanding of the dynamics of collaboration between agencies and of the policy implementation process involving central and local government. As will be demonstrated, the bureaucratic politics perspective has parallels with rational choice theory²⁰ in its concern with the pursuit of individual or organisational interests. However, it extends the analysis by attempting to explain how actors seek to satisfy those interests through an explicit focus on the power dynamics of interacting groups.

3.3.1 Introducing the bureaucratic politics perspective

As the label suggests, the basic premise of this perspective is that the bureaucracy is inherently political. The bureaucratic politics perspective challenges the artificial separation of politics and administration espoused in 'orthodox' (although empirically disputed) public administration literature. Dwight Waldo (1948), one of the first scholars to convincingly challenge this dichotomy argued that 'administration *is* politics' (see Frederickson and Smith 2003). In theories of bureaucratic politics, rather than being seen as neutral implementers of public policy, bureaucrats are viewed as shaping, or even making, laws. Organisations are considered political and are made up of competing factions engaged in processes of bargaining, exchange and compromise.

The bureaucratic politics perspective is not of itself a coherent theory, and is more accurately described as a school of thought or even simply set of propositions about the nature of political and administrative life. Nevertheless the underlying principle of the bureaucratic politics perspective, that government actions are a product of bargaining and

²⁰ The term 'rational' used within rational choice theory is employed in a different sense to the notion of rationality employed in the rational-administrative perspective. Rational choice theory uses the term to refer to bureaucratic decision-making as the pursuit of *individual interests* in an individual utility maximising sense. This is in contrast to the rational-administrative approach which, although also applying a means-ends logic, assumes that bureaucrats' decisions are focused on searching for efficient means to solve the administrative problem itself rather than to satisfy the bureaucrats' own interests.

compromise involving both bureaucrats and politicians, has served as an important influence on subsequent theory and research in political science (Frederickson and Smith 2003). Allison's *Essence of Decision* and its more comprehensive development by Allison and Halperin are together generally regarded as representing the first full academic articulation of the bureaucratic politics framework. The Allison and Halperin contribution is worth describing in some detail since the propositions which flow from this account have provided the framework for many subsequent studies of bureaucratic politics.

In Allison and Halperin's model government decisions and actions are the outcome of a bargaining game between policy actors, where each division acts according to its own organisational interests, and where the outcomes favour the most powerful of the actors involved. This latter point represents the crucial departure from the rational administrative perspective. The bureaucratic politics perspective, in contrast to the rational-administrative perspective, is concerned with the exercise of power in organisations, acknowledging how inequalities in power affect the outcome of decision-making. Allison and Halperin's model also contrasts with the rational actor model because rather than single actors making choices to maximize performance against pre-decided organisational or individual aims, decisions are made as a result of bargaining between several different actors each with their own set of priorities, interests and perceptions. According to Allison and Halperin (1972, p. 43), 'players make governmental decisions not by a single rational choice, but by pulling and hauling'. The bargaining process is, however, highly structured, is governed by 'action channels', which are defined as 'regularized sets of procedures'. The authors thus acknowledge the importance of standard operating procedures and routines, as emphasised in institutional and organisation theory.

Allison and Halperin advance three central questions to organize the bureaucratic politics paradigm (1972, pp. 46-47), namely (i) who plays? (ii) what determines each player's stand? and (iii) how are players' stands aggregated to yield governmental decisions and actions? They note that who plays is often determined by the issue at stake and the type of game. They suggest that 'decision games', the arena in which government policy is worked out, are dominated by senior players such as Heads of Government and their immediate circle. 'Action games', concerned with producing government actions, are dominated by junior players which includes those charged with carrying out senior players' decisions. In addition, they suggest that action channels determine which players enter which game, thus acknowledging that the exercise of power may institutionalise who plays and who does not. On the second question, each player's stand is determined

by a combination of interests including national security interests, domestic political interests, organisational interests and personal interests²¹.

On the third question, the authors consider both decision games and action games. In decision games, the domain of senior players, government decisions are the outcome of a series of strategic moves on the part of the players involved. Players' decisions on what stand to take are the product of an *implicit* calculation about 'resources and reputation', in which the actor decides on the level of resource they are willing to put into the move, and how much influence they feel they have over other players. In deciding on their move, they consider their own prior track record and reputation, as this is likely to influence other players' responses to their move. Who wins is determined by bargaining advantages such as control of implementation, control over information, persuasiveness with other players and ability to affect other players' objectives. However, the results of the game are also influenced by various constraints, particularly organisational constraints and broader societal values.

In action games, the primary domain of junior players, the success of individual players is determined by a similar range of factors to those affecting senior players, such as bargaining advantages and control over resources and information. In addition, junior players may take actions in pursuit of policy decisions that are different from those anticipated by senior players. This is partly because policy decisions often do not specify in detail the intended purpose of the policy, and also because organisational routines may determine what course of action is pursued, or sometimes because junior actors distort actions when they are specified from above. Distortion is most likely to occur where junior actors do not support the original decision. This may cause them to implement 'the letter but not the spirit', or in more extreme cases to disobey the policy decision entirely.

The perspective therefore sees bureaucratic politics in the relationships between actors firstly at the level where policy decisions are made, which can be termed the 'senior horizontal level', secondly in the relationships between actors where decisions are enacted, the 'junior horizontal level', and thirdly in the relationship between these two levels, the 'vertical level'. Each of these dimensions is characterised by inequality in terms of bargaining advantages, and policy decisions and outcomes are a reflection of negotiation between the various interests of parties at these levels and an uneven distribution of power.

²¹ Since Allison and Halperin were predominantly concerned with foreign policy and national security issues, the interests they articulate reflect this. However, applying this to other areas of public policy, an individual's policy stance may be considered to be made up of similar sets of interests determined by the relevant influences in that particular field. National security is unlikely to be relevant in other domains. The point is that policy stances are not based on a single but affected by multiple influences and interests such as citizen or public interests, personal, interests, and organisational interests.

The perspective has been criticised for failing to account for how aspects of organisational design, culture and hierarchy within public administration may affect the actions of government (see Clifford 1990; Frederickson and Smith 2003 for discussions of the various critiques). However, it can be argued that attempting to account for all these dimensions within a single model may result in loss of meaning and explanatory power. The model has also been criticized from the opposite angle for lacking in parsimony. Indeed, the model is a rather complex one which explains decision-making by referring to multiple sources of influence including organisational routines and constraints, strategic moves and organisational and social values.

It is suggested here that the perspective is helpful because it successfully draws attention towards the importance of bargaining within the policy process, and the unequal way in which bargaining ‘advantages’ are distributed. Its core contribution is to highlight the way in which policy decisions and actions are the product of a struggle between factions or divisions with disparate and sometimes competing interests. It is also a perspective which captures the interactive nature of much public policy decision-making without the limitations of classical pluralist accounts which underplay the way in which certain interests may be excluded from decision-making.

The broad bureaucratic politics perspective has been applied in numerous areas of political science. Some of these studies preceded Allison and Halperin’s work which can be thought of as a formalisation of many of the characteristics of these earlier studies into a single analytical framework. Studies following in this vein include those investigating the relationship between politicians and administrators, and between and within government departments, either centrally or locally. Others have focused on the political nature of the design of government machinery and its coordination.

Bottom-up models of policy implementation are one important variant of the bureaucratic politics approach. These models of the policy process call into question the image of the rational organisation in which subordinates unquestioningly implement the orders of their superiors, such as Elmore’s (1979) bottom-up policy making model and Lipsky’s (1980) theory of street level bureaucracy. These accounts illustrate that frontline bureaucrats have a significant role in determining ‘who gets what, when and how’, which Laswell described as the essence of politics. James Q Wilson (1989) also followed in this vein, arguing that frontline bureaucrats, or ‘operators’, help to shape the policy which is only vaguely defined in legislation. These three studies highlight the pertinence of the bureaucratic politics perspective for analyzing policy implementation at ‘street level’, a tier of bureaucracy which some would argue enjoys considerable autonomy from the central state, particularly in realms of public policy involving professionals (see below for

a fuller discussion of implementation theory). In this sense they acknowledge the vertical dimension of Allison and Halperin's model which suggests that junior players may distort the policy made by senior players.

Another category of studies which broadly fit the bureaucratic politics mould are public choice theories including the economic theory of bureaucracy, and later variants of this approach such as bureau-shaping models. These approaches also reject the idea of bureaucrats as neutral implementers of policy. Instead, bureaucrats are strategists who attempt to maximize the budgets of their own departments or to carve out the most interesting and important work for their own agencies. However, while these works may be characterised as studies of bureaucratic politics because of their focus on the strategic action of the individuals involved, they are more commonly thought of as rational choice or public choice theories. They are more centrally concerned with the self-interested nature of bureaucratic decision-making than with the exercise of power *per se*.

A more direct and explicit application of bureaucratic politics is Peters' account of the relationship between elected political institutions and bureaucracies or non-elected public agencies. He attempts to open up the black box of bureaucratic politics in order to enhance understanding of *how* bureaucracies use the strategies and resources at their disposal to exert power and influence over the policy making process, and how elected politicians seek to curb this power. Various sources of *bureaucratic power* are observed in Peters' account.

Compared to political institutions, bureaucrats possess a relative monopoly of information on certain aspects of policy by virtue of their training and technical expertise. This information can be used to bargain or trade for influence. In addition, bureaucracies are comparatively efficient decision-making structures as compared to political institutions, making it appealing for political executives to delegate responsibility to these bodies, which enhances their power. The supporters and interest groups of bureaucratic bodies are typically more cohesive and vocal than the supporters of political institutions, making the bureaucracy's appeal for influence all the more powerful.

Peters also suggests that since bureaucracies are not involved in partisan politics, they are more isolated from the demands of the voters than politicians, allowing them to rise above party politics and project an image of technical expertise. Bureaucratic agencies also develop strong agency ideologies which are used as 'weapons' to seek justification for their actions. These ideologies provide the policy direction of the agency, and are similar to the concept of organisational culture, and allow agencies to preserve existing policies.

By contrast, the main resources possessed by *political institutions* are legitimacy, finance, the ability to grant latitude or autonomy to agencies and their capacity, as public representatives, to mobilise public support against the bureaucracy. Such resources are used by political institutions to curb bureaucratic power, for instance by trading these resources for expert information held by bureaucrats or employing them in some other way to hold bureaucrats to account. According to Peters (1995, p. 229), the resources or weapons that each side possesses are used ‘to play the game of politics within formal organisations’.

Peters’ work can be thought of as a dissection of how groups in the political process – in this case elected politicians versus bureaucrats - use their resources to exercise power over the each other, using tactical and strategic moves. This account therefore highlights ways in which the politics-administration dichotomy proposed in the rational-administrative perspective is often broken down in practice.

Applying bureaucratic politics to the organisation of British local government, Stoker (1991), highlights how decisions around service organisation are frequently related more to bureaucratic rivalry between departments than to any rational considerations. Citing evidence from several case studies, he suggests that departments regularly seek to protect their own turf, staff, budgets, values and responsibilities. One example concerned a high profile housing renewal programme being split between departments to the detriment of the programme itself in order to ‘appease’ the various competing interests. A second example involved an industrial policy programme where departmental jealousies over the planning department ‘winning’ responsibility for the programme resulted in the programme subsequently being divided between several departments. Further studies revealed instances of departmental priorities overriding the agreed council’s corporate priorities, such as Liverpool’s commitment to the provision of social facilities being bypassed by the housing and health departments’ concern to maintain momentum for a slum clearance programme in opposition to the planning department.

Such examples lead Stoker to characterize local authorities as terrains of ‘debated territory’. One strategy adopted by departments to avoid conflict, he suggests, is to agree ‘accepted action spaces’ where departments’ decisions remain unchallenged. Where these accepted actions break down, departments use negotiation and persuasion to process these conflicts. This type of strategy is used because despite power differences between departments, no department has formal authority over the other departments involved in the dispute, and there is therefore no scope for using coercive or regulative strategies. The momentum for such policy struggles, he contends, is fostered by officials’ perceptions that they are involved in a competition where each official must strive to

protect and extend their own 'administrative empire', and where long-standing professional jealousies and value clashes exist.

In the context of central/ local government relations, central government possesses far greater resources than local authorities and other local bodies, giving it a stronger bargaining position in policy games. The same point may also be applied to the inter-organisational or inter-departmental arena. It can be argued that the distribution of power between actors in local service delivery networks is also uneven, reflecting differences in resources such as finances, democratic legitimacy and perceived expertise. Stoker (ibid), for instance, notes that the relative power of different local authority departments is likely to be affected by the political popularity of their policies and their 'organisational status', reflected in the size of their departments and budgets. Within central government, departments and executive agencies also enjoy differing status depending on the size of their budget and the political importance of the services and policy area for which they are responsible. Moreover, they have differing interpretations of the same problem, and may not represent a unified or single perspective to neutrally arbitrate the game (Howlett and Ramesh 2003).

A final area of relevance where 'bureaucratic politics' has been applied, is to the study of policy tools. As discussed in chapter two, many theories of instrument choice assume that tools are selected on a rational means-end basis. However, some political scientists have challenged the possibility of such neutral and systematic tool selection processes. Peters makes a strong case for the politics of tool selection. In his analysis he illustrates how the choice of policy tools used by governments often favours the more powerful groups. For instance, he suggests that the more powerful political groups or actors will typically succeed in securing their interests through less visible policy tools, such as tax exemptions. The lack of visibility disguises the true impact of the policy tool and allows powerful actors to preserve their interests without much opposition. As well as seeking to preserve the interests of such groups, governments may also choose tools with popular appeal to maximise support from the electorate at large. For instance, in societies where there is a public preference for limited state intervention, governments are likely to employ less visible tools. Peters' framework serves to highlight how competing interests come into play when governments and bureaucracies choose policy tools. Policy tools, or means, as much as policies themselves, or ends, are viewed as serving the more powerful interests.

3.3.2 Applying bureaucratic politics to the implementation of collaboration

A bureaucratic politics perspective on collaboration would view the collaborative process as a game. In this game, certain interests are likely to dominate since the terrain is one of unequal influence. The resulting forms of collaboration pursued would be the outcome of a process of negotiation, compromise and bargaining. Rather than all parties benefiting equally from the process, certain parties may benefit from collaborating more than others. Therefore, collaboration, either between different arms or levels of government, occurs within a broader context of bargaining and negotiation .

In terms of the implementation of collaboration, the political nature of bureaucracy is manifested in three ways: first, in the ‘horizontal’ relationships between agencies in the multi-agency homelessness network; secondly, in the horizontal relations between central government departments; thirdly, in the ‘vertical’ relationship street level bureaucrats (from across several agencies) and central government.

On a horizontal level, inter-agency relations across the public/ private/ voluntary sector interface can be viewed as a realm of conflict, competition and differing priorities. The conceptualisation of the collaborative process as a political one acknowledges the struggles, bargains and compromises that take place at an inter-organisational level . Although collaboration is a term which connotes consensus, motivations for collaborating can be seen as occurring within a wider context which is more conflictual and competitive in nature. Indeed, previous studies of network management have been criticised for failing to account for the role of power and conflict in inter-organisational settings . In contrast to the ‘naïve’ position associated with rational administration , which assumes that actors collaborate because they are more likely to achieve their goals this way, the bureaucratic politics perspective would acknowledge that goals may not be shared and that actors may have differing motivations for collaborating. Hudson (1995, p. 236) suggests that ‘it maybe more realistic to assume that organisations will strive to maintain their autonomy’.

Within this context, the ‘horizontal tools’ selected by street level bureaucrats, that is, the *means* of collaboration, would be used as part of a bargaining process in which each agency seeks to promote its own organisational priorities. The resulting tool selection would favour the most powerful actors, rather than a collective aim.

The horizontal dimension applied to the level of central government would assume that government departments each have their own interests to pursue. Rather than articulating a unified voice, mandates to their subordinate units may be incoherent or contradictory. With respect to an issue such as homelessness, departments may have differing interpretations of this, casting doubt on the ability of the state to set out a rational or strategic plan for tackling it. Again, the processes of collaboration, that is, the

horizontal tools used to coordinate government departments, would result from pulling and hauling between government departments rather than being selected on the basis of a synoptically rational assessment of all available options.

In terms of the vertical dimension, a bureaucratic politics perspective would view government's 'meta-policy' to encourage collaboration amongst street level bureaucrats as a game between these two players, with each player responding or adjusting to the moves of the other. The game involves government using the 'tools' at its disposal to try to exert influence over street level bureaucrats to elicit a desired way of working. However, these tools are not simply mechanisms of control but more complex bargaining strategies involving incentives to elicit desired behaviour. The motivations for selecting particular vertical policy tools to encourage local collaboration would be seen in a political sense, with central government selecting tools not on a rational basis but according to influences such as ideas, interests and institutions. Central and local actors may have different preferences regarding policy tools, and local actors may resist certain tools and comply with others. Street level bureaucrats would therefore have their own means of 'playing the game' which previous theory suggests may involve moves to produce a veneer of compliance, particularly if the risks and costs of collaborating are seen as curtailing the attainment of individual organisational goals.

Furthermore, while a rationalistic argument would view government's promotion of local collaboration as the most efficient and effective response to a fragmented polity, a bureaucratic politics perspective would view the motivations behind this rather differently. For instance, a bureaucratic politics perspective may consider the promotion of local inter-agency collaboration by government a method for shifting the responsibility for obtaining resources off the central state and into the local arena where agencies compete for resources. In addition, central government encouraging collaboration could be seen as a method for detracting from the broader difficulties facing agencies that stem from the fragmentation of services. In this view collaboration may be seen as the politically acceptable face of privatization, and as a 'soft' and less visible policy tool as compared to privatization. Finally, collaboration itself may be regarded as a 'powerful, noble idea' (Peters *ibid*). Government may extol the virtues of a collaborative approach to street level bureaucrats and appeal to their altruistic side in order to legitimize this meta-policy.

The above discussion illuminates how the implementation of collaboration would be viewed from two very distinct perspectives, the rational-administrative and the bureaucratic politics perspective, each reflecting a different set of assumptions about decision-making in relation to government policies. Based on existing literature, the

bureaucratic politics perspective seems a more relevant and useful explanation of the implementation of collaboration within service delivery networks.

Firstly, as noted in the preceding discussion, these networks are made up of distinct organisations with individual and sometimes competing remits, and processes are often governed by a logic of exchange and bargaining. As such they are arguably fundamentally conflictual rather than cooperative. As already discussed, networks are often characterized as being ‘closed’ in that they prohibit access to certain actors. The bureaucratic politics perspective may help explain why some actors participate in collaborative endeavours or negotiations while others do not, why some players gain from collaborating more than others, and lastly why dominant or powerful players may gain from limiting access to certain other players.

In addition, since there are controversies over the extent to which collaboration is a top-down or a bottom-up process, to understand the implementation of collaboration it is essential to account for the nature of relations between the central state and local agencies. Bureaucratic politics draws attention towards such conflicts and tensions, and empirical studies following in this tradition have fruitfully examined such aspects of the policy process.

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that the nature of the relationships between central government departments involves dynamics associated with bureaucratic politics. There is a long pedigree of literature which indicates that British Central Government is a terrain of competition between departments, each seeking to protect their own interests. For instance, problems of turf fighting have been well-documented, with departments keen to pursue their own interests in order to protect their own territory and areas of responsibility. Indeed, it is acknowledged amongst academics and civil servants alike that the sectional interests of government departments frequently dominate the collective interests of government as a whole. In British Government, the relationship between individual departments in their relationship to the Treasury is recognised to be one of competition or ‘bargained allocation’. Anthony Crosland (see Jordan 1994, p. 49) reflecting on his experience as, observed that Ministers get resources for their departments in ‘an endless tactical battle which requires determination, cunning and occasional unscrupulousness’. Such observations indicate the relevance of a bureaucratic politics perspective to collaborative working in central government.

The next section moves to a discussion of the *level* at which policy decisions are made, drawing on two influential and opposing perspectives from implementation theory. As discussed in the preceding chapters, there is much debate in the collaboration literature on the extent to which collaboration is, or should be, a top-down or a bottom-up process.

3.4 Implementation theory and collaboration

Implementation theory is concerned with the process of translating public policies into action. Within the overarching policy process, implementation is often viewed as the stage occurring after policy formulation and before policy evaluation. In practice these stages are not always clearly defined, as will be illustrated below. Nevertheless, the distinction between these different aspects of the policy process provides a useful starting point. According to Howlett and Ramesh (2003, p.13), the implementation stage relates to ‘how governments put policies into effect’. The main question addressed in the present research can be considered a manifestation of this classic implementation concern, in this case concerned with how governments get their meta-policy of collaboration into practice.

Implementation theorists have been characterised as falling into three camps, namely ‘top-down’ theorists, ‘bottom-up’ theorists and ‘synthesizers’ who combine elements of the first two models . The following section focuses on top-down and bottom-up perspectives of implementation before proceeding to a discussion of their application to the implementation of collaboration.

3.4.1 Top-down perspectives

Top-down perspectives are concerned with explaining why policies do, or do not, get into action as anticipated by policy makers. Top-down studies therefore usually begin with specific political decisions or laws and investigate whether these are implemented in a manner consistent with their official purpose . They are typically prescriptive in orientation, providing ‘recipes’ for effective implementation, usually in ways which enhance control over implementers. When governments themselves take ‘top-down’ approaches, in practice this means ‘laying out what they want to occur and taking measures to ensure others comply with their wishes’ (Stoker 1991, p. 206).

Top-down approaches are generally construed as having arisen in response to seminal studies such as Pressman and Wildavsky’s *Implementation*, and Bardach’s *The Implementation Game* . Such studies highlight the numerous challenges to effective policy implementation. They draw attention towards policy failures, or ‘implementation gaps’, which occur either due to bad policy design, to the number of veto points and actors in the implementation process, or because of implementers having their own

interests to pursue. These challenges create policy distortions or failures, and top-down studies have responded by highlighting ways in which these can be minimized.

Minimising implementation deficits in the top-down perspective places emphasis on strengthening government and securing a tighter grip on bureaucracy. Authority-based tools such as tighter monitoring are therefore employed, although additional methods to ensure effective implementation are also employed. Top-down perspectives advocate a range of strategies including greater clarity and less ambiguity in the communication of policy intent (i.e. strong statutes), the provision of adequate resources and reducing the number of links in the policy chain.

Several studies with a top-down orientation construct ideal-typical models of implementation, under which conditions 'perfect implementation' can be attained. Perfect implementation conditions include having a single implementing agency which is not overly-dependent on others, and a single line of command. In the ideal typical model the subunits of the implementing agency have uniform objectives, norms and rules. There is also perfect communication, information sharing and coordination among the various elements of a programme or service.

There are clear parallels between the top-down perspective and rational-administrative decision-making models. According to Ham and Hill (1993, p. 111) a top-down perspective assumes that 'rationality in public policy involves goal setting followed by activities in pursuit of those goals which may be systematically monitored'. When their policy goals or ends are not achieved, the assumption of the top-down perspective is that those at the apex of the political and administrative system will revise these to select alternative courses of action in order to achieve these goals. This may involve tampering with the bureaucracy in ways highlighted above, such as reducing the number of links in the policy chain or pursuing other measures to enhance coordination. Top-down perspectives, like rational-administrative perspectives, therefore involve a search for the most efficient means to achieve policy goals or ends. They assume that decisions regarding policy instruments and implementation are made on technical grounds, as means towards specified ends.

Furthermore, top-down models are rationalistic in the sense that the policy process itself is considered to occur in orderly and sequential stages, beginning with policy formulation at the top of the organisational hierarchy and proceeding to implementation at the bottom, with different actors involved at each stage. Top-down models, like the rational-administrative model, generally assume that elected politicians make the value decisions while the officials carry out the more detailed choices about the means for achieving these.

3.4.2 Bottom-Up Perspectives

The contrasting perspective highlights the bottom-up nature of much policy making and implementation. Indeed, many accounts normatively prefer policy making to occur at this level. This perspective challenges the idea of a linear, top-down policy process in which high ranking officials control those working at the lower tiers. Instead, bottom-up perspectives view policy formulation as a product of negotiation and compromise, with policy modified and ‘concretised’ as it goes through the implementation process .

The bottom-up perspective has been particularly influential in studies of ‘street level’ bureaucracy. Street level bureaucrats are the administrators and officials working at the frontline of public agencies who work at the interface between citizens and the state. Their typical areas of responsibility, according to Meyers and Vorsanger encompass many of the core activities of public agencies such as “determining program eligibility, allocating benefits, judging compliance, imposing sanctions and exempting individuals and businesses from penalties”.

Lipsky’s study of street level bureaucracy is arguably the most influential study of bottom-up policy-making. In his research into public service ‘semi-professionals’ including teachers, police and social workers, he suggests that street level bureaucrats *make* rather than merely implement policy, due to the need to exercise human judgment in many of their decisions. Street level workers have to adjust their response according to the circumstances of clients who walk into their offices, thus effectively making policy at street level.

Making policy at street level in Lipsky’s study is also viewed as a response to the limited resources available to, and pressures upon, such street level bureaucrats. Bureaucrats in human services organisations have to find ways of rationing the finite resources they are allocated in the face of infinite demands on services. In this analysis, street level bureaucrats perform a rationing job on behalf of the state and public sector organisations in the distribution of social welfare. This is achieved in one of two ways. First bureaucrats may limit or modify client *demand*, using bureaucratic procedures such as delaying tactics, withholding information and stigmatising service use. Second, they may modify client *conception*, which involves making a distinction between deserving and undeserving cases, or prioritising those most likely to succeed. Therefore, in Lipsky’s view, street level bureaucrats have considerable discretion in policy implementation. Thus, the interactions between frontline workers and citizens cannot be specified from above in the realms of higher level policy making. Rather, they need to be decided at

street level, in social services departments' offices and in town halls, where government policy interfaces directly with citizens.

Similarly for Elmore, problem solving in complex systems depends not on hierarchical control, but on maximising discretion at the point where the problem is most immediate. He suggests that 'forward mapping' solutions relying on formal devices of command and control such as funding formulas, authority relationships, regulation and administrative controls are likely to have limited effectiveness in solving policy problems. In his view, delegated discretion with adequate resources directed at the points within the system where this discretion is needed is a more effective method for effective implementation. Since policy implementation is heavily dependent on specialized problem solving capacities at lower levels, he argues for a 'backward mapping' approach to implementation which builds local bargaining and problem solving capacity. Hierarchical controls, he contends, encourage standardised responses and uniformity, and serve to restrict rather than facilitate these skills and capacities. James Q Wilson argues in much the same vein, arguing for greater de-regulation of local public services, something he views as necessary to allow street level bureaucrats the discretion required to perform effectively in their roles. His study which was concerned with prisons, schools and armies argued that over-regulation encouraged bureaucrats to 'go by the book', which ultimately did not serve the public interest.

Some bottom-up studies identify ways in which bureaucrats may help to secure the public interest through their non-compliance. For instance, Wood and Waterman (1994, see Frederickson and Smith 2003) suggest that strict bureaucratic compliance with official mandates is sometimes less likely to secure the interests of the public than bureaucratic resistance. They argue that bureaucrats frequently ignore policy mandates when they see this as likely to further the public interest. To illustrate they cite the example of bureaucratic curbing of presidential power in the case of President Reagan who was committed to de-regulation of the environment, contrary to public preference. Similarly, Blau (1963, see Jordan 1994) demonstrated in his case study of a Federal law enforcement agency that bureaucratic non-compliance with official priorities can create benefits for an organisation. In the case in question federal agents were charged with reporting attempted bribes by employers. Agents, however, managed to discourage bribes from taking place by agreeing an informal deal with employers that they would not report the bribe in return for voluntary modification of their behaviour.

Another variant of the bottom-up perspective, associated with authors such as Barrett and Fudge, sees the policy process as a continuum, or an iterative and recursive 'policy action' process which takes place vertically and horizontally. This view provides

a partial synthesis of top-down and bottom-up perspectives. As with the conventional bottom-up approach, it suggests that the policy process cannot be seen simply as involving the implementation of policies developed at higher levels into practice at lower levels. Although sometimes characterised as ‘bottom-uppers’ (for example Hill and Hupe 2002), Barrett and Fudge criticize the ‘pure’ bottom-up perspective which they argue mistakenly assumes that most action at the implementation level is spontaneous, thus understating the coordination capacity of super-ordinate policy actors. They see policy action in a political context, which involves negotiations that take place over time. Successful implementation is not simply about achieving compliance, but is also about compromise, which is seen as being needed as much at the policy formulation level as at the implementation level. The approach therefore implies a dialogic relationship between central and local levels rather than a simple hierarchical one. Nevertheless, the ‘action space’ given to policy actors can be restricted, and negotiation is used in conjunction with other modes of action, including coercion, persuasion, manipulation and regulation.

This perspective acknowledges that the complexity of the relationship between policy formulation and implementation. For instance, the consequences of a policy cannot always be anticipated. It is suggested that policy is not constant, but is mediated by those involved in its implementation, undergoing interpretation, modification and sometimes subversion. According to Barrett and Fudge (*ibid*), individuals’ and organisations’ actions and reactions may determine policy as much as policy itself determining action and response.

There are many similarities between bottom-up studies of the policy process and bureaucratic politics perspectives. For instance, bottom-up studies such as Lipsky’s which emphasises bureaucrats’ power to allocate public resources, share similarities with Waldo’s bureaucratic politics view that administrators have a large say in who gets what, when and how. Barrett and Fudge’s work also has parallels with bureaucratic politics in its conception of policy as something which is negotiated in an arena where action space can be restricted. Indeed, some commentators categorize theories of street level bureaucracy as falling within the bureaucratic politics paradigm (for example Frederickson and Smith 2003). The two perspectives are united in their concern with negotiation and bargaining, and are concerned with unravelling the politics/administration dichotomy.

However, bottom-up perspectives can also have a rational character. As noted above, some ‘bottom-uppers’ suggest that higher level policy makers only possess partial knowledge and are reliant on lower level implementers who have the requisite skills and know-how to translate policy intentions into practice. Studies such as Goodsell’s, Wood

and Waterman's and James Q. Wilson's imply that bureaucrats and those involved in public service delivery have the capacity to select appropriate courses of action in a technical and rational manner based on their training and professional expertise.

3.4.3 Application of top-down and bottom-up perspectives to the implementation of collaboration

It has been argued that policy implementation is an inherently complex process. Previous studies have demonstrated that translating government policy into action is problematic, with many policies devised by central government failing to be implemented at local level. A range of solutions in the top-down-model have been proposed for countering implementation deficits. As discussed above, solutions offered in the literature include tighter monitoring and control, and clearer mandates.

In terms of the implementation of collaboration, in the top-down perspective we would expect governments to employ largely authoritative policy tools such as close monitoring of collaboration, clear and unambiguous specification of the nature of collaboration and perhaps also to issue legislation. Such approaches would, in theory, enhance compliance with official mandates. The top-down approach may be seen in two ways, either as an authoritative response to the bargaining which takes place between central government and local public service providers, serving to curb recalcitrant behaviour, or as a rational approach to administration in which the top selects coordination tools most likely to deliver the aims of collaboration.

From a bottom-up perspective, decisions around collaborating would be made at the local level, and government mandates would have only limited influence. Decision-making at street level would imply that policy aims, or ends, may be set at this level as well and the means for achieving these. Bottom-up collaboration may be driven by rational considerations where the professionals and other technical experts at street level who are closer to the people and more in tune with their needs, would make decisions on the most appropriate means and level of collaboration, helping to serve the public interest. However, in the bottom-up perspective collaboration may also be driven by bureaucratic politics, resulting from a process of bargaining, negotiation and compromise in which the agencies involved pursue their own interests and where the outcomes favour those with the strongest bargaining influence.

Existing evidence on the nature of collaboration and arguments about the limits of authoritative strategies in network settings cast doubt on the appropriateness of traditional top-down models for explaining the implementation of collaboration. As discussed in

chapter one, the processes of monitoring, coordination and control are complex in service delivery networks as compared to 'conventional' hierarchical systems. The solutions offered in the top-down implementation literature for increasing compliance with policy mandates may therefore not be applicable when seeking to influence behaviour in implementation networks. Indeed, a number of authors have discussed the difficulty of applying 'traditional' (top-down) implementation theory to situations of fragmented governance.

The ideal-typical conditions for enhancing top-down coordination identified by scholars such as Hood, Hogwood and Gunn have limited applicability in service delivery networks for a number of reasons. First, it was noted above that one condition of perfect implementation is a single line of command. However, service delivery networks are influenced by several lines of command, with implementation agencies subject to the demands of different government departments, and in the case of private and voluntary sector agencies, to other stakeholders. It is therefore not always clear who is in control in such situations. Secondly, under conditions of perfect top-down implementation it was noted that there would be a single implementing agency which is not overly dependent on others. Clearly service delivery networks which are the subject of central coordinating efforts have more than one implementing actor, and are also characterized by interdependence. Thirdly, the ideal typical condition of subunits of the implementing agency having uniform objectives, norms and rules is unrealistic in multi-agency networks consisting of agencies with different professional and cultural values, priorities and organisational systems. Finally, conditions such as perfect communication, information sharing and coordination among the various elements of a programme are contrary to much of the evidence of multi-agency implementation systems where such processes are frequently found to be problematic.

Top-down strategies to enhance control such as tight monitoring and clear specification of policy content are also problematic in service delivery networks. Monitoring is challenging since it may be difficult to identify non-compliant agencies. As two knowledgeable observers have commented, 'recalcitrant agencies are generally less visible to mandating authorities when many actors are involved; and other agencies, which may depend on their actions, have few mechanisms for enforcement'. Clear specification of unambiguous policies may be problematic since messages may be lost in transmission where there are numerous implementing agencies involved and long implementation chains (ibid). For instance, government departments may specify mandates and messages to their subordinate agencies in the expectation that these will be passed on to other relevant agencies in service delivery networks. However, empirical

studies have demonstrated that where implementation relies on multiple actors, messages are frequently weakened or lost (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; O'Toole and Montjoy *ibid*). In addition, where there are various conflicting groups affected by a policy decision as in service delivery networks, clear and unambiguous policy directives may be more difficult to achieve (Ham and Hill 1984). The variety of actors involved locally means that common definitions may not be appropriate and consequently it may not be possible to achieve clarity .

Pressman and Wildavsky's seminal study of a multi-organisational job creation programme in Oakland, California provides an illuminating account of the difficulties of achieving top-down methods of control in complex implementation settings involving a large and diverse range of actors. Three particular difficulties are highlighted, namely the widely diverging and conflicting interests of the actors involved, the frequency at which actors changed and the number of clearance points at which agreement was needed. The study also highlights the challenges of achieving joint action in such settings, stemming from issues such as the incompatibility of organisational goals, legal and procedural differences between organisations, and dependence on actors who lack a sense of urgency. The number of decision or veto points is seen as especially problematic, requiring dozens of people with different perspectives to give clearance to controversial issues.

Such perspectives suggest that the implementation gap and the ability of the centre to control implementers is more problematic in situations involving multiple organisations. The greater number of links in the implementation chain makes it more difficult to exert top-down control and to ensure policies are 'correctly' implemented, as intended by the original policy makers. All this suggests it is more difficult to invoke authority as a mode of action in implementation networks than in hierarchies, and there may be a number of 'control deficits' . Other strategies involving information-based tools, incentive-based tools and capacity building tools may be required, as discussed in chapter two.

Turning specifically to the implementation of collaboration, there are a number of reasons why the bottom-up perspective appears more relevant than top-down down perspective. At least three issues can be discerned, first, resistance from lower level policy actors may occur because of the costs involved in collaborating; secondly, the knowledge and expertise required for devising collaborative strategies is likely to be held locally; and thirdly, collaboration is difficult to monitor.

In relation to the first point, the policy may be one which local actors have a propensity to resist due to the costs and risks involved. Agencies fear they are likely to have to surrender some of their organisational autonomy . For instance, many varieties of

joint working involve the merging of organisational procedures, requiring agencies to abandon systems with which they are familiar. In addition, in adjusting to the prevailing values and ethos of other professions and sectors, ideological compromises have to be made. Professional values tend to be deeply rooted, and are not readily departed from. In the most extreme cases, there is the unwelcome possibility of one organisation being subsumed by another. Moreover, the benefits to be gained from collaboration can appear fairly intangible in the early stages, and it may take some time for their impacts to be felt. As already discussed, collaboration is a time consuming and resource intensive activity. Certainly, collaboration is unlikely to produce quick wins. As Pollitt (2003, p. 46) has succinctly put it: 'it would be wise for proponents of joined up government to regard it as a long term project, a selective project, and a cooperative project – not something that central government can just decide to 'have'. Because of these costs and risks, agencies are likely to resist a meta-policy promoting collaboration unless there is a sense of ownership of, and a shared commitment to, the idea within the local area.

Resistance to collaboration is likely to be enhanced when the form of collaboration promoted or imposed is highly ambitious, for example varieties falling at the higher end of the collaborative spectrum. At this end, collaboration poses more of a threat and disruption to the organisations involved. In such cases, it has been suggested that agencies may adopt coping strategies to produce a veneer of joint working. These strategies will ensure that their organisational independence is retained and standard operating procedures unaffected. In a similar vein, Hudson, drawing on Lipsky's theory of street level bureaucracy, notes that it is up to street level workers whether or not they engage in collaborative working. One of the notable features of welfare organisations, he suggests, is that operational staff have 'considerable contact with outside bodies, and in some cases have de facto autonomy from their superiors' (ibid, p. 237). If the goals of policy makers or superiors are perceived as too difficult to achieve, he suggests, they will redefine or abandon them.

Research by Jennings lends support to this idea. In a systematic study of coordination tools used in the employment and training sector in the American States, he found that states adopted 'low payoff' tools, that is, tools that were perceived as having least impact but which are easiest to implement. These were the tools required by law, and included formal planning requirements. The horizontal coordination tools which were seen as most effective – the high payoff tools – were least likely to be implemented. These tools were entirely voluntary and were either group modes of coordination that involved increasing communication between agencies such as regular inter-agency meetings and working partnerships, or impersonal modes for operational integration

around the client level, such as joint electronic client record systems and the creation of universal eligibility and referral mechanisms. Jennings is pessimistic about the findings and suggests that state personnel seemed to persist with ineffective coordination tools either because they are mandated or easier to implement, resulting in much waste time and effort. Yet this leaves open a conundrum in that without any form of government steering, it is quite possible that states would have engaged in no coordination efforts whatsoever.

With reference to the second problem, it can be argued that collaboration is an intrinsically bottom-up affair because the knowledge about how to make collaboration work is held at the local level. As noted by Hudson (1995; 1999), the knowledge of the issues which are likely to benefit from collaboration may need to be determined locally. Similarly, local agencies are best placed to determine the actors with whom they should collaborate. As has been illustrated, much collaboration is of an informal nature, based on inter-personal ties, which are developed through personal contacts and local networks. In the same way as Lipsky suggested that higher tiers of government bureaucracy could not specify the interactions between street level workers and citizens, it can be argued that higher level actors cannot specify the required interactions between agencies.

Finally, monitoring local compliance with a collaborative agenda is problematic, casting some doubt on the possibility of a top-down approach. We have seen that monitoring in implementation networks is generally problematic. As discussed by Winter (2003), some aspects of administration are more visible than others, rendering them more amenable to political control. For instance, Winter notes that the number of penalties issued by a regulator or the inspections carried out are more visible than the harshness of penalties or strictness of inspections. Similarly, collaboration is not easily observed since many cooperative actions are of an informal nature, involving interactions between street level actors as they deal with day-to-day, operational issues. The centrality of such informal interactions to human services networks was discussed in chapter two. While one approach to assessing the implementation of collaboration is to evaluate the extent to which government best practice on formal collaboration mechanisms is being followed, this approach only measures the more visible elements of collaboration.

Despite these observations on the limitations of top-down control, empirical research has also demonstrated that collaboration may not naturally happen of its own accord without some form of central steering. Although altruism or the pursuit of resources may motivate agencies to collaborate, as illustrated in chapter one, the costs and risks mean that it cannot be assumed that actors will collaborate voluntarily. In summary, collaboration can be seen as a process which requires significant bottom-up or grassroots

development and the use of the skills, knowledge and personal contacts held by local actors. However, because of the costs and risks involved, legal mandates, exhortations and other strategies are likely to be needed to induce agencies to collaborate. The next section combines the perspectives discussed above to create alternative models to explain collaboration.

3.5 Potential explanatory models and hypotheses

As outlined above, there are several potential ways of explaining collaboration in service delivery networks. Two principal types of explanation have been discussed: one pertaining to the nature of decision-making and another pertaining to the level at which decision-making occurs. The first dimension is concerned with the question ‘how and why is collaboration policy set?’ (i.e. in a rational-administrative or a bureaucratic politics sense?), and the second dimension with ‘who sets it?’ (i.e. at which level of government, the centre or the street?). The question of who sets policy can be subdivided into two further questions, namely, who sets the policy *aims*, and who sets the policy *means*? In the context of the present study, the policy *aim* is for agencies to collaborate. The *means* are the tools or mechanisms (formal or informal) through which collaboration occurs.

An overview of the rival explanatory models is captured in figure 3.1, and the core aspects of these models are outlined in figure 3.2. Each of the models and the hypotheses flowing from these are detailed further below.

Fig 3.1 Overview of the rival explanatory models

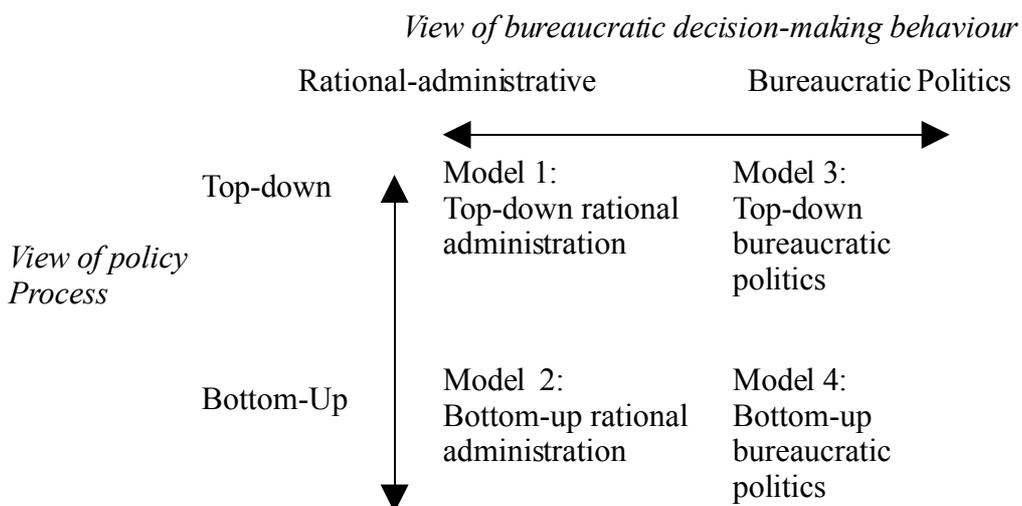


Fig 3.2 Key aspects of the rival explanatory models

Model	View of decision-making	Locus of control	Nature of horizontal relationships	Nature of vertical relationships
1	Rational-altruistic	Centre	Unified	Unified
2	Rational-altruistic	Street	Unified	Conflictual
3	Political-instrumental	Centre	Conflictual	Unified
4	Political-instrumental	Street	Conflictual	Conflictual

Model 1: The top-down rational administrative explanation:

H1a Local agencies collaborate because government tells them to; government's aims are unified and unambiguous;

H1b The values and objectives of the collaboration policy would be defined by government, and neutral implementers or bureaucrats would search for the most efficient means of delivering these objectives.

In model 1, the top-down rational administrative model, local agencies collaborate because government tells them to. This would be evidenced by local agencies generally complying with government policy on collaboration. In the top-down rational administrative model we would expect government to set the *aims* of the collaborative policy and neutral bureaucrats to select the *means* or tools of local collaboration. The bureaucrats selecting the tools are likely to be higher level bureaucrats working at the level of central government rather than service providers themselves, that is, 'street level' bureaucrats. Tool selection may either proceed according to synoptic rationality or bounded rationality. In the synoptically rational variant the full range of options is considered when selecting tools. In the 'boundedly' rational variant actors, in view of their cognitive limitations and constraints, would choose collaboration tools from a more limited range of options, producing outcomes that are good enough or 'satisficing' rather than optimal.

In this scenario it is government that is sovereign and sets the priorities and there is a strong central steer over local agencies through bureaucratic control. The assumption is that the weight and legitimacy of government authority is enough to compel local actors to act in accordance with central mandates to collaborate. Vertical relationships are consequently unified.

Confirmation of Hypotheses 1a and b would add weight to the view that government can stimulate collaboration at local level, and provide support for a top-down view of the policy process in which neutral bureaucrats implement the will of

government. It would also indicate the persistence of hierarchy in an era of governance and cast doubt on the governing without government/ hollow state thesis.

Model 2 The bottom-up rational administrative explanation

H2a Collaboration is locally defined and local agencies collaborate because they see this as the most effective mode of action for attaining their aims and for meeting clients' needs; local agencies' aims are unified and unambiguous;

H2b The means pursued are the most administratively efficient to meet these aims.

In the bottom-up rational administrative model both the ends or goals of collaboration and the means for pursuing these are decided locally. Local agencies collaborate because they view collaboration as the best way to meet the needs of their client group rather than because government tells them to. In this model it is local networks that are sovereign. Street level bureaucrats, by virtue of their close proximity to service users, possess the technical expertise and local knowledge to choose the most efficient, effective and relevant mechanisms of collaboration for the issues involved and to meet client needs. We would expect local bureaucrats to adopt collaboration mechanisms based on technical rather than political or strategic grounds, and the tools employed may be additional or different to those recommended by government or central bureaucrats, generated from the 'bottom-up'. Again, the horizontal tools of collaboration choices may be either synoptically rational or 'boundedly' rational.

In this model there is little need for vertical steering since collaboration occurs spontaneously without any government intervention. Agencies collaborate because they view joint working with other agencies as more likely to deliver their shared aims than working alone. Confirmation of hypotheses 2a and 2b would provide support for the notion of self-governing or self-organising networks and indicate limited ability of government to mandate collaboration from the top-down.

Model 3 The top-down, bureaucratic politics explanation:

H3a Government or central bureaucrats set collaboration policy aims and means, and local agencies are generally responsive to their parent government departments;

H3b Government policy is, however, not unified, with different departments pursuing their own interests and the outcome favouring the most powerful department.

Government sets the collaborative policy but is not unified, with different central government departments directing policy to their respective subordinates in ways which reflect their diverging interests. Central government departments may have differing motivations for promoting collaboration and some may be more committed to this than others. Local agencies are generally responsive to the mandates of their parent government departments, but because of the differing aims and priorities of these departments, the aims and priorities of local agencies within the network are themselves unlikely to be unified. The horizontal tools or collaboration mechanisms promoted to local agencies by central bureaucrats are an outcome of ‘pulling and hauling’ between government departments rather than being selected on technical grounds.

Evidence to support hypotheses 3a and 3b signifies central government sovereignty over local sovereignty, casting doubt on the hollow state/ self-organising networks thesis. However, because of the differing interests operating at central level, this model suggests that government may be unable to specify clear and unambiguous collaboration policy in the way suggested by the conventional rationalistic versions of top-down implementation theory.

Model 4 The bottom-up, bureaucratic politics explanation:

H4a Collaboration decisions (both means and ends) are generated from the bottom-up; however aims are not unified;

H4b Collaboration decisions are the outcome of strategic and instrumental moves between actors in the local arena, each promoting their own interests; the outcomes favour the most powerful local agencies.

In this model decisions around collaboration are generated at local level, regardless of governmental attempts to promote collaboration. Local agencies may resist government policy, and the relationship between central and local government is one of struggle and compromise. Inter-organisational working takes place in an arena of conflict, and collaborative processes would be characterised by negotiation and bargaining. In this explanation, motivations for adopting tools would be more strategic and instrumental in nature.

In Model 4, the patterns and mechanisms of collaboration pursued locally may bear no particular resemblance to those advocated by government. Indeed, there may be little collaboration pursued at all because of the differing priorities of local agencies. Evidence to support hypotheses 4a and 4b would indicate limited capacity of government to steer collaboration and provide some support for the notion of self-organising networks.

There are, however, two possible variants of the bottom-up bureaucratic politics model. In one view, conflict is so endemic that collaboration is unlikely to happen of its own accord, implying that a need for government steering, even in view of the difficulties of doing so. Ultimately, however, such steering is unlikely to prove successful. In another more optimistic view, following Lindblom's theory of partisan mutual adjustment, agencies will make mutual adjustment despite their differing interests agencies, moving towards agreement on values and decisions. In this latter view, agencies will ultimately coordinate themselves without the need for a central government coordinator.

Chapter summary

The chapters which follow examine the relative weight of these potential explanations. The purpose of using these theoretical models is not to formally test the rival theories presented. Rather, the models are used as a mechanism for exploring the key dimensions of the research question on the ability of government to implement collaboration in local service delivery networks. The particular models selected represent the dominant rival explanations in the collaboration literature, viewed through a political science/ public administration theory lens. The strategy of presenting rival models and testing the empirical evidence against the competing perspectives enables the salient dimensions of collaboration to be analysed. As discussed by Elmore (1978), viewing implementation processes through the presentation of alternative models is also analytically useful because it forces the analyst to make explicit the assumptions underlying their explanations. Before presenting the empirical data, chapter four provides details of the empirical setting of the research and the research methodology employed.

Chapter 4: Empirical Context and Research methods

Chapter overview

This chapter begins by introducing the context of the empirical research. This provides essential background information to facilitate interpretation of references made in subsequent chapters and enables the reader to make judgments about the applicability of the research findings to other settings. It also provides contextual information enabling further ‘contingency’ related hypotheses regarding the nature of coordination mechanisms one might expect to see in the sector. The chapter firstly presents evidence to highlight the cross-cutting nature of homelessness (section 4.1.1), and maps out the various service providers involved in the homelessness system (section 4.1.2). It subsequently outlines the funding and governance arrangements in the sector (section 4.1.3), and the policy and legislative context (section 4.1.4). Next, the nature of the task environment is discussed and some hypotheses are presented relating to the nature of horizontal coordination tools that might be expected in terms of the task environment (section 4.1.5).

Section two applies the theoretical framework to the case of homelessness (section 4.2). Section three discusses the methods used for the empirical research, firstly providing an overview of the research methods and procedure (4.3.1), followed by a details of phase one of the research, the survey phase (4.3.2) and phase two, the interview phase (4.3.2).

4.1 Empirical Context

The research questions are examined within the context of English homelessness services²². Homelessness is a so-called ‘cross-cutting’ issue (Rittel and Webber 1973), transcending departmental and organisational boundaries by virtue of its multi-dimensional nature, and demanding holistic approaches. It is also a sector²³ that has been heavily influenced by New Public Management processes of fragmentation and specialization common across other OECD countries (Verhoest, Bouckaert, and Peters 2007). The English homelessness sector has been the target of coordination efforts on the part of UK central government. Collaboration or ‘multi-agency working’ has been a central plank of official homelessness policy since 2002, and a series of initiatives has been introduced to promote local collaboration²⁴.

4.1.1 The cross-cutting nature of homelessness

There is something of a consensus amongst researchers, practitioners and policy makers alike that homelessness is about more than housing. It is generally regarded as a multi-factorial issue with multiple causes and consequences which require multi-agency, collaborative approaches. Indeed, the current UK government strategy for tackling homelessness, influenced by the government report *More Than A Roof* (DTLR 2002), is underpinned by this view.

The root causes of homelessness arguably lie in structural and socio-economic factors relating to demographics, housing supply, poverty and unemployment. However, the personal and social problems stemming from these are often the most immediate cause of homelessness to be identified. For instance, one study of 95 homeless people in the UK found that of 264 reasons given by participants for their homelessness, only 8% were specifically housing related. Common causes of homelessness include financial difficulties (especially mortgage or rent arrears), relationship breakdown, mental illness, alcohol or substance abuse and domestic violence (Lemos and Goodby 1999; Fitzpatrick et al. 2000). Other risk factors associated with homelessness include making the transition from institutions into the community. In particular, people leaving prison, young offender institutions or police custody, the armed forces, hospital or psychiatric wards, rehabilitation centres and the care system have an elevated risk of homelessness.

²² Homelessness services in other jurisdictions of the United Kingdom operate along similar lines although the governance structures vary slightly due to institutional reforms associated with devolution.

²³ The term ‘sector’ is used here to refer to the full range of agencies involved in service delivery – encompassing public, voluntary and private actors directly involved in providing services or housing to homeless people or those threatened with homelessness.

²⁴ ‘Meta-governance’ strategies are discussed in detail in chapter six.

Once a person is homeless, their experience of homelessness is often compounded by other associated problems. For entrenched rough sleepers, there is a particularly high prevalence of health, mental health and substance abuse problems²⁵, and the life expectancy for rough sleepers is estimated to be only 42 years (NAO 2005).

Research also suggests that there are links between offending behaviour and homelessness (SEU 2002). Almost a third of prisoners are estimated to lose their existing housing whilst in prison, and around the same proportion of people entering prison have no permanent accommodation to start with. Around 10% of prisoners who return to prison after a period in the community report that they 'slept rough' between convictions. For ex-offenders, reconviction rates are higher amongst those without stable accommodation by around 20%. There is also some evidence that street homeless people, particularly those who beg, are at risk of physical and verbal abuse from passers by and other homeless people (Fitzpatrick and Kennedy 2000). Because of problematic drug dependency issues around many street homeless people, begging, petty crime and theft may provide a means of financing substance addiction. High crime rates have been found in some homelessness hostels, with both single homeless people and housing staff reporting feelings of vulnerability.

The wider social and personal problems associated with homelessness are not, however, confined to rough sleepers. Official statistics suggest that people applying to local authorities for homelessness assistance have a wide range of needs including mental health problems, substance addiction and physical illness²⁶. Research also indicates that a high proportion of people applying for homeless assistance have problematic family backgrounds, with many having suffered abuse or with a background in institutional care.

4.1.2 Defining the homelessness service delivery network

Due to the multiple causes and consequences of homelessness, no single agency possesses the full range of resources required to tackle it. Consequently the structure of homelessness services in England, like in many other countries, resembles a 'service delivery network'. The network is not a formalised structure but rather a population of

²⁵ Common health problems amongst rough sleepers include respiratory problems, musculoskeletal problems, skin disease and tuberculosis. Mental illness is estimated to be eleven times higher in street homeless people and eight times higher among those living in temporary hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation than in the general population, with Schizophrenia one of the most common mental illnesses in street homeless people. Serious alcohol problems are estimated to occur in between a third and a half of street homeless people, and high levels of drug dependence have been found amongst young street homeless people in particular (Fitzpatrick et al. 2000).

²⁶ Local Authority Annual Returns Data (PIE Data Returns), accessed at www.communities.gov.uk, website of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

inter-dependent agencies involved in service provision. As with other human service systems a typical client case may involve several agencies, with each agency contributing a component of the care package (Bardach 1994).

Homelessness in the present study is taken to mean any person either without a home or threatened with losing their home, including those who sleep rough or reside in temporary or emergency accommodation. In order to define some boundaries for the present study, however, the focus is on the network of agencies surrounding 'single homeless' people. Single homelessness is a recognised term in UK homelessness policy and practice which refers to homeless people without dependent children (Fitzpatrick et al. 2000). While there is considerable variation even within the single homelessness subcategory, the term is well understood by those in the sector and therefore serves as a valid means of limiting the scope of the study. It is necessary to specify a category because collaborative arrangements and the agencies involved are likely to vary depending on the particular client group²⁷.

The homelessness service delivery network for 'single homeless' people consists of organisations from across the public (statutory), private and voluntary sectors. Some agencies can additionally be classified as quangos or 'quasi-public' agencies, as discussed in chapter one. For some organisations homelessness represents their core business but for many it is only one part of their remit. In England the local housing authority has lead statutory responsibility for homelessness in local areas and is therefore arguably the central actor operating in local service delivery networks. While each local authority is served by a service delivery network, these networks do not fit perfectly within local authority boundaries. In practice, many agencies' geographical remits extend across more than one authority, serving several areas within a region or subregion. Therefore networks are to a certain extent overlapping, and agencies' boundaries within networks are not necessarily coterminous. The number of agencies involved in any given area varies according to factors such as population size, geography and the level of homelessness or housing need.

The core statutory actors within the homelessness service delivery network include local authority housing departments, social services departments, health services and criminal justice agencies. Housing authorities have a legal responsibility to provide housing advice and accommodation to those who are homeless or threatened with this (further details on the housing authority's duties are provided below). Other statutory agencies including social services departments, the probation service, the prison service,

²⁷ Both statutory and non-statutory cases of single homelessness are included in the present study. This includes rough sleepers (some of whom may be entitled to statutory provision, depending on their circumstances) as well as people accepted under statutory definitions because they are vulnerable due to a threat of violence, old age, ill-health, or time spent in the armed forces, prison or custody.

the NHS and the armed forces have a role to play in the prevention of single adult homelessness, particularly in relation to transitory groups of service users moving from institutions into the community. Other statutory agencies involved with homeless clients include the police who have a role in tackling antisocial behaviour and crimes associated with homelessness.

For single homeless people, health and welfare-related statutory agencies play a particularly important role because of the high prevalence of physical ill-health, mental illness and substance misuse problems amongst this group as reported above. Agencies such as NHS Trusts, General Practices, Mental Health teams, Social Services Departments and Drug and Alcohol Teams are the key agencies in this regard.

The voluntary sector has long played an important role in homelessness prevention and provision . Housing advice services, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, debt management and resettlement projects, mediation services, hostels, drug and alcohol projects and mental health projects are amongst the voluntary sector organisations contributing to the multi-agency network. For single homeless people in particular, the voluntary sector has traditionally provided a safety net, since this group has until recently been denied statutory housing assistance under homeless definitions and face difficulties accessing mainstream statutory services .

Accommodation for homeless people is dispersed between a range of providers, from across the public, private and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) sector. This is a consequence of wider changes to social housing in the UK context. Like many other public service areas in the UK, the housing sector has been affected by New Public Management reforms as discussed in chapter two. In particular, the residualisation of social housing resulting from the 'Right to Buy' policy and the Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfers (LSVT) programme have increased the reliance of the state on housing associations and private landlords . In England by 2007 approximately 49% of local authorities had transferred some or all of their council housing stock and associated management functions to an LSVT organisation²⁸. Private sector management has also been introduced through the use of Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) to manage remaining council housing stock in a large number of English local authorities . The Communities Plan 2003 for England provided strong incentives for the continued process of reform, with additional money made available for local authorities linked to housing stock transfer, the development of ALMOs and Private Finance Initiatives .

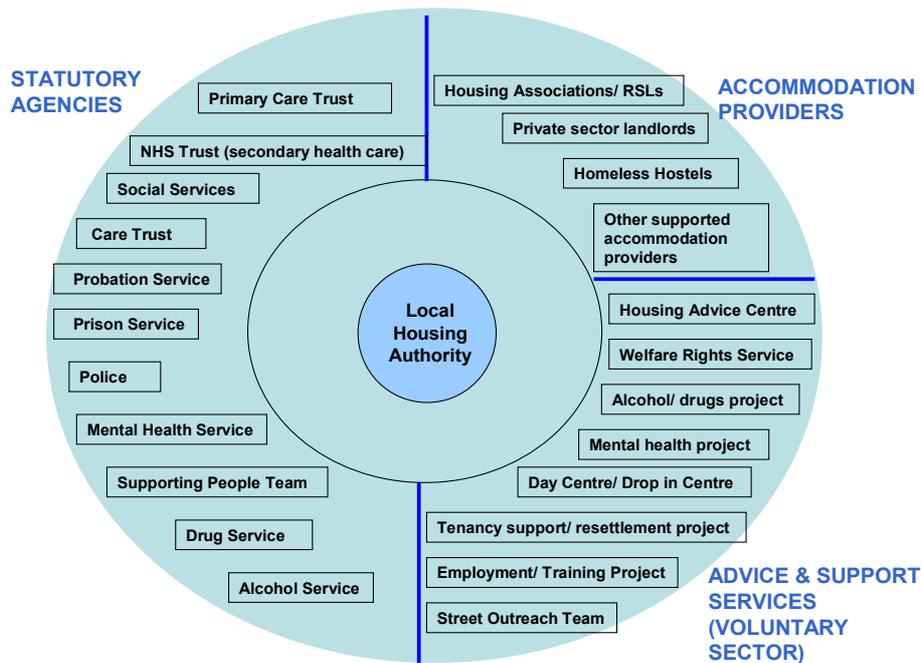
²⁸ DCLG 'Completed LSVTs' - Excel Spreadsheet listing all Large Scale Voluntary Transfers completed by local authorities in England. Updated 3 April 2007.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1152563> Website accessed 23/04/07.

Consequently while housing authorities are responsible for providing accommodation for statutorily homeless households, they are dependent on various providers in order to discharge this responsibility. The latest figures²⁹ indicate that the private sector is an important partner of local authorities in dealing with homelessness, providing accommodation for over half (58%) of statutory homeless households. The remaining households are placed in local authority or housing association property (28%), hostels and women's refuges (9%) or bed and breakfast hotels (5%). These statistics reveal a significant rise in the role of the private sector over recent years (up from 31% in 1995) and a declining role for social housing overall (down from 38%). The growing dependence on the private sector makes it increasingly important for local authorities to attain cooperation from private sector landlords. The LSVT Housing Associations appear to be important actors in the provision of housing to homeless people, with figures for 2003-2004 indicating that they let on average 25% of their stock to homeless people (statutory and non-statutory), compared to 18% for non-LSVT Housing Associations.

The main agencies involved in meeting the needs of single homeless adults, therefore, fall into three categories: statutory services, accommodation providers (consisting of public, private and quasi-public housing agencies) and voluntary sector support/ advice services (see figure 4.1). Within any given area it is not untypical for 50 or 60 organisations to have some degree of involvement in homelessness, partly due to the large number of Housing Associations in each locality. This number is higher in some areas, particularly large cities. One study of homelessness services in London found that there were almost 200 agencies with some involvement in the welfare of homeless people (Pleace 1995).

Fig 4.1 The homelessness service delivery network

²⁹ Table 623 'Statutory Homelessness: households in temporary accommodation by type of accommodation', ODPM. Last quarter for 2006. CLG Quarterly P1E Returns. http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/308/Table623_id1156308.xls Website accessed 10/05/07.



4.1.3 Funding, governance and accountability arrangements

A brief outline of the funding, governance and accountability arrangements in the sector is warranted since these features of the institutional setting structure the way in which central government executes its meta-policy of collaboration. For instance, the level of funding and the way it is distributed has implications for the nature of relationships between central government and the consequent ability of government to influence local agencies. Similarly, the governance structure and lines of accountability are potential influences on the choice of vertical policy tools used by governments to implement its collaborative policy.

The funding arrangements involve the allocation of government money principally to local authorities, voluntary sector bodies and housing associations. Central government provides funding to English local authorities in the form of an annual homelessness grant, worth £74m in 2007-2008. The grant is split between the 354 English local authorities proportionately to reflect authority size and the level and nature of homelessness in different areas. The allocation of national funding for homelessness is determined in the Treasury's three-yearly Spending Review. In return local authorities have a range of statutory homelessness duties to perform and are expected to meet government homelessness targets (see below). The homelessness grant is allocated partly on a formulaic basis related to historical levels of homelessness, and partly on a performance basis (ODPM 2005b). Local housing authorities themselves have the freedom to spend their grant as appropriate in the local area, and this typically involves

contracting external agencies in the local homelessness network to provide services such as advice, resettlement, mediation, or rent deposit schemes.

Government funds an additional £15m per annum³⁰ to the voluntary sector for homelessness to support national charities such as Shelter, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and Women's Aid. Charities such as these carry out national campaigning and advocacy work, and also have a core service provision function through their networks of local services. Bespoke funds have also been established to support homelessness services, including an innovation fund to encourage service development in particular government priority areas, and additional funds specifically aimed at developing services for ethnic minority groups. A hostels capital improvement programme for England worth £90m was launched in 2005, aiming to improve and upgrade existing homeless hostels. Such funds are distributed largely on a competitive basis, inviting bids from local services.

Housing-related support work is funded through the Cross-Whitehall 'Supporting People' programme, with a £1.72 billion budget for 2006-07. The scheme brings together finance for supported housing under a single funding stream. Each authority is allocated a sum of money annually according to local need, and decisions about the allocation of funding are taken locally. This programme tackles a wide range of housing need, of which homelessness is one part³¹. The Audit Commission (1995, p. 2) states that the aim of the programme is 'to prevent problems that can lead to hospitalisation, institutional care or homelessness', and to 'protect tenancies and assist the transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment'. Approximately 20% of the fund is earmarked for homelessness related work³² and the homeless groups covered include families, rough sleepers and single homeless people with support needs. Importantly, this funding is restricted to housing-related support services rather than social care services or accommodation. In the context of homelessness this involves funding for hostels as a step towards independent living, immediate refuge for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness because of domestic violence, 'floating support', and other support elements of specialist accommodation for groups at risk of homelessness. The Supporting People fund is the principal source of homelessness funding for the voluntary sector in England, and the largest source of domestic government revenue funding for the voluntary sector as a whole.

³⁰ This figure reflects the 2007 level (Source: Department for Communities & Local Government, Interviewee ID37).

³¹ Additional groups covered by this fund include older people, people with learning, physical or sensory disabilities, HIV/AIDS, or drug and alcohol problems, refugees, ex-prisoners and women at risk of domestic violence.

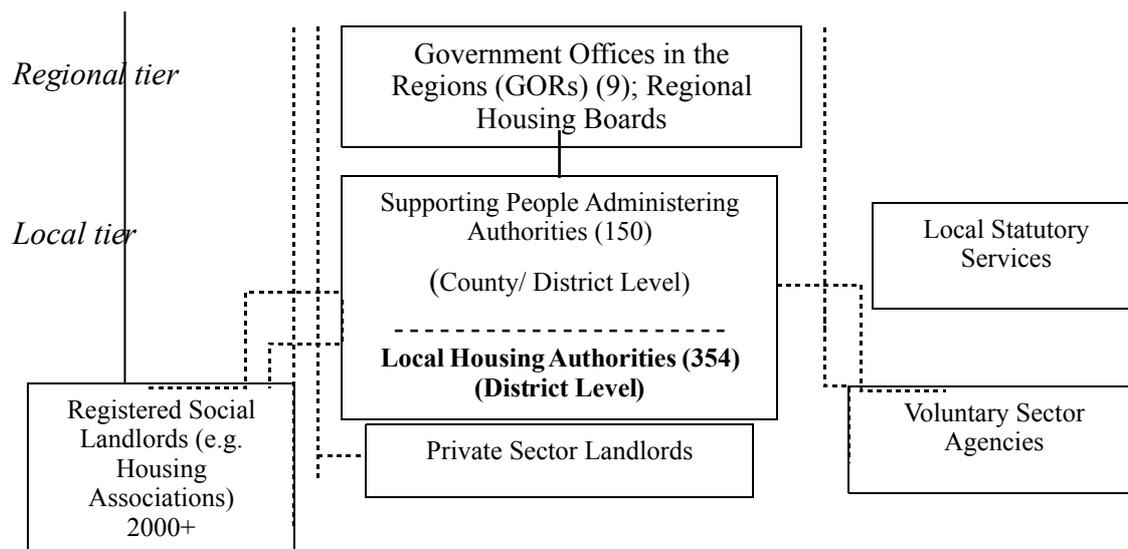
³² £350m for 2004-05 from a total budget of £1.8b (NAO, 2005)

The accountability framework for homelessness includes Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) related to national homelessness targets. Local housing authorities are required to monitor and demonstrate improvement on homelessness performance indicators³³. Statutory homelessness services are inspected by the Audit Commission's Housing inspectorate through its housing authority inspections, with several 'Key Lines of Enquiry' directly related to homelessness. These assessments are combined with Best Value Performance Indicators and combined to provide an overall ranking for housing authorities within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment system. Housing Associations are also subject to a regime of performance targets and inspections (elements relating to homelessness are discussed in chapter six). The introduction of such measures in homelessness can be seen as part of a more general trend over the past 25 years towards greater central control over local government in relation to the housing sector as a whole, which has experienced a tightening of regulation, inspection and performance monitoring (Malpass and Murie 1999).

The governance structure of the English homelessness sector, at the time of writing, is illustrated in fig 4.2. As can be seen, as much as services are delivered in a multi-agency setting, the governance structure is also multi-level. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) sits at the head and is the government department responsible for homelessness and housing policy more generally. Government Offices in the Regions (GORs) and Regional Housing Boards sit below. These Housing Boards, chaired by the Government Offices, provide strategic direction for housing policy in the English regions and are required to produce regional housing strategies. The Boards themselves are comprised of representatives of the GOR, English Partnerships, the Regional Development Agency, the Housing Corporation and other relevant regional bodies. However, Government Offices and Regional Housing Boards appear to have had only marginal involvement of homelessness to date. The National Audit Office (NAO 2005), for instance, found little evidence of partnership working between the regional tier and local authorities in relation to homelessness and noted that only some regional housing strategies specifically addressed homelessness.

Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) and Supporting People 'Administering Authorities' fall under the domain of the DCLG, although they sit under different Directorates, respectively the Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate and the Supporting People Directorate. Local Housing Authorities have the role of strategic lead for commissioning homelessness services from voluntary and private sector providers

³³ Performance indicators include levels of rough sleeping, length of time spent in temporary accommodation, prevention of homelessness, levels of repeat homelessness and the number of domestic violence refuge places provided in local authorities.



Key ——— Full Lines indicate hierarchical relationships
 Dotted Lines indicate relationships based on indirect influence

The diagram above illustrates the complexity of accountability and governance arrangements in the homeless sector. Each body within the service delivery network is accountable to a different higher level body, and many agencies have multiple lines of accountability, sometimes from a range of tiers. The effects of these multiple lines of accountability on inter-agency collaboration are considered in the empirical chapters which follow.

4.1.4 Policy and legislative context

Although homelessness has not enjoyed much political priority historically, the issue has risen up the political agenda in recent decades. The introduction of the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, consolidated into the 1985 Housing Act Part V and amended under the Housing Act 1996, places responsibility on local authorities to provide housing for those deemed to be ‘statutorily’ homeless. Statutory duties for certain categories of homeless people were introduced for social services departments through the Children Act 1989 and the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. Prior to this central government had played only a minor role in responding to homelessness, with local government, charities and various types of housing providers the major forces for intervention.

The issue of rough sleeping has also received greater attention in recent years. In 1990 the visibility of rough sleeping in many of the United Kingdom’s major cities,

particularly London, provoked the then government to invest in a ‘Rough Sleeper’s Initiative’. This was a three year block grant, renewed several times, which provided fixed funding to homelessness agencies with the aim of reducing rough sleeping, in the end worth around £200m in total.

Homelessness has arguably been afforded still greater priority under New Labour with the creation of the 2002 Homelessness Act which extended statutory provision to a larger group of people affected by homelessness, and introduced a more strategic and preventive approach with a strong focus on collaborative multi-agency working (discussed further in chapter six). In addition to the updating of legislation in 2002, the introduction of national targets and performance monitoring of homelessness, and the recent creation of National Homelessness Strategies in all parts of the United Kingdom, provide evidence of the increasing political salience of homelessness as a policy issue.

As discussed above, local housing authorities are the principal bodies with statutory homeless responsibilities which operate at local level. Under current legislation³⁷ English local authorities have a ‘main duty’ to provide accommodation to those with a local connection who are in ‘priority need’³⁸ and are homeless through no fault of their own, or in other words, are ‘unintentionally homeless’. While a person’s case is being assessed, there is a duty to provide interim accommodation, and the local authority may provide this from its own stock or use an alternative provider. Once a homeless application has been accepted, accommodation should be provided until the client has found suitable settled accommodation or until the homelessness duty ends.

Authorities have a ‘general duty’ to provide advice and assistance on homelessness and its prevention, free of charge, to anyone within their district. This advice can be provided by the housing authority or another agency on its behalf. Advice is typically provided on housing options and the factors which cause homelessness including financial matters, tenancy issues and family breakdown. Authorities are also expected to provide information on specialist support services such as counselling, debt management and drug and alcohol services where needed. Part of the general duty is to undertake a housing needs assessment and, on this basis, to make information available about where to find appropriate accommodation and support. Lastly, local housing authorities have strategic functions in relation to homelessness. In particular, under the

³⁷ The Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002

³⁸ The definition of ‘priority need’ as updated in the 2002 Act includes families with children, or households that include someone who is vulnerable because of factors such as ill-health (physical or mental), pregnancy or old age, those who are fleeing domestic violence, people who are vulnerable due to having left prison, the care system or the armed forces, and young people aged 16 and 17 (ODPM/ DH, 2002). Rough sleeping does not in itself qualify a person for statutory assistance.

Homelessness Act 2002 housing authorities are required to review homelessness in their area and publish a five yearly homelessness strategy³⁹.

4.1.5 The nature of the task environment

As discussed in chapter two, many of the more rationalistic contributions to the literature on coordination mechanism choice take a contingency theory view. Such contributions suggest that choice of mechanisms are, or should be, related to the nature of the organisational or policy environment and tasks involved. It is therefore pertinent to sketch briefly the nature of the task environment in homelessness services before making some brief hypotheses on the nature of collaborative mechanisms one might expect in this policy sector.

The nature of work carried out by homelessness agencies is fairly diverse because of the range of agencies involved and the different manifestations of homelessness they deal with. However, two principal aspects of frontline homelessness work can be discerned, namely ‘people changing’ and ‘people processing’ tasks, tasks which are common in the area of human services. ‘People changing’ tasks involve the empowerment of individuals and facilitation of behavioural change. Agencies such as drugs rehabilitation services, resettlement services, criminal justice agencies and social work services are particularly associated with this role. Such work is highly technical and professionalised, and requires individualised solutions, implying a significant level of discretion among frontline staff, and making it difficult to specify in advance the exact tasks involved. In this respect the task environment can be described as uncertain.

The other main element of frontline work is a ‘people processing’ function, which involves referring clients onto other services and allocating resources such as housing or welfare benefit entitlements. Typically this involves placing clients on accommodation registers or waiting lists, negotiating accommodation, assisting with the completion of application forms or signposting clients to relevant services. Such work is more routinised than ‘people changing’ work, often involving the use of standardised assessment forms or the application of eligibility criteria. Nevertheless a degree of discretion and tailoring to individual circumstances is required on the part of staff. In order to make assessments about eligibility or need, workers have to gather service user testimony, exercise their own judgment and make subsequent referrals to other agencies, something which often involves performing an advocacy role on behalf of the client.

³⁹ This is a multi-agency strategy and another form of meta-governance (see chapter six)

Many agencies involved in homelessness perform a dual people processing and people changing role. For instance, most registered social landlords providing specialist accommodation to homeless people also perform a housing support role. Where 'mainstream' accommodation is offered, key workers are often attached in the form of floating support. Housing authorities and voluntary sector providers frequently provide a range of services including both advisory/ referral services and resettlement services. Similarly, mental health services are at once providers of treatment and referral agencies.

A further characteristic of the homelessness sector, in line with other areas of human services, is that there is a high degree of professional specialization (Nylen 2007). Specialization, as discussed in chapter one, describes a situation where organisations perform single rather than multiple objectives. While homelessness agencies do perform a range of tasks, as noted above, the professional skills involved in the network as a whole are divided between these agencies.

In addition, the agencies comprising the homelessness network are relatively interdependent. Since homelessness is a multidimensional problem, it requires multi-professional input. This is particularly true for the client group under investigation, the 'single' homeless, since people falling into this category include both rough sleepers who typically have multiple problems and 'statutorily' single homeless people who are defined as such because of their additional vulnerabilities such as ill-health (physical or mental), old age, or problems arising from leaving an institutionalised environment. Yet since the system for dealing with single homeless people is specialised, this creates interdependence between agencies. Devising solutions for individual clients with multiple needs involves agencies drawing on the knowledge and professional expertise of other agencies.

Interdependence also stems from the highly fragmented nature of the homelessness service system, partly due to reforms associated with New Public Management. As discussed above, the pool of social housing owned by local authorities is severely restricted due to the LSVT and 'Right to Buy' processes. The housing authority is therefore highly dependent on other accommodation providers such as registered social landlords and the private sector to meet its 'main duty' to accommodate the homeless. It is also reliant on the dispersed network of voluntary sector agencies which have long been part of the homelessness system, and on other specialist statutory agencies to meet the broader support needs of homeless people and to discharge its advisory duties. By the same token, these agencies and providers are dependent on housing authorities for contracts, making the relationship one of interdependence.

In short, homelessness agencies' frontline work is characterised by a significant degree of *uncertainty* in the sense that many decisions, particularly at case level, cannot be specified in advance. The network itself is both specialised and *interdependent*. The multi-dimensional nature of homelessness indicates *broad task scope*. These features of the task environment would indicate that horizontal coordination tools such as *group* and *personal modes* involving 'coordination by feedback' may be relevant (March and Simon 1958; Van De Ven et al. 1976; Alter and Hage 1993).

4.2 Application of the theoretical framework to homelessness

Chapter three presented the theoretical framework for investigating the implementation of collaboration. Following the above introduction to the empirical context of the research, it is now possible to make some brief comments on how the framework relates specifically to the case of homelessness and to present preliminary predictions on the likely persuasiveness of the rival theoretical positions.

4.2.1 Collaboration in homelessness as rational administration?

The first aspect of the theoretical framework concerns the decision-making process, which can be construed either as rational-administrative or as bureau-political. As discussed in chapter three, from a rational-administrative perspective one might expect agencies to collaborate because they view this as the most effective means for tackling homelessness. There are fairly strong arguments to support the view that inter-agency collaboration may constitute an effective and appropriate response to this issue. As discussed in this chapter, the causes and consequences of homelessness are multi-factorial and diverse, and no single agency is equipped to deal with this multitude of problems.

In order to direct clients to appropriate services, agencies are likely to need to share information and make referrals, two forms of collaboration. Furthermore, in order to make appropriate referrals to other agencies, workers need sufficient understanding and awareness of the different issues affecting clients. For instance, it may be important for housing staff to be able to recognise the symptoms of mental health conditions, or for drugs workers to have an understanding of the benefits system. Collaboration in the form of multi-agency training may be appropriate in this respect. Additionally, in order to refer clients to appropriate services, knowledge is required of other agencies' referral criteria and procedures, opening hours, location and services offered. This suggests a

need for information sharing to ensure that agencies possess the relevant information about the work of other agencies. Clients with multiple needs may require intensive packages of support from several agencies simultaneously, and in these circumstances it is likely to be appropriate for agencies to share client level information, either informally through discussions between individual fieldworkers or more formally through joint care planning, a strong form of collaboration.

Moreover, because of the fragmented system of provision, agencies may need to collaborate in order to minimise externalities such as gaps, duplication and other forms of incoherence. This argument has been articulated with respect to other parts of the housing sector. Reid , for example, argues that effective delivery of social housing is dependent on the development and maintenance of cooperative inter-organisational relationships. This can help prevent clients in fragmented service delivery systems ‘falling through the cracks’ . From a service user’s perspective, ensuring services are well-integrated can help the system appear seamless (Leutz 1999).

As discussed in chapter three, the rational-administrative view would see actors as selecting horizontal collaboration mechanisms according to their ability efficiently and effectively to deliver their clearly articulated collaborative aims. This is likely to involve consideration of the nature of the task environment. From a rational-administrative perspective, we might expect actors in the homelessness network to adopt tools such as those listed in section 4.1.5 above. Existing theory and research indicates that these types of tools – group and personal modes in particular – are likely to fit environments exhibiting the characteristics of the homelessness network.

4.2.2 Collaboration in homelessness as bureaucratic politics?

The bureaucratic politics perspective, by contrast, emphasises the conflictual nature of inter-agency relationships. Rather than decisions being the outcome of a rational process, they are the result of a bargaining game of pulling and hauling between various interests. In this view there may be no united view of the need for collaboration, either centrally or locally. A number of features of the above account of the homelessness sector indicate that the bureaucratic politics perspective may be relevant.

As discussed in section 4.1.2, homelessness is a core part of the work of particular agencies but only a peripheral part of other agencies’ work. This indicates that collaboration on homelessness may be prioritised more by some agencies than others, creating a possible source of tension. In addition, the complex governance structure of homelessness suggests that there are likely to be a variety of views on homelessness

represented nationally rather than a unified view. The multiple lines of accountability in the sector as presented in figure 4.2 indicate that each local agency has a different super-ordinate body to answer to. In addition, some agencies have more than one body to whom they must be answer and consequently may have competing agendas to satisfy.

Although the bureaucratic politics of homelessness services is a relatively unexplored issue, related research on collaboration between public sector providers in human services areas such as health, social care and housing provides some insights into the tensions surrounding collaboration between organisations with a role in homelessness. A number of studies have reported problems stemming from differences in professional perspectives, philosophies or world views between community care and health agencies. Similar tensions have been found between the differing perspectives of voluntary and statutory agencies, with voluntary sector agencies concerned with grassroots empowerment and individual rights, and local authorities more focused on the fulfilment of statutory obligations. Studies of the relationship between housing authorities and health and social services agencies have also identified difficulties in inter-agency relations stemming from a lack of appreciation and understanding on the part of social services departments and health authorities about the nature of changes in the governance and structure of the housing sector. Since homelessness services involve many of the agencies investigated within these studies, it seems plausible that this particular 'sector' or network may suffer from similar tensions.

4.2.3 Collaboration in homelessness as top-down?

The second aspect of the theoretical framework looked at the level at which collaborative decision-making occurs, suggesting that this may occur either at central government level or at the level of local multi-agency networks. Since a key question of the research is the extent to which government can mandate or impose collaboration, the level at which collaborative decision-making occurs has implications for the appropriate type of meta-governance strategy for encouraging collaboration.

As discussed in chapter three, top-down views suggest it is possible for governments and higher tiers of bureaucracy to gain control over implementing actors and lower bureaucratic tiers by pursuing a hierarchical implementation strategy. Such strategies strive towards 'ideal-typical' conditions for perfect implementation. These include a single line of authority, few links in the policy chain, uniform objectives amongst implementing agencies, clear mandates and strong control over implementing actors.

As noted above, there is a clear line of authority between the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and local housing authorities (LHAs), the principal national and local government actors responsible for homelessness. There is also a performance assessment and regulatory regime in place which provides the infrastructure for controlling local agencies. However, extending beyond the principal CLG-LHA relationship is a set of additional relationships which create a layer of institutional complexity that are likely to impact on the principal relationship. Moreover, encouraging collaboration in homelessness requires government to influence a range of bodies beyond the LHA, casting doubt on the idea of a *single* line of authority. More accurately, there are multiple lines of authority involved.

In terms of the number of links, figure 4.2 reveals that there are several ‘links’ in the policy chain, both horizontally and vertically. Due to the importance of multiple bodies, particularly on a local horizontal level, it seems that reducing the number of links in the policy chain as a means of enhancing implementation success is unlikely to be a viable option. The idea of clear mandates and uniform objectives also seems suspect in the homelessness network. As already noted, the multiple lines of accountability and number of bodies involved indicates that objectives may be diverse rather than unified, and this may militate against the notion of clear mandates.

In chapter three it was suggested that top-down perspectives seem difficult to apply in the context of service delivery networks generally. On the basis of the contextual information on the homelessness sector presented above, it would seem that this prediction is also likely to apply to the homelessness service delivery network.

4.2.4 Collaboration in homelessness as bottom-up?

The bottom-up perspective on implementation suggests that policy is significantly shaped or even made within the ‘street level bureaucracy’. Many bottom-up analysts argue that policy decisions *should* be made at this level, arguing that complex decisions require problem solving capacities at the point where the problem is most immediate. Such analysts suggest that top-down approaches are likely to promote standardised responses which undermine the specialised problem solving capacities which exist at the local level. Bottom-up perspectives are also sympathetic to the view that organisations which are dominated by professions are significantly self-governing, heavily influenced by professional norms and ethical codes, and less influenced by national regulatory institutions.

These bottom-up conceptions of the implementation process seem relevant to the context of homelessness. As this chapter has illustrated, many decisions around homelessness, particularly case level decisions, cannot be specified in advance and require face-to-face or inter-personal problem solving. Moreover, both people processing and people changing functions of homelessness services require the exercise of street level discretion. People changing tasks in particular do not easily lend themselves to the routine application of rules specified in law or by other governmental edicts. The highly professionalised and specialised nature of the agencies involved with homelessness also implies that local agencies, compared to central agencies, may have asymmetrical access to information on the solutions to homelessness based on their training and professional skills, raising questions about the capacity of the state to prescribe solutions on local services.

It was suggested in chapter three that collaboration is an inherently bottom-up process, with its basis in informal interactions, trust and relationships which cannot easily be specified in advance or mandated from the top-down. The contextual information in this chapter highlights the relevance of bottom-up processes within homelessness decision-making generally, and since tackling homelessness is a multi-agency endeavour, it also seems reasonable to suggest that decisions around collaborating are also likely to be made at this level.

4.3 Research methods

4.3.1 Overview of research methods and procedure

In order to address the research questions in the context of the theoretical framework presented, a mixed-method design was regarded as most appropriate⁴⁰. This approach, sometimes labelled under the alternative headings of synthesis, integration or multi-method research, is used by researchers who wish either to confirm findings using different methods *or* to use a range of methods in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the research problem. Mixed methods approaches are used in recognition that all methods have limitations and that different methods may yield different results in response to the same question. Moreover, these approaches acknowledge that different methods may be suitable for exploring different aspects of a research problem. The mixed-method approach is growing in recognition in a range of disciplines and has been the subject of a number of recent publications .

The research procedure began with a pilot phase involving analysis of local authority documentation and central policy documents, statutes and guidance in order to become familiar with the context and research issue. Pilot interviews with local agency staff and observation of multi-agency meetings provided further background information. These sources collectively aided the design of the main data collection instruments.

The main data collection phase had two main components, and employed a ‘sequential’ research design (Brannen 2005; Cresswell 2003), with one component following on from the other. First, a fixed response postal survey of English local housing authorities was conducted⁴¹ in order to assess general patterns in the level and nature of local collaboration in relation to homelessness. The data collected via this method were quantitative in nature, using likert scales and checklists. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with staff from local authorities and other homelessness service providers were employed⁴² to provide rich detail or ‘thick descriptions’ (Cresswell *ibid*) on street level actors’ motivations for collaborating, the challenges of doing so, and further information on the nature of collaboration, building on the quantitative data collected in the survey component. Interviewees’ views on the perceived effectiveness of vertical and horizontal coordination tools were also investigated. The interview phase

⁴⁰ Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the relevant University of Exeter Ethics Committee (School of Historical, Political and Sociological Studies). School Ethics Committee approval ref no. 8.02.05/5.iv.

⁴¹ The survey was conducted in the Summer-Autumn of 2006

⁴² Interviews were carried out in Spring-Summer of 2007

also included a smaller number of interviews with civil servants in relevant government departments. The aim of the latter interviews was to gather background information on joint working between government departments and between these departments and other national bodies, as well as on meta-governance issues relating to steering local network actors.

The methods used in the main data collection phase were complementary⁴³, in that each method provided information on different elements of the research topic. No single method would have been sufficient to address the research questions. For instance, a survey was considered most appropriate for charting the general pattern and level of collaboration in local authorities. On the other hand, views on the *dynamics* of collaboration would not easily have been captured in a fixed response survey. While the main reason for employing mixed methods was to explore different dimensions of the research puzzle (through a complementary approach), the sequencing of the data collection process allowed for some elaboration and further exploration - at the interview phase - of findings yielded by the survey

The first, largely quantitative phase of the research was used to address the descriptive questions of the research (the 'what' of collaboration) while the second qualitative phase predominantly addressed the explanatory questions (the 'why' of collaboration)⁴⁴. Neither method is seen as being dominant over the other. The following shorthand usually denotes this design: QUAN > QUAL⁴⁵. This is a recognised sequential method, known as 'sequential explanatory design' (Creswell 2003), and involves testing theories or concepts using a quantitative method followed up with a qualitative method in which detailed exploration is undertaken with a few cases or individuals. The term *explanatory* indicates that the second qualitative phase is used to explain and interpret the results of the first quantitative phase. This contrasts with the sequential *exploratory* strategy whereby *quantitative* data and results are used to assist in the interpretation of *qualitative* findings. While the explanatory model is more useful for explaining and interpreting relationships, the exploratory model is more appropriate for studies where the main aim is to explore a particular phenomenon, for example to test elements in an emergent theory resulting from the qualitative phase. Therefore, the

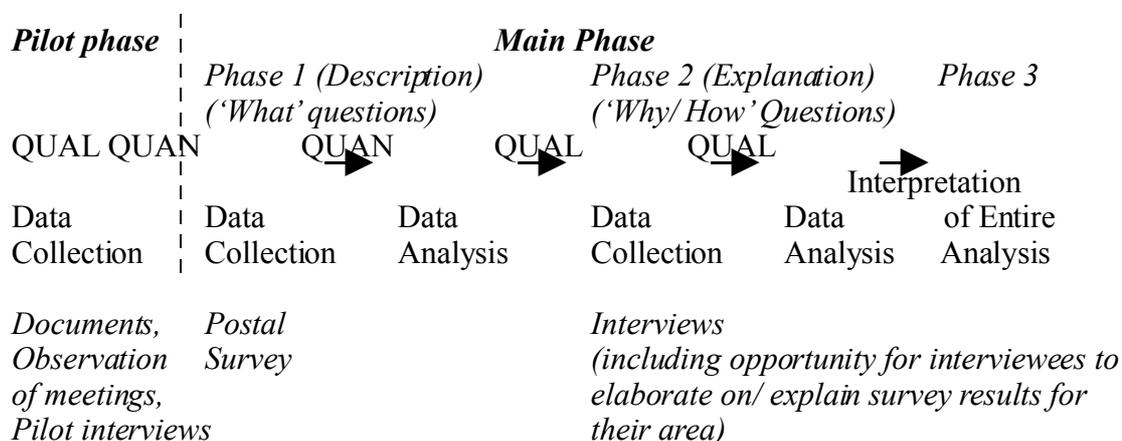
⁴³ This is in contrast mixed methods approaches whose main aim is to triangulate in order to corroborate findings using different methods or sources to examine the same phenomenon as a means of enhancing validity.

⁴⁴ In each Local Authority interview the completed survey for the relevant authority was brought along to the interview as an aide memoire for interviewees, and was used where needed to highlight the coordination mechanisms in place, with interviewees asked to elaborate their perceptions of the effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of these tools. The completed surveys were therefore used, where appropriate, in conjunction with the interview topic guides.

⁴⁵ Note that both words are capitalised to indicate that neither part of the data collection was seen as more dominant than the other. QUAN > qual would indicate primacy of the former method over the latter.

research design combined dimensions of both ‘complementary’ and ‘sequential explanatory’ mixed methods approaches. The data collection procedure is illustrated in figure 4.3 below, with methods used at each stage added underneath.

Fig 4.3 Sequential explanatory-complementary design⁴⁶



4.3.2 Phase One: Postal Survey

Sampling and survey administration

As noted above, the survey was conducted amongst local housing authorities. As the local agency with overall statutory responsibility for homelessness and the strategic lead for forging inter-agency links, this was the most relevant unit of analysis. Questionnaires, along with a covering letter and information sheet, were sent to the lead manager or senior officer responsible for homelessness in each authority⁴⁷. Where it was not possible to identify this person from public directories and websites, they were sent to the Director of Housing with instructions to pass them on to the appropriate person. Lead homelessness managers or the equivalent senior officers were targeted because they are likely to straddle both operational and strategic domains, and have knowledge of joint working practices and inter-agency contact at both these levels, which was one of the key issues being explored within the survey⁴⁸.

In order to ensure a sufficient number of responses for the analysis, a census sample approach was used, with questionnaires posted to all 354 English local authorities. The census sample approach means that every member of the ‘population’

⁴⁶ Diagram adapted from Creswell (2003, p. 213)

⁴⁷ See Appendices A-D for the questionnaire, the two covering letters and the information sheet

⁴⁸ See Appendix E for a break-down of questionnaire respondent information, including job titles, managerial position, unit or section of the housing authority

of interest (i.e. English local authorities) has an equal chance of being involved in the study, thereby reducing the chance of sampling error. Sixteen randomly selected authorities which were included in the pilot phase were excluded from the main census sample, which therefore comprised 338 authorities. Piloting the questionnaire allowed the researcher to identify any questions which were subject to misinterpretation, and several individuals provided in-depth feedback on improvements for individual questions.

The first mail-out achieved a 41% (n=139) response rate, and a subsequent mail-out to non-responding authorities six weeks later increased the overall response rate to 57% (n=193). Aside from a second mail-out, additional steps were taken to maximise response rate in line with standard postal survey procedures (De Vaus 2002) such as the inclusion of an official academic letterhead, personalised salutations, stamped, self-addressed envelopes and confidentiality assurances. Participants were also offered a summary of the research results as an incentive to participate.

One problem arising with any survey is the issue of non-response bias, since it is always possible that respondents will be systematically different from non-respondents, resulting in a skewed sample. Since a 100% response rate is highly unusual in any survey research it is usually the case that respondents will ultimately therefore only represent a sample of the total population.

While it is impossible to discover whether non-respondents would have provided a different set of answers, key characteristics of respondents and non-respondents can be compared to determine how representative respondents are of the broader target sample, and responses weighted to account for any major differences. Analysis of returned surveys revealed that responding authorities were broadly representative of the national population of local authorities on key dimensions such as authority structure, geography and region and therefore no weighting was necessary⁴⁹.

Survey design and analysis

The survey⁵⁰ measured *organisational* collaboration on two dimensions, firstly, formalised collaboration through the use of horizontal coordination tools in local authority areas, and secondly, informal collaboration defined as interactions between the housing authority and other local bodies in its local network in the course of day-to-day work. Two separate measures were developed to investigate these dimensions. For formal collaboration an 'index' of horizontal coordination tools was employed. For

⁴⁹ See Appendix E for data table comparing characteristics of responding authorities with wider population of English local authorities

⁵⁰ See Appendix D for a copy of the survey

informal collaboration a Likert scale was used to gauge the level of contact or interaction between the housing authority and other agencies from a standard list of agencies. The Likert scale was used twice, once relating to case level contact and once relating to service planning level contact. The measures and data analysis methods are discussed in more detail in chapter 7 in conjunction with the survey results. A third measure was used to assess collaboration at the *individual* respondent level. This measure simply involved asking respondents to estimate the proportion of their work time spent over the last year in contact with other external bodies in relation to single homelessness.

The measures were modelled on existing research which has sought to quantitatively assess inter-organisational coordination. For instance, previous studies of organisational coordination have assessed use of formal coordination mechanisms in fields such as economic development and mental health (Jennings 1994; Macmanus 1986; Van De Ven et al. 1976; Alter and Hage 1993). The general approach involving the measurement of contact has been used in previous studies of human services as a method for of measuring collaboration or network integration .

A number of additional questions were included to elicit relevant institutional and individual respondent information suggested in previous research to be associated with collaboration, as discussed in chapter one. Institutional information included issues such as authority structure, number of homelessness personnel and the degree of external contracting of homelessness services. Individual respondent data included length of time working the local area, previous experience of working in other organisations within the homeless network and professional background.

The survey data overall provided an indicator of the degree and nature of organisational collaboration in English local authorities on formal and informal dimensions, as well as some indication of the level of the collaborative or networking behaviour at an individual level. While the survey provides only a snapshot in time, it nevertheless serves as a reliable and valid means of gauging the general pattern of collaboration in local authorities. It also permits analysis of the potential impact of the different independent variables of interest in the study including central government steering, local institutional factors and individual level variables.

The questionnaire was designed with reference to existing literature on collaboration in the homelessness sector and the public sector more broadly, and drew on the information contained in local authorities' homelessness strategies and other relevant documentation. In order to develop the two measures described above, a random sample of 40 local authority homelessness strategies was selected and the content systematically analysed to generate a list of horizontal coordination mechanisms typically used in local

authorities, and a list of homelessness service providing agencies typically involved in local areas. The rule of thumb employed was that when an 'item' (a coordination mechanism or agency) was mentioned in 10% (N=4) of cases or more, the item was included in the survey measures. The lists generated were also cross-checked with other documents, including government guidance, Audit Commission reports and publications generated by other relevant national bodies. This approach helped increase 'face validity', by ensuring that the items included in the questionnaire were meaningful constructs. As discussed by Bryman and Cramer , determining face validity, i.e. that a measure really measures what it purports to, is a minimum requirement for researchers seeking to develop new measures. Survey data analysis was carried out with SPSS v 11.5 using a combination of descriptive and bivariate statistical analysis techniques. Further details of particular tests performed and justifications for selecting these tests are provided in chapter seven.

4.3.3 Phase Two: Interviews

Sampling

As already noted, interviews were conducted with frontline staff in the homelessness network as well as with civil servants working in relevant government departments. The inclusion of both these groups provided insights into the complexities of collaboration at both national and local level, and also enabled investigation of the relationship between these two levels. This approach sets the study apart from previous studies of collaboration in public services which have tended to focus on either one of these tiers in isolation. Since the aim was to examine the process of central steering of local collaboration, gathering evidence from both these levels was important.

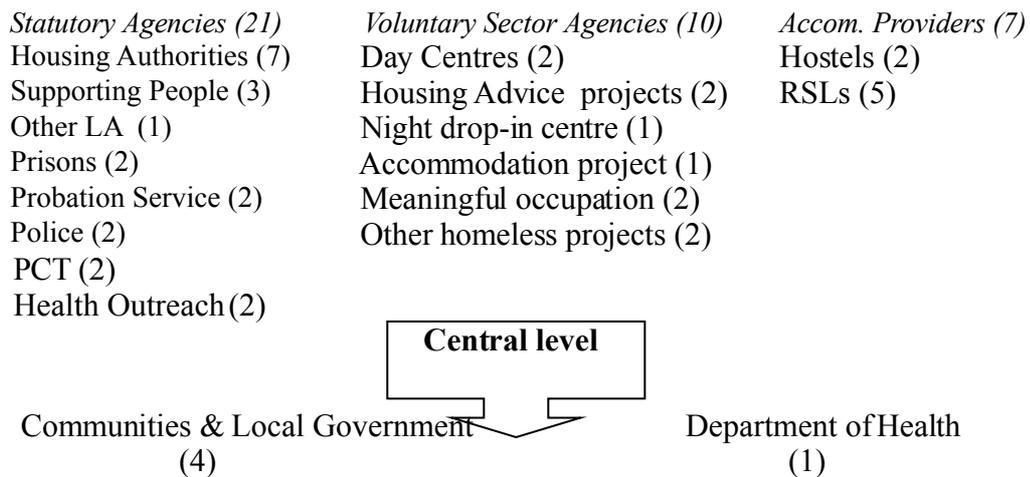
At the local level, representatives from each of the core service provider agencies in the homelessness implementation network were included. These included frontline staff in housing authorities as well as other relevant statutory and voluntary sector agencies and accommodation providers. While many studies in public administration tend to focus exclusively on the role of governmental bodies, the nature of the aims of the present study demanded inclusion of this broader range of perspectives. To make a full assessment of the impact of national initiatives to stimulate collaboration, it was also important to obtain a mix of practitioner and managerial viewpoints. As discussed in previous chapters, both organisational levels make a contribution to collaboration.

A total of 43 interviewees were included in the qualitative part of the research⁵¹. The sample incorporated 38 frontline practitioners or managers, including 21 from statutory agencies, 10 from the voluntary sector and seven from the accommodation sector (see figure 4.4 for a full breakdown of agencies included). Out of the 38 involved, 23 were in managerial roles and 15 in practitioner/ officer roles. The local interviewees were drawn from three local authorities from different regions of England, with similar numbers drawn from each authority (11 in LA1; 14 in LA2; 15 in LA3). At national level, five civil servants from relevant government departments were included, including the Department for Communities and Local Government (Housing and Homelessness Directorate and Supporting People Directorate), and the Department of Health.

Fig 4.4 Sampling frame for interviews

⁵¹ A list of job titles and ID numbers are provided in Appendix H. Some job titles are changed marginally (without altering the approximate meaning) in order to protect anonymity.

Local level



Interviews with central civil servants can be classified as ‘elite’ or ‘expert’ interviews since participants have privileged access to the political institutions of interest. Civil servants are generally considered an important source of knowledge for such information and are more easily accessible than other political elites. Elite interviewing has a number of advantages. For instance, elites can usually provide an overview of an organisation and its relationship with others, and often possess knowledge about the legal and financial structures of an organisation. In addition, they often possess knowledge about organisational policy and have an understanding of an organisation’s history and future plans. While the limited number of interviewees within this category of interviewees must be borne in mind when interpreting the findings, this can be defended in that the aim of the interviews, as with most qualitative research, was to explore a diversity of perspectives in order to generate insights into the phenomena of interest, rather than to make generalisations based on large numbers.

Case selection

The three local authority areas were selected from among the survey respondents. Because of the need to include a wide range of interviewees involving different organisations within each authority, it was not possible in practice to conduct field interviews in a larger number of local authorities. The sub sample of case study areas selected was a ‘purposeful’ one, in line with standard qualitative practice. This involves selection of cases that are likely to be able to yield information of interest to the research question and central research phenomenon.

All areas selected had significant levels of single homelessness in their area, either at or above the national average⁵². By holding this variable of the sub-sample 'constant', it meant that any variation in joint working practices or levels could not be attributed to major differences in the nature of the homeless demographic. It was crucial to choose areas where single homelessness was a significant issue because it is unrealistic to expect developed collaborative arrangements for single homeless people in areas where there is no significant client group to serve. Conversely it could be argued that in areas where there are low levels of single homelessness, the low number could be attributed to the existence of successful collaborative arrangements. However, while collaboration can contribute to better practice and the prevention of homelessness, the existence of this is not considered a strong enough variable to significantly affect the levels of single homelessness in an area, which are affected by a range of demographic, economic and geographical factors.

The three authorities were selected on the basis of various independent variables that may have an influence on the level and nature of collaboration (see table 4.1 below). First, it was considered important to include at least one London authority, since there are a number of features which make London authorities of interest to the research topic. In particular, the nature of homelessness in London is such that a sub-regional approach to collaboration is particularly important. Because homeless people in London tend to be a fairly transient group, moving frequently across Boroughs, cooperation between London authorities is important. Much joint working in London therefore has either a sub-regional or pan-London basis, for instance in the development of sub-regional homelessness strategies for North, West, East and South London, and a London-wide electronic database for monitoring homeless clients as they move across borough boundaries. In addition, London is the area with the highest levels of single homelessness and rough sleeping in the country and consequently was a valid case to include.

A limited number of institutional features were also of interest, including authority structure (single versus two-tier), whether a local authority was an LSVTO, and whether it had contracted out its homelessness service to an external agency. Because the provision of social housing and the role of the homelessness or housing advice service are so intrinsic to the homelessness services provided by local authorities, it was considered plausible that the outsourcing of these could impinge on collaboration.

⁵² Figures are based on local authority 'PIE returns' for 2005. The mean number of single homeless people in English local authorities was 103. As a proportion of all homeless people in local authorities this equates to 29%.

Finally, it was considered relevant to include examples of authorities with differing experiences of central government steering. This is not an easy variable to measure, since central government policy is largely generic to all local authorities. However, certain vertical coordination methods in this sector, as will be discussed in chapter six, are experienced more acutely in some authorities than in others. In particular, one form of funding supporting the development of multi-agency working, the 'Innovation Fund', is a competitive stream in which some authorities have received grants and not others. Therefore the sub-sample included at least one authority which had been a beneficiary of this funding and one which had not, in order to explore whether and in what way this had made a difference to the working relationships between agencies.

The choice of variables on which to select the case studies was therefore made in order to provide a range of perspectives. As noted by Marshall and Rossman (1999), most sampling strategies in qualitative research attempt to provide a sample with reasonable variation in the phenomenon, settings or people under investigation. The central concern of the research was to examine implementation issues and the role of vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms in aiding collaboration. As noted in chapter one, independent variables likely to influence the extent of local collaboration include vertical steering and a variety of local institutional factors. Case studies were chosen, as far as possible, to reflect this.

Table 4.1 Key characteristics of the case study areas

Case Study	Region	IF Money ⁵³	EMIF Money ⁵⁴	No of tiers in Authority	LSVT	Status of homelessness and housing advice service	No. of Rough sleepers ⁵⁵	No. of statutory homeless acceptances (all households)	No. of statutory 'single' homeless acceptances ⁵⁶	Single homelessness as a % of all statutory homelessness
LA1	LB	N	N	1	N	Both in-house	N/A	1114	309	28%
LA2	SW	Y	N	2	N	Both in-house	6	290	117	40%
LA3	NW	N	Y	1	Y	Both contracted out	9	1160	802	69%
<i>National data</i>	-	-	-	1 tier: 22% 2 tier: 78%	LSVT: 49%	% Contracted out: -homeless service: 14% -housing advice service: 18%	5 (mean) 2 (median)	326 (mean) 189 (median)	103 (mean) 55 (median)	29%

⁵³ Innovation Fund Money

⁵⁴ Ethic Minority Innovation Fund Money

⁵⁵ Estimate based on official street counts. Data drawn from Local Authority Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix made in June 2006.

⁵⁶ Statistics on homelessness and single homelessness are based on annual Local Authority Annual Returns to Central Government for the year 2005 (PIE Data)

Interview format

The interview schedules developed for the both national and local interviews were semi-structured in format, involving specified questions but leaving open the option for further probing and for asking respondents to elaborate on particular issues. As noted by May , semi-structured interviews are sufficiently standardised to allow for comparisons between participants but nevertheless allow people to answer on their own terms rather than being restricted to the frame of reference imposed by the researcher. While there were clear theoretical propositions to explore, it was important to leave sufficient room for unanticipated themes to arise.

Questions were organised under three main headings, namely perceptions of collaboration at local level, the relationship between central government and local agencies, and collaboration between central government departments⁵⁷. These were the main headings in both the central and local interviews. Within each theme there were a series of secondary questions, some aimed at gathering factual information about practices and procedures, and others aiming for more subjective information about interviewees' organisational experiences. The latter questions were left deliberately broad to enable explanations for collaboration to be generated by interviewees themselves rather than being imposed by the researcher. The same broad questions were asked in each interview, although some flexibility was required to allow participants to focus on those issues most relevant to their own remit or area of expertise. The questions themselves were devised to build on previous theory and research as discussed in chapters 1-3. Some specific questions were also included to allow interviewees to expand on the data yielded from the survey in phase 1 of the research⁵⁸.

Data collection and analysis

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and tape-recorded with informed consent⁵⁹. The majority were one-to-one although in three cases two staff were jointly interviewed. Most interviews were held in participants' place of work in order to maximise convenience for participants and to allow the researcher to gain a feel for the settings in which they worked. Interviews ranged in length from 47 - 81 minutes, with a mean running time of 68 minutes.

⁵⁷ See Appendices F & G for copies of the local and central interview schedules.

⁵⁸ As discussed above, a copy of the completed postal survey for the relevant authority was brought to the interviews and discussed where appropriate.

⁵⁹ All interviewees were provided with an information sheet explaining the aims and background of the research and including a statement regarding confidentiality and anonymity (see Appendix C).

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using a thematic approach which involves generating themes from categories and codes . Transcripts were first scanned to gain an overall feel for the data. The text was organised into tables using the broad headings used in the interview schedules. The data under these headings were then systematically coded using labels which summarised the meaning of the text. Where these codes began to recur they were clustered into themes. The thematic analysis was an iterative process and involved refining the coding framework as additional text was analysed. Within qualitative research it is desirable, as far as possible, to let the data speak for itself rather than to impose a predefined frame of reference, and so this approach seemed appropriate.

Where qualitative data are reported in the following chapters, these are presented in tabular form displaying themes and illustrative quotes. As noted by White, Woodfield and Ritchie , presenting qualitative data involves an attempt to display the integrity of the findings, by illustrating that the conclusions presented are grounded in the data. Presentation of quotations is the accepted means of doing this within qualitative research. However, it is important when reporting findings to display diversity, since one of the aims of qualitative research is to explore the different aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. White et al. (ibid) therefore advise inclusivity, by reporting the less typical as well as the highly recurrent themes. The approach used within the present study is to display themes in order, with those raised most frequently at the top of each table. However, all themes included were mentioned by several rather than by just one or two interviewees. ID numbers are included alongside quotes in order to allow comments to be matched to job titles.

The above discussion provides an overview and justification of the research procedure, including the sampling, methods and data analysis techniques. The supporting appendices include copies of the research instruments. Further methodological details can be found in the relevant empirical chapters.

Chapter 5: Local Views of the Rationale for and Factors Affecting Collaboration

Chapter overview

This chapter begins to investigate the rationale for, and factors affecting, collaboration in homelessness services. It firstly presents empirical interview evidence on the ‘externalities’ created by the fragmented homelessness service system. As outlined in chapter one, collaboration is one potential response to such externalities, and a rational-administrative perspective would suggest that recognition of these factors may contribute to local actors’ motivations for collaborating. It is therefore pertinent to examine the degree to which such externalities are recognised by street level bureaucrats. The chapter then moves to an assessment of the level of *local* support for the policy of collaboration and the explanations provided for this, issues which are likely to have a bearing on local actors’ responsiveness to central government’s exhortations to collaborate. Lastly, actors’ perceptions of the challenges and enablers of collaboration are discussed. It was suggested in chapter one that a range of factors, both interpretive and contextual, are considered important influences on collaboration, affecting organisational ability or propensity to collaborate. This chapter assesses these issues in the context of homelessness and discusses these in light of the rival theoretical models presented in chapter three.

5.1 Externalities in the Homelessness System

As discussed in chapter 1, systemic performance effects or externalities refer to coordination problems which arise because of the involvement of multiple bodies in complex systems. They usually occur when one part of the system fails to take account of how its actions will affect the other parts. Common externalities highlighted in previous literature include incoherence (e.g. policies working at cross purposes; unintended consequences of policies), organisational redundancy (e.g. organisations duplicating one another's work), and lacunae (e.g. gaps in services). In areas of human services chapter one illustrated that such problems are common, and provide a rationale for collaborative, multi-agency working. One of the aims of the interviews was to uncover any such problems arising in the homelessness system and to determine whether such factors motivated, or provided a rationale for, agencies to collaborate. The extent to which inter-agency collaboration attenuates such problems is discussed further in chapter eight. The evidence presented in the two subsections which follow (5.1.1. and 5.1.2) was generated in response to a question put to interviewees which asked them to comment on any problems arising from the way in which services were delivered through a multi-agency network⁶⁰.

5.1.1 Client level externalities

A number of themes emerged in terms of externalities experienced at the client level and illustrative quotes for each of these themes are presented in table 5.1. Although homelessness staff cannot speak on behalf of service users, their experience working directly with service users provides them with insights into the difficulties created by a fragmented system of provision.

⁶⁰ All qualitative material presented in this and in subsequent chapters was analysed according to the method set out in chapter four.

Table 5.1 Client level externalities

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Confusion caused by service complexity and number of agencies</p>	<p>“There are 7 or 8 support services, so lots of people are confused about who does what... staff, volunteers, clients. The accommodation sector has also massively expanded, it’s incredibly complicated. It’s hard enough trying to explain to a volunteer how it all works, so imagine how it feels for a service user who has got an afternoon to sort their accommodation out”. ID 19, LA 2</p> <p>“My ideal would be closer partnership working within the voluntary sector, that they co-locate, cause it must be very confusing for clients cause everything is in different place in the City” ID 8, LA2</p>
<p>Difficulty accessing services for clients with multiple needs</p>	<p>“Because the county is broken up into lots of districts, it’s very complicated. And imagine having mild learning difficulties and a problem with alcohol and trying to manage that system. It’s difficult, and I don’t think it has to be that complicated”. ID 13, LA2</p>
<p>Difficulty accessing services for clients making transition between services</p>	<p>“If you are discharged from hospital you are given a centralised phone number which you ring and they direct you to 1 of 10 treatment centres to get your dressings done, even before that you have to phone your GP before you go and get a prescription for your own dressings, then get to where the centres are if you can, then go there 2 or 3 times a week to get them changed. For Joe Public that is complicated but for someone who is homeless without access to a phone, money, a GP...I think that is more of a barrier to treatment than a service”. ID 41, LA3</p>
<p>Duplication of assessment and information collection by different agencies</p>	<p>“Client A goes from service to service... and each service says, ‘sit down, Name, Age...’ goes through this long needs assessment, then the client goes to the next service and the same thing happens”. ID 14, LA2</p> <p>“People reasonably think that they speak to the council and the council will pass on information between its departments, but it’s really difficult to somehow all be working together ...cause we’ve all got different priorities... so even within one department it’s quite difficult”. ID 5, LA1</p>
<p>Accountability/failure to take responsibility for in-between people</p>	<p>“One problem working with mental health services is when there is a dual diagnosis. Often the mental illness predated the addiction but Mental Health just see the addiction. These clients are seen by mental health services as too difficult to deal with – probably a skills issue & maybe to do with resources. There are some dangerous people with severe mental health problems that don’t get seen.” ID10, LA2</p>
<p>Gaps in services</p>	<p>“Unless they provide more money specifically for people who fall between the gaps – it’s them that the closer working needs to be about. If you’re clearly defined it’s fine because you fall into this or that category, but if you’re not... there’s no money for those sort of in-between people. People don’t want to take responsibility for them”. ID20, LA3</p>

Confusion caused by service complexity and number of agencies

The most commonly raised theme, a form of incoherence, was the general confusion created by the complexity of the service system. Interviewees could see arguments for providing a range and choice of services and believed this to be important. For instance, service users who were excluded from certain agencies would be able to obtain support elsewhere. In addition, having a variety of services was considered essential for catering to the diverse needs of clients. However, the sheer number of agencies was considered to make it difficult for clients to know where to go for help, and services were characterised as difficult to navigate and geographically fragmented. Some interviewees commented that there was no single place or coordinating agency that clients could visit to obtain all the information they needed.

Difficulty accessing services for vulnerable clients with multiple needs

Second, there were difficulties around accessing services for clients who were in the position of having to move between different agencies, either because of multiple needs requiring multi-agency support, or because of making a transition from an institution to another form of service provision. Clients with multiple and complex needs were sometimes described as needing ‘hand holding’, and some interviewees were concerned that if these clients were left to negotiate access to services unassisted they might not receive the support needed. This was explained partly by the nature and severity of problems faced by some vulnerable clients such as learning disabilities, mental health and drug or alcohol issues. However, it was also related to a concern that particular agencies acted as ‘gatekeepers’ of services, judging vulnerable service users to deny them access to services. Particular problems related to local housing authorities denying service users the opportunity to make formal homeless applications, and receptionists in GP surgeries and other statutory agencies making clients feel unwelcome. Some interviewees stressed that they physically accompanied such service users to other agencies or engaged in other forms of advocacy to ensure that they obtained the services required.

Difficulty accessing services for clients making transition between services

Difficulties around accessing services for transitional groups of users included those leaving prisons and hospitals. In the case of prisons, on one authority there was a gap between people leaving prison and being assessed for homelessness by the local authority, since practical difficulties prevented the local authority from holding regular surgeries in the prison itself. During this gap many former prisoners found themselves homeless, having lost their accommodation whilst in prison. In the case of hospitals, homeless people leaving hospital found it difficult to access rehabilitative community-based treatment because of the practical challenges involved and their lack of a stable place of residence from which to coordinate such treatment.

Duplication of assessment and information collection by different agencies

An additional theme at the client level was the problem of duplication of lengthy needs assessments by different agencies. Interviewees suggested that it was not uncommon for this to happen, creating frustration for clients who were repeatedly asked the same questions by different agencies. This duplication occurred in part because agencies did not share client assessment information. Although there may be valid reasons for agencies wishing to conduct their own assessments (discussed further below), in some cases agencies seemed unaware that other agencies had already collected information from a particular client. This problem occurred both between different agencies and within different local authority departments.

Accountability problems

Another major issue experienced at the client level was the problem of agencies' failure to take responsibility for clients whose needs lay on the borderlines between different agencies. Examples included clients with a 'dual diagnosis', particularly those with mental health as well as drug or alcohol problems. Staff in some agencies did not feel suitably trained or qualified to deal with clients' additional problems, arguing that it was not their responsibility to tackle these issues, and frustrated in their attempts to obtain support from other agencies. Social and mental health services had proven particularly problematic in this respect.

A further example of this involved a housing association which provided supported accommodation for people with mental health problems. However, a number of residents also had social care needs including incontinence and other physical problems which the association felt unable to deal with. Their perception was that the local social

services department had ceded responsibility for these people, seeing it as the housing association's 'problem'. One interviewee noted how policy changes to allow users of social services to purchase their own care had led to a situation where some users with severe needs either did not or were unable to arrange this independently. This enabled social services departments to evade responsibility, but the housing association concerned did not see it as their role to arrange the appropriate care. This had led to eviction in some cases for clients considered unable to manage their accommodation.

Prisoners serving less than 12 months in prison were described as a group for whom nobody had responsibility, since probation services were restricted to dealing with those with sentences of 12 months or more. It was also difficult to obtain support for prisoners and others with low level mental health needs since they did not meet the criteria for psychiatric or mental health care. Similarly, few ex-prisoners with mental health issues were classified as statutorily homeless because their mental health problem was not sufficiently severe for them to pass the vulnerability test.

In summary, rather than agencies being set up around clients' needs, it seemed apparent that certain clients did not 'fit' into existing services, falling between the cracks in services. Moreover, it appeared that where clients had multiple problems, there was some dispute over who was ultimately responsible for providing support. In such cases determining responsibility was problematic, with no single agency apparently accountable for these clients.

Gaps in services

A number of gaps in service provision were identified by interviewees. As discussed in chapter one, lacunae are an externality common in fragmented human service systems, often caused by the fact that since no single agency has a sufficient overview of the system to detect these gaps. Numerous examples were provided in the study context, although the most common were around 'move-on' accommodation, specialist tailored accommodation for particular client groups, dedicated services for those with multiple needs who fell between the cracks between services and affordable accommodation generally.

Move-on accommodation was described as providing a bridge for people between temporary accommodation and longer-term independent accommodation, and typically including an element of support, either 'floating' or residential support. Interviewees in all areas commented that there was a severe shortage of move-on accommodation, resulting in clients spending too long in hostels. This was a major problem in terms of creating space for new residents in need of emergency accommodation, sometimes

described as ‘silting up’. It also posed problems for clients who had successfully engaged with support services, were trying to tackle their problems but were unable to progress further whilst residing in a hostel environment.

In terms of ‘single homeless’ people of interest in the present study, specialist accommodation which was lacking included hostels specifically catering for homeless women and homeless couples without children. The majority of existing facilities for women and couples in all authorities were working at full capacity with long waiting lists. Other groups for which there were gaps in supported accommodation included ex-prisoners and people with drug and alcohol problems. Interviewees attributed the lack of provision for such groups partly to landlords’ fears of damage to property, perceived negative impact on neighbourhoods, social exclusion and agencies’ fear of not being able to provide the level of support needed. Interviewees also commented on the need for tiered accommodation for alcoholics and drug users at different stages of recovery because of the necessity for moving recovering addicts from environments where other residents were actively using substances. However, many hostels maintained no substance abuse policies for fear of criminal proceedings and as part of a risk management strategy. These concerns illustrate how the diversity of problems faced by homeless people creates challenges for providing standardised services to all homeless people.

Third, and related to the theme above on agencies’ failure to take responsibility for service users whose needs lie in the interstices between agencies, interviewees noted a lack of services for these people. They perceived this to be a particular gap, indicating that this may be an area requiring additional and specific funding. Lastly, interviewees commented on a lack of affordable and accessible accommodation for homeless people generally. This theme is returned to below and is an important contextual issue which provides the backdrop against which attempts to work collaboratively are played out.

5.1.2 Externalities relating to service provision/ planning

Interviewees also perceived there to be a number of wider systemic problems which militated against the development and delivery of effective services. Externalities included duplication and incoherence created by funding arrangements and by specialisation (illustrative quotes are provided in table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Externalities relating to service provision/ planning

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Duplication	“It’s good in essence that there’s choice, but what happens is that service users play one off against the other. The people we are dealing with are survivors, desperate people do desperate things, and therefore if you go and get a meal somewhere, you’ll go to the next place and get one there too and you’ll say you didn’t get one over there. That will happen of you have seven sets of people doing the same thing. So there is the danger of having different agencies in different places in one city doing similar things”. (ID18, LA2)
Funding arrangements creating incoherence	“SP have fragmented the way we do things, that you literally have to carve out housing related support, where it used to be a bit more, it used to encompass many different threads, it was very clearly defined, so there are few threads now that are missing that no one’s providing”. (ID13, LA2)
Problems created by dependence on other agencies to meet statutory duties	“To go back to stock transfer, soon we will not be a housing authority, and it’s fine for the judge at the end of the judicial review to come up with the recommendation that the local authority must re-house this person in 7 days, but what do you do if you haven’t got any housing? You can’t force an RSL to give you a house. Whereas when we own our own properties, you pick up the phone to a local office and say ‘have you got a property in such and such an area’... ‘yeah, come and have a look at it’... So in that respect I think we’re going to have some difficulty”. (ID2, LA3)

Duplication

There were strong concerns that there was some duplication in agencies’ work, particularly amongst services set up with a pure ‘homelessness’ remit. One particular area of duplication related to day services for homeless people. This problem stemmed in part from the nature of funding arrangements in the voluntary sector which meant that agencies proactively and opportunistically sought funding from disparate sources as and when calls for bids were announced. This had resulted in overlapping services in some cases. In one instance when funding for a day centre had come to end, a new centre had been established to fill the void, with funding from an alternative source. However, a successful bid had subsequently led to the original day centre re-opening, resulting in

immediate duplication of activities of these two centres. One of the outcomes of such duplication in service provision was that clients in severe need would sometimes play services off against each other, trying to obtain as much assistance as possible, as illustrated in the first quotation in table 5.2.

Another form of organisational redundancy included duplication of work carried out by different strategic housing groups or boards, and there was a general feeling that different groups covered much of the same ground. Most of the senior managers interviewed were members of numerous groups but attended meetings of these selectively because of perceived duplication.

Interviewees also considered there to be duplication in terms of agencies developing 'outcomes monitoring' tools separately rather than collectively. The Supporting People funding requirements were driving this development and while the increased emphasis on measuring outcomes was viewed as a positive development, agencies felt that a more coordinated approach to achieving this would be desirable. Linked to this, there were some cases of 'double counting' of outcomes, with different agencies monitoring and claiming responsibility for the same outcomes with the same clients.

Funding arrangements as a form of incoherence

The broad funding system was viewed by interviewees as creating a number of challenges in terms of service development. Interviewees commented on two themes in particular. First, agencies were sometimes frustrated in their attempts to develop services because national and government funding streams facilitated the development of certain aspects of services but not others. For instance, a number of interviewees commented on the difficulty of developing new supported accommodation. While money was available from the Housing Corporation for building costs, there appeared to be a shortage of funding for the support element⁶¹. Similarly, interviewees spoke of an increase in funding for rehabilitating prisoners but a lack of accommodation to sit alongside this. Therefore, in spite of national policy attempts to rationalise funding by bringing together disparate streams for housing related support into a single pot (under 'Supporting People'), certain aspects of the funding system seemed to suffer from a lack of 'joined up' thinking.

Secondly, the present funding system for the voluntary sector places agencies in direct competition with one another, encouraging them to act to protect their own interests rather than consider the effects of their own actions on other parts of the system. As

⁶¹ Edgar et al (1999) note that the former Rough Sleepers initiative suffered from the same problem in reverse, with revenue funding available but no capital funding.

discussed in chapter four, recent local government reforms have devolved funding decisions to the local level. As a result, local authorities are now responsible for distributing central government homelessness grant to local voluntary sector agencies. A consequence of this policy reform has been the creation of a system whereby voluntary sector agencies bid for funding from local authorities in a competitive environment, placing the local authority in a position of power within the multi-agency network. This theme is returned to in the discussion below of factors affecting collaboration.

The problem of specialisation: dependence on other agencies to meet statutory responsibilities

The fragmentation of services was also problematic in terms of agencies' ability to meet their statutory responsibilities. Some agencies were concerned that they may be unable to meet their legal duty to make provisions for eligible vulnerable people because of their dependence on other bodies. For instance, in one local authority undergoing completion of the large scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) process, the housing authority was concerned about its ability to provide a safety net of housing for those deemed to be eligible for assistance under the Homeless Act. While housing authorities had legal duties in this respect, they felt their ability to meet these was restricted by their dependence on housing associations to provide the housing needed.

In addition, housing authority staff commented on their heavy reliance on the private sector to provide temporary housing for homeless people. Although government was promoting private sector involvement for housing homeless people, interviewees felt at the mercy of the market place since any significant change in the market could create a slump in private rental market.

In summary, a range of client level and service planning level externalities permeated the fragmented homelessness networks in the three case study areas. At client level, the sheer volume of agencies made it difficult for clients to navigate the system. This was particularly so for vulnerable clients with multiple needs who, because of the nature of their problems, required multi-agency support, or for transitional clients moving between different institutions or systems of care. Organisational redundancy occurred in the form of duplication of assessment by different agencies. Clients whose needs lay on the interstices between agencies or who had dual diagnoses of health and other problems were not well served by the system, falling between the gaps in services, with no agency accepting responsibility for these clients. Finally, despite the large volume of agencies involved in homelessness, there were numerous gaps in services. At service provision

and planning level, externalities included duplication, incoherence associated with the funding system and dependence on other agencies to carry out core activities.

Comments made by interviewees suggested that an awareness of such issues did provide a motivation for collaboration in some cases. For example partnership working was viewed as an appropriate means of ensuring that clients with dual diagnosis and multiple needs got the services they required. Co-location was considered a possible form of collaboration for reducing confusion for clients attempting to navigate the complex homeless system. In addition, devising a joint outcomes database was viewed as a means of avoiding double counting of service outcomes. The role of such forms of partnership working in minimising externalities is returned to in chapter eight.

5.2 Local Support for Collaboration

In order to determine the level of support for collaboration amongst local street level bureaucrats, interviewees were asked how important multi-agency or collaborative working was for them personally, and whether they felt it was a priority for local agencies generally. The vast majority of local agencies were strongly in support of collaborative, multi-agency working. Interviewees variously suggested that it was ‘essential’, ‘necessary’ or ‘very important’ for tackling homelessness, especially in relation to clients with multiple and complex needs. Indeed, there appeared to be a general acceptance that this was the only way to work. Some suggested that inter-agency working had become ‘part of the culture’ and that agencies generally had a strong will to work in this way, even in spite of the challenges of doing so. Interviewees also distinguished between operational and strategic level collaboration, and perceived it to be important that collaborative approaches were pursued both of these organisational levels.

Two main reasons were given in support of a collaborative approach to practice. First, interviewees recognised the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness, and collaborative multi-agency approaches were viewed as essential to meeting the multiple needs of service users. Secondly, and related to the first issue, interviewees felt that they alone did not have the skills needed to tackle homelessness. Interviewees acknowledged their dependence on other agencies in this regard.

Table 5.3 Local support for collaboration

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Support for collaboration at local level	

General support for collaboration	<p>“I just think that partnership is the only way. The sum of the parts is always going to be better than the individual parts. There’s something magical that happens when people bring different things together, share wisdom, expertise, and there’s just something in the mix that happens that is quite powerful.” ID 7, LA2</p> <p>“If you don’t work with the other agencies in a joint support plan approach then I don’t know what we’re here for.” ID 14, LA2.</p>
Importance of collaboration at different organisational levels	<p>“It’s essential for us really, we’ve got to have a good working relationship both at day to day level, and that staff can relate to each other, just simply to enable service users to move between agencies. Strategically, as well, it’s very important for people to be included in any joint decisions being made.” ID 17, LA</p> <p>“I think right from an individual service user being in a supported housing project & needing their key worker & drugs worker to work together, you know, right through to a very senior strategic level, it has to work all the way through.” ID 4, LA2</p>

Reasons for supporting a collaborative approach

Recognition of multi-dimensional nature of homelessness	<p>“I just don’t think any of us will get anything done without it, I mean from a service user basis they don’t just have one need, do they, they have a variety of needs.” ID 4, LA2</p> <p>“Without a collaborative or multi-agency approach, it’s inevitable that the people who don’t fit into the standard boxes are going to get a poor standard of service.” ID 24, LA1</p>
Dependence on other agencies to meet multiple needs	<p>“We’ve got to make sure that we’re able to support them in the right way, and so recognising that we can’t do that 100% ourselves, there’s a need to work together with them so that our clients get the best service possible.” ID 23, LA3</p>

In summary, collaboration between local agencies was something which interviewees perceived to be important. However, despite the perceived importance of collaborative working, there were numerous challenges to putting this into practice. Interviewees suggested that despite a willingness and commitment to collaboration, the reality was often somewhat different.

One civil servant summed this up in the following way:

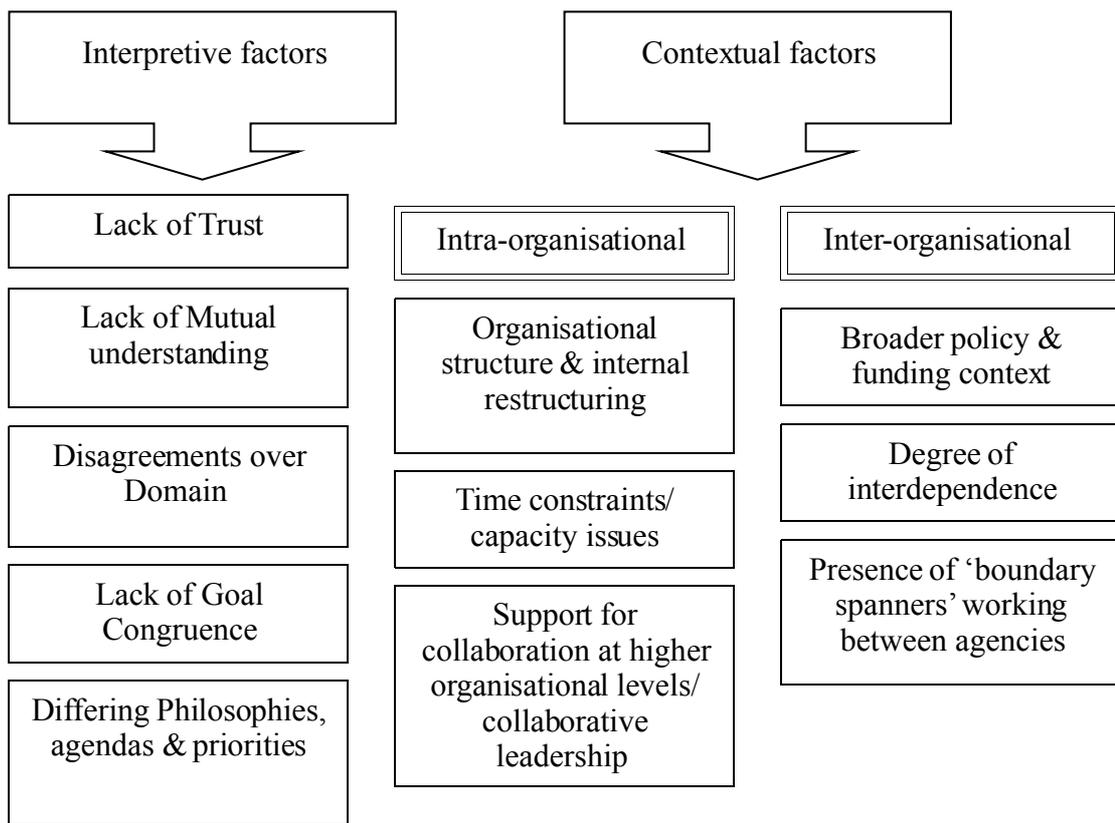
‘What I’ve come across is a very strong willingness to undertake multi-agency working but (people are) often hampered by the sheer mechanics of it doing it’ (ID33)

Several reasons were provided by interviewees to explain why collaboration did not always ensue. The next section considers the main factors affecting collaboration including both challenges and enablers.

5.3 The Factors Affecting Collaboration

The factors affecting collaboration can be broadly organised under the headings presented in chapter one, notably interpretive and contextual factors. Comments were made in response to a general question on the main challenges and enablers of collaboration (see Appendix F for interview schedule). The thematic subheadings provided in figure 5.1 below represent the most salient themes emerging in the analysis.

Fig 5.1 Main factors affecting collaboration: thematic analysis



5.3.1 Interpretive Factors

As noted in chapter one, a range of interpretive factors are highlighted in literature investigating the antecedents of collaboration, where interpretive factors refer to the subjective images that organisations hold of one another. The presence of factors such as domain consensus, goal congruence and trust are considered to facilitate collaboration. However, there was evidence that these factors were lacking in the study context, as illustrated in the analysis below.

Trust and mutual understanding

A lack of trust appeared to undermine inter-agency relationships in the case study areas. Mistrust emerged for a number of reasons (see table 5.4). One reason given for low trust relations related to power and dependency issues created by funding arrangements. The reliance of agencies on local authority funding made them reticent to openly share information with the council or with other agencies. Specifically, agencies were unwilling to admit problems, preferring to project an image of success. Explicit

references were made to a 'culture of mistrust' and to the 'blame culture' generated by agencies' fear of losing funding.

A second area of mistrust centred on the desire by agencies to protect their own client groups, which again led them to withhold certain information from partner agencies or withhold client referrals. Workers believed that other agencies would not always act in the appropriate way if certain information about their clients was shared. Two examples serve to illustrate. First, in one voluntary sector agency working with offenders there was a reticence among staff to share pre-sentence reports with Housing Associations. This was due to a perception that Housing Associations often made prejudicial assumptions about offenders and that this would impede their clients' ability to gain access to Housing Association properties. The second example involved drugs workers failing to share information about their clients' drug use for fear of them being evicted from hostels or other forms of supported accommodation.

Some interviewees attributed agencies' lack of willingness to make client referrals to their desire to keep hold of their own clients in order to protect funding. The concept of agencies 'owning' clients was one which emerged a number of times, and interviewees were critical of agencies that behaved in this way. Others commented that they were reluctant to refer clients to certain agencies because of a lack of faith that they would deal appropriately with their clients. For instance, some voluntary sector interviewees were concerned about the judgemental attitude of other agencies, particularly statutory agencies, to some of their more vulnerable clients. Lack of trust was also expressed in terms of perceptions that certain agencies, in particular the local authority, would deny clients the service to which they were entitled. The theme of local authorities failing to complete formal homelessness assessments was one which emerged a number of times.

Discussing how trust was built up, interviewees suggested that this emerged when agencies fulfilled their end of the bargain by following up their words with actions. On the other side of the coin, when agencies did not keep their word, or where there was a history of tensions between agencies, this inhibited future collaborative relations. One example involved smaller agencies being unwilling to enter into consortia with larger statutory bodies because of negative experiences of this in the past. This finding resonates strongly with the concept of 'fair dealing' or 'principled conduct' as discussed in chapter one, which suggests that collaboration ensues when shared expectations are met.

Trust was characterised as something which developed over time. For instance, interviewees spoke of agencies learning to understand each other's positions in the 'fullness of time'. By way of illustration, one local authority worker commented on how

their homelessness prevention policy had been viewed suspiciously by voluntary sector workers initially but had been accepted in time as they learned to understand the purpose of the policy. She described how voluntary sector agencies had initially viewed the authority's practices as a 'gate keeping exercise' but had come to recognise that the local authority's aim was to prevent homelessness by exploring alternative options prior to conducting formal homeless assessments. Interviewees also commented on the importance of communication and contact in building trust.

Much of the explanation for low trust stemmed from a lack of mutual understanding between agencies (see again table 5.4). Interviewees commented principally on a lack of understanding about the pressures that other agencies are under, unrealistic expectations about what they could deliver, and a limited appreciation of the issues facing their clients. Part of developing understanding meant acknowledging the different agendas and priorities of agencies. For instance, one interviewee commented on the need for voluntary sector agencies to recognise that statutory services are driven by legislation, and for statutory agencies to recognise that voluntary sector agencies were driven by a different set of demands. Another stated that agencies simply had to have 'respect' for one another's roles.

Table 5.4 Trust and mutual understanding

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Trust	
Lack of willingness to openly discuss or admit problems in order to protect funding	<p>“Some people would just turn the forum into a PR opportunity and say how fabulous everything is going. Whereas it’s just as useful to share problems. Because of the increasing competition in the sector with the introduction of SP I watched the inter-agency forum change from being a very supportive environment to a... you know, who can seem to be the best around the table and try and impress the council as commissioners”. ID 19, LA2</p>
Desire to protect own clients	<p>“I have heard workers from several organisations saying ‘this is <i>our</i> client’, well, nobody owns people, and I think that’s something in the system that needs to be addressed at some point. We are providers of services, to help people, we don’t <i>own</i> people”. ID 17, LA2</p> <p>“They’ve got no trust with one another. So if they get a client they should be encouraging them to progress by referring them to another organisation, but in so many cases they don’t ‘cause they think we want to keep this client because it affects their funding”. ID 18, LA2</p>
Lack of confidence in other agencies’ ability/ willingness to treat clients appropriately	<p>“We are actually loathe to send anyone anywhere on their own, we have to take them, because we don’t know what the staff’s going to be like when they get to the other end”. ID 22, LA 3</p> <p>“One of the things we hear from drugs workers is ‘I’m not going to tell the housing worker about my client’s drug use because they might evict them’... which actually they might. So there’s a mistrust there”. ID 16, LA2</p>
Incremental nature of trust-building; importance of contact and communication	<p>“Trust had built up over time.. phone calls were being made about this issue or that, there was a kind of contacts or communication process going on”. ID 39, LA1</p>
Mutual understanding	
Lack of understanding between agencies	<p>“Complaints about each other’s service are based on lack of knowledge. They’re assuming that we’re turning everyone down and that we don’t give a pop about the clients. And we assume they just meddle and interfere, advocate for people who aren’t actually homeless in the first place”. ID5, LA1</p> <p>“One thing is people don’t know each other’s roles very well, what their remits are”. ID 40, LA3</p>
Importance of recognizing other agencies’ priorities	<p>“It’s about recognising and acknowledging that there is difference between us in terms of our agendas.” ID 7, LA1</p>

Disagreements over domain

Several interviewees made reference to disagreements over the proper remit and domain of different agencies, relating to the notion of ‘domain consensus’, a further interpretive antecedent to collaboration introduced in chapter one. The most common problem involved interviewees feeling that other agencies should be providing input on certain issues where they did not appear to be doing so. Some interviewees suggested that this was due to an inability of other professionals to see the links between different issues. For instance, one specialist health visitor for homeless people suggested that other health professionals did not see mediation as part of their role, despite the fact that this may prevent mental ill-health in many cases. As illustrated in the quote below (ID16), another example concerned a drugs agency failing to see sexual health issues as part of their remit. However, interviewees also attributed the lack of willingness of agencies to provide input to resource limitations and funding priorities. There is a clear link between the domain issue and the problem of agencies failing to take responsibility for ‘in-between’ clients, as discussed in section 4.2.3 above.

The other side of domain consensus is where agencies stray into the territory or turf of other agencies. This was less common than the phenomenon described above, although two examples emerged. One involved workers who were described as lacking professional boundaries. These people tried to achieve everything alone and failed to recognise their dependence on other agencies. A second example links to the issue of duplication already discussed, and involved agencies undertaking work that was already covered by existing agencies. Agencies were concerned of the implications of this in terms of wasting resources and there was also a sense of fear that funding bodies would make cuts where this duplication occurred.

Table 5.5 Lack of domain consensus

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Disagreement over appropriate remit of different agencies	“I was doing some sexual health training and as part of this I had to do visits to different organisations, I said ‘can I visit your needle exchange cause I am doing this sexual health course’, and they were like ‘well, what’s that got to do with sexual health?’, and I was just like, ‘What?! It’s got everything to do with sexual health. What’s the point in giving somebody a clean needle if you are not talking about their sexual behaviour, wearing condoms, transmission of blood borne viruses, it’s sexual health’ ... and that link seems to have been lost in drugs services, they were like, ‘well what’s it got to do with us?’” ID 16, LA2
Lack of professional boundaries/ straying into turf of other agencies	“Some organisations have this dying breed of worker who somehow think they can do everything... that they can be the drugs worker, the housing worker and everything else. But we all need to be big enough to go ‘this isn’t my field of expertise but I can refer you to someone’.” ID 16, LA2

Lack of goal congruence

As discussed in chapter one, goal congruence is thought to enhance collaboration. Where organisations have similar goals, collaboration is considered more likely to occur due to their greater ability to identify with one another (although it was also noted that where organisations’ goals are too similar, conflicts may emerge because of competition over territory). There was considerable evidence that lack of goal congruence posed problems in terms of developing collaborative relationships. Two major themes emerged, one relating to differing philosophies and worldviews, and another relating to different priorities and agendas.

On the theme of differing worldviews and philosophies, agencies with differences in these respects often found it challenging to work together. In particular, there was an inherent tension between statutory agencies which were driven by government priorities and legal obligations, and voluntary sector agencies with an advocacy remit. For instance, the Probation Service was characterised by voluntary sector agencies as having a punitive approach in contrast to what they saw as their own rehabilitative approach.

Similarly, there were clashes in two of the case study areas between local housing authorities and voluntary sector advice agencies over the issue of homelessness assessments. In all three authorities, housing departments were following government policy of preventing homelessness, by diverting homelessness applications and promoting alternative options. While voluntary sector agencies generally viewed this as a ‘gate-keeping’ exercise to prevent homeless people appearing in official statistics, local

authorities were more supportive of government policy, suggesting that a preventive approach was appropriate. Housing authorities' actions were also driven by their lack of available housing which meant that they had to ration existing stock.

In one authority housing advice agencies regularly sent clients to the local housing authority for formal homelessness assessments, even when they knew there was little chance of those particular clients successfully meeting the requirements under homeless legislation. While they viewed this as a means of keeping the housing authority informed of the level of need in the local area and for ensuring that clients received their legal entitlement to an assessment, one interviewee suggested that this was tantamount to clients being used as 'pawns' in a 'game' between these two agencies (see quote below, ID 16).

Other cultural tensions emerged around the perception of non-statutory agencies that their statutory counterparts viewed them as 'untrained', 'casual', or 'unprofessional'. Some voluntary sector interviewees held the view that statutory agencies were unaware of the extent to which their sector had become professionalised and was subject to similar levels of scrutiny and monitoring as public sector agencies. Statutory agencies were similarly concerned that voluntary sector agencies often held unrealistic views about what they could deliver and were unaware of the government priorities to which they were working.

Within the voluntary sector, interviewees dichotomised those with an 'empowering' approach versus those with a 'helping' or paternalistic philosophy, and also contrasted secular with religious-based organisations. Such differences were considered to impede collaboration. By contrast, one voluntary sector day service worker commented on how he found it easy to work with his counterpart in a neighbouring local authority agency because of a shared philosophy on how to help homeless people.

Secondly, the different agendas and priorities of the organisations involved were also cited as an obstacle to collaboration. Reflecting on why agencies found it difficult to work collaboratively, some interviewees commented that in the absence of a shared statutory responsibility for homelessness, agencies' individual agendas took priority. Examples included health authorities whose priorities lay in other areas than homelessness. For instance, one homelessness health worker summarised a case where she had devised a funding bid in order to establish a homelessness discharge coordinator post. Despite obtaining the support of the Drug Action Team, the Public Health Department and the Health Protection Agency, she ultimately failed to the funding due to a lack of support on the part of the local NHS trust which did not see homelessness as its priority. There were also different agendas and priorities intra-organisationally in some

cases. For instance, different local authority housing teams were characterised as working to their own agendas, even in spite of the fact that all teams were working under the same legislation.

The differing agendas of the various agencies stemmed from two main issues. The most commonly cited factor determining the strategic priorities of agencies was their funding. Interviewees commented that funding priorities determined their core business and that this was often not flexible enough to give agencies discretion to pick up on the wider issues associated with their core business. Additionally, when funding was cut, issues such as homelessness which were not core priorities for some agencies were usually the first to be sacrificed.

The second issue which influenced the agendas of agencies was the government targets they worked towards, a theme which is picked up in more detail in the section below. A number of interviewees mentioned this factor, suggesting that unless organisations had joint targets, it was unrealistic to expect them to work towards the same issues. An additional, although less widespread, explanation for differing agendas was that the strategic priorities of agencies varied according to the personal interests of senior staff.

Table 5.6 Lack of goal congruence; contrasting agendas and priorities

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Lack of goal congruence	
Dissimilarity of worldview/ philosophy, eg campaigning versus government targets remit	“Our agency’s priority is to meet government targets. Other agencies have a different agenda, like campaigning or proving where gaps in services are, or how rubbish the government are, and I think sometimes the clients can be pawns in that game. So yes, constantly sending clients up to the council might make a point about the inadequacies of the Housing Act or resources to house them, but for that individual who has their expectations raised and then crushed, it’s not good”. ID 16, LA2
Contrasting agendas & priorities	
Homelessness seen as a low priority by some agencies	“The money was literally sitting there waiting for us, I had been asked to submit a bid to this fund, had it all ready, sent it to the general discharge coordinator at the Hospital and they said ‘we don’t have a problem with homelessness, primary care do’. So that bid failed”. ID 41, LA3
Contrasting priorities stemming from funding arrangements	<p>“That has been one of the worst things to happen to local government... the devolved financial management. People get entrenched in their own budget and their own priorities become ultra-important. And to an extent that money is not flexible enough to go lateral with, and that’s what you’ll find a lot in these departments”. ID 26, LA3</p> <p>“There’s a silo mentality, they come together and talk about it but ultimately they’ve still got their silos with their money and they can only spend their money on their client group, but they can’t do joint budgets which is the thing that’s going to unlock it all”. ID 18, LA2</p>
Contrasting priorities a reflection of disparate government targets	<p>“One example is the PCTs and the Health authorities. If they don’t have any targets around alcohol treatment or prevention, then it’s not going to be a priority for them. You’ve always got to find the back door way of getting them to commit to something like saying ‘you’ve got a target to reduce heart disease, therefore if you prevent some of the alcohol problems you might prevent the heart disease’, I mean that is just so time consuming and so convoluted. If they simply had a target to say you must treat alcohol problems that would be so much more straightforward”. ID 29, LA2</p> <p>“Not having the same targets.. if you don’t have jointly owned targets the I think it’s very difficult to get people to work towards the same thing”. ID 8, LA2</p>

Many of the issues above provide support for a bureaucratic politics conception of inter-agency relationships. As discussed in chapter three, bureaucratic politics emphasises the different goals between agencies, as compared to the rational-administrative perspective which suggests unity of goals. The lack of goal congruence discussed above provides support for the former perspective. The metaphor invoked by one interviewee of a game between agencies where clients are pawns is also consistent with the bureaucratic politics

perspective which conceives of collaboration as a series of strategic moves between players. This perspective also suggests that agencies will strive to maintain their autonomy. This was notable in two respects in interviewees' accounts of the challenges of collaborating, firstly in relation to agencies' concern to protect their own client groups and client outcomes, and secondly in their lack of willingness to admit mistakes and share information in order to protect themselves against competitors vying for the same funding.

5.3.2 Contextual Factors

Turning next to contextual factors, it was noted in chapter one that certain intra- and inter-organisational features are amongst the antecedents to collaboration. These are the more 'objective' features that exist within an organisation's external or internal environment which may either impede or facilitate collaboration. When such factors are present, collaboration is more likely to ensue. While for both pragmatic and methodological reasons it is not possible to address all of the issues identified in previous literature, the framework outlined in chapter one nevertheless acts as a guide to help identify potential areas of importance in the current study. Using the interview data it is possible to reflect on the extent to which such factors appear to influence the ability and propensity of agencies to collaborate.

Intra-organisational factors

As outlined above, features of the internal organisational environment considered antecedents of collaboration include decentralization, a complex and wide ranging task environment, staff competence and training, the presence of sufficient organisational resources, an open and cosmopolitan organisational culture and certain leadership qualities. The major intra-organisational factors affecting collaboration as perceived by interviewees in the present study were, in order of importance, organisational structures and restructuring, time/ resource issues, and the level of commitment to collaboration by senior management or the extent of collaborative leadership (table 5.7).

Organisational structures and restructuring

With regards to organisational structure, internal restructuring was a major challenge to the development of collaborative working. For instance, in one area several interviewees described how the re-organisation of management tiers within the local authority had created collaborative inertia, since key posts leading on this agenda had been abolished, leaving a strategic vacuum. Furthermore, practitioners found it extremely difficult to establish and maintain relationships and contacts with individuals in organisations where job titles and personnel seemed to be constantly changing due to restructuring and high staff turnover. This highlights the importance of key individuals to the collaborative process, a theme which is discussed in more depth in chapter seven. Examples of organisations cited as being prone to re-structuring included mental health trusts, housing associations, primary care trusts, the Connexions service and local authorities.

Another theme relating to organisational structure concerned the issue of single versus two tier council structures. At the time of carrying out the interviews one of the case study authorities was awaiting the outcome of a bid for unitary council status⁶². The majority of those working in this two tier authority found the two tier system to be problematic. In particular, the difficulty of having Social Services and the Supporting People team in one authority (i.e. the County level authority) and the Housing Department in another (the District level authority) was highlighted.

Some interviewees commented on the practical challenges this posed such as being located in different buildings in different parts of the city (ID 9 below), which was considered an obstacle to communication, while others focused on local political tensions created (ID 16 below). In particular, the two tier system created tensions between District and County level due to the District Housing Authority having to 'compete' with other local housing authorities within the County for Social Services and Supporting People money. This had also caused resentment amongst the other District local authorities in the County because of a perception that the case study area, a City Council, obtained a larger share of the available money.

⁶² This was in the context of the recent Local Government Whitepaper (CLG 2006c) which invited interested local authorities to submit bids for unitary status.

Table 5.7 Contextual *intra*-organisational factors affecting collaboration

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Organisational structure/ restructuring	<p>“I don’t feel the two tier government situation actually helps us, because it’s quite difficult to have proper joined-up working between social services and housing, and Supporting People, when you’ve got Supporting People and Social Services in one local authority and Housing in another”. ID 9, LA2</p> <p>“I think one of the issues about joint working at the moment is the tension between those agencies which are part of the City Council and those which are County. There’s a feeling in the City that Supporting People should be putting more stuff into the City but of course we’re competing with the Districts that say we get everything”. ID 16, LA2</p>
Time and capacity issues	<p>“I have a lot of very broad responsibilities so probably don’t have as much time to get out & see other agencies as I’d like cause I have to run a large operational service as well. It’s just the time factor really. So more management time to devote to it would be one thing that would facilitate joint working”. ID 3, LA 3</p> <p>“Everybody has their own thing to do, so they don’t feel like they have the time to dedicate to this extra bit which is working with this other organisation”. ID 1, LA1</p> <p>“If you’re going to properly facilitate active valid and vibrant partnership working, you have to have adequate resources of staff time in particular”. ID 9, LA2</p>
Collaborative leadership	<p>“At a high level it’s been really good cause not only have senior people shown that they understand the other service but they’ve actually put things in place that seem to actually offer the other organisation some real options. It seems to show that there’s a commitment to joint working, ‘cause it’s actually put things in place to say this department will do this as part of its joint working arrangements with yours”. ID 5, LA1</p> <p>“A lot of the issues that you are talking about trying to overcome you would need Directors there at a senior level to say right, I’m gonna send down this mandate and this is how we are going to work”. ID 8, LA2</p> <p>“I went to this meeting and the director of the partnership trust said, ‘we’ve done a lot of research and it says people need to work in partnership’, and it’s just like.. you don’t say...really?. And then he’s off somewhere, off again... it’s like they live in a different world”. ID 16, LA 2</p>

Time and capacity issues

Second, time was a central concern. Interviewees suggested that collaboration with other agencies was something requiring time, but demands on services and workload pressures meant they had little spare time to devote to this. Indeed, there was a perception amongst several interviewees that collaboration was an ‘extra’ activity that staff had to undertake on top of their own jobs rather than a core part of their job.

Support for collaboration at higher organisational levels

Third, the level of commitment to collaboration by senior personnel was considered important. Interviewees considered it important that their strategic managers themselves adopted a collaborative approach, and that they support efforts amongst frontline staff to collaborate. In some cases senior managers had been supportive in this respect (ID 5 above). However, some interviewees were critical of senior managers who were perceived to be disconnected from the reality of partnership working at a frontline level (e.g. ID 16).

Inter-organisational factors

As discussed in chapter one, previous literature suggests that key inter-organisational factors impacting on collaboration are conflicting organisational structures, timetables, planning frameworks, funding regimes, IT systems, as well as the level of interdependence between agencies, the broader policy environment and the presence of boundary spanners. Some of these factors were pertinent in the study context, with the most salient themes relating to the broader and funding policy environment, the degree of interdependence between agencies and the presence of boundary spanners. The first of these themes was mainly an inhibitor of collaboration while the second and third were principally facilitators. Practical issues around clashing organisational structures and systems, particularly inflexible budgets and differing geographical boundaries, as well as distance from other agencies and size of network were mentioned by a smaller number of interviewees, but do not constitute core themes.

Table 5.8 Contextual *inter-organisational* factors affecting collaboration: broader policy & funding environment

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Competitive funding system – voluntary sector	<p>“There is in-fighting within the voluntary sector - a lot of it is funding related... they all seem to be putting in their own funding bids for everything, and not really communicating despite the fact that there is a forum there which is meant to make things more strategic. There is that issue of protectionism of their service & making sure that they are delivering a service, despite the fact that there might be another agency maybe better placed to do it.” ID 8, LA2</p> <p>“The political backdrop is important because you’re not going to want to share information and be as honest with other agencies if you deem them to be a threat” ID 19, LA2</p> <p>“They are that frightened of loosing 5 bob that people are like ‘no, we’re not doing that because they might take our results and our outcomes, and we’ve got to keep hold of them” ID 22, LA3</p>
Competitive funding system – related to changes to Supporting People rules	<p>“We’re beginning to see people saying ‘I’m not sharing that’, cause it’s all tendering & people competing for business. Now Supporting People have started to tender services I think people will be less willing to share their good practice” ID 4, LA3</p> <p>“I am worried that the new SP way they are commissioning things. Some of the competition is starting to feel people are a bit back-bitey and not going to share as much” ID 13, LA2</p>
Perceived power inequalities	<p>“They are the preferred provider so get the most funding. If you haven’t got the big structure, your policy department, your recruitment department, you don’t get the money. It’s the services nearer the ground like us that have the most impact in my opinion. And yet we don’t get the money because we haven’t got that underpinning”. ID 22, LA3</p>
Resource constraints	<p>“The eternal stumbling block is the lack of finance. That’s a real problem for homeless services, some charities are there today and gone tomorrow, or they are struggling”. ID 40, LA1</p> <p>“It’s also the financial limitations of the PCT about what they can afford. I think that means the PCT sometimes take a sticking plaster approach rather than dealing with the route causes. And the homeless client group is very needy and they don’t get treatment at the point of need”. ID 41, LA3</p>
Pressure to meet government targets	<p>“The government expects a lot of local authorities, but apart from the money that it gives us, it doesn’t give us much else other than heartache about meeting targets and additional responsibilities”. ID 10, LA2</p>
Parameters of government funding programmes	<p>“With joint working you’ll be sitting round a table with different agencies and we have this client and we want to enable them to do this, but because of the parameters of the funding for this group over here, or that group over here, it’s very difficult. I don’t know if it has to be so bureaucratic.” ID 13, LA2</p>

The broader policy and funding environment

The broader policy and funding environment was a major influence on collaboration in a number of ways. In many respects this wider environment impeded collaboration. Four aspects which inhibited collaboration included the competitive funding system, scarcity of resources, the pressures of government bureaucracy including targets, and the parameters of government funding. All this created a challenging backdrop within which local agencies were operating and meant that even where there was a desire to work collaboratively, this was often not possible.

The competitive funding environment was a very strong theme throughout the interviews, as also noted above in the discussion of externalities. There was a perception amongst interviewees from all sectors that competition, especially in the voluntary sector, was undermining efforts to collaborate. Interviewees characterised the voluntary sector as affected by 'in-fighting' (ID 8, LA2), with agencies unwilling to openly share information with their competitors (e.g. quote ID 19), or as one interviewee put it 'playing their cards close to their chest' (ID 12, LA3). The competitive edge of the voluntary sector was also manifested in agencies' lack of willingness to share successful outcomes (see quote ID 22 above).

Also illustrating the competitive nature of the sector, there were perceived power inequalities between smaller voluntary sector agencies and larger agencies that were more successful in obtaining funding. In some areas one or two very large homelessness organisations dominated the local arena and were regarded as being favoured by the local authority. In one area smaller agencies were resentful of one particular large and successful voluntary sector agency, and considered there to be a lack of transparency in the way funding was allocated by the local authority.

Changes to the way in which the Supporting People fund is delivered were underway during the period of the research, and there was evidence that these changes were further exacerbating the level of competition, including amongst accommodation providers such as Housing Associations and other Registered Social Landlords who are major beneficiaries of this fund. This fund was in the process of moving from a grant-based to a tender-based system, and several interviewees suggested this would result in greater tensions between agencies competing for this money, to a sector which was already characterised by rivalry between providers.

The resource constraints within which agencies were operating also created tensions between agencies. For instance, many agencies found it difficult to provide the level of service required within existing resources, causing frustration and resentment on the part of other agencies that were referring clients to these agencies. Examples included local authorities' lack of housing, the 'squeeze' on Supporting People budgets and social

services departments' budgetary constraints. Agencies referring to these services understood the resource constraints these services were under, but were nevertheless attempting to 'battle' with these agencies to obtain services for clients.

General resource constraints were reflected in the language of interviewees who commented that local authorities operated in a 'vice', that the 'screws' had been put on local authorities and that the system was 'on its knees'. Some interviewees noted how the efficiency drive in the context of the Gershon Review⁶³ meant that public organisations had to maintain and improve services with less funding. Others commented that voluntary sector were 'scrapping around' for money, and that there were 'diminishing pots of money'. They described the unstable and short term nature of voluntary sector funding, which meant that some charities were 'there today and gone tomorrow' (ID 40, LA1). These resource constraints meant that joint working was 'the last thing people thought about', according to one interviewee (ID 13, LA2). For organisations such as primary care trusts and social services departments operating under severe financial constraints, wider issues such as homelessness which were not their core priorities often suffered.

Pressure to meet government targets and fulfil bureaucratic reporting requirements were additional background factors which preoccupied agencies. While interviewees understood why monitoring and targets were important, these demands frustrated their attempts to work laterally or flexibly across organisations. Targets meant that statutory services devoted their time to fulfilling these at the expense of pursuing wider issues, often the cross-cutting issues which were relevant to several agencies but were of lower priority. Similarly, bureaucracy and paperwork was frequently seen as leaving little time or opportunity to pursue the more creative cross-cutting work. The parameters of government funding and the rules of particular programmes regarding how money was spent also impeded the development of collaborative multi-agency approaches (see quote ID23 above).

Despite these wider policy and funding issues impeding collaboration, certain government agendas were recognised as having contributed to greater collaboration. One example concerned a resettlement policy introduced by the National Offender Management Service which had 'forced' the prison & probation services to 'talk to other agencies' (ID1, LA1). Another concerned the 'Options agenda' introduced into housing and homelessness services, which one interviewee suggested was 'what has brought us all together' (ID7, LA1).

⁶³ The Gershon Review was an independent review of public sector efficiency in the UK published in 2004, aiming to provide advice on making efficiency savings in order to release funds for frontline services. The government response to the review was to initiate measures to produce annual efficiency savings of 2.5% for every government department.

These issues relating to the broader policy environment serve to underscore the important role of government in terms of creating a framework which enables local agencies to collaborate. Interviewees' views of the level of coordination and coherence at the level of central government are examined in more detail in chapter six.

The degree of interdependence

The degree of interdependence between agencies was the second major contextual inter-organisational factor affecting collaboration. Interviewees indicated that dependence on other agencies was a major motivating factor or antecedent of collaboration. The main reasons for agencies' interdependence were the need to pull in the skill sets of staff from other organisations, to gain client referrals, and to draw on other organisations' resources (table 5.9). Resources included human resource input from other agencies, as well as housing. Several interviewees commented that individuals were more likely to collaborate when they could see the personal or organisational benefits of doing so. Such comments provide evidence of instrumental motivations for collaborating.

Table 5.9 Contextual inter-organisational factors affecting collaboration: level of interdependence

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Need to draw in other agencies' resources e.g. human resources/ housing	<p>“Partnership working is a big feature of our work. We offer over 70 hours of activities, and that’s through a lot of working with our volunteers and tutors. We can’t do that on our own, we are a small team of three people, we rely heavily on partnerships”. ID17, LA2</p> <p>“Every local authority department would say they value joint working approaches to dealing with problems, like involving the voluntary sector. They welcome anyone assisting which is going to reduce pressure on their own services”. ID24, LA1</p> <p>“The council have been very helpful, I think partly because we’ve lifted the burden from them”. ID11, LA2</p> <p>“In terms of the joint working, as much as I think that a lot of the agencies would still like to see local authorities providing council housing & offering temporary accommodation, I think they are aware of the crisis in council housing being made available, and that has made us have to work more closely together”. ID7, LA1</p>
Dependence on skills of other professionals	<p>“I think partnership working is driven by need simply because prisons are unable to fund or find the skills they need to work with the current support needs of offenders from within their own ranks”. ID32, LA2</p>
Need to gain client referrals	<p>“If we didn’t work with other agencies then no one would be referring to us. Because of the way the funding works we have to sustain high occupancy levels, and because of the network we’ve got, we are able to. So it’s necessary for our organisation to network”. ID12, LA3</p>

The presence of boundary spanners and other individual level factors

Third, interviewees’ comments (see table 5.10) provide support for previous work which argues that collaboration is to a significant degree influenced by the contribution of individuals with relevant skills and abilities, sometimes referred to as boundary spanners (Williams 2002). Numerous references were made to the importance of personality traits and it was clear that in many cases certain key individuals had contributed significantly to building and maintaining collaborative relationships. Such people had helped to build bridges and ease tensions, and had ‘orchestrated’ joint working arrangements. They were described as being assertive, proactive, persistent, creative, able to cut red tape, and willing to take risks. Other personal qualities included a willingness to engage, to put in effort, time and energy, and being committed to meeting the needs of clients. Interviewees also stressed the importance of individuals ‘getting on’, on a personal level.

The perceived credibility of the people skilled at collaborating stemmed in part from their ability to understand the roles and priorities of other agencies. Previous

experience working in other agencies was considered beneficial in this respect, with many of those singled out for praise having worked in other local organisations involved with homelessness. Having a relevant professional background was also thought to enhance individuals' ability to understand other agencies' perspectives. Some housing workers suggested that collaboration over homelessness issues with agencies in the wider network would only succeed if homelessness was a personal priority for those working in those other organisations. Professional background was felt to be one of the factors influencing the prioritization or otherwise of issues such as homelessness.

Interviewees commented that in the sector in which they worked there was significant movement of staff between agencies as funding for jobs ceased and as new jobs came up in other local agencies. This helped increase understanding between agencies and individuals often retained links with ex-colleagues which facilitated collaboration. However, negative aspects were that the sector could become 'cliquey', and one interviewee commented that it could be difficult for new staff to penetrate the existing network of contacts.

Table 5.10 Boundary spanners and other individual level factors

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Professional background	<p>“We’ve got a really good worker whose got a history of working in drugs services, she’s also got also worked at the prison for quite a while, so she’s well-versed in both criminal justice & drug & alcohol issues”. ID5, LA1</p>
Previous experience in other local agencies: positive and negative aspects	<p>“People who work in housing or support needs with this sort of client group tend to pop around between the jobs when they become available, so everyone’s got a bit of experience here and there so they kind of understand the needs” ID14, LA2</p> <p>“There is lots of movement of staff between agencies. The homeless sector here is quite cliquey – there are advantages to that but also disadvantages. Advantages in that people know about other agencies but negative in that it’s all about who you know and if you are new to the area you don’t know where to start”. ID11, LA2.</p>
Proactive/ Assertive approach	<p>“It’s my personality I think. I try to cut every red tape if I can. If someone tries to fob me off with an email or says they haven’t time I’ll ring that person and say ‘why can’t you talk to me?’ You’ve got to be assertive”. ID40, LA1</p> <p>“To be honest it’s probably down to my personality to have the cheek to ask. Some of it is networking, bumping into people. And having the gall to go up and ask somebody”. ID17, LA2</p>
Dedication, commitment, willingness to take risks	<p>“They are willing to take risks as well as us. Both managers are willing to bend over backwards to make this work”. ID17, LA2.</p>
Importance of personal relationships	<p>“It’s very personality dependent. If the managers get on and like each other then they’re in each other’s pockets, if they don’t then they’re at each other’s throats”. ID19, LA2.</p>

Chapter summary and discussion

The aim at the outset of this chapter was to assess, from the perspective of street level bureaucrats, the perceived rationale for collaboration and the key factors affecting this, including challenges and enablers. Overall, street level bureaucrats working with the homeless were committed to the *idea* of collaboration, considering this essential for meeting the needs of service users. They were generally of the view that homelessness was bound up with many other issues, and regarded their respective agencies as incapable of dealing with this multitude of issues alone, viewing themselves as interdependent in this respect. Altruistic considerations appeared to play a part in motivating collaboration, however, some of the main drivers were more instrumental in nature, relating to the need to lever in resources from other agencies including human resources in the form of relevant skills, accommodation and client referrals.

Street level bureaucrats cited a number of key externalities resulting from the fragmented network of agencies, such as gaps in services and a lack of accountability for providing services to clients with multiple needs who did not fit within any dominant service. They suggested that from a client's perspective services could seem inaccessible and confusing, and there was a perception that agencies did not always share information and duplicated at least some aspects of one other's work, particularly in relation to the collection of client data. In some cases these issues were cited as reasons for pursuing a collaborative approach, although it was not clear whether these considerations had actually stimulated collaborative working. Some externalities stemmed from the broader environment and were therefore outside of the control of local agencies, although could be ameliorated through greater policy coherence and collaborative working at the level of central government departments.

In spite of interviewees' broad support for the idea of collaboration, there were numerous obstacles to inter-agency working, both interpretive and contextual. Many of these factors, especially the interpretive factors, resonate fairly strongly with the bureaucratic politics perspective. This perspective stresses the differing priorities of agencies, and suggests that agencies will seek to pursue their own interests in the absence of a common dominant interest. The discussion above suggests that agencies involved in the homelessness network have differing priorities and agendas and that these differences do impede collaboration. These agendas and priorities are in many cases a reflection of the priorities of agencies' funding bodies or their parent government departments, channelled down to the local level. The lack of a shared legal responsibility among

statutory agencies for homelessness suggests that it is a greater priority for some agencies and some parts of the local authority than for others.

The bureaucratic politics perspective also views governmental actors as competing factions, engaged in processes of bargaining, exchange and compromise. Certainly the environment of voluntary sector agencies and housing providers appears to be a competitive one, with agencies actively competing for funding and services. It was clear that agencies employed strategies such as withholding information from other agencies and behaving possessively over their successful outcomes and even their clients, in order to protect their own positions.

Bureaucratic politics also draws attention to the unequal terrain in which governmental actions are pursued, with some factions endowed with greater power and resources than others, and the outcomes of negotiations favouring those with greatest bargaining power. Power inequalities in the case study areas were manifested in several different relationships. First, there were perceived inequalities between smaller and larger voluntary sector agencies, with interviewees from smaller organisations suggesting that larger agencies usually benefited from any new sources of government or local authority money, indicating that in this case the outcomes favoured these larger more powerful agencies. Second, inequalities were a feature of relationships between different district local authorities in a single county which were competing for shares of the county council budget. In this context the city authority was the largest player and there was a perception amongst the other district authorities that the city authority was the ‘winner’ in resource allocations from the County Council. Third, the local authority itself was a powerful player with greater bargaining power in comparison to the other agencies in the homelessness network. While the local authority itself was dependent on other agencies to provide services, the relationship was asymmetrical, with agencies depending heavily on the local authority for funding.

Interviewees’ testimonies do, however, draw attention to ways in which some of the obstacles to collaboration associated with bureaucratic politics can be ameliorated. The role of senior staff in determining organisational priorities and supporting collaborative endeavours, as well as the persistence of key individuals with collaborative capacities appear to facilitate collaboration. Furthermore the inherent interdependencies between agencies do sometimes compel agencies to collaborate in order to achieve their aims.

On the basis of the evidence presented thus far, decisions around collaborating appear to be more complex than rationalistic explanations of decision-making would suggest. While collaboration can be viewed as a ‘rational’ response to agencies’ desire to

pull in resources and to deal with homelessness holistically, decisions on whether and how much to collaborate are governed by a broader range of factors. The range of options open to agencies is constrained by the policy context and funding environment, and by time and cost considerations, indicating bounded rationality at best. Furthermore, decisions take place in an environment which is characterised by some of the features described in the bureaucratic politics perspective. The next chapter examines similar issues at the level of *central* government.

Chapter 6: The Meta-Governance of Collaboration:

Steering from the top-down?

Chapter Overview

The previous chapter began to explore what motivates actors in homelessness agencies to collaborate. The motivations discussed were predominantly bottom-up, both altruistic and instrumental. As discussed in chapter one, a further potential motivation for collaborating is government edict or incentive, a ‘top-down’ driver. It was suggested in chapter four that the field of homelessness is one where the UK government has promoted a collaborative approach to local service provision. The aim of the present chapter is to characterise the nature of governmental steering of local collaboration in relation to homelessness.

This chapter first assesses, from the perspective of central and street level bureaucrats, the degree of importance attached to local collaboration by *central government*. It is asked whether collaboration appears to be a government policy priority (section 6.1). The second section of the chapter (6.2) describes the vertical tools used by government to encourage local inter-agency collaboration, that is, the tools of ‘meta-governance’, using a combination of documentary and interview evidence. The third section (6.3) discusses the level and forms of collaboration at the level of central government, as well as the nature of links between government departments and national bodies, again drawing on perspectives from both central and street level and documentary evidence. It also examines the challenges of collaboration at the central level. Collaboration in central government can itself be considered a form of vertical steering. As illustrated in chapter five, the priorities of central government departments set the framework within which local public sector agencies operate, and consequently the extent to which central policies are coordinated or joined up has implications for the ability of local agencies to work collaboratively.

6.1 Local collaboration as a government priority

Both central and local bureaucrats were asked whether they viewed local multi-agency collaboration as a government priority, and as something government was generally trying to promote in its approach to homelessness (see interview schedules, Appendices F and G). The majority of street level interviewees were of the view that this was a government priority, with several suggesting that collaborative, multi-agency approaches to homelessness were firmly on the government's agenda (see table 6.1). This view was expressed by local authority housing department staff in particular, who felt that the Department for Communities and Local Government was prioritising this. Those working in other statutory agencies including the probation service, the prison service and the health service also perceived there to be pressure from their own parent government departments to work collaboratively with other agencies on a range of issues. In the criminal justice sector there appeared to be particular emphasis on accommodation issues for offenders and ex-offenders. The majority of voluntary sector interviewees also viewed collaboration as a priority at national level, although were less aware of specific government priorities on homelessness. Their awareness of collaboration as an agenda more generally was generated principally through funding streams promoting this.

Interviewees cited various examples of how collaboration was being promoted, including through funding which was increasingly tied to multi-agency working, through monitoring visits to local authorities and through greater emphasis on involving the voluntary sector. Several interviewees also mentioned the move towards Local Area Agreements as examples of government's support for partnership and collaborative approaches more generally.

However, a small minority of interviewees from the voluntary and RSL sector were unsure about how much of a government priority this was. In addition, some local authority interviewees felt that inter-agency collaboration was fading as a priority or was lower priority than other issues such as performance targets. Some suggested that sub-regional collaboration and community involvement were issues with greater political currency, with notions of partnership working beginning to extend beyond inter-agency collaboration towards community collaboration.

Table 6.1 Street level bureaucrats' views of central government prioritisation of local collaboration

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
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<p>Local collaboration firmly on government agenda</p>	<p>‘The impression I get from all the White Papers is there’s a very clear agenda. The latest White Paper is promoting that one stage further still, not just local government, housing, social services working in partnership with voluntary agencies, but now also other agencies like the Police, Health, drawing those into the partnership working, so the idea is joined up communities, getting the Community involved in running their Estates. That kind of thing is a stage further in actually bringing the community itself back into the partnership.’ ID 9, LA 2</p> <p>‘Yes, I get that impression. Not as much as with social & health care I don’t think. Cause it’s come on later, but yeah, I certainly get the impression that joint working is... through the strategy and everything, that’s what they want to see’ ID 3, LA3</p>
<p>Collaboration promoted through funding streams</p>	<p>‘Yes, it’s on the agenda, if you look at any government funding it specifies voluntary sector involvement’. ID 41, LA3</p> <p>‘I think so, simply because all their funding is coming through that way’. ID 21, LA3</p>
<p>Collaboration promoted through visits to local authorities and monitoring</p>	<p>‘I think the stuff that comes out from CLG on homelessness makes it very clear that you have to work with agencies, and the way in which they monitor our performance and come down here and say what are you doing on this and that, is always encouraging working with agencies’ ID 1, LA 1.</p> <p>‘Sometimes when people come down from CLG to the council review days, they certainly say that they promote that kind of stuff’ ID 23, LA 3.</p>
<p>Government priorities lie elsewhere, e.g. sub-regional working; performance targets</p>	<p>‘I think they’re going even further than that, the government’s priority is at the moment is sub-regional working. Partnership working doesn’t appear to me as a priority, because there’s not been any impetus on trying to make people do it. Their focus at the moment is targets, measurable outcomes. They are trying to push people towards it, but there’s no requirement to do it. So it doesn’t come across as a priority’ ID 8, LA 2.</p> <p>‘Yeah, it’s slightly faded but it’s still one of the buzzwords. Not as much as Community engagement. That’s certainly flavour of the month. Even then you do community engagement on a multi-agency partnership basis. So yeah, it’s still there.’ ID 29, LA 2.</p>

Central bureaucrats themselves viewed collaboration as something that was being promoted by government (table 6.2). One of the principal means of doing this was by emphasising this in their guidance to local authorities, although one civil servant noted that their department would fall short of specifying to local authorities who their partner agencies should be, suggesting that this was up to local authorities to decide.

In relation to rough sleeping and single homelessness, one CLG civil servant indicated that there was a strong push in this direction and suggested that these particular

manifestations of homelessness were multi-faceted and required a multi-agency approach, betraying a rationalistic motivation for encouraging collaboration. Similarly, a civil servant from the Department of Health noted that this department recognised the interface between health and other aspects of people's lives such as their housing, social support networks and employment status. In recognition that health services could not address these wider issues alone, the department had begun to work with other government departments. It also encouraged local agencies such as health and housing services to work together, and had introduced a joint commissioning framework to facilitate this.

One interviewee noted that in return for the funding provided to national voluntary sector organisations such as Shelter and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, they would expect to see the local arms of these agencies assisting local authorities in terms of homelessness prevention and supporting them in the development of their local homelessness strategies. In addition to multi-agency working, civil servants suggested that sub-regional working between local authorities was being promoted.

Table 6.2 Central bureaucrats' views of level of priority attached to local collaboration by central government

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Central government prioritisation of local collaboration</p>	<p>‘We want agencies to work together in the delivery of our homelessness strategy in the local authority areas... the LA are unlikely to deliver everything they need if they don’t work together’. ID 36, CLG</p> <p>‘Obviously Supporting People has a huge role in terms of the prevention of homelessness and avoiding crisis, so those links, we would expect them to be made at a local level’. ID 34, CLG.</p>
<p>Rationalistic motivations for encouraging local collaboration</p>	<p>‘In order to crack rough sleeping you have to have a joint working approach, including the voluntary sector who provide the services for people on the street, like outreach teams... it won’t just work with the Local Authority. Police, because there’s a big crime issue, and you also need links into Health Services to address drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues, so rough sleeping tends to bring together, it’s the only way it’s going to work, cause you’re not only getting people off the street, you’ve gotta get them to address their problems, and once that’s happened onto some form of employment or training, so Local Authorities in the lead, working with the voluntary sector and with other agencies...it wouldn’t work without a multi-agency approach’. ID 36, CLG</p> <p>‘The joint commissioning framework and health inequalities – that’s really the way DH is moving, there is a recognition that if you haven’t got somewhere decent to live, a job, or social networks, then you’re not likely to be very well. So actually providing work or meaningful activity and somewhere decent to live, the health service can’t provide those, so it has to work together with other departments... Joint commissioning is about signing up to the same kind of document and suggestions that local areas on the ground should work together’. ID 34, Department of Health</p>
<p>Prioritisation of sub-regional collaboration</p>	<p>‘We are encouraging wider working on a sub-regional basis. We’re keen to get the smaller boroughs to work together on their homelessness strategy. Our homelessness prevention best practice guides encourage smaller areas to work together and consider commissioning things like mediation and rent deposit schemes that go wider than just boroughs, to use economies of scale. In London we have been funding posts so that authorities work together sub-regionally on homelessness issues’. ID 36, CLG</p>

In summary, there appears to be agreement between central and local bureaucrats that collaboration is a policy priority for central government. The above section highlights some of the ways in which this priority is manifested, for example through funding streams, government guidance and cross-cutting policy agendas in government departments. Comments from civil servants suggest that civil servants in government

departments hold fairly rationalistic motivations for encouraging local agencies to collaborate, believing that this is the best way to tackle homelessness and the wider issues with which it is associated⁶⁴. The next section provides a more systematic analysis of the particular ways in which government has promoted collaboration in the homelessness sector in recent years, drawing on documentary evidence such as government reports, official guidance and legislation, as well as on interview data.

6.2 Classification of vertical meta-governance tools to stimulate local collaboration

As discussed in chapter two, the stimulation by central government of local collaboration falls within the realm of ‘meta-policy’, concerned with the systems and structures within which substantive policy outputs occur. Governments seeking to induce collaboration in local actors can do so using a variety of coordination tools, that is, tools of ‘meta-governance’. Broadly these fit into the categories of authoritative, information-based and incentive-based tools. Each of these categories can also be considered a type of governance strategy. Table 6.3 summarises the main types of governance strategy and the associated meta-governance tools discussed in chapter two.

⁶⁴ Although this analysis of civil servants is based on a small number of interviews, this point is backed up by government guidance which has a strong rationalistic orientation.

Table 6.3 Governance strategies and tools for promoting collaboration

Governance strategy	Tools of meta-governance	Examples
Authority-based	Mandatory collaboration via legislation	Bi-lateral government; Relational contracting; Covenants
	Network constitution/ Process management	Creation of multi-agency bodies/ new organisational arrangements
	Monitoring/ Regulation	Inspections/ audit/ field visits/ analysis of local plans; Joint inspections; Shared targets
Information-based	Exhortation/ Suasion (effector tools)	Written guidance esp. jointly produced; Rhetoric of collaboration within government policy literature; Inter-personal information provision e.g. events, conferences or informally
	Various detector tools	Collection of good practice on collaboration
Incentive-based	Treasure	Funding streams to reward collaboration
	Capacity building measures	Additional personnel to reward/ facilitate collaboration; Funding to defray costs of collaboration; Technical assistance

It was also suggested in chapter two that the implementation of collaboration is likely to require a mix of coordination tools (Lynn 1996; De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhoff 1997). However, as discussed by Alexander (1995), there is little research investigating the appropriateness of different tools mixes for governments wishing to influence inter-organisational relationships. The next subsection of the chapter identifies the range of coordination tools that are used in the English homelessness sector, using the above framework to guide the analysis.

6.2.1 Authority-based tools

Mandatory collaboration

There is some use of mandatory collaboration in the form of legislation in the sector. These laws specify particular points within the system where particular agencies are required to cooperate, thus corresponding to the concept of ‘bi-lateral government’ in which laws are introduced to control the interactions of pairs of organisations (Alexander 1995). In terms of mode of vertical coordination, laws are ‘impersonal’ and formal, since they are codified in writing. Table 6.4 below outlines various pieces of housing, health and social services legislation with collaborative implications for local service providers in relation to homelessness. The table provides a full range of examples beyond single homelessness in order to illustrate the general approach used in the sector.

As illustrated, there is a legal requirement under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 for social services departments to inform housing authorities when client community care assessments reveal issues of housing vulnerability. On the other hand, under the Housing Act 1996, housing authorities must inform social services departments where families with children do not qualify for statutory homelessness assistance⁶⁵. Similarly, the NHS and Community Care Act stipulates that when people are found to be vulnerable and homeless under statutory definitions, housing authorities should also consider their eligibility for social care services. There is also a requirement under the Housing Act 1996 for Registered Social Landlords and Housing Action Trusts to provide ‘reasonable assistance’ to Local Housing Authorities where requested to enable them to meet their statutory homelessness duties. In practice this involves making available a reasonable proportion of their accommodation to homeless households as requested by the local authority. Under the same Act, Local Housing Authorities must also cooperate in providing assistance to other Local Housing Authorities when requested. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires Social Services Departments to provide ‘all reasonable assistance’ in helping the Housing Authority to produce its compulsory five-yearly Homelessness Strategy

Although the list of powers and duties relating to collaboration appears to be fairly extensive, it can be seen that the tenor of these legislative requirements is advisory rather than prescriptive. Injunctions about ‘reasonable cooperation’, ‘expectations to engage with other agencies’ and ‘consideration of joint action’ are fairly ambiguous and open to interpretation by the authorities concerned. This is likely to have implications for

⁶⁵ For example because of being deemed ‘intentionally homeless’

enforcing the legislation since clear evidence of failure to cooperate may be difficult to detect, highlighting one potential difficulty of monitoring and mandating collaboration from the top-down.

Table 6.4 Legislation with collaborative implications relevant to homelessness sector

Legislation	Relevant section(s)	Nature of duty/ power
Housing Act 1996	213, 213a, 170	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Reasonable cooperation’ from housing and social services authorities and relevant housing bodies (registered social landlords and housing action trusts in England and Wales) in relation to housing duties and inquiries when requested. • ‘Reasonable cooperation’ from RSLs to accommodate priority applications under LA’s allocations policy. • Notification by housing authorities to social services authorities where families with children are ineligible for homelessness assistance.
Homelessness Act 2002	1, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of how joint action between local homelessness bodies could help achieve objectives of local homelessness strategy. • Expectation that relevant homelessness bodies* will engage in creating and updating the local authority homelessness strategy. Legal duty for Social Services to cooperate in this process. • Consideration of cross-boundary partnerships with other local authorities and local strategic partnerships.
Local Govt. Act 2000	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community wellbeing power provides scope for cross boundary partnership working between local authorities.
Children Act 1989	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty for statutory authorities to provide help provide services as requested by local authorities in relation to children and young people homeless or threatened with homelessness. Emphasis on joint agreements between relevant departments for assessing clients, & coordinated strategic planning/ service provision. • Cooperation from the housing authority when requested by social services authority in accommodating young care leavers and 16 & 17 year olds. Emphasis on jointly agreed protocols between housing and social services authorities.
NHS and Community Care Act 1990	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social services assessment of those with community care needs must include assessment of housing need. Housing authority to be notified when housing need is identified. • Use of established eligibility framework in assessing eligibility for social services for vulnerable homeless people.
Health Act 1999	27, 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty for NHS bodies & local authorities to cooperate in exercising their respective functions to secure health and welfare outcomes. • Power to set up pooled budgets, lead commissioning and integrated provision between Health Authority and any other related authority, including the housing authority.

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2006

* Bodies specified include social services departments, primary care trusts, the national offender management service, the police, voluntary and community sector organisations, registered social landlords and private landlords.

Network constitution

At least two forms of authoritative network constitution have been used in the context of English homelessness services. Network constitution, as noted by Klijn and Koppenjan (2000), are tools of ‘process management’ aiming to improve interactions between actors. Creating or merging agencies, tampering with organisational boundaries, or establishing new organisational structures are common forms of network constitution. In the present context, the requirement to produce a multi-agency homelessness strategy (see table 6.4 above) in most authorities has necessitated the creation of a multi-agency homelessness group responsible for writing the strategy and overseeing its implementation. This group provides a forum for managing interactions and relationships between organisations.

Supporting People Commissioning Bodies are a second form of network constitution. As discussed in chapter four, these are compulsory multi-agency bodies in every Supporting People administering authority, in which the Local Authority, the Probation Service and the Primary Care Trust are required to participate. Each agency has a vote on service commissioning decisions related to housing related support, including homelessness. This multi-agency body is a reflection of the broad aims of the programme to assist the transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment such as prisons or hospitals, and to prevent homelessness. Both Supporting People Commissioning Bodies and Homelessness Strategy groups are examples of group coordination modes mandated by government, involving face-to-face communication in which several actors to come together simultaneously to devise coordinated responses to homelessness in local areas.

Monitoring and Regulation

Other authoritative tools include several varieties of monitoring and regulation. Regulation of collaboration takes place through inspections of Local Housing Authorities carried out by the Audit Commission’s Housing inspectorate, a form of personal vertical coordination. Two of the ‘Key Lines of Enquiry’ used in these inspections are intended to measure aspects of collaboration⁶⁶. The Audit Commission has produced a number of reports which highlight strengths and weaknesses in joint working arrangements between

⁶⁶ KLOE 7: ‘Allocations and lettings’: assessment of arrangements of working with partners to ensure an appropriate level of allocations/ nominations go to homeless households, including formal nominations agreements with partners, which are to be regularly monitored.

KLOE 8: ‘Homelessness and housing needs’: Assessment of involvement of relevant partners with homelessness review and strategy; assessment of partnership working with other teams to secure funding from cross-cutting sources to prevent homelessness; assessment of protocols with partner agencies for certain vulnerable groups.

local authorities and their relevant partner agencies with a role in the wider issues associated with homelessness. Research has been undertaken by CLG to monitor the implementation of homelessness strategies, including assessment of the extent of involvement of relevant partners in contributing to the strategies and the development of multi-agency working more generally (ODPM 2004b). Issues around partnership working in homelessness services have also been assessed within House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts and Public Administration Select Committee processes.

Another form of monitoring, although a more indirect and impersonal variety, is the use of a self-assessment toolkit for local authorities to assess their own progress on tackling homelessness. This toolkit incorporates assessment of inter-agency working (CLG 2006b). The tool encourages authorities to assess their progress against the development of a range of collaboration mechanisms and processes such as joint protocols, information sharing procedures, multi-agency forums and sub-regional working. Authorities are encouraged to send this information to CLG, although this is not compulsory.

Finally, as noted in chapter four, CLG monitors housing authorities' homelessness performance using a combination of indicators and targets, another impersonal coordination mode. Although this performance information does not directly measure inter-agency collaboration, central bureaucrats interviewed for the purposes of this research expressed the view that local authorities' ability to meet these government targets was dependent upon them working in partnership with other relevant bodies.

6.2.2 Information-based tools

Effector Tools: Exhortation and Guidance

Information or communication-based strategies to encourage collaboration include tools aimed at imparting advice and information to local agencies as well as those aimed at gathering information, that is, government as both effector and detector (Hood 1983). Information *effecting* tools range from simple exhortation to detailed guidance. Exhortations for local agencies to collaborate are pervasive in central policy documents. For instance, collaboration is a strong theme in the government's national strategy for homelessness (ODPM 2005b). The following extract from the national strategy is illustrative. One of the core strands of the strategy is stated as:

‘to encourage and support stronger partnerships between local authorities, housing associations, private landlords and other statutory and voluntary sector agencies – so that they act in concert to help people avoid homelessness and provide solutions to homelessness’ (ODPM 2005b, p. 14).

The strategy states that collaboration is central to delivering on government's priority areas for homelessness, such as reducing rough sleeping and the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation. As noted above, interviews with central policy makers confirmed that the official view was that the government's priorities for homelessness could only be achieved by local agencies working in partnership. Government extolling the virtues of partnership working in a general sense can be seen as a ‘cultural-persuasive’ implementation tool in which government uses its moral authority to promote the virtues of partnership approaches (Stoker 2000).

Detailed guidance on collaboration is provided nationally through the Homelessness Code of Guidance (ODPM 2002a; CLG 2006a). It contains an entire chapter devoted to ‘working with others’ which provides guidance to housing authorities on working in partnership with other agencies, including forms of collaboration and lists of agencies relevant to the prevention of homelessness. The forms of collaboration recommended in the Code of Guidance are listed in table 6.5. The Code of Guidance also clarifies the legislative requirements for collaboration as discussed above.

Table 6.5 Horizontal coordination tools suggested in central guidance

-
- Establishment of multi-agency forum to share information, ideas etc
 - Making clear links between homelessness strategy and other key strategies
 - Joint protocols for referring clients between services and sharing information
 - Establishment of formal links between organisations
 - Joint planning and commissioning of services
 - Funding of joint posts
 - Joint training
 - Senior housing representation on key corporate groups
 - Common assessment procedures
 - Client confidentiality protocols
 - Visits between agencies
 - Joint case conferences
 - Easily updated guide on the work of different agencies
 - Exchange of information between agencies about services provided, how they can be accessed and what an agency cannot do
 - Increased liaison through contacts between staff at both frontline and management levels
 - Sharing information and joint research on local needs
 - Joint initiatives and development plans
 - An agreed officer or agency to facilitate and drive the process of joint work
-

Sources: ODPM 2002a; CLG 2006a

This official guidance is supplemented by additional best practice guides on collaboration in homelessness. Guidance has been produced on collaboration for Housing Associations and Local Authorities (ODPM 2003; 2004a), Primary Care Trusts, Hospitals with Housing Authorities (ODPM 2004c; 2005c) and Drug Action Teams, Local Authorities and Voluntary Sector homelessness agencies (ODPM 2002b). Much of this particular guidance is issued jointly by CLG (previously ODPM) in cooperation with other government departments and national bodies as appropriate, such as the Department of Health, Home Office, National Treatment Agency and Housing Corporation. In addition, a ‘joint commissioning framework’ aimed at housing, health, and social services authorities, has been produced by CLG (2007). This framework aims to encourage joint planning and joint commissioning between health providers and local authorities to ensure that the health needs of homeless people and those in temporary accommodation are met. Table 6.6 summarises the advice contained within central guidance on issues over which collaboration is advised, including the key partners with whom local housing authorities are expected to work.

Table 6.6 Specific issues requiring collaboration highlighted in official guidance and recommended partner agencies

Relevant Partners	Client group	Purpose of collaboration
Prisons, Youth Offending Teams, National Offender Management Service, Probation Service, Housing Advice Projects	Ex-offenders, Offenders, Users of Criminal Justice System	- To prevent homelessness and re-offending
Police, Voluntary Sector Organisations	Rough Sleepers, People at Risk of Homelessness	- To tackle issues associated with homelessness eg anti-social behaviour, begging, street drinking, drug misuse
Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)	All homeless groups	- Improve access to mainstream health services and health outcomes for homeless people
Hospital-based social workers (Social Services, NHS Trusts)	Homeless patients	- Accommodation assessment/ plan prior to discharge to avoid homelessness
Drug Action Teams (DATs)	Homeless Drug Users	- Meeting accommodation of homeless drug users - Improving access to drug treatment for homeless people - Assure DAT Treatment Plans in line with homelessness strategies
GPs, Community Mental Health Teams, Hospitals, Mental Health Crisis Teams, A&E Wards, Supported Accommodation Providers	Homeless People with Mental Health Problems	- Accessing Mental Health Services - Preventing homelessness in discharged patients through early identification of housing needs
Private sector landlords	All prospective and existing private sector tenants	- Increase access to private rented sector - Prevent evictions
Housing associations	All prospective and existing housing association tenants	- Improve allocations & make temporary accommodation available for homeless people - Prevent evictions
Ministry of Defense (MOD) Resettlement Services, Joint Service Housing Advice Office	Armed Services Personnel	- Prevention of homelessness amongst ex-services personnel
Various Statutory Agencies, Voluntary Agencies and Accommodation providers	All homeless or potentially homeless people	- Create local homelessness strategy

Sources: ODPM 2002a; 2002c; 2003a; 2004a; 2004b; CLG 2006a; 2007

Detector/ Effector tools

Information-based tools which can be considered both effectors include the identification of examples of good practice through schemes such as the ‘Regional Champions’ programme⁶⁷. One of the aims of the scheme is to select local authorities which have demonstrated excellence in preventing and tackling homelessness (detecting). These authorities subsequently provide support to other local authorities in their region (effecting). This support takes the form of peer assessment, advice and sharing of best practice and information across local authorities. This vertical coordination measure is therefore an attempt to enhance collaboration across local authorities.

An additional example is the use of field visits to local housing authorities from CLG civil servants. These are conducted predominantly in local authorities with either particularly high or particularly low performance. In the former case visits are used to identify areas of good practice which may serve as potential models to be applied elsewhere, while in the latter case civil servants provide advice to authorities to enable them to improve services. Interviewees suggested that such visits were widely used in the homelessness sector and that direct contact between CLG central civil servants and local authorities was fairly high. Interviewees also commented that collaborative arrangements were a core topic discussed during these visits. Similarly, CLG runs regular ‘Roadshows’ which serve as information gathering and imparting tools. These events take place regularly throughout the country and are used by CLG to promote its homelessness agenda in local areas.

6.2.3 Incentive-based tools

Governmental promotion of collaboration amongst local homelessness services also makes some use of incentive-based instruments, particularly through funding streams which reward collaboration. The Supporting People programme discussed above is a potential incentive for collaboration by encouraging submission of joint or multi-agency bids. The use of joint commissioning bodies with probation, health service and local authority membership is also a means of ensuring that those services which are funded take account of the different agendas of these agencies and the needs of their respective client groups, thus channelling funding towards projects which take a holistic, multi-agency approach.

⁶⁷ Formerly the Beacons Scheme for Homelessness. www.communities.gov.uk – accessed 30/04/07

Collaborative working is also financially rewarded through two ‘Innovation Funds’⁶⁸. Local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and RSLs are entitled to apply to these funds. All existing funded projects incorporate some element of collaboration between relevant agencies, accommodation providers or community and service user groups⁶⁹. Many of the projects focus on increasing the availability of accommodation for homeless people by building links between landlords, relevant agencies and tenant groups. Some have an educational and preventive emphasis, while others seek to provide multi-agency support to help formerly homeless people, including single homeless people, to move from temporary into permanent accommodation. A national pilot project, the ‘Move-On Plans Pilot’ funded through this scheme is a developmental project to devise models of joint protocol working between local authorities and hostel providers.

The above-mentioned ‘Regional Champions’ scheme is arguably both an incentive-based and an information-based tool. While it encourages information sharing between local authorities, it also provides a financial reward⁷⁰ to those which can demonstrate strengths in partnership working, since successful applicants must display the skills and ability to work across boundaries with other local authorities in order to share good practice⁷¹.

As noted in chapter two, capacity building tools can be classed as a particular subset of incentive-based tools which aim to provide targeted support for collaborative working. A number of the incentive-based tools summarised above can be viewed as attempts to build local capacity for collaboration. The Regional Champions scheme, for instance, is a mechanism for building local innovation and encouraging local transfer of best practice. The centrally produced guidance on forms of collaboration can be considered a form of technical assistance to develop collaborative skills. The Move-On Plans Pilot is a method for developing methods and templates for collaboration.

In summary, government uses a range of tools to encourage local agencies to collaborate. This is in line with observations in the literature discussed in chapter two that governments seeking to influence networks of agencies cannot rely solely on authority-based tools and may require a mix of tools. However, not all the available tools of meta-governance are used in the context of homelessness services. National homelessness targets, for instance, are aimed at local authorities rather than being jointly shared. While meeting such targets may require local authorities to work in partnership, unless government targets are shared by different statutory agencies, it seems likely that their

⁶⁸ The Innovation Fund and Ethnic Minorities Innovation Fund (EMIF) www.communities.gov.uk – accessed 30/04/07

⁶⁹ 42 such awards had been made by May 2007

⁷⁰ Approximately £12,000 per champion

⁷¹ CLG website ‘Regional Champions’ www.communities.gov.uk - accessed 01/05/07

own departmental priorities will take precedence. Similarly, while inspections do examine housing authorities' arrangements with other agencies, there is *relatively* little use⁷² of joint inspections between the Housing Inspectorate and the Inspectorates of the other public sector delivery agencies involved in the wider issues associated with homelessness.

6.2.4 Additional national actors and local governance structures

Although the above discussion has focused on the role of government departments in promoting collaboration between homelessness agencies, non-governmental actors and quasi-public bodies also have a potential role to play in targeting the bodies within their own domain. For instance, the Housing Corporation has a 'Gold Award' scheme aimed at Housing Associations, similar to CLG's Regional Champions scheme. In addition, it has produced its own national Homelessness Strategy aimed at Housing Associations. The Housing Corporation in its Regulatory Code stipulates that RSLs should give reasonable preference to those in housing need, and further states that RSLs must cooperate with Local Authorities to assist them in carrying out their homelessness duties, therefore reinforcing the duties of the Housing Act 1996 as discussed above.

National voluntary sector organisations such as Shelter, Crisis and Homeless Link have produced guidance on collaboration. Homeless Link, the national umbrella organisation for homelessness charities, has been particularly involved in the promotion of multi-agency approaches, providing training in association with Shelter and others for local agencies. Other national housing organisations involved with the RSL sector such as the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing have also collaborated with CLG in the provision of guidance for local agencies.

There are a range of broader local governance structures in which collaboration processes between homelessness agencies in England are embedded. These are not all directly related to homelessness but serve as a potential means of joining up services at a local level. They include Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Local Area Agreements (LAAs), the Joint Commissioning process for Health and Wellbeing, and the National Value Improvement Programme amongst others. These governance structures vary widely in their aims and scope.

LSPs aim to join up the myriad of partnership programmes in local areas, providing overarching coordination. They provide a means of identifying interfaces between different public service agendas at a local strategic level. LAAs also aim to

⁷² Although joint inspections are not widely used, one of the local authority case studies had experienced a joint inspection as discussed in chapter nine.

improve the delivery of local services by securing better coordination between central and local government and its partners. Indeed, a statutory duty for local agencies to cooperate in delivering their LAA there has recently been introduced. A number of local authorities have included homelessness targets within their LAAs⁷³. These structures provide a potential means of raising the corporate responsibility for cross-cutting areas like homelessness across local authorities. Other strategic mechanisms which provide a means of coordinating work on homelessness include local authority Housing Strategies, Community Strategies and numerous other strategies for areas overlapping with homelessness, such as those relating to Domestic Violence, Community Safety and Substance Abuse.

The Commissioning Framework for Health and Wellbeing (DH 2007) is targeted at Primary Care Trusts, practice-based commissioners and local authorities, and the aim is to encourage integrated approaches to service commissioning and delivery, through processes such as joint needs assessment and improved information sharing procedures. The above mentioned joint commissioning framework for homelessness (table 6.2, ID34) is one component of this broader process.

Lastly, the 'National Value Improvement Programme' aims to support local authorities to work with their partners locally, particularly in relation to issues around contracting and commissioning. The programme is delivered through Regional Centres of Excellence, and is driven nationally by relevant government departments and directorates. It is led from CLG but also involves other relevant government departments and national voluntary sector partners.

In summary, the vertical steering strategy for promoting collaboration which is currently employed in the English homelessness sector utilises a fairly wide mix of tools, including authoritative, information-based and incentive-based tools including those aimed at building local capacity for collaboration. Some tools are aimed specifically at addressing homelessness. However, these tools are embedded within other, more broadly based meta-governmental processes such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. The latter tools set a broad framework for collaboration at local authority level, arguably creating a culture of partnership in public services delivery, therefore acting as potential facilitators of collaborations in service areas such as homelessness. Although central government is the main actor, a range of government departments have some involvement in steering collaboration, and other national bodies play a minor role in steering collaboration. Nevertheless, CLG is the strategic lead at a national level for

⁷³ For example the London Borough of Camden and Devon County Council. In Devon the Local Agreement was also used to align and simplify budgeting arrangements for housing budgets such as Homelessness and Supporting People Budgets with others.

homelessness, and the majority of meta-governance initiatives have been led by this department.

6.3 Collaboration in central government as a form of vertical steering

As discussed in previous chapters, there are significant challenges to collaboration at the level of central government. Since central government is organised along departmental lines, there is a propensity for ministers and civil servants to focus on their own narrow departmental objectives, leading to a neglect of cross-cutting issues. Moreover, because budgets are allocated departmentally rather than cross-departmentally, there is a tendency for departments to seek to defend their budgets. The priorities of departments are frequently in conflict, creating problems for local service providers. An influential Cabinet Office report on Whitehall's management of cross-cutting policies and services (PIU 2000) backs this up. As the report states:

‘mechanisms for reconciling conflicting priorities between departments can be weak, leaving service deliverers to wrestle with uncoordinated central initiatives and policy initiatives and without the flexibility to deal with these in a way that makes most sense at local level’ (PIU 2000, p. 12).

The last section of this chapter assesses the extent and forms of collaboration at the level of *central government* in relation to homelessness. As the above quotation illustrates, where central government departments are uncoordinated, systemic effects such as conflicting priorities may ensue. The effects of these conflicts are often channelled down to local level, creating tensions between agencies and competing priorities which militate against collaboration. As with the local level, collaboration in central government is one potential means for addressing systemic effects such as policy incoherence, and can therefore be considered a form of vertical steering of local collaboration.

6.3.1 Forms of collaboration in central government

Evidence of forms of collaboration employed in central government in relation to homelessness was gathered both from civil servant interviewees and from official documentation⁷⁴. Comments from central civil servants suggest that they do recognise the importance of joining up at the level of central government in order to support such efforts further down the line. The following quotations from civil servants are illustrative:

⁷⁴ Five civil servants including representatives from CLG, the Supporting People Directorate and the Department of Health. The limited number of civil servant interviewees does not warrant a full thematic qualitative analysis. The themes presented in this section are therefore indicative only.

“At national level you need to have someone that can get to grips with and be informed about the problems and the implications of things so that if a policy is being developed you can look at it and say, ‘this is going to have these implications for homeless people and it’s not good’... and I would hope that most policy areas would automatically include homeless issues in their considerations”. ID 33, Department of Health Civil Servant

“It’s getting people to understand how the issues are linked and if they don’t understand that at central level, it can be a bit of a bugger at local level”. ID 37, CLG Civil Servant

The first quote illustrates a belief that departments should take into account the systemic effects – positive or negative – that their policies have on other departments. The latter acknowledges the tensions created for local agencies when departments do not do this. To what extent, then, are these aspirations realised in practice and what forms does central collaboration take?

Collaboration within Whitehall appears to occur through a combination of informal channels and formal mechanisms, although there may be growing use of formalised arrangements. Interviewees indicated that informal and ad-hoc communication with colleagues from other departments was used to deal with specific issues as and when they arose, often via email or telephone or face-to-face discussions. They also highlighted the importance of having good contacts in other departments. Informal contact typically involved departments copying colleagues in other departments into e-mails or sending copies of strategies or policy documents on which to comment. A practical difficulty of managing informal communication of this type was dealing with the volume of emails and correspondence sent by different departments.

Individuals were most connected with departments which overlapped with their own areas of work. Examples included informal contact between CLG and the Ministry of Defence on resettling ex-service personnel, liaison between CLG’s Supporting People Directorate and the Home Office on accommodating ex-offenders, and interactions between the Supporting People Team and the Department for Work and Pensions on issues relating to Housing Benefit. However, the issues over which departments collaborated were themselves a reflection of government priorities at the time, and the changing nature of government policy meant that relationships with officials in other departments were also continually changing. For instance, one CLG interviewee (ID35) commented that government priorities were moving towards refugees and migrant workers, and away from offending, which would lead to a strengthening of his personal links with relevant parts of the Home Office and a decrease in contact with the National Offender Management Service.

Collaboration with other departments was also generated in response to issues raised by MPs during parliamentary questions or by Ministers. One interviewee noted that departmental work programmes on which civil servants worked were often diverted by having to spend time responding to ministerial business, and characterised their work as ‘reactive’. This interviewee also noted that issues high on the political or public agenda came to dominate cross-departmental working. Examples included stories in the press around prisoners, asylum seekers and migrant workers. When issues such as these emerged, they would become the priority for cross-government work. This highlights the difficulty of undertaking planned, rational collaborative working in a dynamic political environment.

Much joint contact was generated through shared work programmes between departments, with some individual staff sitting on other departments’ boards when these were relevant to their own work⁷⁵. There also appeared to be a fairly significant amount of movement of personnel horizontally around government departments and vertically from local government to central government. For instance, all civil servant interviewees had previously worked in other government departments or within local government. As noted in chapter two, such personal contact between individuals in different departments has the potential to enhance understanding between the different arms of government.

However, these informal methods were supplemented by more formal collaborative processes. The most widely used processes fall into the group mode of coordination as discussed in chapter two, although personal and impersonal modes are also used (table 6.7). The most common group modes cited by interviewees were inter-departmental groups and networks, such as a joint Home Office/Department of Health group working on prisoners’ health issues and a housing network within the Department of Health. There were also regular inter-departmental meetings including a monthly meeting between CLG, the Home Office and the National Treatment Agency on offending, drugs and housing issues, with a rotating Chair. Ad-hoc meetings were also held between departments and other national partners to deal with specific issues when they arose. At a more strategic level, the National Homelessness Strategy and the Supporting People programme both had cross-departmental steering groups attached to them which included additional para-public bodies such as the Audit Commission and relevant national charities. A group had also recently been established to enable CLG to develop a more strategic and systematic approach to its work with other government departments and to identify shared priorities. Additional group modes included inter-

⁷⁵ For instance, CLG representatives sitting on the Home Office’s Re-Offending Board

ministerial groups attended by civil servants, and seminars and meetings held with other relevant national bodies such as charities and accommodation providers.

Although not discussed by interviewees themselves, a final group coordination mode employed was the creation of the Rough Sleepers Unit in 1999. This was a new body created to coordinate responses to rough sleeping, and itself part of a broader strategy of the then Social Exclusion Unit to develop a cross-departmental approach to issues of social exclusion (NAO 2001). The unit was based in the then Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions and brought together national funding for rough sleepers within a pooled budget, established national targets and provided an arena at the national level for partnership working with the voluntary sector. Although now defunct, the work of the unit continues within CLG's Housing Support and Homelessness Directorate and the approach employed by the unit can be considered a precursor to CLG's multi-agency approach to homelessness more generally.

As also shown in table 6.7, several formalised personal collaboration modes were also used. Jointly appointed posts included drugs advisors funded by the Home Office and Department for Communities and Local Government. There was also a jointly appointed specialist homelessness advisor within the Department of Health, and a health specialist working on homelessness within the Department for Communities and Local Government. In a number of departments existing personnel had been assigned responsibility for inter-departmental working such as the Head of Housing Need within CLG who had a specific remit to work with other departments. The Department of Health also had officers leading on joint work with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Supporting People Directorate. Secondments were also used, such as an official seconded from the National Offender Management Service to the CLG. The person had a remit to free-up prison bed-spaces nationally by working to enhance accommodation options for prisoners in order to speed up prison discharges.

Two examples of central government collaboration cited by interviewees fell into the impersonal category. First, interviewees mentioned the cross-Whitehall Supporting People budget which brings together funding from different government departments, streamlining funding for different client groups in need of housing support. In theory, this should reduce competition between departments over funding for their respective client groups. Second, a joint work-plan had been established between the Department of Health and CLG to address the health component of homelessness, which should provide a structure for ensuring that the health dimension of homelessness is taken into account.

Table 6.7 Formal central collaboration mechanisms used in Homelessness Sector

Group modes	Personal Modes	Impersonal Modes
Inter-departmental groups & networks (officer level)	Jointly funded/ appointed posts	Cross-cutting Budget (i.e. Supporting People)
Joint meetings, either ad-hoc or regular	Assigning responsibility for inter-departmental working to a named individual	Joint work-plans (e.g. DH/ CLG)
Cross Whitehall Homelessness Strategy Steering Group	Posts created specifically to join-up departments	
Cross Whitehall Supporting People Steering Group	Secondments	
Inter-ministerial groups & meetings		
Seminars, Conferences (e.g. with national voluntary sector organisations & accommodation providers)		
Rough Sleepers Unit		

Based on an analysis of civil servants' accounts of their principal inter-organisational links⁷⁶, it is possible to map out the main actors involved in homelessness at the national level, including both government departments (fig 6.1) and other national bodies (fig. 6.2).

⁷⁶ Civil servants were asked to describe which government departments and national bodies they had contact with in relation to homelessness and to summarise the nature of these links

Fig 6.1 Government departments involved in homelessness

Ministry of Justice⁷⁷

(housing & re-settlement for ex-offenders, refugees, asylum seekers & migrant workers; drugs policy, domestic violence, police and probation service for crime issues associated with homelessness)

Department for Work and Pensions

(employment & welfare benefits for homeless people, inc. Housing Benefit)

Department of Health

(health needs of homeless people, including mental & physical health, drug & alcohol treatment)

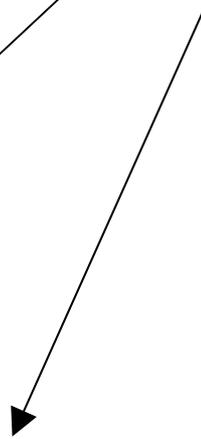
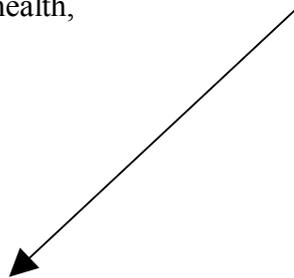
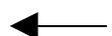
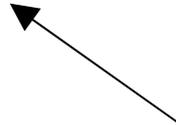
Ministry of Defence

(accommodation for ex-service personnel)

Department for Education & Skills

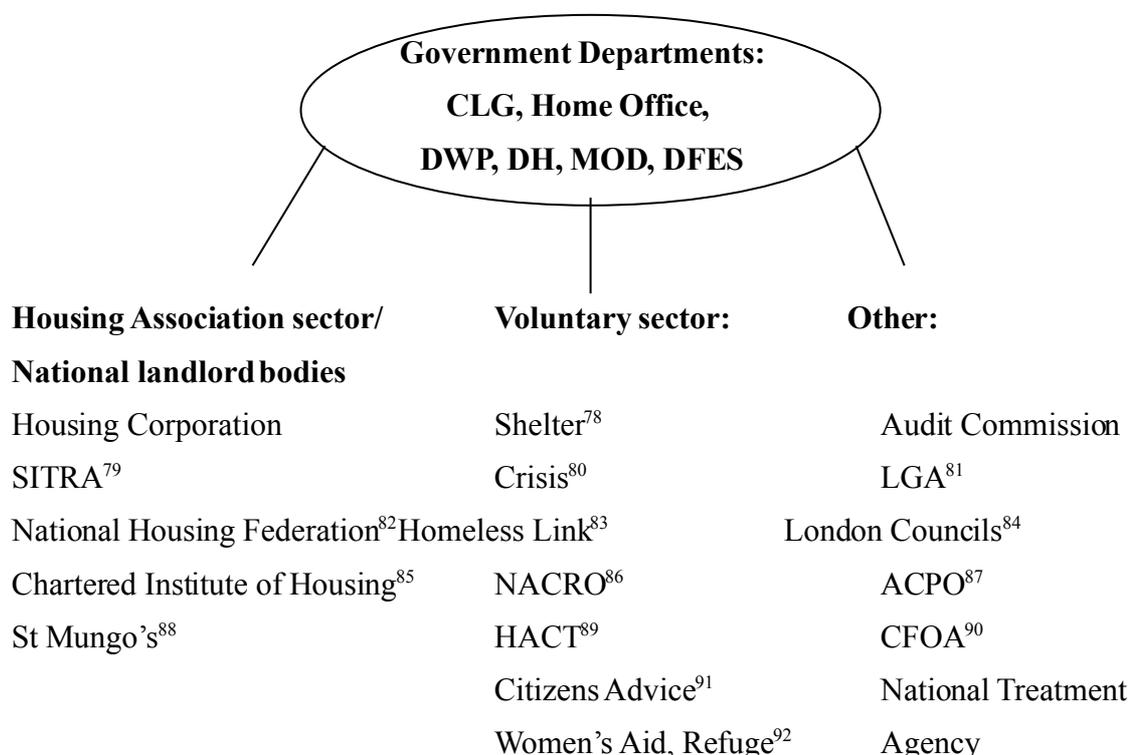
(young people at risk of homelessness, homelessness prevention in schools & with Connexions service, teenage parents)

CLG (Housing Support and Homelessness Directorate; Supporting People Directorate)



⁷⁷ Formerly part of the Home Office. Various Directorates and agencies have a role including the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), the Respect Taskforce (anti-social behaviour), the Crime Reduction and Community Safety Group (the police service), the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) for offenders.

Fig 6.2 Wider network of national bodies involved in homelessness



⁷⁸ Homelessness prevention charity with service provision/ campaigning/ research & policy remit

⁷⁹ Membership umbrella body for supported housing providers, mainly housing associations and managers

⁸⁰ Homelessness prevention charity specialising in single / hidden homelessness

⁸¹ Local Government Association

⁸² Representative membership body for Housing Associations in England

⁸³ Membership/ umbrella organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England

⁸⁴ Representative body for London local authorities with lobbying and policy functions, formerly Association of London Government (ALG)

⁸⁵ Professional body for those working in the housing sector across the UK

⁸⁶ Crime reduction charity providing housing and support services (employment, resettlement and mental health) to ex-offenders & those at risk of offending

⁸⁷ Association of Chief Police officers

⁸⁸ London's largest frontline service provider for homeless people providing accommodation & support, principally hostels and outreach services for rough sleepers (an Industrial and Provident Society)

⁸⁹ Housing charity aiming to develop housing solutions for people on the margins of mainstream housing. A 'bridge' organisation between Housing Associations and the Voluntary Sector.

⁹⁰ Chief Fire Officers Association

⁹¹ National advice charity with network of Citizens Advice Bureaux throughout the UK. Provides the National Homelessness Advice Service in partnership with Shelter, funded by CLG.

⁹² Domestic Violence Charities

The above discussion outlines the nature of central government collaboration in relation to homelessness, which appears to involve both informal contact and formal collaboration mechanisms. The main actors collaborating are government departments, although other government agencies and national bodies are involved where relevant. The use of formal horizontal mechanisms indicates that there have been active attempts to improve coordination at the level of central government in order to support efforts further down the line in local areas. While on paper these formal mechanisms suggest a structured and rational approach to joining up government, the above discussion highlights the importance of political context which may produce a more reactive approach to collaboration, with inter-departmental working relationships affected by changing political priorities. The next section focuses on the key challenges of collaboration within central government.

6.3.2 The challenges of collaboration in central government

Civil servant interviewees were asked to describe the main challenges of collaborating across government departments. Many of the themes raised mirror the challenges faced at local level as discussed in the previous chapter. The main difficulty revolved around the competing priorities of different government departments, and tensions around which departmental agendas should take priority. Even within departments, different directorates had their own priorities, with each directorate viewing its own client group as the top priority. This impacted on collaboration because of disagreements about whose departments' policy priorities other departments should be supporting in terms of delivery.

There were suggestions amongst interviewees that the more powerful departments' priorities dominated collaborative working. For instance, the Home Office's⁹³ reducing re-offending agenda was particularly dominant. CLG officials stated that their own priorities in terms of preventing homelessness should be around groups such as victims of domestic violence and refugees who in statistical terms contributed more to statutory homelessness acceptances. Offenders represented less than 1% of homelessness acceptances but because of pressure from the Home Office, the work of CLC was being diverted towards this client group. When probed about the reasons behind the Home Office's domination of the collaborative agenda, one interviewee suggested that bureaucratic structures such as inter-ministerial groups and other mechanisms were in place which ensured that this Department's issues were communicated to other departments. Another suggested that the style of political

⁹³ During the period of the research re-offending lay within the domain of the Home Office, although this has since been transferred to the new Ministry of Justice

leadership of the Home Office was fairly aggressive which meant that their issues tended to be given greater priority. Overall, CLG interviewees considered there to be a lack of reciprocity in that while they assisted other departments to meet their priorities, they received little support in return. One interviewee commented:

“We do a lot to support other departments and their agendas but how much do we actually get back, that is something we’re starting to question” (ID35).

A second issue related to departments’ unwillingness to accept even partial responsibility for homelessness. CLG officials believed that other government departments viewed homelessness as CLG’s problem. This was partly attributed to other departments’ failure to recognise that homelessness was about more than housing. An illustrative example involved homeless immigrants from the recently enlarged European Union. One CLG official (ID36) expressed frustration at other departments’ lack of cooperation over this issue. This was a clear priority for CLG because large numbers of immigrants were finding themselves destitute in London without anywhere to live, and this was affecting CLG’s ability to meet its rough sleeping targets. The official noted that the issue also related to immigration, benefits and employment, suggesting that Departments such as the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions should also be involved. This example is resonant of the phenomenon described in chapter five of local agencies failing to take responsibility for clients whose needs lay in the interstices between agencies.

An alternative explanation for other departments’ failure to accept responsibility for homelessness was attributed to the way in which the issue had been allocated organisationally. A Department of Health representative (ID33) noted that despite the existence of the inter-departmental steering group for homelessness, the National Strategy itself had been written by CLG several years previously without involving other relevant departments. He suggested that the long term effects of this were visible at local level, where health agencies had found it difficult to become involved with homelessness, even where they wanted to, because CLG nationally and housing authorities locally had been assigned the lead role.

A third major challenge of inter-departmental working related to expectations about what other departments could deliver within existing resources. For instance one CLG official suggested that the Home Office held unrealistic views about CLG’s ability to deliver accommodation to ex-offenders. This demonstrated a lack of awareness of the housing pressures on local authorities and the more general challenges of sourcing suitable accommodation within the community for this client group. CLG interviewees

also noted that they could not over-burden local housing authorities with requests to assist with other departmental agendas. Local Authorities had capped budgets and therefore had to meet their core responsibilities within this budget, leaving little room for addressing wider issues. A Department of Health interviewee commented that his department had to be realistic and to make choices about what they could be involved in cross-departmentally, and had to manage other departments' expectations in this regard. Therefore, as with the local level, resource issues played their part at central level in inhibiting collaboration. One interviewee commented: "I think resources are under increasing pressure and that creates tensions both centrally and locally... everyone is scrabbling around for their client groups" (ID 35).

This brief depiction of the obstacles to collaboration provides support for the bureaucratic politics perspective. Several features of the inter-departmental relations are indicative of this, including departments' pursuit of their own priorities, the lack of unity over priorities, the power inequalities of the departments involved, the way in which the outcomes appear to favour the most powerful actors, and the struggle for resources. The above analysis is based on a small number of interviews and therefore provides an indication of the nature of inter-departmental relations only, rather than a full analysis. In order to cross-check these findings, the next section analyses perceptions of the degree of collaboration in central government from a different perspective – that of the street level bureaucrats.

6.3.3 Local perceptions of collaboration in government

Street level bureaucrats were asked how 'joined-up' they considered central government to be with respect to homelessness. A minority of interviewees believed that central departments did collaborate well, or were at least improving in this respect. However, the vast majority were sceptical about the extent to which central government departments were actually 'joined-up', as illustrated in table 6.8.

Several interviewees considered there to be a lack of communication between departments. For instance, they commented that different departments and directorates seemed unaware of one another's policies. One example concerned a consultation held by the Supporting People directorate on tenancy deposit schemes which made no mention of a new tenancy deposit scheme established by CLG. There was also recognition amongst street level bureaucrats of the differing priorities of different government departments, and the competitiveness of their relationships.

Interviewees' doubts about the degree of joining up in central government were also expressed in terms of several examples of incoherence in government policy. One example concerned the conflicting guidance on where, geographically, homeless people could receive local authority assistance. The message to local authorities from the Homelessness Directorate was that homeless people should be encouraged to return to their former place of residence since this was where their social networks were established. However, the Supporting People Directorate's recommendation was that homeless people should be able to access local authority support in any part of the country. The Probation Service was also sending out its own messages on the need for ex-offenders to have a fresh start and to be accommodated away from their previous locations. A further example concerned the conflicting anti-social behaviour or 'respect' agenda and the homelessness prevention agenda. The former agenda encouraged eviction of families exhibiting anti-social behaviour in their estates, leaving local authorities to deal with the homelessness resulting from this. Similarly, there was a perception that regeneration policies to stimulate housing renewal drove up property prices and led to a reduction in affordable housing which created difficulties for local authorities seeking to accommodate homeless people.

Others commented on departments simply ignoring issues which were not directly on their agenda. For instance, one interviewee commented that when officials from CLG came to inspect their housing services, they seemed uninterested in their work in relation to Supporting People. Other examples revolved around government policy papers missing housing off their agenda. In a new initiative creating local multi-agency youth advisory boards to deal with youth offending, there was no national specification within national guidance that housing agencies should be represented on the board, despite several other agencies being listed. Similarly, a new national targeted youth strategy led by social services made no mention of local areas involving homelessness or housing services.

Table 6.8 Street Level Bureaucrats' perceptions of collaboration in central government

Theme	Illustrative Quote(s)
Doubt over level of collaboration in central government	'I'm not sure how much it happens at national level... I do think they are clear about how <i>we</i> should, it's just whether <i>they</i> do it'. ID 1, LA 1.
Perceived lack of communication between departments	'They don't give the appearance of talking to each other.' ID 7, LA2

<p>Recognition of competitive nature of inter-departmental relations</p>	<p>‘The same is happening from top to bottom. Lack of communication, competitiveness, who wants the most money. I think departments within departments within departments are competing’ ID 22, LA3</p> <p>‘You get a sense that there is a sort of combative relationship going on there. They’re obviously all bidding to the Treasury for funding’ ID38, LA1</p>
<p>Lack of policy coherence</p>	<p>‘I’m not sure they do. When you take through the logical consequences of some of their policies you kind of come into conflict. The issues on asylum seekers and migration, or anti-social behaviour from one department have a massive effect on homelessness, so I don’t see them working those through in a very logical manner or coming up with joint solutions.’ ID 4, LA1.</p> <p>‘You’ve got all of those competing things going on up there, and we’re trying to make sense of it all down here, so leading by example on joint working would be good.’ ID16, LA2</p>
<p>Recognition of differing priorities</p>	<p>‘I don’t think there’s really a lot of joined up thinking and certainly not in terms of prioritising or agreeing a set of priorities’ ID 29, LA2</p> <p>‘Yes I think they are (promoting collaboration) in terms of each department, but I think they can have really conflicting, different proprieties that impact that’ ID 4, LA3</p>
<p>Lack of inclusion of homelessness within other national policy frameworks</p>	<p>‘The new targeted youth strategy has got a huge amount of stuff about agencies working together... but when it lists agencies you must work with it doesn’t mention Housing’. ID1, LA2</p>

Chapter summary and discussion

The overarching aim of this chapter has been to characterise and explore government steering of local collaboration in the homelessness sector. This has involved identifying and classifying the vertical meta-governance tools employed, assessing the level of importance attached to collaboration by central policy makers, and finally evaluating the degree of collaboration at the level of central government, which is in itself a form of vertical steering.

Overall, multi-agency collaboration is something which government is trying to promote in local areas. This is a view shared by central and local bureaucrats, and is also evidenced in a variety of documentary sources including guidance, legislation and statements in national strategies. Civil servants, like street level bureaucrats, view local collaboration and multiple agency involvement as appropriate to the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness, indicating that their articulated motivations for encouraging local collaboration are at least partly rational in nature. However, collaboration itself was partially influenced by political priorities at the time, with inter-departmental linkages shifting according to Ministerial agendas, which were themselves affected by the mass media and public pressures. This appears to undermine a planned, rationalistic approach to cross-government working.

Some street level bureaucrats interviewed were more aware of government's collaborative agenda than others. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those working in statutory agencies were most aware of government's prioritisation of collaboration, with voluntary sector actors and accommodation providers less so. This highlights the limited ability of central actors to influence local agencies outside of their own line of authority, as previous theories of implementation in networks have suggested. The strategy of pursuing meta-governance jointly with other national bodies is one potential means of addressing this, for instance by issuing joint guidance or undertaking joint inspections. Clearly there had been some attempts to undertake meta-governance initiatives in collaboration with other national bodies and government departments, although CLG was the lead department within these attempts.

A combination of meta-governance tools is used to promote collaboration in homelessness, including those based on authority, exhortation and incentive. These meta-governmental approaches are embedded within a broader meta-governance strategy aiming to enhance collaboration more generally across local public services, suggesting that the promotion of collaboration in relation to homelessness is something of 'a policy within a policy'.

Attempts to stimulate a collaborative approach at local level are perceived by local actors to be undermined by a lack of joined-up policy at the level of central government. Although central civil servants were aware of the need to join up centrally to facilitate such efforts locally, and had instigated formal collaborative mechanisms within central government in an attempt to enhance policy coherence, street level bureaucrats nevertheless found government policies and priorities in many respects to be conflicting. These conflicting priorities may to some extent to be related to a lack of communication and the difficulty of keeping abreast of policies across departments. However, they are also a consequence of different agendas rubbing up against one another, something which may be an inevitable feature of public policy regardless of attempts to improve policy coherence through better coordination in central government.

The terrain of inter-departmental relations – like that of local inter-agency relations as described in chapter five – is one of differing priorities, power inequalities and competition for resources. In some respects departments are interdependent, relying on one another to support delivery of their respective policies. However, departments are also unequal, with some more powerful than others and consequently more able to gain the support of other departments in delivering their agendas.

The disagreements over where responsibility lies for different policy issues, and the tendency of departments to ignore or neglect those that are outside of their core business, stems back to the departmental organisation of central government. At present homelessness is the primary responsibility of one department alone, CLG, and other departments such as the Home Office have no obligation to assist with this. Similarly, when the research was conducted, the reducing re-offending agenda ‘belonged’ to the Home Office and there was little incentive for departments such as CLG to assist with this work, although the power exercised by the Home Office compelled them to do so.

Certain themes raised in relation to the challenges of collaboration within central government resonate with aspects of the literature discussed in chapter one relating to the antecedents of collaboration. In particular this research has underlined the importance of mutual understanding – such as of the resource pressures different departments are under – and of reciprocity. Where departments did not reciprocate other departments’ efforts to assist them with their agendas, this created resentment and contributed to a breakdown of trust.

In terms of the *level of government* at which collaborative policy is set, this chapter has illustrated that there have been clear attempts to define this centrally. While the relevant legislation is not itself overly prescriptive, information-based tools do flesh out this legislation, providing advice on how this might be translated into practice at a

local level. Even although central actors stated that they would not specify in detail to local areas which agencies should be their collaborative partners, the guidance itself is fairly detailed with respect to recommended forms of collaboration.

Later chapters will investigate further the extent to which collaboration policy can be considered to be formulated at central level, by examining local actors' responsiveness to central mandates, guidance and exhortations to collaborate, as well as the more 'bottom-up' factors which may influence their decisions around collaboration.

Chapter 7: Collaboration and its relationship to Government Steering and Other Key Factors

Chapter overview

While the previous chapter assessed the *nature* of government steering of local collaboration in relation to homelessness, this chapter turns to the relationship between government steering and collaboration. It is asked whether government steering, or ‘meta-governance’, appears to be positively related to collaboration. This potential antecedent of collaboration is considered alongside several other possible explanatory variables.

Since one of the aims of the research was to assess the extent and nature of collaboration in the multi-agency homelessness network, the chapter first presents a summary of the degree and nature of collaboration in local authorities, using evidence from the postal survey discussed in chapter four. *Formal* horizontal collaboration in English local authorities is first assessed (sections 7.1-7.3), followed by *informal* collaboration, including analysis of the degree of interaction with different types of bodies and the amount of time spent interacting with other bodies generally (sections 7.4-7.7). The picture revealed is one of moderate levels of formal and informal collaboration, but with variation across local authorities.

The chapter then moves on to assess how this variation may be explained, beginning with a consideration of government steering (section 7.2) and proceeding to analyse additional factors highlighted in previous collaboration literature which are relevant to the context of English homelessness services (section 7.3). The discussion at the end of the chapter provides a recap of the main findings and assesses these in light of previous research and in relation to the qualitative findings presented in chapter five.

7.1 The level and nature of homelessness collaboration in English local authorities

7.1.1 Formal collaboration: introduction

As discussed in chapter two, horizontal coordination tools are mechanisms used to enhance integration between organisations. They have been described as the ‘basic elements employed to effect inter-organisational coordination’ (Alexander 1995, p.40). Horizontal coordination tools can be considered forms of collaboration which, for the purposes of this thesis, has been defined as *a process in which organisations actively and jointly work together across organisational boundaries*. Horizontal coordination tools require the active participation of more than one agency for their establishment and operation. They are formal in the sense of being concrete arrangements or mechanisms that systematise inter-agency working.

To provide a measure of formal collaboration, postal survey respondents were provided with a list of 20 horizontal coordination mechanisms⁹⁴ and asked to tick those present in their local authority in relation to single homeless people, with a clear definition of single homelessness provided. It was specified that they should tick ‘yes’ even if the arrangements involved only some agencies or applied to certain categories of single homeless people. A dichotomous yes/ no response was the most appropriate measurement level since these coordination mechanisms are of a fixed nature; either they are in place or they are not, although a ‘don’t know’ category was also included. From the list it was possible to generate a score of formal collaboration for each local authority. This approach facilitates comparisons between authorities and is used to help explain variation (see sections 7.2 and 7.3). It also provides an indication of the contribution of formal collaboration as compared to informal collaboration (see section 7.1.5).

As noted in chapter four, the index of coordination mechanisms was generated after conducting a systematic content analysis of a random sample of 40 local authority homelessness strategies and consulting other relevant documentation in order to enhance face validity. A reliability test was also performed to ensure that it was appropriate to combine the listed items to create a single scale of formal horizontal coordination. This was achieved using a test for uni-dimensionality, which suggested that the items on the scale measured the same underlying construct (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.7995)⁹⁵.

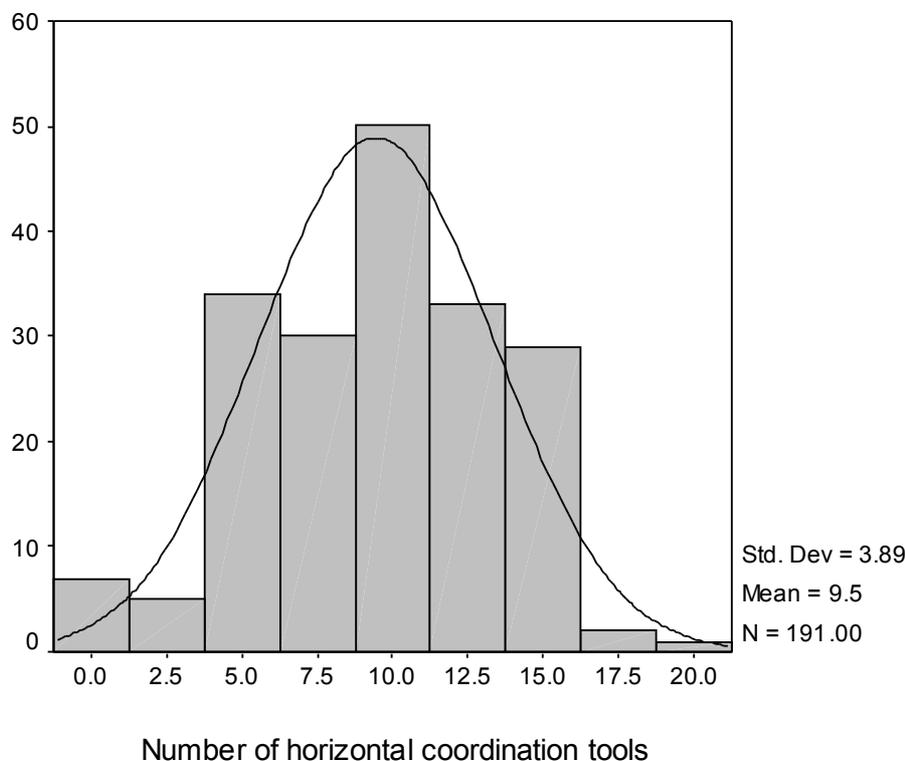
⁹⁴ See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire containing the list of 20 mechanisms

⁹⁵ Reliability coefficients of 0.8 are desirable although scores of above 0.7 are considered acceptable (Bryman and Cramer 2005).

7.1.2 The level of adoption of formal collaboration tools

The mean number of tools employed was 9.5 (sd 3.89, range 0-20), just below the midpoint of the range, indicating moderate levels of formalised collaboration. The dispersion of data is presented in fig 7.1 below and indicates an approximately normal distribution⁹⁶. Most authorities were clustered around the middle of the scale, with relatively few extreme values, particularly at the higher end of the scale. An analysis of scores which involved categorising authorities as low, moderate or high placed 24% in the low category, 59% percent in the moderate category and 17% in the high category⁹⁷.

Fig 7.1 Number of horizontal coordination tools employed in local authorities



It should be noted that in some cases there were missing data or ‘don’t know’ responses for particular items on the list, suggesting that some respondents may have been unfamiliar with particular items listed or unsure of whether these coordination mechanisms were in place in their authority. The mean level of missing data for the 20 items listed was 9.5%. There are a number of ways of dealing with missing data. One

⁹⁶ The normal distribution indicates that approximately 2/3 of cases lie within one standard deviation of the mean, 95% within 2 standard deviations and 99% within three standard deviations. Visual inspection was cross-checked with a formal test of normality, the Shapiro-Wilks test, which confirmed this interpretation with $W = 0.983$ where 1 indicates a perfectly normal distribution.

⁹⁷ Data were collapsed into these categories using the substantive approach which divided the range into 3 equal divisions (0-6 tools; 7-13 tools; 14-20 tools).

method is to drop certain *variables* or items from a scale. In view of the results of the Cronbach's Alpha test for reliability reported above, however, it was decided to retain all items. Other common methods for minimising the effect of missing values, including substituting missing responses with group or sample means and regression analysis, are dependent on interval data. Since the responses to individual items on this scale were dichotomous, these methods would have been inappropriate. Similarly, consideration may be given to deleting *cases* involving missing data. This was the approach used here. For instance, when analysing frequencies on the particular types of tools employed, missing *cases* are excluded from the analysis⁹⁸. However, when calculating the formal collaboration score for each authority, the first dependent variable, all cases were included and only 'yes' items were included in individual authorities' total scores⁹⁹.

It is also important to recognise the possibility of social desirability of responses. Given the central pressure to work in partnership and the endorsement of the research by the government department responsible for homelessness, it is possible that respondents may have over-stated the level of collaboration in their authorities in some cases. Attempts were made to minimise social desirability effects by stressing that the research was an independent academic study and guaranteeing the anonymity of respondents. Furthermore, anonymous postal surveys are generally recognised as providing more reliable answers as compared to face-to-face methods of data collection in which problems such as interviewer bias may feature.

⁹⁸ This was achieved by using the 'system missing' function in SPSS.

⁹⁹ As a reliability check a separate analysis was carried out on formal collaboration scores which excluded all cases containing 20% or more missing items on the formal collaboration score. However, the analysis revealed that excluding these cases from the analysis would have produced little difference since the distribution of scores (mean 9.7, range 0-20, sd 3.99) was almost identical to the overall sample.

7.1.3 The nature of collaboration tools employed

It is possible to characterise the nature of formal collaboration by identifying the frequency of adoption of specific types of tools. As discussed in chapter two, horizontal tools may be classified by their 'mode' of coordination, namely personal, impersonal or group-based modes. This is the first level of classification adopted in this analysis. It was also noted in chapter two that tools of coordination are sometimes classified according to the degree of integration involved, with more tightly integrated varieties representing more ambitious forms of collaboration. The degree of integration is therefore the second level of analysis used to classify horizontal tools.

To recap, impersonal methods are of a routine and formalised nature, and are more anticipatory than adaptive. Coordination is established by 'programme' or 'plan', implying little need for face-to-face contact beyond the initial establishment of the coordination tools themselves. Impersonal tools include standardised information and communication systems, and jointly agreed rules and procedures which provide blueprints for future action and specify the tasks and responsibilities of the parties involved. While a degree of joint action is required to establish the rules, procedures and systems, once these are agreed, they become institutionalised, embedded with the standard operating procedures of the organisations involved, and require relatively little need for ongoing inter-personal contact. Consequently impersonal methods are said to remove discretion from individual workers.

Personal and group-based methods, by contrast, usually involve face-to-face or inter-personal contact in 'real time'. They entail 'coordination by feedback', with decisions reached as issues arise within the context of daily work. Because of the presence of two or more interacting participants, mutual adjustments can be made as new information is transmitted and received. In the context of inter-organisational working, personal tools involve linkages between individuals from different agencies, often in the form of staff transfer such as placements and secondments, or informal communication between staff. Group tools involve several agencies being simultaneously involved in meetings or other joint activities, and include scheduled or unscheduled staff meetings and standing committees that coordinate the work of participating units (Van De Ven et al. 1976).

In chapter four, it was suggested that because of the nature of work undertaken by, and the task environment of homelessness agencies, group and personal modes of coordination may be more common than impersonal modes. It was noted that the task environment of homelessness services is characterised by uncertainty, broad task scope

and interdependence, organisational characteristics related to group and personal modes. Furthermore, the homelessness sector, like other areas of human services, requires significant coordination at the operational level. Such work includes assessing clients' needs, sharing this information with other agencies and the use of discretion and human judgement to allocate available resources. Standardised responses - often regarded as the most 'efficient' in administrative terms - are therefore less appropriate. With the respect to the *degree* of integration of coordination tools employed, previous literature, as discussed in chapter two, suggests that there may be a general propensity for agencies to adopt the least ambitious tools which are less costly and lower risk.

Table 7.1 below indicates the percentage of authorities adopting each tool from the list provided in the survey. The table also identifies the mode and level of integration of each tool. Although there is no universally agreed method for quantifying the level of integration of different tools, there are nevertheless clear indications in the existing literature of the nature of collaborative activity at different ends of the spectrum, as identified in chapter two. These indications serve as a guiding framework for assessing the degree of integration of each tool listed below. As will be demonstrated, examples of weak, moderate and highly integrated tools can be found within group, personal and impersonal categories.

In line with previous literature, those tools which impact least on the working arrangements and standard operating procedures of individual agencies are assigned lower scores (Rogers 1974). Joint service provision such as multi-agency teams (a group mode) and joint commissioning of services (an impersonal mode) can be regarded as the most fully integrated variety of collaboration (Hambleton et al. 1995; Leutz 1999). Co-location of services, another group mode, may be characterised as marginally less integrated than multi-agency teams, since co-location in this context is usually a form a satellite provision within other agencies, for instance the provision of drug treatment services within existing homelessness facilities such as drop-in centres.

Most prior literature classifies information sharing as a relatively weak or moderate form of collaboration (Rogers 1974; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002), and consequently mechanisms which are centred on information sharing are assigned lower scores, although some tools for sharing information are more ambitious than others. For instance, information sharing activities which involve written agreements between agencies such as impersonal client information sharing protocols, involve greater commitment and compromise than do group-based operational multi-agency forums and events which are a less formal mechanism for sharing service information. Joint case conferences are more ambitious than other information-based tools since they also

involve an element of integrated case-planning. Joint case conferences do not, however, involve joint service provision since services still operate largely through separate structures of existing systems, and so occupy a moderate position on the scale (Leutz 1999).

In relation to the personal modes listed, dedicated posts for forging inter-agency links may be regarded as moderate level tools . While they involve active attempts to bridge organisational boundaries and often involve the joint dedication of funding, they do not alter services, rules or structures. The aim of dedicated posts is generally to facilitate information sharing. Forms of staff transfer such as staff placements and secondments in other agencies perform a similar function although may be regarded as less ambitious since these posts may service to improve links between specific agencies rather than within a wider network of agencies.

Common monitoring systems and joint client assessment forms are fairly ambitious forms of impersonal collaboration since they involve agencies aligning their operating systems. Similarly joint local targets are considered strong forms of collaboration since they are accountability mechanisms involving a high level commitment to collaboration and a commitment to shared outcomes. Joint protocols are classified as 'moderate' since they are formal agreements outlining the responsibilities of different agencies, but do not require significant further joint action beyond the inception stage. Other impersonal modes such as common directories of information on services or accommodation providers are classified as lower end activities, since once these have been compiled there is little need for further joint action and there is no sense in which these tools radically impact on the service provision of individual agencies. Service level agreements involve agencies contracting other organisations to provide services on their behalf and have been characterised as more of a contractual than a collaborative form of joint working (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002) and are therefore assigned a low score.

Table 7.1 Forms of horizontal coordination tools adopted

Coordination mode	Level* of Integration	Coordination tool	Authorities employing tool	
			%	N
Group	3	Joint case conferences/ multi-agency assessment panels	83	161
	3	Multi-agency forum (strategic level)	76	147
	3	Multi-agency forum (operational level)	70	135
	1	Multi-agency training events/ workshops	65	125
	5	Multi-agency outreach service	51	99
	4	Location of additional specialist services within existing agencies (co-location of services)	38	74
	5	Multi-agency homelessness team, project or one stop shop	19	34
Impersonal	3	Joint protocols (operational level)	72	138
	3	Client information sharing/ confidentiality protocols	69	133
	1	Service Level Agreements	69	133
	2	Joint directory of information on local services	55	106
	2	Common directory of accommodation providers	54	105
	4	Joint client monitoring procedures/ multi-agency monitoring	49	94
	3	Joint protocols (strategic level)	46	89
	4	Joint client assessment forms	35	68
	5	Jointly commissioned services	30	57
	5	Joint local performance indicators/ targets	21	40
	5	Joint budgets	6	12
Personal	3	Dedicated post for forging inter-agency links	18	34
	1	Staff placements in other agencies	15	28

*1=LOW, 2=LOW-MODERATE, 3=MODERATE, 4=MODERATE-HIGH, 5=HIGH

As illustrated in table 7.1, the most widely used joint working methods are group coordination modes, that is, those involving interpersonal contact between groups of agencies. Three of the top four responses fall into this category, namely joint case conferences (83%), strategic multi-agency forums (76%) and operational multi-agency forums (70%). Multi-agency training events and workshops are another commonly used group method (65%). Interestingly, all of these tools are classified as moderate or low level integrative activities. The more ambitious group modes with higher integration scores such as those involving joint service delivery that may require senior commitment to establish, are less widely used. For instance, co-location of services and multi-agency teams are in place in only slightly more than a third of authorities. Multi-agency outreach services are available in approximately half of authorities. Personal coordination modes which involve formal methods of linking individuals are relatively uncommon on this

evidence, with staff placements in other agencies used in only 15% of authorities and dedicated posts for forging inter-agency links in only 17% of authorities.

There is also fairly extensive use of some impersonal modes, in particular operational protocols (72%), client confidentiality protocols (69%) and service level agreements (69%). Joint directories of accommodation providers or services are present in over half of authorities. Again, the most commonly used impersonal tools are the more moderate or weak forms of collaboration. The more highly integrated impersonal tools such as joint monitoring procedures and assessment forms are less common, employed in only 49% and 35% of authorities respectively. Other ambitious forms of impersonal collaboration which involve commitment at a senior level and may be characterised as strategic level coordination tools, such as joint commissioning, joint performance systems and joint budgets, are even less common (30%, 21% and 6% respectively).

In summary, the findings indicate that formal horizontal coordination in the English homelessness sector involves a combination of group and impersonal modes. Group methods take the form of face-to-face contact through established groups, forums and multi-agency events while impersonal methods involve information sharing and written agreements clarifying roles and responsibilities. The prevalence of group modes fits with the predicted forms expected in relation to task environment, although contrary to the prediction, there is little use of formal personal modes¹⁰⁰. It was also hypothesised that the nature of operational work is unlikely to be conducive to standardised systems which routinise decisions and remove discretion from workers. Although some impersonal tools are adopted by the responding local authorities, standardised systems such as joint monitoring and assessment are fairly uncommon as might have been expected.

As hypothesised, the coordination tools employed are the less ambitious ones which can be grafted onto existing practices without too much alteration of standard operating procedures or existing organisational structures. Collaborative practices that involve deeper integration of services or joint accountability mechanisms are much less common. Collaboration often involves pooling information, either about services or clients, but rarely involves pooling other resources, such as financial resources, office premises or staff. Furthermore, operational level horizontal tools are more common than those at the strategic level, with the majority of coordination tools employed likely to be enacted by frontline rather than strategic level staff, with the exception of strategic level multi-agency forums and service level agreements. The reasons behind the pattern of adoption of different tools are examined in chapter eight.

¹⁰⁰ However, note that section 7.1.5 below illustrates that *informal* personal coordination is reasonably common.

7.1.4 Informal collaboration: introduction

As discussed in chapter two, inter-personal contact or interaction between individuals in organisations is another dimension of collaboration. Within the spectrum of collaboration, such interactions are classed as a weaker form of collaboration, since they are usually informal and ad-hoc rather than formalised or routine. However, informal interactions between agencies may be as important as formal varieties, since repeated interactions generate trust, which itself has been shown in previous literature to be a key antecedent of collaboration. Chapter four suggested that in the context of homelessness services, interaction between agencies is likely to be important for assisting individual clients in need of multi-agency support. Much of this interaction is likely to occur at the operational level between field-level staff engaged in client work, and may involve referrals, information sharing or discussions of issues associated with particular clients. In addition, regular contact is required at managerial level for a range of purposes related to service planning, information sharing and monitoring.

The postal survey provides information on the degree of interaction between housing authorities and other relevant bodies in the homelessness network at both strategic and operational levels, which serves as a means of assessing informal collaboration. The scores of the degree of interaction are used to assess the relative strength of the Housing Authority's links with different bodies as a way of identifying potential 'cracks' in the system. As with the measure of formal collaboration, an informal collaboration score is calculated for each authority. This helps to explain the contribution of informal interactions to the collaboration process overall. Again, as above, an aggregate measure of this nature allows for testing of the factors considered likely to affect the level of collaboration, such as government steering and other variables of interest as discussed in sections 7.2 and 7.3.

Survey respondents were asked to rank the amount of contact in relation to single homelessness between the housing authority and each other body, from a list of 25 bodies. As noted in chapter four, these bodies were identified after analysis of homelessness strategies, relevant documentation and discussions with those in the field. The agencies listed represent the core bodies with a role in homelessness provision for single homeless adults. Because of the wide range of bodies involved in homelessness and the need to define some boundaries for the study, those aimed at specific user groups other than single homeless adults were excluded from the checklist¹⁰¹.

¹⁰¹ The list of agencies and stakeholders included can be found in the Questionnaire, Appendix D.

The agencies involved in delivering services to single homeless people fell into three main categories: statutory agencies; voluntary sector agencies; and accommodation providers. A five point Likert scale was used where 1 represented 'very little contact', 2 'little contact', 3 'a moderate amount of contact', 4 'a lot of contact' and 5 'a very great deal of contact'. Contact was defined as any contact with the bodies listed (for example by phone, e-mail, fax, or in person) firstly in relation to service planning and secondly in relation to client referrals/ casework. A 'don't know/ not applicable' response was also offered for respondents who could not answer, for instance where there was no such agency in place locally.

While this provided a measure of the amount of contact occurring, this information is difficult to interpret without some idea of how much contact there *ought* to be. For instance, it is likely that contact is more important with some agencies than with others, and that some agencies will perform a principally strategic role in relation to joint working and others an operational role. The question was therefore repeated, with respondents asked to rate, on the same scale, the 'ideal' amount of contact with each agency. The gap between the ideal and actual levels of contact could therefore be calculated. The ideal contact scores provide an indication of the perceived importance of informal collaboration generally and with particular bodies.

7.1.5 The level of informal collaboration and its relationship with formal collaboration

For each local authority a total horizontal contact score was calculated by aggregating 'actual' contact scores for 23 of the agencies¹⁰² in the homeless network for both service planning and casework. Since agencies could be assigned a score of 1-5 and there were two scales, the maximum possible score was 230 and lowest possible was 50¹⁰³. The distribution of horizontal contact scores is presented in figure 7.2. The mean overall contact score for local authorities is 136, just below the midpoint of 140. The range is 55-196 and the data distribution is within the normal range¹⁰⁴. This reveals a similar pattern to adoption of horizontal coordination tools. However, as illustrated in table 7.2 a slightly greater proportion of scores were in the upper range of the scale when this scale as

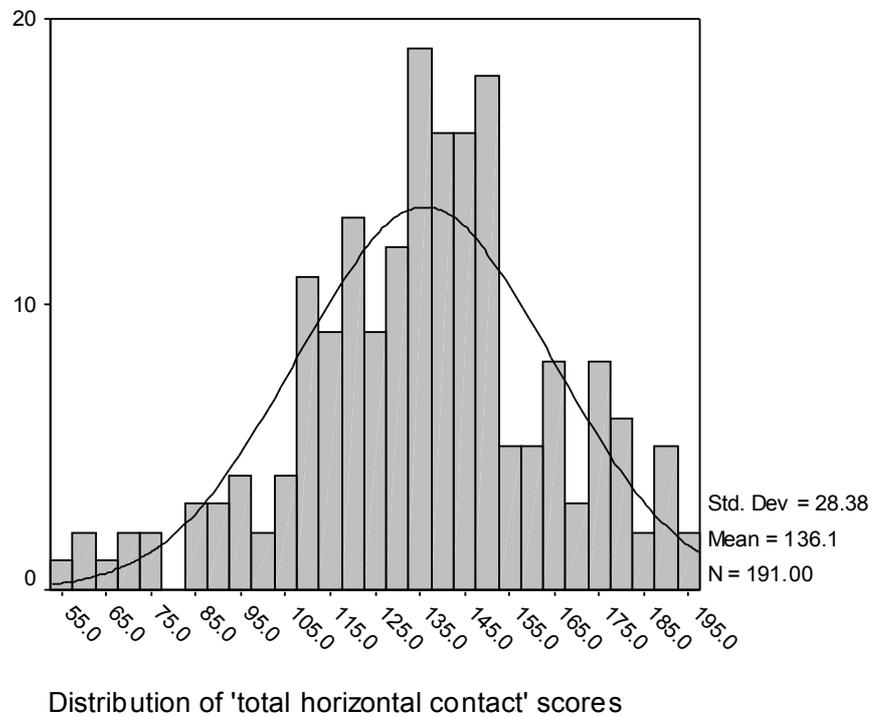
¹⁰² Local elected members and other local authorities are excluded from the aggregate horizontal contact score since the overarching aim was to assess collaboration within local authority multi-agency networks. However, data for these bodies are provided within the analysis by sector and organisation below for descriptive purposes.

¹⁰³ Where respondents selected the 'not applicable' category for specific agencies (for example because there was no such agency locally), the substitution method for dealing with missing data was used in order to ensure comparability across authorities. This involved assigning an estimated value based on the sample mean.

¹⁰⁴ The Shapiro-Wilks test indicated normality, with $W = 0.984$.

collapsed into low/ moderate/ high categories, with figures of 11%, 59% and 30% respectively¹⁰⁵. This data indicates that collaboration overall may be marginally more reliant on informal than on formal measures.

Fig 7.2 Histogram of informal collaboration scores in local authorities



¹⁰⁵ The same means of collapsing data into categories was used here as with the formal collaboration scale, with 3 equal cutpoints along the range of scores (low=55-101; moderate=102-149; high=150-196).

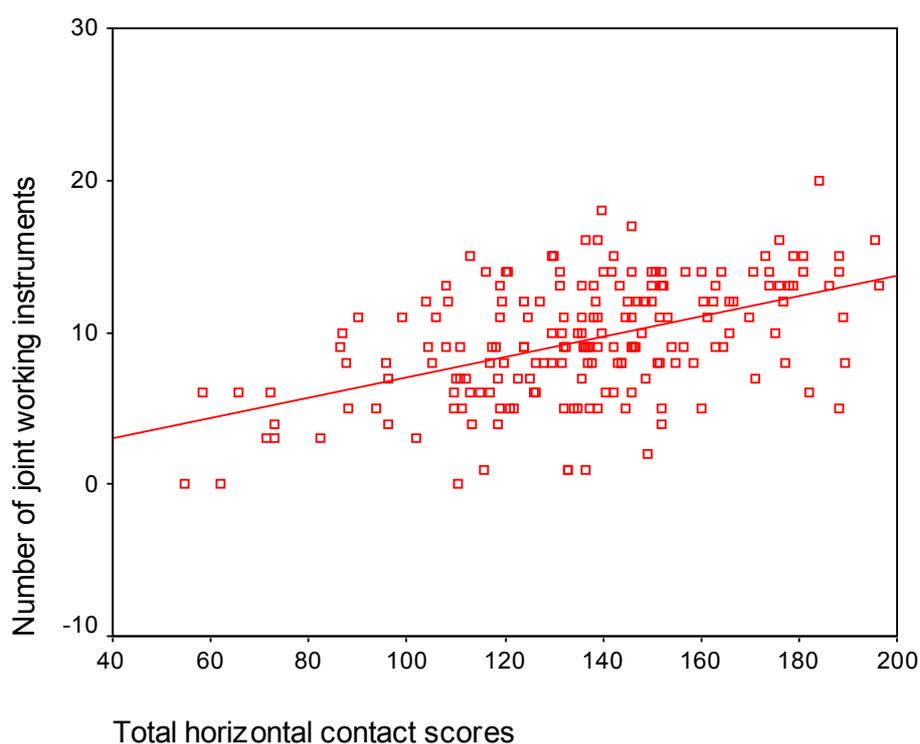
Table 7.2 Proportion of authorities in low/ moderate/ high categories for formal and informal collaboration

Level of collaboration	Formal		Informal	
	N	%	N	%
Low	46	24	21	11
Moderate	113	59	113	59
High	32	17	57	30
Total	191	100	191	100

While the comparative data presented above provides an indication of the relative importance of formal and informal collaboration, it reveals little about how the two are related, for instance, whether those authorities with high formal collaboration scores also have high informal collaboration scores. The relationship between formal and informal collaboration is assessed here by correlating the number of tools adopted and the total horizontal contact scores for each authority. The scattergram below shows visually the pattern of results (figure 7.3). The results indicate a moderate-substantial positive relationship which is unlikely to have occurred by chance ($r = 0.487$, $r^2 = 24\%$, $p < 0.01$)¹⁰⁶. In other words, the greater the number of formal horizontal coordination tools in a local authority, the greater the level of informal contact. The r^2 figure indicates that nearly 24% of variation in one variable is likely to be explained by variation in the other. This finding indicates that formal and informal collaboration may positively reinforce one another.

¹⁰⁶ Pearson's correlation co-efficient was used, the usual measure of correlation for normally distributed interval data (Bryman and Cramer 2001). For social scientific data, a correlation coefficient of 0.487 indicates a moderate-substantial relationship (De Vaus 2002).

Fig 7.3 Scattergram of formal and informal collaboration (N=191)



Pearson's $r = 0.487$ $r^2 = 24\%$ $p < 0.01$

7.1.6 Informal collaboration: breakdown by sector and organisation

Data on the level of contact between the housing authority and different types of agency in the homelessness network both in terms of service planning and casework is provided in table 7.3. The 'actual' contact scores provide an indication of the extent of interaction while the 'ideal' contact scores provide an indication of the perceived importance of different bodies. The 'gap' score indicates how close the actual level of collaboration is to the ideal.

In terms of actual contact, there is most contact with accommodation providers, both at planning level and case level. There is least contact with voluntary sector agencies, both for planning and case work, with statutory agencies lying in between for both types of work, although the difference between these two sectors is small. The results for the ideal amount of contact show the same pattern across sectors, with accommodation providers deemed most important, followed by statutory agencies and then voluntary sector agencies. There is greater contact in relation to casework than planning level work in each sector and across all sectors as a whole.

Overall, there is less contact between housing authorities and other agencies than would be desirable as perceived by survey respondents themselves. Taking all of the

agencies together, there is only a 'moderate' amount of contact for both planning and casework (mean 3) whereas in an ideal world there would be 'a lot' of contact (mean 4). This indicates that overall, interaction between agencies is regarded as fairly important by respondents. The gap between the actual and ideal level of contact is smallest with accommodation providers and managers, and greatest with voluntary sector agencies. In terms of overall mean contact gaps, there is a bigger gap between actual and ideal amount of contact at planning than case level.

Further analysis in section 7.2 discusses the relative levels of contact between the housing authority and specific bodies prioritised in central government guidance, as one means of assessing the success of government exhortations for agencies to collaborate.

Table 7.3 Mean contact scores with local bodies for service planning and casework

	Service Planning Contact			Casework Contact		
	'Actual' Score (N)	'Ideal' Score (N)	Gap	'Actual' Score (N)	'Ideal' Score (N)	Gap
<i>Statutory agencies</i>						
Supp. People Team	3.79 (188)	4.08 (180)	0.29	2.82 (176)	3.39 (173)	0.57
Housing Benefit	3.50 (187)	4.06 (182)	0.56	3.66 (181)	4.09 (176)	0.43
Other LHAs	3.30 (188)	3.69 (181)	0.39	3.07 (179)	3.53 (175)	0.46
Mental Health	2.97 (189)	3.98 (184)	1.01	3.38 (189)	4.01 (178)	0.63
Drug/ Alcohol	2.95 (189)	3.92 (181)	0.97	3.14 (183)	3.91 (176)	0.77
Probation Service	2.86 (188)	3.71 (183)	0.85	3.15 (180)	3.73 (177)	0.58
Social Services	2.85 (190)	4.02 (182)	1.17	3.25 (183)	4.04 (176)	0.79
Police	2.69 (191)	3.46 (184)	0.77	2.94 (183)	3.44 (178)	0.50
Primary Care Trust	2.17 (189)	3.48 (183)	1.31	2.55 (181)	3.53 (178)	0.98
Prison Service	2.15 (184)	3.24 (180)	1.09	2.33 (176)	3.34 (176)	1.01
NHS Trust/ Hospital	1.98 (184)	3.33 (182)	1.35	2.34 (177)	3.40 (177)	1.06
Mean	2.84	3.73	0.89	2.97	3.67	0.70
<i>Voluntary Sector agencies/ NGOs</i>						
Tenancy Support Proj.	3.33 (176)	3.95 (173)	0.62	3.50 (172)	4.08 (167)	0.58
Housing Advice Cent.	3.17 (157)	3.83 (156)	0.66	3.39 (152)	3.81 (151)	0.42
Welfare Rights Service	2.97 (189)	3.73 (181)	0.76	3.25 (183)	3.78 (176)	0.53
Drug/ Alcohol Project	2.61 (173)	3.71 (171)	1.1	2.82 (169)	3.80 (164)	0.98
Street Outreach Team	2.50 (120)	3.50 (117)	1.0	2.50 (119)	3.54 (114)	1.04
Mental Health Project	2.47 (167)	3.73 (168)	1.26	2.74 (164)	3.74 (164)	1.00
Day/ Drop-in Centre	2.30 (149)	3.30 (147)	1.0	2.41 (147)	3.29 (144)	0.88
Skills/ Empl. Project	1.92 (156)	3.30 (163)	1.38	1.92 (152)	3.23 (158)	1.31
Mean	2.66	3.63	0.97	2.82	3.66	0.84
<i>Accommodation Providers</i>						
LSVT Organisation	3.95 (093)	4.21 (094)	0.26	4.01 (089)	4.13 (091)	0.12
Hous. Associations	3.70 (187)	4.20 (181)	0.50	3.78 (180)	4.09 (175)	0.31
Homeless Hostel(s)	3.63 (150)	4.05 (150)	0.42	3.88 (147)	4.14 (146)	0.26
Supported Accom.	3.55 (176)	4.10 (174)	0.55	3.76 (170)	4.05 (168)	0.29
Private sector L'lords	2.68 (188)	3.79 (180)	1.11	3.25 (179)	3.84 (174)	0.59
Mean	3.50	4.07	0.57	3.74	4.05	0.31
<i>Other</i>						
Elected Members	2.77 (189)	3.26 (181)	0.49	2.44 (181)	2.68 (173)	0.24
Mean for all bodies	2.91	3.75	0.84	3.05	3.70	0.65

Scale

1 = very little contact

2 = little contact

3 = a moderate amount of contact

4 = a lot of contact

5 = a very great deal of contact

7.1.7 Time spent interacting with other bodies

In order to provide an indication of how the above statistics relate to a person's workload, respondents were asked to estimate approximately how much of their time over the past year had been spent in contact with other agencies in relation to homelessness. They were asked to express this as a percentage of their total work time. The mean figure given was 19% (sd 16, range 0-90%), suggesting that although there is wide variation, a fairly significant portion of respondents' time is spent interacting with other agencies. This figure is consistent with other empirical studies where the degree of time spent engaging in collaborative activity has been assessed, with figures of 15-20% reported for public managers in the American context . Hambleton et al. (1995) report wide variation amongst local public service officers in a UK context in terms of time spent collaborating (2-100%), although over half of their sample (51%) spent less than 20% of their time on this. That respondents report that they spend nearly a fifth of their time in contact with other agencies suggests that networking is a significant although perhaps not a central element of their daily work.

7.2 Explaining variation in local authorities

The preceding analysis provides an indication both of the level and nature of collaboration in relation to single homelessness in local authorities. The next two sections consider how variation in collaboration scores may be explained. Collaboration is considered the dependent variable and each of the aggregate measures discussed above is investigated separately in the analysis. These two dependent variables are assessed against a number of key independent or explanatory variables. Both contextual variables, including intra-organisational and inter-organisational factors, and interpretive variables are considered. However, it is important to note that because the data in the present study are not part of an experimental design, it is not appropriate to infer causality for the analyses which follow¹⁰⁷. In all cases the analysis should be treated as descriptive only.

The present study involves analysis of different types of data. Since the choice of techniques for analysing quantitative data is driven by the nature of the data itself, it is necessary in the present study to employ a number of different strategies for analysis. Much of the analysis below is conducted using bivariate tests which examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. In most cases independent sample t-tests are the most relevant statistical test. T-tests compare means between two

¹⁰⁷ As discussed by Warner (2008), determining causality in social scientific analysis is difficult even with experimental designs, and causality can only begin to be inferred when several well constructed experimental studies yield similar results.

groups of cases where the groups correspond to the two values of a dichotomous variable¹⁰⁸. T-tests are reliant on three key assumptions about the data corresponding to the dependent variable being investigated. The dependent variable must be quantitative¹⁰⁹, approximately normally distributed and the variance between the groups compared must be similar (homogeneity of variance). These assumptions are all tested and satisfied in the analyses which follow. In most cases independent samples t-test are appropriate rather than paired sampled t-tests (where it is otherwise this is specified). The former are used when the comparison groups are unrelated, that is, where each participant is a member of one of the groups only. The latter are used where the comparison groups are related in some way, that is, the same participants may be part of both comparison groups (e.g. where scores have been taken from the same people at different time points).

In those parts of the analysis where the independent variables are interval, correlation is used which is a bivariate analysis technique for assessing the strength of the linear relationship between two quantitative variables. Pearson's correlation is used where both variables are normally distributed and Spearman's correlation, the non-parametric correlation coefficient, is used when data are *not* normally distributed. In other parts of the analysis where it is not possible to determine variation on the independent variable, purely descriptive statistics are employed.

Where significance tests are carried out and p values are reported, 'one tailed' significance tests are used where hypotheses are directional and 'two tailed' tests are used where hypotheses are non-directional. The pre-selected significance level is 0.05, as is standard for social scientific analysis. Where p values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis of no association between variables is rejected.

7.2.1 The influence of government steering

The present section investigates the potential influence of government steering on local collaboration, the main independent variable of interest in the present study. Using the framework presented in chapter six of meta-governance tools used to promote collaboration in combination with the survey evidence, it is possible to make a

¹⁰⁸ The dichotomous variable is categorical with only two values. That is, it may consist either of two naturally occurring comparison groups (e.g. rural versus urban authorities/ male versus female) or two groups created by collapsing quantitative data into two groups using cut-off points on a scale (e.g. high versus low/ large versus small).

¹⁰⁹ In the present case the formal collaboration variable is a purely interval scale, while the informal collaboration scales is an aggregate score combined from several ordinal Likert-type scales and is treated as an interval variable. While some statisticians contend that t-tests should be confined to interval data rather than ordinal data, in practice most researchers require scores only to be quantitative, and means on Likert scales are commonly compared using t-tests (Bryman and Cramer *ibid*; Warner 2008).

quantitative assessment of the relationship between government steering and local collaboration. Three particular varieties of government steering were delineated in the previous chapter, including strategies involving information-based, incentive-based and authority-based tools. Each of these is addressed in turn below.

The influence of information-based tools

Information-based tools include written government guidance as well as inter-personal contact in the form of field visits to local authorities from government officials and official ‘road-shows’. Taking the first of these tools, written guidance, it is possible to assess its influence by examining the degree to which guidance on collaboration appears to be followed in local areas. As noted in chapter six, government practice guidance recommends specific horizontal coordination tools to local authorities (ODPM 2002a; CLG 2006a). Table 7.4 compares implementation in local areas of these ‘top-down’ coordination tools as compared to other tools which may be considered more ‘bottom-up’.

Overall, there is greater use of top-down than bottom-up tools, with a mean implementation rate of 57% for tools advocated in central guidance as compared to a mean implementation rate of 36% for locally generated tools. In terms of specific tools advocated in central guidance, there is a fairly high level of compliance with some of the suggested tools such as joint training, operational level joint protocols and multi-agency forums. However, other tools including joint commissioning, dedicated posts, strategic protocols and common assessment procedures are less common. Nevertheless, given that implementation of these tools is not a legal requirement, the compliance level with official guidance can be considered fairly high.

Interestingly, the majority of tools promoted in official guidance are the less ‘ambitious’ ones according to the scale of integration developed above. This is perhaps in recognition of the difficulty of mandating overly ambitious forms of collaboration. The few examples of ambitious tools which are advocated centrally are adopted only in a minority of cases (e.g. joint commissioning, common assessment procedures). While the use of additional tools which are not explicitly mentioned in the official guidance is not as high as for the centrally advised tools, figures of around 50% for some tools may be considered high in view of the fact that such activity is entirely voluntary, and indicate a degree of locally defined collaboration.

Table 7.4 Implementation of formal horizontal coordination tools

<i>Centrally advocated/ ‘top-down’ tools</i>	%	(N)
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1 Joint case conferences		84	161
2 Multi-agency forum (strategic)		77	147
3 Joint protocols (operational)	72	138	
4 Multi-agency forum (operational)		71	135
5 Client confidentiality protocols		70	133
6 Multi-agency training events		65	125
7 Joint directory of support services		56	106
8 Joint protocols (strategic)		47	89
9 Common assessment procedures, eg forms		36	68
10 Joint commissioning of services		30	57
11 Dedicated post for forging inter-agency links		18	34
Mean		57	
<hr/>			
Locally developed/ 'bottom-up' tools		%	(N)
12 Service Level Agreements		70	133
13 Common directory of accommodation providers		55	105
14 Multi-agency outreach service		52	99
15 Joint client monitoring procedures	49	94	
16 Co-location of services		39	74
17 Joint local Performance targets/ indicators	21	40	
18 Multi-agency homelessness team/one stop shop		18	34
19 Staff placements in other agencies		15	28
20 Joint budgets		6	12
Mean		36	

The influence of the second information-based tool, inter-personal contact from government officials, can be assessed by comparing mean collaboration scores for authorities with high and those with low levels of contact with CLG, the central government department responsible for homelessness. A measure of 'vertical contact' was developed in the survey which asked respondents to indicate the degree of contact they had with a range of national level bodies, including with CLG, using the same 5 point likert scale as for horizontal contact. In this analysis high contact with CLG is defined as scores of 3 or more while low contact is scores of less than 3¹¹⁰.

Table 7.5 indicates that those reporting high levels of contact with CLG had higher mean collaboration scores on both measures of the dependent variable. Independent sample t-tests to compare means found that the differences were significant for both formal collaboration ($t = 2.01$, $p = 0.001$) and informal collaboration ($t = 22.51$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 7.5 Relationship between vertical contact and local collaboration

Collaboration measure	High Vertical Contact (≥ 3) (N=132)	Low vertical contact (< 3) (N=56)
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¹¹⁰ Mean scores for the five national bodies investigated are presented in appendix X (table) which reveals that of all the national level bodies, contact with CLG was highest.

Formal collaboration (mean score, s.d.)	143 (26.17)	120 (28.11)
Informal collaboration (mean score, s.d.)	10.06 (3.6)	8.05 (4.3)

The influence of incentive-based tools

As discussed in the previous chapter, key incentives include funds and schemes rewarding collaborative working such as the Innovation Fund and the Regional Champions Scheme. It is possible to ascertain the influence of these incentive-based tools by comparing mean collaboration scores for authorities in receipt of these awards and those which are not.

The results are presented in table 7.6 below. It can be seen that the mean informal collaboration scores of Beacon/ Regional Champion authorities are significantly different from authorities without this status ($t=-18.8$, $p=0.005$). Similarly, the mean informal collaboration score for authorities with Innovation Funding is greater than those without ($t=-16.4$, $p=0.01$). There was also a statistically significant difference ($t=-2.87$, $p=0.001$) between the mean number of coordination tools adopted by authorities which received Innovation Funding (mean=12) and those who had not (mean=9). There was a marginal difference between the mean coordination tool scores of 'Beacon' and 'non-Beacon' authorities, although this finding was not statistically significant ($t=-1.27$, $p=0.167$). Overall, the results indicate that collaboration is greater in authorities that have been awarded Innovation Funding and Beacon or 'Regional Champion' status, suggesting that incentive based tools may have a positive impact on the level of local collaboration.

Table 7.6 Relationship between incentives and local collaboration

Collaboration measure	Innovation Funding		Regional Champion/ Beacon Award	
	Yes (N=22)	No (N=169)	Yes (N=20)	No (N=171)
Formal collaboration mean score (s.d.)	12.00 (3.04)	9.13 (3.87)	10.60 (4.89)	9.33 (3.75)
Informal collaboration mean score (s.d.)	150.6 (23.39)	134.2 (28.49)	152.9 (30.8)	134.1 (27.5)

The influence of authority-based tools

One method of assessing the influence of authority-based tools on local collaboration is to examine mean interaction scores between the housing authority and other bodies with which collaboration is mandated under statute, and comparing these with non-mandated bodies. As discussed in chapter six, there is a legal duty for social services departments and registered social landlords including LSVT organisations to cooperate with housing authorities to help them discharge their homelessness functions. There is also a legal duty for housing authorities to assist *other* local housing authorities when requested. Consequently, one might expect there to be significant levels of interaction between housing authorities and these bodies in comparison to other agencies in the homelessness network. Furthermore, because of the requirement for social services departments to assist with the development of local authority homelessness strategies, one might predict a reasonably high level of ‘planning level’ contact with this agency in particular. In addition, since the probation service and primary care trusts are required to be involved in strategic Supporting People commissioning bodies at local level, one might also anticipate high planning level interaction scores with these bodies.

Table 7.7 provides the planning and case level contact scores for each of these ‘mandated’ bodies as compared to the mean scores for all bodies in the homelessness network. It indicates that the three agencies for which we may have expected high planning level contact – social services departments, the probation service and primary care trusts - have either average or below average scores compared to all agencies in the network. Case level contact follows a similar pattern, with greatest contact gaps with primary care trusts, followed by social services departments and then the probation service. These three bodies have the greatest gaps between ideal and actual levels of planning and case level contact of all mandated bodies, indicating scope for improvement in terms of contact levels. However, of all mandated bodies, only primary care trusts and social services departments have higher ‘contact gaps’ than the network mean. For all other mandated bodies, interaction levels are either greater than or around average. This

suggests that the government requirement to collaborate is more successful with some mandated bodies than others.

Table 7.7 Mean contact scores for individual mandated agencies and all agencies

Agency	Planning Level Contact			Case Level Contact		
	Actual	Ideal	Gap	Actual	Ideal	Gap
Other LHAs	3.3	3.7	0.4	3.1	3.5	0.4
Probation	2.9	3.7	0.8	3.2	3.7	0.5
Social Services	2.9	4.0	1.1	3.3	4.0	0.7
PCT	2.2	3.5	1.3	2.6	3.5	0.9
LSVTs	4.0	4.2	0.2	4.0	4.1	0.1
RSLs	3.7	4.2	0.5	3.8	4.1	0.3
All agencies in network	2.9	3.8	0.9	3.1	3.7	0.6

Table 7.8 below provides data on local housing authorities' mean interaction scores with mandated bodies as a whole in comparison to the mean contact scores of all non-mandated local bodies in the homelessness network. When all mandated bodies are taken together, it can be seen that there is greater interaction with these bodies than with non-mandated bodies and a greater perceived gap between actual and ideal contact for non-mandated than mandated bodies. This suggests that legal mandates to collaborate with particular bodies are at least moderately successful.

Table 7.8 Mean contact scores for mandated versus non-mandated bodies

Type of Body	Planning Level			Case Level		
	Actual	Ideal	Gap	Actual	Ideal	Gap
Mandated*	3.25	3.87	0.62	3.33	3.80	0.47
Non-mandated	2.95	3.72	0.77	3.08	3.65	0.57

* Mandated bodies include the Social Services Department, Primary Care Trust, Probation Service, Registered Social Landlords, LSVT organisations and other Local Authorities.

Taking all 'meta-governance' tools together, the analysis suggests that attempts to stimulate collaboration in local authorities may have a positive impact. Although it is not possible to determine causality without constructing an experimental design, these results provide some evidence of positive state influence of local service delivery networks across English local authorities. They also indicate a reasonable level of consistency between central and local conceptions of collaboration. There is no serious 'implementation gap' between central policy prescriptions and local practice, although compliance is not perfect and there may be a tendency for local authorities to resist the most ambitious forms of collaboration. Comparisons of interaction scores indicates fairly

good contact scores for mandated bodies as a whole compared to non-mandated bodies, although there are particular mandated bodies such as social services departments and primary care trusts with which there is perhaps less contact than would be desirable.

It is not possible within the current research design to make direct comparisons between the relative impacts of these different tools on collaboration because of the difficulty of isolating the effect of one tool from another. For instance, greater collaboration in authorities receiving incentives to collaborate may also be explained by the fact that such authorities have also received information or advice on collaboration, or because they have responded to government mandates. Nevertheless it is possible to make some qualitative assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different tools, a topic which is explored in chapter nine.

7.2.2 Additional factors affecting collaboration: Introduction

Moving onto other potential explanatory variables, a range of antecedents of collaboration identified in previous literature were discussed in chapter one. Recalling figure 1.1 from that chapter, contextual factors include both inter- and intra-organisational factors. Inter-organisational factors refer to the environment between agencies or the wider context in which networks of organisations reside. Inter-organisational factors aside from government policies and meta-governance tools include the level of inter-dependence between agencies, the geographical proximity of agencies and the degree of compatibility of organisational systems. Intra-organisational factors are internal to agencies and include the level of resources, the presence of collaborative leadership, organisational structure (e.g. number of tiers) and the level of staff training. Interpretive factors refer to subjective factors relating to the attitudes of staff towards other organisations and their personnel, and include issues such as domain consensus, trust, goal congruence and mutual understanding.

While it is outside the scope and aims of the present research to consider of all these factors, it is possible to assess a small number of variables from each category in order to identify which other factors or variables – other than government steering – appear to explain variation in collaboration across local authorities in the present setting. Since some of the factors identified above are difficult to measure quantitatively, it is necessary in some cases to use proxy measures for these variables.

Contextual *intra*-organisational variables investigated include organisational structure, level of training of staff, and level of resources. Organisational structure is

considered in terms of the number of tiers in a local authority. Since previous research has indicated that collaboration is more challenging where there are several levels of government involved, it might be expected that collaboration will be greater in single tier authorities than in two tier authorities. Level of training is assessed in terms of survey respondents' qualifications. Previous work indicates that more highly trained and qualified staff may be more likely to collaborate since they perceive collaboration to be less of a threat, and therefore where respondents are more highly qualified, collaboration is expected to be higher. Level of resources is assessed in terms of number of staff. Since collaboration is often hindered by lack of resources, authorities with greater staffing levels may be expected to collaborate more.

Contextual *inter-organisational* variables assessed include the degree of interdependence, fragmentation and geographical proximity between agencies. The level of single homelessness is used as a proxy for interdependence. It seems likely that where there is greater homelessness in local areas, agencies will also be more interdependent since tackling homelessness in the present system depends on agencies working together, as illustrated in chapter four. Since interdependence is an antecedent of collaboration, we may expect areas with greater homelessness to collaborate more. Fragmentation is indicated by the degree of externalisation of core housing services, including homelessness, housing advice and local authority housing stock. Previous literature also considers fragmentation to be an antecedent of collaboration, and we may therefore expect local authorities with contracted out services to have higher collaboration scores. An authority's geography, that is, whether it is urban or rural¹¹¹, is used as a proxy for physical proximity since it is likely that agencies in urban authorities are more proximal than those in rural authorities. As discussed above, geographical proximity is considered to facilitate collaboration. We may therefore expect closer collaboration in urban than in rural authorities.

Interpretive variables are much harder to assess but two key variables may provide information on the influence of such factors. The length of time a respondent has been in post, or in their present authority, is potentially important and serves as a proxy measure for trust. As discussed in chapter one, trust emerges as individuals engage in repeated interactions, and those who have been in post or in their current authority longer will have had a greater length of time to interact with other agencies in their network and therefore to establish trust. Since trust is an antecedent of collaboration, length of time in post or in current authority are predicted to be associated with greater collaboration. Secondly, previous experience of working in other types of agencies in the homelessness

¹¹¹ Authorities are classified as urban and rural according to the DEFRA Rural definition and classification of authorities dataset: www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm

network may indicate a greater understanding of other agencies, something which is also considered an antecedent of collaboration. Consequently collaboration may be greater amongst individuals who have worked in other types of agencies in the homelessness network and less amongst those who have worked predominantly in one sector.

It should be noted that the two main dependent variables used hitherto measure *organisational* rather than *individual* collaboration. A separate question asked respondents to indicate what proportion of their own work time personally had been spent in contact with external bodies in relation to single homelessness. When assessing individual level factors such as length of time in post, professional qualifications and previous experience of working in other agencies in the homelessness network, this measure is used as a third dependent variable and cross-checked against the other two dependent variables.

7.2.3 Intra-organisational factors

Number of organisational tiers, Level of resources and Professional qualifications

Of the contextual intra-organisational factors investigated, both organisational structure (i.e. number of tiers in an authority) and number of housing advice staff appear to be related to the level of collaboration, while professional qualifications do not (see Appendix I, tables 1 and 4). Independent sample t-tests reveal that mean collaboration scores are greater for single tier than two tier authorities. Single tier authorities have higher *formal* collaboration scores than two tier authorities (11 vs 9 coordination tools employed) and the difference is statistically significant ($t=2.14$, $p=0.034$). Single tier authorities also have higher *informal* collaboration scores (mean 146) compared to two tier authorities (mean 134) and the difference is again statistically significant ($t=2.30$, $p=0.023$).

A bi-variate correlation analysis for level of staffing¹¹² and formal collaboration score was performed, and the two variables were found to be weakly and positively associated ($r=0.252$, $p=0.000$). Similarly, informal collaboration was weakly and positively associated with the number of personnel ($r=0.237$, $p=0.001$). T-tests, however, revealed no significant relationship between professional qualifications of respondents and level of collaboration, either organisational collaboration or individual collaboration (see Appendix I table 4)¹¹³.

¹¹² Measured as number of full time housing advice staff

¹¹³ Data on professional qualifications were not perfectly normal so the non-parametric equivalent to the t-test (Mann-Whitney *U* test) was also run as a cross-check; this test confirmed that qualifications are not significantly related to the amount of time interacting with external agencies.

7.2.4 Inter-organisational factors

Interdependence, Fragmentation and Geographical proximity

With regards to contextual inter-organisational factors, interdependence and geographical proximity are positively associated with collaboration, although fragmentation is not (see Appendix I tables 2a and 4). The proxy for interdependence, the level of single homelessness, varies across local authorities. The range in levels of single homelessness¹¹⁴ for 2005 in English local authorities was 0-1407 with a mean level of 103¹¹⁵. The level of single homelessness was found to be weakly and positively correlated with collaboration. In other words, the greater the level of homelessness, the greater is the degree of collaboration. This finding applied to both informal collaboration (Spearman's $r = 0.211$, $p = 0.003$ ¹¹⁶) and formal collaboration (Spearman's $r = 0.289$, $p = 0.000$).

As noted above, the degree of externalisation serves as a measure of fragmentation, with greater externalisation predicted to be associated with higher collaboration. The survey asked respondents to indicate whether their housing advice service and homelessness service were contracted out to an external agency, and also whether their authority had undergone the Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer process to transfer ownership of their housing to an external housing provider¹¹⁷. T-tests to compare the mean collaboration scores for those authorities which *had* contracted out these services and those which had not, revealed that none of these variables was related to the degree of collaboration (see Appendix I table 2a).

In terms of geography, urban areas were found to have greater formal and informal collaboration scores than rural authorities, and the difference was statistically significant. Urban authorities had mean formal collaboration scores of 10.18 compared to

¹¹⁴ Single homelessness was defined as the number of homeless people accepted by English local authorities for statutory assistance due to vulnerabilities such as old age, mental illness, physical disability or for 'other' special reasons, such as time spent in custody, in HM forces or in care (other than 'young' care leavers), and those fleeing home because of violence or the threat of violence (other than domestic violence). Official rough sleeping estimates were available for a limited number of authorities only and are therefore not included in the single homelessness statistic.

¹¹⁵ Since the survey was conducted in the Summer of 2006, aggregate data for the four quarters of the previous year on the number of single homeless people is used to provide an indication of the level of single homelessness at local authority level. This data was obtained from Local Authority Annual Returns to Central Government for the year 2005 (PIE Data).

¹¹⁶ Spearman's r was used since the level of single homelessness was not normally distributed across authorities.

¹¹⁷ Data on LSVT status was cross-checked against official data 'Completed LSVTs Dataset'. Updated 16/08/06 www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1152563.

rural authorities with scores of 8.84 ($t=2.40$, $p=0.017$). The mean informal collaboration score for urban authorities was 141 in comparison to rural authorities' mean of 132 ($t=2.32$, $p=0.022$). Assuming that agencies in urban authorities are geographically closer than in rural authorities, this provides support for the hypothesis that geographical proximity is an antecedent of collaboration.

7.2.5 Interpretive factors: trust and mutual understanding

Length of time in post or current authority

Moving onto interpretive factors, it was suggested above that the length of time a respondent had been in post or in their present authority, proxy measures for trust, may be related to collaboration, with collaboration greater amongst those who had spent longer in post or in their current authority. The relationships between each of these variables and collaboration were assessed using correlation analysis. Collaboration was considered both at an organisational level and an individual level (i.e. percentage of respondents' time spent interacting with external bodies). However, neither of these variables was found to be associated with level of collaboration either at an organisational or individual level (see Appendix I table 4).

Experience working in other agencies

In relation to the second interpretive variable, respondents were first asked whether they had previously worked in *any* other type of agency from the list of 25 provided in the survey. *Organisational* collaboration scores for those who had previously worked in another type of agency were, perhaps unsurprisingly, no different to those who had not worked in another type of agency from the list provided. However, as noted above, it was anticipated that experience working in other types of agencies may increase an *individual's* likelihood of collaborating with other agencies, since it may indicate greater mutual understanding. Indeed, individual collaboration scores were greater for those who had worked in another type of agency than those who had not (25% versus 17%), although this difference was not statistically significant ($p=0.052$).

Those who had worked in another type of agency were asked to indicate what type of agency this was. Analysis was conducted to ascertain whether there was any relationship between the particular type of agency previously worked in and a respondent's individual collaboration score. Those who had worked in non-housing

related agencies reported that they had spent more time over the past year in contact with external agencies than those who had not (25% versus 16%) and this difference was statistically significant ($t=2.61$, $p=0.011$). However, previous work in a non-housing agency was not associated with organisational collaboration scores.

Respondents who indicated that they had worked in another type of agency were also asked whether this organisation had been within their current local authority. It was anticipated that collaboration scores may be greater amongst those who had worked in other agencies *within* their current authority than those who had not, since movement of staff between agencies is one way of building trust and understanding between agencies. However, there was very little difference in mean collaboration scores for these two groups (see Appendix I table 3).

In a separate question respondents were asked to indicate how many years they had spent in the housing or homelessness sector. Using correlation analysis, this variable was not found to be associated with *organisational* collaboration (see Appendix I table 4) but was *negatively* associated with *individual* collaboration ($r=-0.175$, $p=0.009$). In other words, those who had been in the housing or homelessness sector longer were *less* likely to spend their time collaborating with other agencies.

A summary of the additional contextual and interpretive factors associated with collaboration is provided in table 7.9.

Table 7.9 Summary of additional factors associated with collaboration

Factors associated with collaboration	Factors not associated with collaboration
No. of tiers in authority	No. years in post/ trust
No. of housing staff/ level of resources	No. years in authority/ trust
Geographical proximity	Professional qualifications (degree or professional housing qualification)
Level of homelessness/ interdependence	Externalisation of services/ fragmentation
Previous experience working in agencies other than housing agencies	Previous work in other agency (any type)
No. years in housing/ homelessness sector	Previous work on other agency in existing local authority

Chapter summary and discussion

This chapter has attempted to gauge the degree of collaboration in English local authority networks with respect to the problem of single homelessness and to characterise the nature of this collaboration. The results indicate moderate levels of formal and informal collaboration, although marginally greater levels of informal collaboration. Within the *formal* variety of collaboration a mix of horizontal coordination tools is used, with group modes and impersonal modes most common. Overall, the tools which are most commonly adopted are those which are less ambitious and do not involve a deep level of service integration. This is perhaps a reflection of the cost and resource implications of these tools, however it may also testify to a propensity for agencies to resist forms of collaboration which threaten organisational autonomy. This concurs with the more pessimistic view of collaboration which suggests that agencies will strive to maintain their organisational autonomy (for example Hudson, 1995).

In terms of *informal* collaboration, that is, the day-to-day interactions between personnel across organisational boundaries, the survey highlighted strongest interactions between housing authorities and accommodation providers or other housing related agencies. This may provide support for the ‘organisational homogeneity’ hypothesis discussed in chapter one that organisations with similar remits and common ground find it easier to collaborate. Housing authority personnel have least contact with voluntary sector agencies and moderate contact levels with statutory sector agencies.

In relation to the *organisational level* at which collaboration is pursued, both informal and formal collaboration are stronger at operational level than at strategic level. This is evidenced by greater ‘case contact’ level scores overall as compared to ‘planning contact’ scores, and a larger gap between actual and ideal contact levels at strategic level than at operational level. It is also backed up by the greater use of operational level horizontal coordination tools than strategic or planning level tools.

A further aim of this chapter has been to investigate the relationship between central government steering, the main independent variable of interest, and local collaboration, the dependent variable. It appears that this key contextual variable *is* positively related to local collaboration. In particular, incentives to collaborate and direct contact between central and local government are associated with greater collaboration. The impact of authority-based tools is more difficult to assess since it is methodologically difficult to detect variation in this tool. Nevertheless, the analysis does provide some indication of the influence of authoritative exhortations and mandates. Analysis of interaction scores for mandated bodies suggests that there is *less* contact with these bodies

than would be ideal according to the perceptions of street level bureaucrats themselves. However, the gap between ideal and actual contact is lower for mandated bodies overall than for non-mandated bodies, indicating at least partial effectiveness of authority-based tools. Similarly, although local agencies are not perfectly compliant with government advice and exhortations on recommended forms of collaboration, there is greater use of horizontal collaboration tools specified in central guidance ('top-down' tools) than other tools ('bottom-up' tools). This also suggests some positive state influence over collaboration. Chapter nine examines perceptions of different vertical steering tools to provide further assessment of local actors' responsiveness to government's attempts to encourage collaboration in local areas.

While government steering appears to be associated with collaboration, other key factors, both contextual and interpretive, are also related to collaboration. This suggests that government steering may explain only part of the variation in collaboration across local authorities. From the range of possible variables investigated, contextual variables associated with collaboration include institutional structure, geographical proximity and number of homelessness staff, while interpretive individual level factors include previous experience in non-housing agencies and length of time in the homelessness sector.

The finding that collaboration is greater in single tier than in two tier authorities resonates with interview data discussed in chapter five. Interviewees in the two tier authority case study area generally found that this structural feature presented challenges for inter-agency collaboration. Difficulties associated with working across levels in two tier authorities were as much related to bureaucratic politics as to physical distance between agencies. The two tier system was characterised as creating tensions between District and County levels since Districts had to compete for County money for services such as social care and housing related support. Therefore the vertical District-County relationship was an unequal one with greater power residing at the County level. The statistical finding on authority structure backs up these qualitative interview findings.

The greater levels of collaboration in urban areas than in rural areas reported in this chapter back up previous work which suggests that geographical proximity may affect collaboration. Geographical proximity was also highlighted by interviewees, although did not constitute a main theme. Comments around geographical proximity related mainly to the physical barrier of working with agencies in other buildings.

The additional finding that collaboration is greater in authorities with more housing staff supports previous work which suggests that adequate resources are an antecedent of collaboration. It indicates that human resources in terms of number of personnel may be an important element of the resource issue. Resources were a

continually emerging theme in the interview analysis of factors affecting collaboration, with lack of sufficient staff time a particular obstacle to collaboration.

In relation to the interpretive factors highlighted, the finding that length of time in current post or authority has little bearing on collaboration scores is interesting. This is surprising in view of the importance of repeated interactions to the development of trust and collaboration, and one might have expected longer serving staff to have developed trusting and collaborative relationships. However, it appears that those who are longer in post do not interact any more frequently than those who are new in post.

The *type of agency* in which an individual has worked appears to be a more important determinant of their likelihood of collaborating than the *local authority area* in which they have worked. The finding that collaboration is greater amongst those with experience of working in agencies outside of the field of housing, coupled with the finding that collaboration is lower amongst those who have spent longer in the housing/homelessness sector, may indicate that individuals who remain within one sector or organisation become entrenched within the culture of that sector and less ‘outward facing’ than those who move across sectors.

Importantly, collaboration also appears to be associated with the level of homelessness. This may provide support for rationalistic explanations of collaboration, which assume that actors collaborate where the task environment dictates this. Where there are significant levels of homelessness in an area, the need for collaboration is likely to be greater, and authority-level data indicate that this is reflected in authorities’ patterns of collaboration.

While the analysis presented in this chapter provides a good indication of the relationship of different variables to collaboration, it is important to recognise its limitations. The analysis is based on bivariate analyses only, which makes it difficult to determine the relative importance of different variables. While comparisons of the strength of association and significance levels for different variables presented in the supporting appendix provide a reasonable guide to this, examination of the full range of factors within a single model using multivariate analysis techniques would generate more sensitive and powerful data to explain the contribution of different variables. In such an analysis it would also be possible to include relevant statistical controls for other variables which may act as potential confounders, such as the level of homelessness, population size, the level of deprivation and the availability of affordable accommodation. A more advanced statistical analysis of this nature would constitute a useful line of enquiry for future study.

Chapter 8: The contribution of horizontal tools to collaboration

Chapter overview

This chapter examines formal horizontal tools as mechanisms of collaboration. While the previous chapter highlighted the range of horizontal coordination tools used in local authorities, the present chapter considers the dynamics of these tools. Four key issues are considered. Section 8.1 offers an examination of the extent to which horizontal tools are viewed as mechanisms for attenuating the perceived externalities in the homelessness system which were documented in chapter five. This has implications for the extent to which horizontal coordination tools can serve as effective mechanisms for overcoming externalities in fragmented systems generally.

Section 8.2 analyses actors' motivations for developing particular horizontal coordination tools, assessing the relative importance of rationalistic and 'bureau-political' considerations. The discussion also assesses the influence of government steering on local collaboration, in particular whether tool development is primarily voluntary or pursued in response to government edict.

Section 8.3 outlines the main challenges associated with developing and managing tools including issues associated with bureaucratic politics. Finally, section 8.4 discusses whether horizontal tools themselves offer a means of overcoming the tensions of collaborative working more generally. Sections 8.3 and 8.4 together provide a means of assessing whether horizontal tools are mechanisms for resolving the tensions of bureaucratic politics, or simply the mechanisms through which bureaucratic politics are played out.

8.1 Do horizontal coordination tools attenuate externalities?

Chapter five outlined the perceived externalities created by the homelessness system. Collaboration is sometimes posited as a means of minimising externalities through better coordination, and the interview analysis sought to assess this claim. The analysis uses data from interviewees' general descriptions and assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of different coordination mechanisms.

To recap, the main client level externalities highlighted by interviewees were confusion created by the complex system, difficulties accessing services, duplication of assessment and information collection by different agencies, disagreements over which agencies should be responsible for clients with multiple needs, and gaps in services. The principal externalities relating to service provision or planning were duplication of the services provided, challenges of developing services because of fragmented funding streams and the precariousness of being dependent on other agencies to fulfil statutory responsibilities. An additional theme raised in the literature, as discussed in chapter one, included forms of incoherence such as contradictory practices created by agencies' lack of an overview of the system as a whole. Several of these themes were raised by interviewees in their accounts of the role of horizontal coordination tools, indicating that the tools do help in many respects to attenuate these externalities (see table 8.1 below).

Duplications and gaps in services were addressed in group modes such as multi-agency forums through discussions where agencies attempted to 'iron out' such issues (quote ID32 in table 8.1). Duplication in service provision was also being addressed in one local authority which was considering co-location of frontline homelessness agencies, a form of joint service provision (see quote ID14). This mode of coordination was viewed as likely to improve cost-effectiveness, obviating the need for each agency to have its own premises, equipment and personnel.

Duplication of assessment and information collection was something which interviewees suggested could be reduced through the use of joint assessment and referral forms, joint monitoring databases and joint service directories. In the case of joint assessment forms, these could help prevent clients from having to repeat their details to several agencies (quote ID19). In relation to joint referral forms, interviewees commented that they often found themselves making several referrals for a single client in order to maximise the chances of securing accommodation for this person. A single referral form, it was suggested, would reduce agencies' duplication of effort. Joint monitoring databases were also cited as a tool for preventing double-counting of client outcomes, something which was created by each agency operating its own monitoring

system. Lastly, joint directories of services or available vacancies were described as reducing the need for each agency to produce their own lists of providers and services.

Improving accessibility of services was linked to forms of integrated provision such as co-location and multi-agency teams. These coordination tools were viewed as bringing services closer to people in the places they normally use the services (quote ID19). For instance, it was suggested that homeless people with very chaotic lives would be more likely to use co-located ‘drop in’ services as compared to disparate appointment-based services (quote ID40). Multi-agency outreach teams were considered to perform a particularly important role for street homeless people who had limited access to mainstream services. Services such as housing advisors in GP surgeries could potentially reach groups who would be less inclined to seek help for housing or debt issues because of the stigma attached or for cultural reasons. Linked to the accessibility argument, integrated service provision was also considered to reduce confusion for clients (quote ID8). As discussed in chapter five, the homeless service system was considered very complex and fragmented in the case study areas, forcing clients to approach several different agencies.

Joint protocols were considered a mechanism to address the problem of the lack of accountability for providing services to certain clients. They had been used in a number of cases as a mechanism for holding agencies to account for their responsibilities. Protocols were considered particularly important for issues where there was no statutory responsibility or duty of care on the part of the agency concerned. In such cases, locally established joint protocols became the ‘stick’ to use to elicit agencies’ cooperation. One example involved the introduction of a protocol with Housing Associations to develop a shared responsibility for preventing homelessness. This was in response to Housing Associations’ practice of evicting tenants and passing the responsibility over to the Local Authority, who held the statutory responsibility for homelessness. This example also serves to illustrate how protocols may be a mechanism for agencies to use when they perceive themselves overly-dependent on other agencies to fulfil their own statutory responsibilities.

There were several tools which local actors viewed as helping to reduce incoherence. For instance, formal coordinator posts – a personal coordination mode – were viewed in this light. In areas where such posts had been established, interviewees commented that these coordinators had an overview of activities and developments in different organisations. Consequently they were able to assist with the creation of policies and procedures on a cross-authority basis and to help ensure that different organisations were not working at cross-purposes (see quotes ID29 and ID8). Multi-

agency forums also helped to improve coherence. Aside from identifying gaps and duplications in services as discussed above, they were also used collectively to deal with problems that may otherwise remain unaddressed (quote ID3). They also served an important information-sharing function which improved agencies' awareness of local developments including service developments, something which could potentially reduce inconsistencies or contradictions in the practices of different agencies.

Lastly, joint directories of services were considered to improve coherence (quote ID21). Because agencies lacked an overview of the system as a whole, their knowledge of other agencies in the system was sometimes inaccurate or incomplete. Joint directories were viewed as a means of distributing accurate and up-to-date information to all agencies within the network and ultimately improving the quality of decisions made around client referrals and other issues.

These examples highlight several ways in which formal horizontal coordination tools do, or could, help to attenuate the externalities of the fragmented homelessness network. Externalities such as duplication, incoherence, poor accountability for determining responsibility and difficulties accessing services were perceived as issues which could be addressed or attenuated through horizontal coordination mechanisms. Their appraisal of the role of horizontal coordination tools does suggest that consideration of these issues did have some influence over their decisions to develop or consider using such tools. Despite this, some externalities identified by interviewees – such as the challenge of developing services because of fragmented funding streams – were outside of local actors' control, with local horizontal coordination structures unlikely to ameliorate such difficulties.

Table 8.1 The contribution of horizontal coordination tools to the reduction of externalities

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Reducing duplication and addressing gaps in services</p>	<p>“There are all sorts of duplications that multi-agency meetings help to iron out. And I think at the moment that is a particular focus.” ID32, LA2</p> <p>“The crux of the matter came from the question ‘why are these agencies working independently, why don’t we share a photocopier or work under one roof or have one admin dept rather than six?’” ID14, LA2</p> <p>“The next step is looking at things like assessments and information, so that clients that use 2 or 3 services don’t have to keep saying the same things over and over. Maybe they could just say it once and that file is held with the lead agency and with the person’s permission, shared appropriately with another service.” ID19, LA2</p>
<p>Enhancing coherence (e.g. through information sharing, collective problem solving, gaining overview of system)</p>	<p>“We look at trying to influence and get resources together where there’s funding streams available. We wouldn’t be able to do that if we didn’t have that County-Wide Homeless Managers group and the post who’s coordinated all that ‘cause they negotiated with the County SP team on a regional level rather than on a local level.” ID8, LA2</p> <p>“I have an awareness of what other agencies are doing, and trying not to pull in the opposite direction to them. That’s my job as the coordinator, making sure that the two different teams are not doing opposite things to the same group... making sure that we’re all trying to work in the same direction, or at least not competing directions.” ID29, LA2</p> <p>“A lot of agencies don’t know that other agencies exist, so it’s not a case of them not wanting to refer, it’s that they don’t know they are there. We’ve been discussing that lately in our group, whether we should put together a directory or something.” ID21, LA3</p> <p>“The forum means that the services are better coordinated, & it means that everyone does occasionally say ‘we’ll all do something about this problem’.” ID3, LA3</p>
<p>Improving accessibility of services</p>	<p>“I support the day centre model of having a single site, of bringing the services closer to the people where they are.” ID19, LA2</p>
<p>Reducing confusion for clients</p>	<p>“Co-location would be ideal; it must be very confusing for clients ‘cause everything is in different place in the City.” ID8, LA2</p>
<p>Improving accountability for fulfilling responsibilities</p>	<p>(Discussing joint protocols) “I think that’s what you need sometimes is a document to go back to, to refer to when agencies maybe aren’t showing up and saying, ‘you do realise within this document that your director or CEO has signed, it says that you’re supposed to be doing this’... a point of reference.” ID16, LA2</p>

8.2 Motivations for adopting horizontal tools

The discussion on local support for collaboration in chapter five (section 5.2) alluded briefly to the reasons why interviewees considered collaboration to be important. The two main reasons cited were firstly that homelessness was a multidimensional problem, and secondly that agencies therefore could not solve this alone and were interdependent. However, in order to delve more deeply into their motivations for collaborating, an analysis of themes was undertaken surrounding interviewees' comments on the role of specific collaborative mechanisms and tools. By focusing on specific examples and forms of collaboration, it was possible to move beyond rhetorical statements about the merits of collaboration to a more meaningful analysis of the major factors which propelled agencies to collaborate.

While local actors did view formal horizontal tools as helping to alleviate problems associated with the fragmented system, as discussed above, tools were adopted for a variety of reasons. Actors' motivations for using horizontal coordination tools extended beyond a belief that they would help remedy negative externalities or provide more holistic approach to client needs. Analysis of the reasons cited for using such tools indicates that concerns to protect the interests of the agencies themselves were fairly high on the agenda of street level bureaucrats (see table 8.2 below).

In particular, horizontal coordination tools provided an opportunity for agencies to protect their own position in a difficult financial environment and also to protect themselves against risk in a sector which was characterised as having a strong 'blame culture'. In terms of the financial environment, as noted above, one authority was considering co-location of services. While this was a means of reducing duplication, it was also part of a survival strategy for local agencies who knew they had to reduce costs in order to remain in operation (see quote ID17). Pooling resources through co-location was one means of achieving this. Co-location was also viewed as a cost effectiveness measure on the part of the local housing authority which had its own interests for reducing the costs of local voluntary sector homelessness services (quote ID8). Across all authorities there was something of a consensus amongst agencies that the availability of funding for voluntary sector organisations was diminishing. Joint bidding, another financial collaboration tool, was being employed in at least two authorities as a means of rationalising available funding and was viewed as a means of reducing local competition between agencies (quote ID21).

In a similar vein, case panels were used to lever in resources in the form of client referrals (quote ID5). Linking back to an earlier point made in chapter five (table 5.9), agencies' funding is generally dependent on sustaining a high throughput of clients or

high occupancy levels. The desire to increase referrals therefore acted as a means of protecting the financial viability and wellbeing of agencies.

In relation to risk, collaboration through formal tools was used as a means for agencies to manage and protect themselves against this. One of the roles of joint protocols, for instance, was to protect agencies against potentially serious incidents arising from a failure to coordinate and the repercussions of this. Interviewees suggested that protocols were more likely to be adopted when agencies could see that it would help protect them in this respect. For instance, one housing authority worker noted how she had been able to persuade the social services department to sign up to a protocol to prevent homelessness amongst families, since if they were found by the housing authority to be ‘intentionally’ homeless, the burden of responsibility and risk would fall onto the social services department (quote ID1). Another housing officer described how the housing authority and the hospital had agreed a hospital discharge protocol following a serious incident involving a homeless patient discharged from hospital. The housing officer suggested that the hospital had been happy to agree the protocol to work jointly with the housing authority because the protocol made it clear that the housing authority would ultimately accept responsibility for any negative consequences of decisions made (quote ID5).

Information sharing protocols were also viewed as a means of protecting agencies against risk. These protocols typically incorporated client consent statements to enable information sharing between specified agencies, and having such protocols in place offered agencies protection against breaches of data protection law. Information sharing protocols were also seen as a means of protecting staff from risky clients by ensuring that they had access to any information held by other agencies on dangerous behaviour (quote ID25).

However, horizontal coordination tools were also sometimes adopted for more altruistic reasons and in recognition of agencies’ interdependence. Multi-agency teams and case panels had been set up in many cases because staff viewed them as necessary for tackling homelessness in a holistic way (quotes ID16 and ID1). Temporary, ad-hoc groups had also been established in case study areas to respond to the needs of homeless people as they arose. They were rationalistic in the sense of being developed as means of responding to service users’ needs, but the desire to tackle these was motivated by an altruistic concern to improve the lives of individuals affected by homelessness. Examples of task-specific groups included a ‘move-on’ group set up out of a concern that people could not move from hostels to their own tenancies because of a lack of appropriate accommodation, and a complex needs group dealing with entrenched rough sleepers.

The role of government in driving the development of formal horizontal coordination tools was highlighted only by a minority of interviewees. These interviewees mentioned joint bidding in response to government funding streams which required multi-agency working as a pre-condition for receiving awards. Two interviewees also noted how the Supporting People programme had stimulated the use of horizontal coordination mechanisms (e.g. quote ID11). This programme funding required the completion of standard paperwork, both in terms of client assessment and reporting forms through its Quality Assurance Framework. In some cases this had helped to standardise the assessment forms and data collected by agencies. Although local authorities did not have fully developed joint assessment and monitoring systems, those agencies funded through this programme were beginning to move in that direction, with their systems becoming increasingly harmonised.

Table 8.2 Motivations for adopting/ participating in formal horizontal tools

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Pooling resources to protect agencies/ achieve cost-effectiveness in a difficult financial environment	<p>“There is an argument for all the organisations using the same building and sharing some of their resources. You could save a lot of money, and that may help when the money is being clawed back. ’Cause there’s no question, not all the organisations are going to survive. Choice is good, but realistically it’s not going to happen.” ID17, LA2</p> <p>“The co-location side of it would be much more attractive to us as a local authority than individual agencies asking us for funding for projects which includes a percentage for admin, monitoring & evaluation etc. I think having all these quite disparate organisations around the city all paying building rents is not really cost effective.” ID8, LA2</p>
Coordination tools as mechanisms for leveraging resources	<p>“The providers attend because they can get referrals, so there’s something in it for them, an incentive.” ID5, LA1</p>
Rationalisation of available funding to reduce local competition	<p>“We’ve been talking about this problem for ages, money keeps coming down, it’s a ridiculous amount they want us to fight over, but we’re not doing that anymore, so what we’ve decided to put together a consortium which will put in a bid for something like £300k.” ID21, LA3</p>
Protecting agencies against risk	<p>“We’ve got a protocol with social services. It was hard to get agreement on some things, but you can if you demonstrate how it benefits them. The obvious hook for them is they will have a children act duty towards that family if we find them intentionally homeless.” ID1, LA1</p> <p>“We’ve had to introduce a protocol around discharge arrangements from the hospital because there is a potential for things to go wrong & I think both sides want to firm things up in terms of risk.” ID5, LA1</p> <p>“I’m trying to get a ‘Client Alert’ going for people who have been excluded from hostels for carrying a weapon, because the police don’t always let us know although they should.” ID25, LA2</p>
Belief in ability of coordination tools to meet needs of homeless people	<p>“We are a multi-agency team and were deliberately formed that way to respond to needs of rough sleepers.” ID16, LA2</p> <p>“I chair a multi-agency domestic violence panel, which from a homelessness point of view is very helpful ’cause it’s about making good, safe decisions with the right information, and domestic violence is a good example of where you really can’t do it on your own.” ID1, LA1</p>
Government programmes/ funding streams	<p>“They are trying to develop a common assessment form but I don’t think there’ll be the will to do it here. Though in some ways Supporting People fulfils that role – agencies have already had to adapt their assessment forms to meet SP requirements.” ID11, LA2</p>

The testimonies of interviewees indicate mixed motivations for adopting formal collaborative tools. ‘Bottom-up’ drivers, overall, appeared to be more dominant than ‘top-down’ drivers. The most significant bottom-up drivers were instrumental and were

associated with protecting agencies, although these motivations themselves stemmed from the broader environment, which required agencies to make savings and protect themselves against risk. Altruistic means-ends motivations were slightly less dominant but nevertheless appeared to stimulate the use of formal mechanisms of collaboration in some cases. Interestingly, top-down drivers such as government programmes and funding streams were mentioned only on a few occasions

8.3 The development and management of horizontal coordination tools

8.3.1 Horizontal tool development: an incremental process

While the section above provides an indication of *why* tools were developed, interviewees also commented on *how* these tools were developed (see table 8.3). Analysis of this process helps to determine the level at which coordination tools are developed, that is, centrally by government or locally by ‘self-organising’ networks. The process of tool development in individual authorities was gradual. It was clear that certain tools facilitated or led to the creation of others. In particular, group coordination modes such as forums and joint training events were commonly used as a basis for working on the development of impersonal collaborative mechanisms such as joint protocols. Those multi-agency forums that did not produce tangible operational multi-agency working arrangements were negatively perceived by interviewees. Indeed, beyond simple information sharing, the very purpose of multi-agency groups in some respects was to develop further joint working mechanisms. In addition, specific issues raised at multi-agency forums had led in many cases to the creation of further subgroups to work on these particular issues.

In some instances new tools had been devised to help support delivery of the goals of other tools. For instance, two examples were provided of joint structures established to help agencies operationalise agreed protocols. First, a homelessness prevention protocol between the Housing Authority and Housing Associations in one authority had led to the creation of a multi-agency case panel to deal with individual cases related to the protocol. Second, a joint protocol between the housing authority and the Connexions service had resulted in co-location in the form of one of the Connexions workers based in the housing department’s advice centre (quote ID7 below).

Other examples of tools introduced to support existing tools included a jointly funded post to help meet a joint local target on youth homelessness in LA2. In another

authority, a jointly funded post had led to the creation of three further posts to support this role and ultimately this had 'mutated into' a dispersed multi-agency team (ID5, LA1). Also in LA1 a housing association manager running a supported accommodation project described how she hoped that a service level agreement with the mental health trust would lead to the development of joint training to assist her accommodation staff in identifying mental health needs amongst their residents.

Another dynamic of tool development was the way in which formal tools sometimes developed as a result of informal inter-agency working, or vice versa. For instance, in one authority agencies were involved in a case panel on an informal and ad-hoc basis when needed, but one of the panel chairs commented that there was a strong possibility that this would be formalised with the panel becoming a multi-agency arrangement (quote ID1). At the same time, in several cases formal group coordination modes such as forums and case panels had triggered additional informal meetings or ongoing discussions on particular issues. These group modes of coordination also reinforced informal inter-agency relationships simply because they provided an arena for agencies to network and build linkages. Interviewees noted that without tools such as multi-agency forums and training events, there would be little opportunity for staff to network and 'catch up' with each other in this way (quote ID2).

The examples above serve to illustrate the gradual and incremental nature of horizontal tool development. There was something of a cumulative effect, with certain tools and forms of collaboration leading to the development of others. This reinforces the idea of tool development as a bottom-up process.

Table 8.3 Process of tool development

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Horizontal tool development as a cumulative and incremental process	“In setting up the joint protocol with Connexions, what we’ve been able to do now is get a worker from Connexions based in our office who will work alongside our Supported Housing team, in providing a service to our young people.” ID7, LA1
Dynamic inter-relation between formal tools and informal collaboration	<p>“The mental health panel isn’t multi-agency yet, but the police and probation have attended on a case by case basis and it may well end up being that.” ID1, LA1</p> <p>“The forum is an excellent opportunity just to meet up with people you wouldn’t see on a daily basis. Just to catch up, you know, to network. That sounds a bit corny but I think it is important to do that.” ID2, LA1</p>

8.3.2 The challenges of developing and managing horizontal tools

While the section above indicates ways in which horizontal coordination tools were mutually reinforcing and cumulative, it was also clear that attempts to develop tools did not always follow this incremental and consolidating pattern. In some cases agencies were unable to develop horizontal coordination tools successfully, and there were several reasons why this was so (see table 8.4).

The first difficulty associated with tool development concerned disagreements over who should be driving these forward. In a number of cases no single agency had assumed responsibility for developing these. Some interviewees expressed frustration that the people they felt should be leading or co-leading the process were not doing so. For instance, one housing association manager, describing why joint protocols had not been set up locally, acknowledged that while he had some responsibility for leading the process, he needed someone from the other agency concerned to share this lead (quote ID39). Similarly, a homelessness manager suggested that the Supporting People team was not leading on the development of integrated information systems, something she considered should be part of its role (quote ID8). Another difficulty in this respect was resentment created when the responsibility for hosting events regularly fell on the same agencies. For instance, some of the larger and more proactive agencies complained that the costs and responsibility for arranging and hosting meetings usually fell to them. This theme links back to the issue described in chapter five of a lack of domain consensus, an important barrier to collaboration, where there is disagreement between agencies over the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

The second main obstacle to tool development was the difficulty of achieving standardisation and uniformity (see quotes ID19, ID13 and ID9). This had arisen in relation to developing impersonal tools such as common directories, joint assessment forms and joint monitoring systems. In each of these areas, agencies' information needs differed slightly, making it difficult to develop uniform systems. Group modes such as co-located services were also hampered by this problem, since it was considered difficult to cater to the needs of diverse client groups in a single setting.

Third, local contextual and council corporate priorities had militated against the development of tools in some cases. For instance, in one authority attempts had been made to develop a common inter-agency database, and a large government grant had been obtained to fund this. However the attempt had failed due to a lack of support from the local council, the corporate priorities of which lay in other areas (ID3, LA3). Contextual problems associated with the wider environment included the different reporting requirements of funders. For example, a housing manager in LA1 commented that the different priorities and reporting requirements of the Home Office and Supporting People programme had presented challenges for the development of their new multi-agency team.

Fourth, certain tools were viewed as posing a potential threat to agencies. For instance, co-location and multi-agency teams were viewed as potentially threatening to the autonomy and viability of the individual agencies involved (quote ID19). Fifth, tool development was subject to a range of practical challenges in the case study areas, including physical and technical problems and time issues. One physical difficulty involved arranging suitable premises for co-located services (quote ID19). In another case, a prison officer outlined the physical challenge of co-location, in terms of arranging for agencies to carry out in-reach homelessness prevention work (quote ID31). Another interviewee commented on the physical difficulty of conducting joint assessments between geographically dispersed agencies and between agencies with different opening hours. This is a potentially important barrier in fields of human services such as homelessness where services are provided around the clock. Technical problems had inhibited the development of integrated information systems in some authorities, including joint database construction.

Lastly, tool development was described as an extremely time consuming process. In some cases the time was considered justified where the tools were seen as performing useful work, and case panels were singled out as an example of this. However, the time it took to develop certain tools made some interviewees question their worth. For instance,

interviewees were dubious about the utility of joint protocols and multi-agency forums in this respect.

Table 8.4 Challenges of tool development

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Lack of clarity/ disagreements over who should lead process	<p>“It’s something that, you know, I should be leading on, but I need somebody from the other side to lead on it with me... ’cause it’s a joint thing.” ID39, LA1</p> <p>“Joint access & referral forms, because a lot of the people who sit on the homelessness forum are SP funded, I really feel that SP should be leading that process, & at the moment they just don’t appear to be doing it.” ID8, LA2</p>
Difficulties around standardisation	<p>“The needs assessment in agencies will be different. It’s all very well sharing information but how much use is it to you?” ID19, LA2</p> <p>“As long as I’ve been in this city people have been trying to work on a common referral and common needs assessment form. But people still want to use their own forms, which is fair enough. There might be one for homelessness, but if you have people in different categories, which forms do we use?” ID13, LA2</p> <p>“I think one of the difficulties of trying to provide homelessness services to all in one place is that you can’t necessarily make that place look and feel the way it needs to for all groups.” ID9, LA2</p>
Contextual difficulties, e.g. local political priorities	<p>“There was an attempt to get a joint database so that everyone could register people in hostels on the same database. But it fell foul of procurement regulations & some internal politics of the council and it fell to pieces. It was at odds with the new customer service system we were engineering which was the council’s priority.” ID3, LA3</p>
Perception that certain ambitious tools could pose a threat	<p>“There’s degrees of collaboration. At one end of the extreme we could just jump into bed with each other and become one organisation that does everything for everybody ... but this is quite threatening for people.” ID19, LA2</p>
Practical challenges: physical, technical & time issues	<p>“I don’t know whether [co-location] is physically possible because in town there’s all the building works going on, there’s not a lot of property available in the city centre, and everyone’s agreed it’s got to be somewhere accessible.” ID19, LA2</p> <p>“We had a big technological problem with Notify which we have done a huge amount over the last year to overcome, and we are now uploading onto Notify.” ID1, LA1</p>

Once tools had been established, there were further challenges associated with maintaining and managing these (table 8.5). These themes have implications for the effectiveness of horizontal coordination mechanisms as tools of local collaborative governance and also for the systemic level at which collaboration is pursued. Several

interviewees noted that there was a need for coordination tools to be supported or underpinned by other processes and it was clear that these processes were not always in place. In one authority, for instance, a joint protocol had been developed to formalise homelessness agencies' commitment to cooperative working, but with no actions to back it up. Agencies had filed the protocol away and it had not been referred to or revisited for several years. Only when a new collaboration initiative had been launched was the protocol unearthed, and even then only one of the agencies concerned could locate it. Similarly, there was a sense of frustration that some group coordination modes achieved few tangible operational outcomes. Some interviewees commented that multi-agency forums were not arenas for 'getting things done' and were mere 'talking shops', underscoring the need for such forums to be underpinned by further processes to ensure they achieved their aims.

Another challenge involved establishing commitment to coordination tools from the agencies concerned. Obtaining the required level of participation had proven problematic in relation to group coordination modes such as forums and meetings (quote ID29). In addition, there was a view that protocols were not always adhered to. One interviewee (quote ID8) suggested that a process for monitoring tools was essential to ensure that agencies did fulfil their commitments set out in joint protocols. Related to this, there were disputes over which agency should shoulder the burden of holding multi-agency events.

Certain tools brought organisational clashes and disagreements to the fore. Multi-agency forums, for instance, were characterised as adversarial and competitive (quote ID13). Forums were also considered arenas where organisational cultural clashes emerged (quote ID3). For instance, differences in approach and philosophy as described in chapter five were manifested in these groups. Group coordination modes could be dominated by certain agencies, allowing them unfair influence over the agenda. The local authority was sometimes the dominant body (quote ID5) but other agencies also dominated proceedings in some instances (quote ID19).

Other challenges were more practical in nature. Interviewees commented that at times there was inadequate participation from senior staff in formal collaboration attempts (quote ID8). The costs and time involved in attending multi-agency forum meetings was considered problematic by some interviewees (quote ID13), a factor which may be related to the view held by some interviewees discussed in chapter five that there was some duplication of multi-agency meetings. Similarly case panels were described as extremely hard work, time consuming and challenging, and requiring significant follow-up work.

Lastly, interviewees highlighted the importance of an effective chairman or chairwoman (quotes ID14 and ID3).

Table 8.5 Challenges of tool management

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Need for tools to be underpinned by further mechanisms and processes	<p>“We had this joint protocol written up about 6 years ago and it was just put on a shelf. I mean it wasn’t really a working document anyway, it was just saying ‘you’ll do this, and we’ll do that, and we’ll all by nice and flowery’. But it didn’t follow up with any stuff like developing joint referral forms.” ID14, LA2</p> <p>“The homelessness forum could do more in terms of setting things up cross-borough, operationally.” ID1, LA1</p>
Enforcing agency commitment to coordination tools	<p>“The number of times that social services don’t come to the multi-agency meetings is just amazing.” ID29, LA2</p> <p>“Unless someone is monitoring how the protocols are working and is it being adhered to, they sit on a shelf and people just fall back into their own practices, they’re not enforceable, they are just bits of paper.” ID8, LA2</p>
Tools as arena for adversarial/ competitive relations and culture clashes	<p>“The forums are not that useful, they’re adversarial. One or two people get on their high horse then the meeting’s over.” ID13, LA2</p> <p>“I think the organisational cultures really that clash at meetings, that’s one barrier.” ID3, LA 3</p>
Dominance of certain agencies in process	<p>“The forum is sometimes a bit council worker-heavy I feel ... it should really be a forum for the voluntary sector.” ID5, LA1</p> <p>“One agency had their own slot and a standing item and were able to take up a quarter of the time with their own concerns and issues.” ID19, LA2.</p>
Need for staff at appropriate organisational levels	<p>“I think the problem with some groups is there are no senior people to make decisions, and a lot of the issues that you are talking about trying to overcome you would need Directors there at a senior level to say right, I’m gonna send down this mandate and this is how we are going to work.” ID 8, LA2</p>
Time/ resources involved	<p>“If you count up the salaries around that table, it’s a really expensive meeting.” ID13, LA2</p>
Importance of effective chair within group coordination modes	<p>“It’s bringing agencies together on a regular basis where there isn’t a dominant chair who’s saying ‘we will follow this agenda’.” ID14, LA2</p> <p>“My job as chair is to find some middle ground really, and to help people see everyone else’s point of view really.” ID3, LA3</p>

Overall, the challenges of tool development and management broadly reflect the obstacles to collaborating as discussed in chapter five. Some of the difficulties of tool development – for instance those around differing priorities and no agency wanting to

shoulder the burden of leading on tool development - are consistent with a bureaucratic politics explanation of collaboration. However, others are more practical in nature and are there perhaps more reflective of a rationalistic perspective, such as the difficulty of developing standardised systems to suit the needs of all clients, and the physical challenge of developing jointly provided services. Similarly, once tools are in operation, they continue to be affected by tensions associated with bureaucratic politics such as competition between agencies and the dominance of powerful organisations. However, they are also beset with other process challenges such as ineffective chairing and lack of participation from staff at appropriate organisational levels. There are also problems of commitment and participation which may be related to lack of time and limited confidence in the utility of some coordination tools.

8.4 Do horizontal coordination tools alleviate the obstacles to collaboration?

Although there were considerable challenges to managing horizontal coordination tools, there were also ways in which horizontal tools helped to alleviate some of the obstacles to collaboration, both interpretive and contextual (see table 8.6). In terms of alleviating interpretive obstacles, certain tools were viewed as building mutual understanding, trust and domain consensus. Mutual understanding and trust were facilitated by co-location. Since this mode of collaboration involves sharing premises, interviewees noted that it increased day-to-day contact between individuals from different agencies, and suggested that this led to improved understanding of one another's roles and a general strengthening of inter-agency relationships (quote ID5 in table 8.6). Despite the tensions sometimes present in multi-agency forums as discussed above, they were also a mechanism for developing mutual understanding and trust since these arenas enabled participating agencies to begin the process of breaking down barriers and misunderstandings (quote ID18). Similarly tools such as staff placements and secondments, as well as multi-agency training events, were considered to generate 'goodwill' between agencies.

Other tools had contributed to the development of domain consensus through the clarification of roles and responsibilities of different agencies. For instance, a series of homelessness forum meetings in one authority had been used to agree the respective roles of the police, frontline homelessness agencies and hospital accident and emergency wards in relation to a rough sleeping problem in the area. In addition, impersonal modes such as joint protocols and agreements had helped to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different agencies with respect to service provision. For instance, a joint agreement had

been introduced in one authority to define the role of two particular agencies with respect to care planning for service users (quote ID13). Such tools helped to manage expectations where agencies held unrealistic views of what other organisations could provide.

Two contextual obstacles to collaboration were attenuated through formal tools. As the discussion above indicates, the time it takes to develop, manage and participate in formal collaborative mechanisms was one obstacle to their development. However, while participation could be time consuming, certain coordination tools helped to alleviate the time pressures associated with multi-agency working. Group coordination modes such as case panels reduced the need for agencies to coordinate sequentially. Rather than having to contact several agencies separately to devise care packages, agencies meeting simultaneously could agree these together (quote ID9). Individual coordinator posts were also seen as fulfilling a time saving role because they brought added capacity to the process and carried out some of the 'legwork' which agencies found challenging on top of their existing workloads (quote ID18). A second contextual obstacle to collaboration – physical distance - was potentially solved through co-location of services (quote ID8). Co-location was described as speeding up the information sharing and communication process.

In summary, horizontal coordination tools have the potential to help overcome some of the challenges of collaborating, and can provide an efficient way of structuring and formalising inter-agency relationships to enhance joint approaches. However, as section 8.3 illustrates, they are no panacea for achieving effective inter-agency relations and require active management and commitment if they are to realise their potential benefits.

Table 8.6 Horizontal coordination tools as mechanisms for addressing the obstacles to collaboration

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
Role in addressing interpretive issues	
Building trust/ mutual understanding	<p>“A resettlement officer is going to specialise in working with the Youth Offending Team. She will spend one day a week at the YOT, attend their meetings, get their referrals, hopefully this will generate a bit of joint working, good will, joint understanding of each others’ roles, so that should be really positive.” ID5, LA1</p> <p>“People through the forum are getting to know each other, building a bit of trust, and hearing each other talk and ‘oh she thinks that, oh, she’s not so bad, she thinks like I do’.” ID18, LA2</p>
Enhancing domain consensus	<p>“We have something called a three way agreement. If someone refers to us from say the mental health team, we would have an agreement with them, you do this bit, we do this bit, the client will do this bit. And it helps actually, because it defines everyone’s role.” ID13, LA2.</p>
Role in addressing contextual issues	
Addressing time obstacle to collaboration	<p>(Discussing a multi-agency case panel) “It’s much more simple doing it that way instead of us being the hub and having to phone half a dozen people, firstly to get all the information, then to find out what the other agencies are going to put it. It’s very time consuming and tiring and the pressure is then all on the one officer who’s trying to get all the information and all the commitments, whereas if we’re all sitting in a multi-agency meeting and everybody’s hearing the same information, it saves time and we can provide holistic support without agencies contradicting each other”. ID9, LA2</p> <p>“You’ve got a paid coordinator who goes away and actually does the legwork to try and make it happen on the ground” ID8, LA2</p>
Addressing physical challenge of collaborating	<p>“It’s easier to sort things out when you’ve got a personal relationship with people & they’re in the same building. If I want to go and speak to environmental health about accommodation, they’re upstairs, you can just go and speak to them. I think that actually having people around in the same building and located in the same organisation does make partnership working easier”. ID8, LA2</p>

Chapter Summary and Discussion

Four core questions have been addressed in this chapter. First, do horizontal tools help to overcome externalities associated with the fragmented homelessness system? Second, what are actors' motivations for developing such tools? Third, how are tools developed and what are the challenges associated with their development and management? And fourth, are they a means of overcoming the challenges of collaboration generally?

There was evidence that they *did* help to alleviate externalities in the homelessness service system, such as gaps, duplications and sources of incoherence. For instance, multi-agency forums helped to iron out duplications, while protocols clarified roles in order to prevent agencies shifting responsibility onto others, and in so doing helped to improve accountability. Operational level tools such as case conferences, jointly delivered services, multi-agency drop in centres and outreach teams were regarded as leading to better coordinated and more holistic services for clients with multiple needs.

Tools did also in some senses present mechanisms for addressing the tensions of and obstacles to collaboration, such as their role in developing mutual understanding and trust, and in establishing domain consensus (e.g. protocols). Although developing and managing formal collaborative mechanisms was described as a time consuming and resource intensive process, some tools did provide opportunities for efficiencies to be made, both in terms of time and money.

However, without active management and continual nurturing, these benefits were unlikely to materialise. Indeed, horizontal coordination mechanisms were arenas for the tensions of inter-agency relations to surface. For instance, cultural differences and competition between agencies were two problems that were associated with group coordination modes. There were clear difficulties around participation in coordination tools and adherence to joint agreements, highlighting a degree of 'free-riding' behaviour, an intrinsic risk in any form of collective action. These issues highlight the importance of developing processes such as rules and sanctions to underpin joint arrangements.

Tool development was a challenging process, and a number of obstacles to its realisation were highlighted. Some tools had proven elusive because of the difficulty of developing standardised responses to the range of clients involved with homelessness services and the differing needs, including informational needs, of agencies. This may partially explain the relatively low use of some impersonal modes such as joint assessment, monitoring systems and common directories of services highlighted in the previous chapter.

Although interviewees could see value in these tools, their desire to retain their own individual systems for assessing clients and recording data was one of the main reasons cited for agencies' failure to adopt such systems.

Other tools were difficult to establish because no one agency or individual was prepared to lead on these or shoulder the costs of doing so. In some cases there was a problem around establishing *joint* leadership for horizontal coordination tools. This may indicate a potentially important role for coordinators, perhaps funded through government, to act as facilitators of this process.

The experience of some interviewees that their attempts to develop collaborative tools were at odds with the council's corporate priorities highlights the fact that horizontal tool development takes place in a local political context which may sometimes undermine attempts to collaborate, in spite of central government's promotion of this.

Tool development itself was a gradual process, and it was clear that certain tools acted as catalysts for the development of others. There was something of a 'snowball' effect in this respect, with one tool leading to another. This theme supports previous work which views collaboration as a sequential, gradual and phased process. In terms of the public policy theories discussed in chapter three, it provides support for the argument that collaboration is an incremental and bottom-up affair, taking time to emerge, and is therefore something which cannot simply be mandated.

Overall, since tool development was perceived to be a time consuming and resource intensive process, agencies were most likely to develop horizontal tools when they could see that it was in their interests to do so. There were strong instrumental motivations for developing tools such as preserving agencies' financial viability and protecting against exposure to forms of risk. Although altruistic motivations did also play a part in decisions to develop tools, these were subordinate to the instrumental motivations raised. However, the instrumental motivations were not necessarily a reflection of selfish individualistic behaviour of the individuals concerned. They were part of a desire to protect organisational interests and reputations in the context of a competitive environment and a blame culture in which there was a potential for vulnerable individuals to slip through the cracks' between services - something which could have serious repercussions. Further analysis of these issues in relation to the overarching theoretical framework of the research is provided in chapter ten.

Chapter 9: The contribution of vertical meta-governance tools to collaboration

Chapter overview

This final empirical chapter explores the dynamics and perceived effectiveness of vertical meta-governance tools through a qualitative examination of the perspectives of street level bureaucrats who are the targets of these tools, and civil servants involved in their development. In so doing the chapter provides evidence to address one of the core questions raised at the outset of the thesis, namely the extent to which this approach to the governance of collaboration offers an effective response to coordination problems and other associated challenges affecting local public services in a fragmented polity.

While chapter seven provided support for the view that government steering can make a difference to the degree of local collaboration, the qualitative evidence which follows helps to build a richer picture of the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of particular vertical meta-governance tools, as well as local actors' responsiveness to these, and central actors' views of their effectiveness. This discussion helps to evaluate the persuasiveness of 'top-down' explanations of the implementation of collaboration, and illuminates the challenges associated with central state steering of local public service delivery networks.

The chapter considers each of the main categories of meta-governance tool in turn, beginning with authority-based tools (section 9.1), moving onto information-based tools (section 9.2) and then incentive-based tools (section 9.3). The last part (9.4) examines the broader meta-governance structures in which the tools aimed specifically at homelessness are embedded. The final discussion draws together the key findings and makes observations regarding the effectiveness of tools and their strengths and limitations as mechanisms for collaborative governance.

9.1 Perceptions of authority-based tools

Beginning with authority-based tools, three examples have been identified, first mandatory collaboration in the form of legislation, second, ‘network constitution’, that is, mandatory inclusion of certain bodies in group structures created to facilitate collaboration, and third, government monitoring and regulation. Each of these is discussed in turn.

9.1.1 Legislation requiring cooperation

As noted in chapter six, the legislation requiring cooperation involves a statutory duty for certain agencies such as housing associations and social services departments to cooperate with the housing authority in order to help it achieve its homelessness functions. In view of previous literature discussed in earlier chapters which casts doubt on the ability of governments authoritatively to mandate local collaboration, actors’ views on this legislation was of particular interest.

When questioned about these statutory duties, interviewees from housing authorities were generally in favour of government setting out a requirement for cooperation at local level from agencies such as social services departments and housing associations, and felt it was legitimate for government to do so (see quotes ID10, ID11, ID16, table 9.1). This view was partly a reflection of their own past difficulties in gaining cooperation from these bodies when requested, something which itself was attributed principally to their resource constraints and competing priorities. Interviewees suggested that the statutory duty to cooperate could be used as a bargaining tool or a stick to wave at housing associations or social services departments to back up their requests for cooperation, or simply that it was at least a commandment to get the right agencies ‘around the table’ (quotes ID1, ID8).

However, the vast majority of interviewees were highly sceptical about the enforceability of the statutory duty to cooperate (quotes ID3, ID8, ID19). There was a general sense that this duty was ineffective and that agencies did not comply with their obligations to cooperate. Several interviewees felt that the duty was too vague to be meaningful, and suggested that the legislation should specify *how* agencies should cooperate. Many also questioned the legislation’s ability to hold agencies to account when they did not comply with the duty to co-operate, pointing out that the statutory duty was meaningless unless it penalised agencies that did not comply. Interviewees therefore suggested that the statutory duty to cooperate alone was not a sufficient driver of

collaboration, and should be backed up with penalties or financial incentives. One local authority homelessness manager (ID3) commented that for Housing Associations the incentives not to collaborate were greater than the incentives to collaborate. Specifically, he suggested that housing associations were reluctant to accommodate people made homeless because of rent arrears, and that the carrot or stick used to encourage this has to be stronger than the perceived negative impact of housing these people.

Since the Housing Authority was the body with ultimate legal responsibility for assisting homeless people, housing officers felt that other bodies could simply ‘bat back’ the responsibility to the Authority. Housing associations and social services departments were both regarded as problematic agencies in this respect. In relation to housing associations, interviewees considered it unfortunate that the duty to house homeless people was not shared between the housing authority and housing associations, arguing that a shared legal responsibility would put greater weight behind the duty to cooperate and provide an incentive for housing associations to comply.

With regards to social services departments, when dealing with people with dual social care and housing needs, one interviewee (ID8) noted that social services departments could simply view the person’s homelessness as the priority problem and pass the responsibility onto the housing authority. Such examples persisted in spite of the duty to cooperate. The same interviewee commented that the housing authority could meet its own statutory duty to cooperate with social services departments by writing a letter to inform them when a family becomes ‘intentionally homeless’. However, she suggested that the social services department did not have an equal duty to respond following receipt of that letter, leaving the homeless family with nothing.

The difficulties of enforcing the duty to cooperate were backed up by additional comments made by interviewees relating to the challenges of mandating collaboration from the top-down (quote ID18). Overall, despite support for the view that government *should* require cooperation from certain agencies, interviewees were doubtful about government’s ability to enforce the statutory duty to cooperate as set out in current legislation. Their comments suggest a need for further supportive legislation to back up the statutory duty, alternative meta-governance tools, or perhaps more radically, a shared legal responsibility for homelessness across the core agencies.

Table 9.1 Perceptions of the statutory duty to cooperate

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Doubts over enforceability of statutory duty to cooperate/ ability to mandate collaboration</p>	<p>“When it says ‘you have a duty to cooperate’, what does that mean? Cooperation could mean just returning your phone calls but persistently saying no to your request... that legislation is very woolly ... rightly so, it shouldn’t be too prescriptive, but you end up with organisations wriggling out of a duty because the legislation is not specific enough. They should be more specific about <i>how</i> they should cooperate. And there should be some element of holding them to account and if they don’t cooperate they’ve got to be able to demonstrate why.” ID19, LA2</p> <p>“They can require it; enforcing it is a whole different ballgame. Unless there is money tied to it or some other strong stick, it just doesn’t get on your agenda. If there was extra money in it or some penalty if you didn’t do it, I think that’s the way to enforce it really. It happens when it’s sensible and everyone can gain by it, but it’s quite difficult to enforce otherwise.” ID3, LA3</p> <p>“Yeah, they have a duty to cooperate, but I just think it’s too vague. It’s meaningless to a certain extent and it’s a bit of a tick box exercise.” ID8, LA2</p> <p>“I think government has got to encourage people to work together but you can’t mandate it from on high, you just can’t do it. Government can’t do anything really, they can just suggest things.” ID18, LA2</p>
<p>Support in principle for statutory duty</p>	<p>“They should do it. Sometimes you need to force agencies to take responsibility – they each have their own pressures.” ID11, LA2</p> <p>“Well I think the government needs to take a greater interest in it.” (gives example of not getting input required from social services) ID10, LA2</p> <p>“There does need to be some kind of higher driver. I know it’s difficult that whole issue of can you make people do this, but I think you need to try. If there’s no will at a national or a strategic level it’s never gonna filter down and I think maybe that is the problem with social services.” ID16, LA2</p>
<p>Viewed as a bargaining stick for gaining cooperation</p>	<p>“You can use it as a bargaining tool when you are trying to get what you want from housing associations, you say, ‘we remind you of your responsibilities under this Act’, but unless the Housing Corporation put down more prescriptive requirements and outcomes that they expect then it’s just a bit pointless really.” ID8, LA2</p> <p>“We could wave around the guidance or the legislation... we did have some things where we had to say ‘no this is what the code of guidance says, this is your responsibility not ours’, so it can be useful.” ID1, LA1</p>

9.1.2 Monitoring and Regulation

Chapter six highlighted various mechanisms for monitoring and regulating collaboration. These included direct regulation through local authority housing inspections, and indirect monitoring through research, performance targets and self-assessment. When asked if collaborative working was something which government monitored, most local interviewees were able to provide some examples of this (see table 9.2). Strong forms of monitoring such as inspection were mentioned by some interviewees. However, the majority of examples provided were ‘softer’ forms of monitoring, for instance through CLG attendance at local forums or meetings, or indirect monitoring through general performance indicators.

Several of the key performance indicators and associated targets in the sector, such as those on the prevention of homelessness, temporary accommodation and rough sleeping, were believed indirectly to encourage collaborative working, since meeting these targets was dependent on adopting multi-agency approaches. This was a view shared both by civil servants and street level bureaucrats alike (quotes ID9, ID36, ID37). Another indirect form of monitoring occurred through the requirement for statutory agencies to produce local strategies which were monitored by central government departments. One interviewee from the criminal justice sector commented that if there was no element of inter-agency working described in his local community safety strategy then ‘somebody would probably notice’ (ID29, LA2). Interviewees also mentioned the self-assessment toolkit produced by CLG which had a strong emphasis on collaboration (quote ID37). This was a voluntary exercise for local authorities to complete and return to the CLG at their discretion. The three local authorities interviewed had made use of it, and their housing staff had found the tool fairly cumbersome, with one (ID8) noting that it was dispiriting because of the wide range of joint working practices suggested that were hard to deliver.

Some interviewees had experience of collaboration being monitored via inspections¹¹⁸. Joint inspections had been held in one authority (LA1), involving the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Audit Commission’s Housing Inspectorate. In this authority collaboration was something which had been highlighted for improvement within the inspection, particularly in relation to how the Supporting People team was working with other parts of the Local Authority. From the perspective of the manager concerned (quote ID38) this has led to improvements in collaborative working, through greater elected member involvement, a significant increase in the

¹¹⁸ For instance the Audit Commission’s ‘Key Lines of Enquiry’ discussed in chapter six were mentioned.

number of Commissioning Body meetings and better engagement generally of the Probation Service and Primary Care Trust.

Another authority (LA3) had undergone ‘special measures’¹¹⁹ for a particular part of their housing service. In this authority the experience of this form of regulation had been useful, with one interviewee (quote ID4) commenting on CLG’s supportive stance. In this authority a nominated advisor had been assigned who had enabled the authority to improve its practice and ‘get ahead of the game’ by providing advice on new national policy priorities. One such priority area discussed in this case was the Supporting People programme’s ‘Quality Assurance Framework’ which emphasised the use of collaborative tools such as common assessment forms.

However, a number of interviewees, from both central and local government, commented on the challenges of monitoring collaboration directly. For instance, it was noted that responses to checklists for local authorities in relation to collaboration would reveal very little about the quality or strength of relationships between agencies. Others felt that there was little need to monitor collaboration, since this was only the process to achieve desired homelessness outcomes. Where outcomes were being met, they suggested that it would have been likely that collaborative, multi-agency approaches were being used.

¹¹⁹ A method for monitoring and improving performance in the lowest ranked authorities under the national performance system.

Table 9.2 Perceptions of government monitoring of collaboration

Theme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Indirect forms of monitoring collaboration e.g. through performance targets, visits or self-assessment</p>	<p>“I can’t think of any specific targets that would identify partnership working directly. However, where we are able to provide evidence that we are doing well against the BVPI around homelessness prevention... then we’re often able to point to partnership working as being the reason why.” ID9, LA2</p> <p>“I’m not sure we monitor the success of joint working, but we do assess performance based on statistics... If you dig under a headline figure as to why an authority has reduced rough sleeping, that may be because it works well at a joint level.” ID36, CLG</p> <p>“We’d be doing it when we went in to see Local Authorities., it’s more of a softer thing, a means to an end, so we’d be expecting there would be joint working to ensure that targets on numbers in Temporary Accommodation are reached.” ID37, CLG</p> <p>“We produced a toolkit with a focus on joint working, but it’s self-assessment, voluntary. If we had concerns we’d ask them to use it and point out to them, if your joint working is just people coming to meetings and not doing anything, that’s probably a reason why you’ve got detox services that no one can access.” ID37, CLG</p>
<p>Challenges of monitoring collaboration</p>	<p>“It’s very difficult. If you are making cars you can monitor that process fairly thoroughly and you can measure the output and how long it takes. With partnership working it’s far more difficult cause you are often not that clear at the beginning what it is you are trying to do.” ID10, LA2</p> <p>“It’s tricky to monitor, it’s no good having set questions like ‘do you work jointly with X?’ You can tick ‘yes’, but the authority may well have put ‘yes, they are engaging with health’, cause they’ve got named representatives in health who occasionally turn up, or they could have put ‘no we’re not’, because they’re struggling to get the named representative to actually get involved. The way you answer that question wouldn’t really tell you very much.” ID33, LA</p>
<p>Potential of regulatory tools to enhance collaboration</p>	<p>“We had a joint inspection ... they asked about partnership working and it was something we fell down on, because SP was not embedded across the Council... I think that’s changed now, we do have member involvement; the PCT and Probation are much more engaged. It was a criticism that the Commissioning Body was meeting so irregularly... now they meet 6 times a year... so it’s much more joined up now than it was.” ID38, LA1</p> <p>“We’ve been under special measures for Supporting People and the CLG were supportive, they really were, I mean it’s carrot and stick, but, you got the feeling they wanted you to succeed ultimately, they weren’t trying to trip you up.” ID4, LA3</p>

9.1.3 Network constitution

Interviewees were also asked for their views with regards to ‘network constitution’, another authority-based tool for promoting collaboration. As highlighted in chapter two, this involves government mandating networks or in some other way authoritatively influencing or re-arranging relationships between agencies.

As discussed in chapter six, network constitution is employed by government in relation to local homelessness networks in two principal ways. First, there are new multi-agency bodies created within the Supporting People programme, in particular Commissioning Bodies with compulsory involvement of specified agencies. The programme has also led to the creation of additional ‘provider forums’ in most areas, strategic bodies made up of provider representatives. Secondly, the statutory requirement for housing authorities to produce homelessness strategies in partnership with other agencies has, in the vast majority of authorities, necessitated the creation of a multi-agency steering group to facilitate the process. Such bodies are similar to the horizontal group coordination modes discussed in the previous chapter, but are forms which are developed directly in response to government edict, rather than being generated in a voluntarily ‘bottom-up’ sense.

There were mixed views amongst interviewees on the extent to which these mandated structures facilitated collaboration (see table 9.3). Interviewees considered them generally useful for promoting the interests of their respective client groups, for voicing collective concerns and challenging the local authority. However, attaining the desired level of participation and commitment from key agencies in the homelessness strategy process had proven problematic, including those agencies required under law to cooperate (quote ID39).

The process of allocating tasks and holding agencies to account for delivering these had been poorly managed in relation to the homelessness strategies in two out of the three local authorities, and interviewees stressed the need for assigning responsibilities to particular individuals and agencies and following these up (quote ID22). In two of the three case study areas interviewees felt the strategy process has been hindered by a lack of resources. Another common view was that the process had been divisive, with tensions between agencies having surfaced. Some voluntary sector agencies viewed the homelessness strategy simply as a means of carving up council money and felt that strategy meetings were used as public relations exercise for voluntary sector agencies seeking the approval of the local authority, rather than an effective mechanism for devising strategy in partnership (quote ID19). In two authorities there was resentment amongst voluntary sector agencies that the larger more powerful agencies in their sector

dominated the agenda. Similar views were expressed in relation to the Supporting People Commissioning Bodies, with agencies becoming preoccupied with securing the interests of their own client groups, rather than taking a broader view of needs in the local area (quote ID1).

These themes resonate strongly with the challenges of managing horizontal coordination tools generally as discussed in the previous chapter, and indicate that horizontal structures mandated by government are subject to similar problems to those generated locally. The themes discussed above and listed in table 9.3 indicate that mandated horizontal structures, as was the case with locally-generated horizontal structures, are affected by the bureaucratic politics of relationships between local service providers.

However, there is also a further dynamic at work in relation to mandated horizontal tools, namely the relationship between central government and local agencies. There was evidence that horizontal tools mandated by government are more problematic because it is difficult to generate support for structures that are seen to be imposed compared to those which are locally devised. For instance, some interviewees felt the homelessness strategies exercise had been driven in a top-down way, imposed by central government on local authorities that in turn treated the homelessness strategy as a 'tick box' exercise (quote ID18). Comments were made on the need for a sense of ownership of the homelessness strategy amongst local agencies. Related to this was the view that multi-agency and service user consultation had both been achieved in a tokenistic way, carried out simply to comply with government requirements (quote ID20).

Table 9.3 Perceptions of authoritative network constitution

Main themes	Illustrative quotes
Forum for promoting interests of client group/ voicing collective concerns/ challenging local authority	<p>“They’ve got a lot of collective issues that they want to bring to us, so I think that maybe they’ve got a sense of that perhaps as well that sort of brings them together.” ID6, LA1</p> <p>“They don’t hold back in challenging what it is that we’re proposing and making clear what their expectations are of SP as a programme, that’s been a really good thing.” ID39, LA1</p>
Can become sectional & divisive with certain agendas dominating	<p>“The danger with the Commissioning Board is that it can become a bit sectional – you know, I’m interested in what there is for my agency rather than recognising that the priority is an area that’s nothing to do with my agency” ID1, LA1</p> <p>“There was a bit of being seen, turning up and showing yourselves, a bit of a PR exercise for some organisations, to let people know how fabulous everything is going.” ID19, LA2</p>
Importance of sense of ownership/ commitment	<p>“The people now involved in developing the strategy, people have an ownership, they have responsibility for pieces of work within that strategy, they’re involved in the service review process”. ID2, LA3</p> <p>“I think when the last one was written they got some consultants in to write it, & it didn’t really seem to have much buy-in from many people so it was a bit of a waste of time.” ID3, LA3</p>
Challenges around holding member agencies to account for actions/ establishing required level of participation	<p>“It’s not always been an easy relationship and getting the three organisations to provide reps on the same day at the same time has not always been easy either.” ID39, LA1</p> <p>“There was a homeless strategy done a couple of years ago and it was all lovely and glossy but there were no actions, there was nobody. It was all yeah, great than needs doing, but there was no one put down to do it, so it was no good.” ID22, LA3</p>
Difficulty if imposed from top-down	<p>“If I’m honest it (the homelessness strategy) feels to me like the Council views it as something that they’ve got to do and it’s a bloody nuisance and the government make them do it, and it’s the only way to get funding, so they’ve got to do it well and put a lot of time into it, but they’re too busy really to do it”. ID18, LA2</p>
Multi-agency involvement in homelessness strategy process as tokenism	<p>“Sometimes I think some of the meetings have been a bit almost tokenistic, ticking boxes about consultation, where it’s not really consultation it’s more like information giving”. ID20, LA3</p>

9.2 Perceptions of information-based tools

9.2.1 Government guidance

A core tool used by government to promote collaboration is the production of written guidance for local agencies. As noted in chapter six, several best practice guides have been produced on particular areas where collaboration is advised, including issues such as the prevention of homelessness amongst ex-prisoners and patients discharged from hospital. An official code of guidance also provides guidance on suggested forms of collaboration.

When asked for their views of government guidance around collaboration (table 9.4), only a minority of interviewees aware of this. Those who had *not* read such material generally thought it could be a useful source of information (e.g. quote ID41). There were mixed views on how useful it was amongst those who *had* read such guidance. Most of these people suggested that the guidance had to a certain extent been helpful and the guidance was viewed as credible (quote ID2), however, there was a feeling amongst some that the guidance produced had become repetitive (quote ID10). Others commented on the limited time they had available for reading the considerable amounts of guidance emanating from government.

Interviewees felt guidance was most useful where it highlighted examples of innovation and good practice in different local authorities and provided contact details for these authorities. They generally found it valuable to be linked up with such authorities to learn from their experience (quotes ID2 and ID 1). Civil servants demonstrated awareness of this issue, having received positive feedback on guidance which provided specific contacts in different local authorities. This indicates a possibly valuable role for government guidance in terms of enhancing collaboration across local authorities. However, the transfer of good practice from one area to another was not always straightforward. Some local authority workers highlighted the challenge of persuading colleagues of the value of visiting and learning from other authorities, mainly because of views about the difficulty of applying lessons from other areas to a local context with different needs, resources and challenges.

Civil servants commented that it was important for guidance to demonstrate how collaboration could benefit local agencies rather than merely expecting agencies to comply with exhortations to collaborate (quote ID33). For instance, guidance issued jointly by the Department of Health and DCLG to encourage collaboration between hospitals and housing authorities had been designed to highlight how joint working with housing authorities could help hospitals to meet their own targets. Specifically, the

guidance stressed how working with housing authorities to link homeless people up with General Practitioners could assist accident and emergency wards to meet their targets to reduce waiting times by preventing inappropriate accident and emergency admissions for homeless people using this form of secondary acute care to fulfil basic primary care needs. This theme mirrors the view expressed by local actors, discussed in chapter eight, that agencies are more likely to adopt formalised coordination tools when they are convinced of the organisational benefits of doing so.

There was a view amongst central bureaucrats, however, that guidance should not be overly prescriptive (quotes ID33, ID34). Some suggested that this was partly due to variation in different parts of the country, while others indicated that ideas had to come from a local level. Civil servants recognised the limitations of information provision and were themselves unsure about how much use was made by local agencies of the guidance they produced.

Unsurprisingly, voluntary sector and RSL workers were much less likely to be recipients of government guidance, and tended to seek out information themselves when needed. While some consulted government information sources, most sought information from other sources, particularly national voluntary sector bodies and housing bodies such as the Housing Corporation. Homeless Link was singled out by several interviewees as being a particularly valuable source of information.

Table 9.4 Information-based tools: written guidance

Themes	Illustrative Quotes
Perceived value of written guidance on collaboration	<p>“Yes, we have. We have downloaded it, I think it’s good, it reinforces the messages that the advisor have put out across. And very often they are the same people that are involved in putting the information together.” ID2, LA3</p> <p>“I think it would (be helpful), because joint working is difficult so if some research was done into best practice that would be a positive thing for me. We could formalise the whole thing then.” ID41, LA3</p> <p>“It would be helpful to have government guidance on what makes partnership work, how do you keep it vibrant, how do you keep that focus, and how do you keep people informed between partnership type meetings and so on about what the issues are.” ID9, LA2</p>
Guidance most useful when it contains contact details of innovative projects	<p>“You’ve got a particular problem, so here’s a list of authorities, this is how they’ve dealt with it. If you contact X, Y& Z, you can talk it through with them; I think that’s really quite useful.” ID2, LA3</p> <p>“Sometimes if you get something like that and it has... those sort of boxes that say ‘in this borough, this happens, and this is the contact’, that’s quite useful.” ID1, LA1</p>
Repetitive nature of some government guidance	<p>“There have been hundreds of reports written about homelessness over the last 5 years. But they say more or less the same thing. I’ve almost given up reading them. It shows frustration at national level with the problem, they keep saying the same things over and over in the hope that some people who aren’t listening will listen.” ID10, LA2</p>
Guidance should demonstrate organisational benefits of collaborating	<p>“It’s not just a case of sending out a document saying ‘you must do this’ or ‘you should do this’, and expecting people to pay attention to it... in the real world that doesn’t happen, some of them will, some of them won’t.” ID33, Department of Health</p>
Guidance should not be overly prescriptive	<p>“Government can put in place the framework within which people work... something that says ‘you have to bring together those people, but then it’s up to you to decide what your priorities are, how best to deliver it’. We back away from being too hands on and prescriptive... it’s all about finding local solutions to local issues. I think we can do stuff to help facilitate, by helping with capacity building for example, but I don’t think we can prescribe too much.” ID34, CLG</p> <p>“DH and CLG last year produced a piece of work providing guidance about producing protocols from people being discharged from hospital, but it’s not detailed, it can’t be, as it will vary enormously across the country.” ID33, DH</p>

9.2.2 Information provision and collection through central-local contact

As discussed in chapter seven, inter-personal contact between central and local government can be classified as a further information-based tool, since much of this contact involves government collecting and imparting information on collaboration to local authorities. Visits from ‘specialist advisors¹²⁰’ were a key part of this contact and local authority interviewees were generally positive about advice that had been provided by CLG in this way (table 9.5), with most able to name particular specialist advisors with whom they held relationships. Advisors were generally considered credible due to their past experience of working in local authorities and were viewed as having a reasonable understanding of the issues facing local areas.

The positive experience of the majority of interviewees made them receptive to advice from CLG during their visits and ‘road-shows’, during which there had been some discussion of issues relating to inter-agency collaboration. For instance, one civil servant described a visit which had been used to problem solve a dispute between particular local agencies attempting to deal with a rough sleeping problem. Another street level bureaucrat described how CLG had enthusiastically accepted an invitation to help the housing authority with difficulties gaining cooperation from a young person’s accommodation project in the local area. In both these cases CLG performed both an advisory role and an arbitration role.

However, a minority of interviewees considered the approach used by the CLG to be rather coercive (quotes ID10, ID11), although comments indicated that the approach had altered in recent years, becoming gradually more supportive (quote ID1). Unsurprisingly, of all government departments, it was with CLG that local housing authorities had most contact, suggesting this department has the greatest steering potential in relation to housing authorities. Contact with other government departments was mainly limited to consultation on particular cases where additional information was needed.

As discussed above, while ‘effecting’ is one role of information based tools, they can also be used to ‘detect’, that is, to collect information from local areas. While specialist advisors had provided generally valued advice to local authorities, advisors’ visits were perceived by street level bureaucrats to be largely a means of CLG dispensing advice (effecting) rather than listening to the views of local authorities (detecting). When asked about their ability to get their views across to government about issues relating to collaboration, and to influence government policy in this respect, the majority of interviewees were fairly sceptical (e.g. quotes ID3, ID8). While some interviewees felt that they had an opportunity to express their views at conferences or events and through

¹²⁰ Civil servants with expertise in homelessness, usually with a background in local government.

research, most of these people were unsure about whether this information was ever used to inform policy.

One again, the national charity 'Homeless Link' was especially influential in the voluntary sector for imparting information, and was mentioned by numerous voluntary sector interviewees. It served as something of a filtering mechanism for selecting the most relevant government information and dispensing this to voluntary sector agencies. This organisation also fulfilled a nodal position in relation to voluntary sector agencies (quote ID17), having an overview of numerous projects and serving as a joining up mechanism by facilitating the transfer of best practice between local voluntary sector agencies.

Table 9.5 Information-based tools: inter-personal information provision and collection

Themes	Illustrative Quotes
Value of inter-personal contacts with CLG advisors	<p>“The contact, monitoring & advice coming from CLG now are hugely different from 2 or 3 years ago and I think it’s really positive. It used to be forms going back and forth and very little contact...civil servants rather than anyone who particularly knew how a service was run. Having the specialist advisors is a big step forward.” ID1, LA1.</p> <p>“Out of an informal discussion at a conference I had quite a positive response where I spoke to one of the CLG advisors about a problem with getting a local provider to accommodate homeless people. And she said ‘I’ll come down to see you, I’ll come & speak to the providers and sort them out”, which was really positive and really good, but that’s the only time that’s ever happened.” ID8, LA”</p>
Preference for supportive rather than coercive/ controlling CLG stance	<p>(Discussing the nature of contact with CLG) “It is helpful up to a point, it can be unhelpful and it can be de-motivating in certain circumstances, I question the tactics of some of the people they’ve used who’ve been involved in trying to persuade some authorities to up their game. I wouldn’t say it was totally business like.” ID10, LA2</p> <p>“In my previous Local Authority ODPM would come down and have control over what we were doing... that really annoyed me.” ID11, LA3</p>
Difficulty of influencing central government	<p>“I think we’ve got absolutely no chance to influence government whatsoever. Their drivers are very different to what drives the local authority. I’m personally a bit cynical when people say ‘oh we should write to CLG about this’. What good is that going to do? No one has ever shown me any evidence that it would change anything.” ID3, LA3</p> <p>“You kind of report and highlight. When the advisor was down doing his prevention road shows it was clear that lots of authorities were highlighting problems with individual housing associations not accepting homeless clients. But I don’t know how much follow-up there was from that.” ID8, LA2</p>
Importance of national charities for information provision to voluntary sector	<p>“Homeless Link has been great for meeting other agencies. There’s no benchmarking in this business, that’s part of the problem, so you can’t test whether you are doing good work or bad work. ‘Jan’ from Homeless Link goes round and visits lots of projects, she can bring lots of ideas back, lots of contacts.” ID17, LA2</p>

9.3 Perceptions of incentive-based tools

As outlined in chapter six, incentive based tools adopted to promote collaboration in this sector include funding streams such as Supporting People, the Hostels Capital Improvement Grant and the Innovation Fund, as well as awards-based schemes such as the Regional Champions and Beacon Awards scheme. Such tools reward collaboration by funding agencies that are able to demonstrate partnership working, and many do so by encouraging partnership bids.

9.3.1 Funding streams and status awards: incentives for collaboration?

When asked if funding streams such as those described above led to greater collaboration (see table 9.6), street level bureaucrats largely felt that they were a strong lever for agencies to work together. The majority were able to cite examples of bids they had been involved in which had required agencies to bid in partnership, and there was a general feeling that funding streams were moving in this direction (quote ID20, quote ID10). Interviewees mentioned all the above funding streams but singled out Supporting People funding as particularly geared towards partnership working. Some commented on a strengthening of local relationships during the process of putting together bids (quote ID6) and suggested that joint bidding was a means of reducing competition for funding at a local level. The emphasis within the Supporting People programme on joint bidding had led in many areas to the creation of consortia.

However, there was also some scepticism about the quality of partnership working generated through funding streams which rewarded partnership working, which were perceived by some to encourage collaboration purely in pursuit of money. For instance one interviewee commented on the possibility of ‘lip-service’ in order to obtain funding (quote ID19).

At the same time, the process of joint bidding and consortium building were considered high stakes activities. For instance, a CLG civil servant (ID34) described the process of consortium building as a ‘very long and sometimes painful process’ which could be perceived as having created much wasted time and effort should agencies fail to succeed. Comments from local interviewees suggested that this had this scenario had arisen in some cases. For instance one voluntary sector project worker described the frustration of staff who had expended much time and effort building a local consortium only to be beaten by a single large provider from outside the local area (quote ID19).

Consequently, in some cases failed collaborative bids had created tensions between agencies. In others, successfully obtained money was perceived as having been

distributed inequitably, with the larger statutory agencies benefiting most from the funding obtained (ID21).

There were also practical challenges associated with putting together collaborative bids because timescales were often prohibitively short. This was viewed as challenging in view of the time it took to get agencies together to develop bids (quote ID20), and one RSL manager (ID39) noted that joint bidding was dependent on agencies having pre-established networks with other local providers. Interviewees also commented that jointly funded projects were often dependent on time-limited funding. In a number of cases these projects had simply come to a halt when the money had run out.

With regards to award-based schemes such as Regional Champions and Beacon Councils, not all interviewees were aware of these. It was primarily local authorities who knew of their existence since the scheme is principally geared towards these bodies. It was not possible to ascertain from the interviews whether these schemes had acted as direct incentives for multi-agency collaboration *within* local areas, however, it was clear that they were a stimulus for collaboration *between* different local authorities. The view of such schemes in terms of cross-authority learning was positive, and many authorities had found it useful when Champions or Beacons in their area had visited either in a peer review or advisory capacity (quotes ID2, ID3). Interviewees' comments on these schemes indicated a general willingness to learn from other local areas, particularly those that were perceived as successful in attracting funding and publicity for their schemes.

In summary, interviewees' comments indicate that the desire for funding did encourage agencies to collaborate, again indicating instrumental motivations for collaborating. Government incentives were effective in stimulating greater use of joint bidding and consortium building. In some cases interviewees perceived the process to have strengthened inter-agency relations and this may have helped to reduce competition in some ways. However, there were a number of problems associated with this, related to the distribution of rewards and the type of partnership working generated by joint bidding, as well as practical challenges of bidding in partnership and potentially negative effects of failed bids, something which could plausibly affect agencies' enthusiasm for partnership working.

Table 9.6 Incentive-based tools: funding streams

Themes	Illustrative Quotes
View that government funding streams incentivise collaboration	<p>“Yes, I think so. We are developing something around meaningful occupation. It was made quite clear to us that money would be available from CLG but only because we are in partnership with the College and the City Council, and because it’s going to be a City-wide scheme which will benefit lots of agencies.” ID20, LA3.</p> <p>“Yeah if there’s money to be had people’s heads are in the trough. We had it for the Hostel, everybody got together, decided what was needed, bunged in the bid and got the money. I think where the objectives are clear and people can see benefits on the different sides, they are up for it.” ID10, LA2</p>
Strengthening of relationships	<p>“The process of preparing the bid definitely strengthened relationships, it improved information sharing. Otherwise we wouldn’t get that kind of relationship with another provider. I think that’s happening more and more, people are doing joint bids, teaming up with organisations that have expertise with a particular client group, they’re joining together, I can’t see how that can be a bad thing.” ID6, LA3</p>
Potential of schemes to enhance cross-authority collaboration and information sharing	<p>“Yes, we invited representatives from a number of those beacons in the area. It was really helpful, positive criticism, which was fine and now we’ve gone on a series of visits them”. ID2, LA3</p> <p>“Yeah certainly I think Nottingham are regional champions & we see them as very useful. They get paid to host people and stuff, and similarly we went to Scarborough & that was very useful, so yes, I think it is very useful.” ID3, LA3</p>
Problems created by failed collaborative bids/ potential for lip service	<p>“The last SP contract I was involved with wanted coverage across the county, so we had no choice but to join consortia. That encouraged joint working, but whether the organisations that joined and didn’t get the bid are still talking to each other... it might just have been lip service to get the funding... We put an enormous amount of work into it but a single provider from out of area got the bid. So that pissed people off a bit”. ID19, LA2.</p>
Practical challenges of bidding in partnership	<p>“When they are looking for tenders, the timescales are often so tight that if you’re going to get something in, you can just about do it yourself but if you are trying to organise all the other people’s diaries it’s a bit of a nightmare... lengthening times would help”. ID20, LA3</p>

9.3.2 Capacity Building Tools

As noted in chapter two, capacity building tools are a particular subset of incentive-based tools to promote collaboration, including support to alleviate the direct costs associated with partnership working, or targeted advice, training or technical assistance. When asked a general question on how government could make it easier for local agencies to collaborate, capacity building measures were raised by several local interviewees.

For instance, it was felt that the costs associated with collaboration were high, and that some funding to cover staff time and the costs of holding multi-agency meetings or events would be helpful (e.g. quotes ID19, ID9). Others voiced support for capacity building to train people in the skills required for partnership working (quote ID10). One suggestion was for training in partnership bidding, and bidding more generally for small voluntary sector agencies, which were viewed as regularly losing out to larger agencies that were better resourced and more able to put bids together (quote ID41). Some interviewees suggested that government guidance providing advice on collaborative working would be helpful (quotes ID19, ID41), indicating either that they were unaware of existing best practice guidance on collaboration or that current forms of information provision may have been perceived as inadequate.

Civil servants also acknowledged their own capacity-building role (quote ID34), and seemed to be generally aware of the difficulties facing local agencies in pursuing collaborative approaches and of ways in which they could support agencies in this regard. Some of the initiatives discussed above did attempt to contribute to capacity building on homelessness collaboration, such as the regional champions scheme which sought to diffuse good practice across local authorities, and the information-based tools described above.

Table 9.7 Incentive-based tools: capacity building support from government

Theme	Illustrative quotes
<p>Perceived importance of earmarked money to resource collaborative endeavours</p>	<p>“Financially if government could provide money just for holding joint meetings, someone’s always got to carry the cost, whether it’s booking a room or whatever... just facilitating getting people together and talking honestly.” ID19, LA2.</p> <p>“The resource to actually get people involved in a partnership takes time to organise, time away from the substantive day job. So we’ve got the agenda around partnership working, but I think the government have to recognise there’s a time element to that, which has to be properly resourced... you need adequate resources of staff time in particular.” ID9, LA2</p>
<p>Desire for guidance/ training on skills for partnership working</p>	<p>“It’s about capacity building, so, not everybody is skilled to do partnership work. It comes naturally to some people and not to others. So if you want that style of working I think they need to be shown how it works, rather than the old system where you know ‘I provide this, and you provide that, and that’s called joint working. So there’s an issue about capacity building.” ID10, LA2</p> <p>“Joint working is difficult and so if some research was done into best practice that would be a positive thing for me. We could formalise the whole thing then.” ID41, LA3</p> <p>“When funding comes available they’ve got to realise that some of the smaller agencies don’t have a full time researcher or someone to do bids all the time, so the way the funding is aimed, it always seems to go to the big people. It should be more accessible to smaller agencies. A lot of them don’t have the knowledge or expertise on bidding.” ID41, LA3</p>
<p>CLG recognition of government’s facilitative/ capacity building role</p>	<p>“Third sector providers are saying to us the amount of time it takes to build consortia and the amount of resource, when a lot of these organisations are running on a shoestring... that actually is a real issue, so in terms of capacity building, that’s something that we’re really focusing on.” ID34, CLG</p>

9.4 Perceptions of Broader Local Meta-Governance Structures

As discussed in chapter six, the tools of meta-governance specifically related to encouraging collaboration between local homelessness agencies are embedded in a broader set of local meta-governance structures. Although these were not the principal focus of the present research, it is pertinent briefly to acknowledge the contribution and potential role of such structures and processes which, although not directly related to homelessness, provide the context in which local service delivery networks operate. These structures are becoming an increasingly important feature of the local governance landscape in contemporary British public services and therefore structure attempts to foster collaboration in specific policy sectors such as homelessness and other cross-cutting areas. This last section briefly considers their role as tools for stimulating collaboration, focusing principally on Local Area Agreements, arguably the most important new coordination structure affecting local authorities at the time of writing.

During the interview phase of the research Local Area Agreements were in the process of being gradually introduced across English Local Authorities. This was therefore very much an emerging agenda at the time, although one which local actors were keenly aware of. One of the local areas (LA2) was involved in the national pilot of Local Area Agreements.

Most local level interviewees believed that the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) structure would, in theory, strengthen local decision-making and simplify current arrangements. However, there was concern that because of the need to reduce the number of priorities in each authority¹²¹, it would be important for agencies working with the homeless to push the interests of socially excluded groups to ensure they prioritised within the local area. Interviewees' experience of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) did not bode well in this regard, and in two areas these were perceived as having prioritised other areas such as regeneration and economic development rather than issues of social exclusion. One interviewee in the authority which had been part of the national pilot was concerned that establishing the LAA had essentially been a fight about resources (quote ID29), and this interviewee suggested that the LAA had been unable to find ways of overcoming the differing priorities and agendas of the local services involved.

These issues were recognised centrally, and one CLG civil servant (ID34) commented that the department was producing guidance for local authorities to advise them of the need to proactively engage with the LAA process to help protect their vulnerable client groups.

¹²¹ Local Area Agreements stipulate that Authorities select 35 priority areas for which associated local targets are set.

Table 9.8 Broader meta-governance structures: Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

Theme	Illustrative quotes
<p>Perceived need to push interests of homeless people & other excluded groups into LAAs</p>	<p>“We are now trying to develop our networks around the LAAs because we think that’s where everything is going to go. And we need to be strong in that area because of the group we’re representing”. ID28, LA3</p> <p>“We do need to guard against the possibility that SP in particular, ’cause that’s my area of concern, that the money isn’t siphoned off to pay for services, that means that suddenly, single homeless people or whoever, suddenly don’t have any services. We need to safeguard against that, and that’s why it’s important to have enshrined within the LAA a commitment to the delivery of housing-related support” ID38, LA1</p> <p>“I was quite proactive in saying we actually need to have some stuff in there on homelessness, because in my experience with the LPSA, if we don’t have these jointly owned targets then you don’t get the engagement and you also maybe don’t get the resources either” ID8, LA2</p>
<p>Doubt over extent to which LAAs/ LSPs help assist social excluded groups such as the homeless</p>	<p>“My personal perception has been that the LSP here has had very much an economic focus, more about the prosperity of the city. I’m not sure that there’s been an awful lot of the social inclusion agenda taken on board.” ID29, LA2</p> <p>“The LSP has had no impact thus far on homelessness. I don’t think it’s yet on the priority list of the strategic housing partnership group. It is on the agenda but in the city there’s a big regeneration agenda as well, which tends to dominate.” ID3, LA3</p>
<p>LAA process dominated by competition & unable to resolve differing priorities of agencies</p>	<p>“One of the barriers to partnership working is that different agencies have different agendas, targets and priorities. And I haven’t seen yet how the LAA negotiates all those to come out with a set of agreed priorities. The experience so far has <i>not</i> been that the LAA is a good way of partnership working, it’s been much more about agency in-fighting... up to now.... It all just became an argument about money.” ID 29, LA2</p>

Additional meta-governance structures such as the National Value Improvement Programme and the Commissioning Framework for Health and Wellbeing discussed in chapter six were vertical tools aiming to build local capacity that were mentioned by civil servants, although not by local interviewees. These measures did not relate directly to homelessness but were geared towards assisting with processes around local partnership working in a general sense. The former programme was viewed as way of helping local

agencies with the process of procurement and contracting, something where there was a perceived lack of expertise (ID34). The latter was considered a mechanism for assisting local agencies with joint commissioning (ID37). Although it was difficult to assess the influence of these particular meta-governance tools in local areas, these tools as well as LAAs can be viewed as attempts to unlock some of the barriers to the strategic level of collaboration in local areas. The early experience of LAAs in the case study areas indicates that, like other meta-governance tools, the process of managing and engaging with these structures entails competition between agencies with respect to promoting the interests of their own client groups and obtaining the resources to meet their needs.

Chapter Summary and Discussion

This chapter sought to investigate the influence of particular tools of meta-governance used to foster collaboration at local level. It also sought to assess their contribution generally in terms of alleviating externalities associated with fragmented service systems and to evaluate their contribution as mechanisms for gaining leverage and control in such an environment. The analysis presented raises a number of points with respect to these questions.

In relation to the different tools, the analysis indicates that some tools are more effective than others, although interviewees' accounts highlight strengths and limitations of all tools. Crucially, there are limitations of authority-based tools such as legislation which mandates collaboration between specified bodies. Although interviewees regarded it as *legitimate* for central government to mandate collaboration, they were more sceptical about government's ability to enforce this. The statutory duty to cooperate was viewed as rather vague and lacking in sufficient authority to generate compliance. This finding underscores the need for meta-governance tools that aim to prescribe relations between agencies to be underpinned by additional tools or mechanisms which provide sanctions or rewards to generate compliance. It also highlights the limitations of approaches which only vaguely define cooperation, and indicates perhaps greater need for legislation to specify ways in which agencies are expected to cooperate.

There were mixed views regarding the effectiveness of authoritative network constitution tools. While the creation of multi-agency structures could serve as mechanisms for getting the right agencies around the table to discuss collective concerns and promote the interests of client groups, these processes needed careful management. In particular, when network structures were mandated by government it was regarded as important to develop a sense of ownership of these structures and to gain sufficient sign up and commitment from key agencies. There were problems surrounding the implementation of the compulsory homelessness strategies in local areas and this task was not always taken up especially enthusiastically, something which may have been related to the manner in which it was imposed on local agencies without any additional resources.

In relation to monitoring, it was acknowledged that it was difficult for government to monitor collaboration directly, particularly when using standard government monitoring techniques involving the collection of statistical data. Central and local interviewees shared this view, and suggested that quantitative data on collaboration would be difficult to interpret without some additional qualitative or explanatory

information on the dynamics of the relationships involved. However, interviewees provided examples of other ways in which collaboration was indirectly monitored. There was a clear view amongst civil servants that key homelessness targets and indicators encouraged collaboration at a local level, and some local interviewees also acknowledged this. However, there was no evidence that other forms of monitoring led to greater collaboration.

In authorities where regulatory mechanisms such as joint inspections and the 'special measures' system had been used, these had helped local authorities to improve collaborative working arrangements. This may be related to the fact that these were *personal* coordination modes. As this chapter has illustrated, information and advice provided in person was generally valued by local interviewees. They found the advice they had received, either from government advisors directly or through peer reviews provided by local authorities and facilitated by government, to be both credible and helpful. The general support for inter-personal information provision from CLG, alongside the finding from chapter seven that those with higher contact with this body had higher collaboration scores, indicates a potentially important role for this type of approach.

However, while inter-personal information provision was valued by local actors, there were fairly mixed views on the utility and effectiveness of written guidance produced and sent down by government. Many local actors in statutory agencies did not read such guidance, something was partly explained by the volume and length of guidance produced and its perceived repetitious nature. Guidance specifying case study examples and contact details was regarded as most helpful, again indicating a general willingness for horizontal learning across local authorities. However, there was recognition amongst central bureaucrats of the difficulty of being overly prescriptive. This is in contrast to the finding reported above that legislative tools are not prescriptive enough, and highlights the challenge of striking a balance between being overly prescriptive and too vague.

Incentives were effective for encouraging agencies to build consortia and bid in partnership, but there were several problems associated with such tools, principally related to the quality of partnership working generated, tensions generated by failed bids and disagreements over the allocation of award money. Incentives geared to build collaborative capacity such as directed assistance to cover the costs of holding multi-agency events may be more rewarding, by helping alleviate some of the general obstacles to collaboration such as lack of time and resources. They may also serve to reduce

resentment which was created when the responsibility and costs of hosting such events routinely fall on the larger or more proactive agencies, as reported in chapter eight.

Local area agreements as broader tools of meta-governance were considered a good idea in theory. They were regarded as having potential for bringing decisions closer to the local level and for reducing bureaucratic reporting requirements by streamlining the performance indicators system. Local actors also suggested that they may help unlock some of the challenges to collaborative working, particularly at a strategic level. Generally local actors indicated that their organisational priorities were heavily influenced by targets and indicators that were mandated by government. Since LAA targets focus on 'cross-cutting' issues, interviewees suggested that they could in theory help to elevate the priority and status of homelessness at local level. However, interviewees were aware that only a limited number of areas could be included in their LAA and there was concern that homelessness, like other areas of social exclusion, may not be a high enough priority to warrant inclusion.

A number of conclusions can also be drawn in relation to the role of meta-governance tools in a more general sense. Meta-governance tools are often effective as a first stage in bringing local agencies together, but that beyond this stage the challenges of bureaucratic politics can take hold. For instance, incentives in the form of funding streams rewarding collaboration do encourage joint bidding, but once jointly sourced funds are obtained, agencies sometimes begin to compete over the rewards and there is a perception amongst smaller agencies that the larger agencies are the greater beneficiaries in this process. Moreover, failed partnership bids generate disappointment, partly because of the significant investment of time required to develop the networks of contacts to put together such bids. Failed bids may therefore dampen enthusiasm for future collaborative endeavours and potentially harm relationships that have been established.

Similarly, authoritative network constitution tools such as mandated multi-agency bodies and inclusion in other strategic processes serve as effective mechanisms for getting the relevant agencies around the table, and have other benefits such as the ability to raise collective concerns to the local authority. However, these structures are also considered divisive in some respects, and are viewed as mechanisms for distributing resources. Where these forums are led by the local authority, local agencies sometimes feel under pressure to use these bodies as forums for winning its approval or favour. In addition, as the example of the Supporting People Commissioning bodies illustrated, local actors are strategic in their approach to these bodies, pursuing the interests of their respective client groups, sometimes contrary to the needs of the local system as a whole.

It is clear that local actors are more responsive to some tools than others, suggesting that meta-governance tools, like the tools of government generally, have their own politics. Unsurprisingly, interviewees responded well to advisory and supportive interactions with government departments and less well to coercive approaches. The vertical dimension of the relationship between central and local actors is clearly affected by bureaucratic politics, with certain tools encouraging tokenistic or tick-box responses which create a veneer of compliance with collaboration or participation agendas. This is somewhat in line with bottom-up conceptions of policy implementation in which street level bureaucrats distort policy generated in the higher realms of government, perhaps because the policies generated at this level are unrealistic or incompatible with local concerns.

The finding that all tools had limitations suggests that meta-governance strategies for stimulating local collaboration may be most effective when they combine tools. This finding is in line with previous work discussed in chapter two which suggests that governments seeking to exercise leverage over networks of agencies are likely to require a combination of tools.

Lastly, the analysis provides support for the hypothesis presented at the outset of the thesis that command and control tools may have limited impact in the context of networks of service providers. The limitations of government legislation mandating cooperation discussed in this chapter point to a need for additional tools to support authoritative techniques.

Overall, this chapter *does* indicate potential for meta-governance tools to help enhance collaboration. However, these vertical tools do not themselves *directly* attenuate problems associated with fragmented service networks such as gaps, duplications and incoherence. They make an indirect contribution to this by stimulating forms of collaboration at local level where these problems can be tackled. These forms of collaboration are themselves subject to considerable challenges stemming in large part from bureaucratic politics. The implications of these findings are considered in next chapter.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Chapter introduction and overview

Contemporary public policy theory asserts that state control and coordination are more problematic, and that coherence is undermined, in the current era of ‘governance’. This research has examined the potential of one type of strategy for re-asserting control and coordination, and enhancing coherence, in this environment. The strategy considered was the stimulation, by central government, of collaboration amongst local networks of service providers, a form of ‘meta-governance’. The empirical setting of the research is the local public services used by those who are homeless, a client group for which the state has sought to encourage collaboration between local agencies. It is a salient example of the state attempting to exercise leverage over a fragmented service delivery network in order to deal with a ‘cross-cutting’ issue.

This concluding chapter defends the thesis that *meta-governance tools aiming to foster collaboration are partially effective, but that state capacity is limited by aspects of ‘bureaucratic politics’ and the ‘bottom-up’ nature of collaborative processes.* Bureaucratic politics is revealed through differing priorities of agencies which lead their personnel to pursue strategies which seek to maximise the interests of their respective organisations. Furthermore there are power inequalities between the agencies concerned, which result in certain agencies dominating the agenda and undermine collaboration. The argument that collaboration is ‘bottom-up’ is backed up by evidence of the incremental nature of the collaborative process, the importance of informal interactions and trust, and the key role played by particular individuals with boundary spanning abilities. Horizontal coordination tools have the *capacity* to alleviate externalities associated with fragmented systems, leading to better and more accessible services for clients, but need strong local management and appropriate central facilitation. Vertical coordination tools have some influence but also have limitations, and there is little evidence that purely ‘top-down’ strategies relying on authority-based tools are likely to secure the implementation of collaboration in local service delivery networks.

The case for these claims is made by returning to the research questions raised in the introduction to the thesis and addressing these in light of the empirical evidence presented in the intervening chapters. The first section of this chapter (10.1) examines the descriptive questions of the research, namely the identification and classification of forms

of government steering of local collaboration, and the assessment of the extent and nature of local collaboration. The second section (10.2) addresses the explanatory questions concerning *why* agencies collaborate, in particular whether collaborative decisions are better explained by rational-administrative or bureaucratic politics models of decision-making, and top-down or bottom-up influences, including discussion of the role of the state in stimulating collaboration. This section also revisits and assesses the rival models and hypotheses presented in chapter three underpinning the analytical framework. The third section (10.3) addresses the evaluative questions concerning the effectiveness of both vertical and horizontal tools. The penultimate section (10.4) situates the research within the existing body of knowledge and discusses its contribution and its limitations, and suggests avenues for future enquiry. Section 10.5 provides concluding remarks.

10.1 The Pattern of Local Collaboration and Central Steering

Government encourages local agencies to collaborate using a range of vertical coordination tools. Together these tools constitute a form of ‘meta-governance’ and are aimed at influencing the relations between actors, in order to foster greater collaboration. The specific tools employed were discussed in chapter six and have been classified as authority-based, information-based and incentive-based. Authority-based tools include legislation mandating cooperation between specified local agencies, ‘network constitution’ which involves creating new structures in which local agencies are required to participate, and various methods of monitoring and regulation. Information-based tools include official exhortations and written guidance, as well as ‘detector/ effector’ tools to collect information from local areas and distribute this to a wider group of local areas. While these vertical coordination tools relate specifically to homelessness, they are situated within a broader range of meta-governance strategies used to enhance coordination between local public services more generally. These include tools such as Local Area Agreements, Local Strategic Partnerships and joint commissioning processes, which are themselves forms of network constitution.

Chapter six also identified formal horizontal coordination tools and examples of informal collaboration employed at the level of central government. These coordination efforts can be considered forms of vertical steering, since they are active attempts to join up government policy on homelessness in order to facilitate collaboration at the lowest policy implementation tier of public services. A tri-partite framework of coordination modes was employed, incorporating group, personal and impersonal modes was used to classify the formal horizontal tools. Group modes used in relation to homelessness include cross-Whitehall groups and networks, regular inter-ministerial meetings and events designed to bring together governmental and non-governmental actors. Personal modes include jointly funded posts, lead officers responsible for homelessness in different departments, and secondments. Impersonal modes employed are cross-cutting budgets and joint work plans. Informal collaboration across central government takes the form of ad-hoc contact where there are areas of overlap between departments, and appears to be a fairly important method of coordination. Overall the UK government’s approach to stimulating local collaboration is characterised as a fairly strong one, and there is a clear policy agenda in this direction.

Local collaboration also includes both formal and informal methods, as revealed by the survey evidence presented in chapter seven. Formal collaboration occurs through a mix of horizontal coordination tools, but principally group and impersonal modes. The

formal tools employed are the least ambitious ones, and tools that radically alter existing organisational structures and procedures are relatively uncommon. The survey evidence also indicates that there is greater informal than formal collaboration, and more collaboration at operational than at strategic level.

Overall there are *moderate* levels of both formal and informal collaboration in English local authorities with respect to homelessness, and less interaction between agencies than would be ideal, as perceived by local actors themselves. The pattern of informal interactions indicates that personnel in housing authorities spend more time collaborating with individuals in other housing related bodies, particularly accommodation providers, than those in non-housing agencies within the wider service network. However, the survey also reveals variation in patterns of collaboration in local authorities, something which the research questions discussed in the next section helped to explain.

10.2 Explaining Collaboration

While the descriptive concerns of the research uncovered evidence on the level and nature of collaboration and of vertical coordination mechanisms to promote this, the explanatory questions sought to determine *why* actors collaborate, and why they sometimes do not. These questions were addressed through an analytical framework which focused attention on two key dimensions of explanation, as outlined in chapter three. The first dimension concerned decision-making, and two alternative perspectives were elaborated, rational-administration and bureaucratic politics, each with different views about why actors collaborate. The second dimension concerned the *level* at which decisions about collaboration occur, and was examined through two branches of implementation theory, ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ perspectives. As discussed in chapter three, these rival theories were selected because they seem to capture some of the key debates in existing literature on collaboration whilst also providing a framework for addressing the core research questions. While the framework builds on this existing work, it highlights new issues which are revealed through a critical assessment of the contrasting theoretical perspectives from political science.

Four alternative models combining the above dimensions were presented. The models exhibit varying degrees of optimism about the ability of government to influence collaboration, and about the likelihood of agencies collaborating at all. They also represent differing viewpoints on the nature of decision-making within public policy. Table 10.1 below summarises the four models and recaps on the rival hypotheses which flow from each of these. In order to assess the persuasiveness of the models, the two main dimensions of the models are considered in turn, first, the nature of decision-making (rational administration or bureaucratic politics) and second, the level at which decision-making occurs, in order to assess the influence of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up factors’. These are presented in the next four subsections, each of which is accompanied by a brief table summarising the evidence to support each perspective. Subsection 10.2.5 combines the key findings to make an assessment of the particular models.

Table 10.1 Rival models and hypotheses

Model 1: The top-down rational administrative explanation*:

H1a Local agencies collaborate because government tells them to; government's aims are unified and unambiguous;

H1b The values and objectives of collaboration policy are defined by government, and neutral bureaucrats search for the most efficient means of delivering these objectives.

Model 2 The bottom-up rational administrative explanation:

H2a Collaboration is locally defined and local agencies collaborate because they see this as the most effective mode of action for attaining their aims and for meeting clients' needs; local agencies' aims are unified and unambiguous;

H2b The means pursued are the most administratively efficient to meet these aims.

Model 3 The top-down, bureaucratic politics explanation:

H3a Government or central bureaucrats set collaboration policy aims and means, and local agencies are generally responsive to their parent government departments;

H3b Government policy is, however, not unified, with different departments pursuing their own interests and the outcome favouring the most powerful department.

Model 4* The bottom-up, bureaucratic politics explanation†:

H4a Collaboration decisions (both means and ends) are generated from the bottom-up; however aims are not unified;

H4b Collaboration decisions are the outcome of strategic and instrumental moves between actors in the local arena, each promoting their own interests; the outcomes favour the most powerful local agencies.

* Both bottom-up & top-down rational administrative models contain a 'synoptically rational' variant and a 'boundedly rational' variant

† Model 4 variant 1: 'no collaboration'

Model 4 variant 2: 'collaboration through partisan mutual adjustment'

10.2.1 Assessment of the rational administrative perspective

The rational administrative model holds three core assumptions. First, that there is unity of aims; second, that aims are clearly specified and unambiguous and third, that decisions occur in a rational means-ends fashion where the means selected are the most administratively efficient to meet these ends. Searching for alternative courses of action may occur in a synoptic or bounded sense.

In terms of the aims or goals of actors involved in collaboration, a very clear theme in the present research has been a distinct lack of unity of goals, and this was one factor which *impeded* collaboration. At the level of central government, the priorities of government departments differ, and homelessness is a major priority of one department but only a peripheral concern of others. As chapter six illustrated, departments are highly focused on their own departmental priorities and do not behave as a unified actor. Similarly at local level, the differing priorities of agencies came across clearly in chapter five which discussed the challenges of collaborating. While homelessness was a concern for most agencies, it was *not* the dominant common interest of all the agencies in the service delivery network. Consequently collaboration itself was less important to some agencies than others, and agencies for which homelessness was *not* a primary concern had less motivation to collaborate. These findings do not support a rational-administrative perspective.

In terms of the goals themselves, these were not unambiguous. As observed in chapter six, collaboration is a clear policy priority for government, and there is a fairly clear message in this regard. However, this message is sent only from one government department, CLG, to its local arm, the housing authority. The message does not seem to have been effectively transmitted to the other agencies in the service delivery network outside of the CLG's control, with voluntary sector agencies and accommodation providers far less aware of its collaborative agenda with respect to homelessness. In addition, there was only limited evidence that other government departments were sending this message to their own subordinate statutory agencies specifically in relation to homelessness, although they did transmit a prioritisation of partnership agendas more generally. Again, this evidence does *not* support the rational-administrative conception of decision-making.

The third feature of rational administration is that collaborative decision-making occurs on a means-ends basis. The rational administrative ideal type presented in the current research is an 'altruistic-rational' version, which some previous commentators have argued is the assumption underpinning many government-led collaboration

initiatives in areas of local public services. This version of rational administration is inherently optimistic and is based on the idea that agencies will be motivated to collaborate because they see this as a means of serving the interests of clients, and believe that they can achieve their aims more efficiently by working together than alone. In this model, the particular collaborative tools selected by actors would be those that are deemed most likely to reach these goals.

There is a *degree* of evidence to support this aspect of the rational-administrative model, although this evidence does not conform entirely to the ‘altruistic-rationality’ model. As noted in chapter five, collaboration was perceived by local bureaucrats to be appropriate in order to meet the multiple problems typically faced by homeless clients. In addition, when discussing the role of formal collaborative tools (chapter eight), street level bureaucrats highlighted various ways in which these did help to iron out externalities in the homelessness system. In this respect actors considered collaboration to be an effective means of attaining the altruistic dimensions of their goals, related to meeting the needs of homeless people. In addition, collaboration was sometimes considered *inappropriate* for reasons related to clients’ needs. For instance, as discussed in chapter eight, the provision of services from a single site, or co-location, was thought to be problematic because it would be difficult to create the ‘right environment’ for different groups of clients in a single setting. The incorporation of such considerations into decision-making around collaboration accords with the notion of ‘thin’ rationality, which denote the ‘selfless’ aspects of rational decision-making.

However, it was clear that this altruistic rationality was only one component of street level bureaucrats’ decision-making. Local actors’ collaborative decisions also exhibited significant *instrumental* rationality, which reflect more self-interested motivations. In this case, it is *organisational* rather than *individual* self-interest, however, which was a feature of decision-making. As discussed in chapters five and eight, instrumental motivations appeared, on balance, to be more dominant than altruistic motivations. Actors’ instrumental motivations for collaborating are elaborated in section 10.2.2 which assesses the evidence for the bureaucratic politics model.

A final aspect of the rational-administrative model which remains to be considered is the question of synoptic versus bounded rationality. Decision-making was *not* consistent with the ‘pure’ synoptic variant of the rational-administrative perspective. There was little evidence of actors selecting coordination tools as part of a systematic and comprehensive search for the most efficient and effective means to achieve their goals, either centrally or locally. At a local level decisions regarding collaboration and the range of collaborative options considered were heavily bounded by constraints such as resource

and time limitations, practical difficulties and the challenges of devising joint systems for diverse agencies, as discussed in chapters five and eight. At the level of central government, as chapter six illustrated, the issues over which central government departments collaborated were as much related to the political salience of the issues concerned as to any planned or systematic approach. The lack of evidence for synoptic rationality is an unsurprising finding, however, and is arguably a reflection of the limited applicability of this model of decision-making within public policy and public administration generally. The evidence relating to the rational-administrative model is summarised in table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Rational-administrative elements of collaborative decision-making

- Some evidence of rational-altruistic considerations in local actors' collaborative decisions: i.e. needs of clients an underlying motivation for collaborating and are considered in decisions about adopting particular horizontal coordination tools; however, instrumental rationality was more dominant;
 - Rational-administrative elements of decision-making were representative of bounded rationality rather than synoptic rationality.
-

10.2.2 Assessment of the bureaucratic politics perspective

Moving onto an assessment of the features of the bureaucratic politics models, three key elements span both top-down and bottom-up variants of this. First, interests, priorities and goals are disparate rather than unified. Second, actors' pursue their own priorities and interests goals through strategic and instrumental moves, often involving bargaining and negotiations, or 'pulling and hauling' (Allison and Halperin, 1972). Third, the outcomes of the negotiations favour the most powerful actors.

It has already been noted that goals were not unified because of differing departmental and organisational priorities. At central level, differing priorities inhibited departments' willingness to assist with the agendas of other departments, and their own individual agendas took priority. While central bureaucrats were highly attuned to the cross-cutting nature of issues such as homelessness and social exclusion, these were ultimately seen as 'belonging' to particular departments. The move underway at the time of the research to agree a list of 'priority priorities' shared across departments can be viewed as an attempt to resolve this issue.

There were also differing priorities at local level. Chapter eight revealed that the different priorities and needs of local agencies actually inhibited the development of some formal horizontal coordination tools such as joint information systems and joint assessment systems. This led agencies to continue with their individual systems, allowing them to obtain the information they felt necessary for their own organisational purposes.

With regards to the second dimension, there was evidence of strategic and instrumental moves amongst actors seeking to promote the interests of their respective organisations. There was little evidence of bargaining as such, defined as the attempt to induce particular responses from others using conditional threats or promises (Lindblom 1965). However, agencies did use persuasion and negotiation to encourage other agencies to commit to collaborative projects and tools. For instance, as reported in chapters eight and nine, both street level and central bureaucrats attempted to demonstrate to agencies the organisational benefits they could attain by collaborating, in order to encourage participation in collaborative endeavours.

As noted above, agencies had instrumental motivations for collaborating, and did so when they felt this could protect their organisational interests. Chapters five and eight revealed three particular examples. First, actors believed that they would be simply unable to achieve their organisational goals without the input of other agencies, and acknowledged their interdependence in this respect. Second, they viewed collaboration as necessary in order to leverage resources, including financial resources, human resources and client referrals (something which itself helped maintain financial stability). Third, they viewed collaboration as a means of protecting their agencies against various forms of risk. In particular, they were concerned to avoid the risk of sharing data improperly, something which could lead to breaches of data protection law. Additionally, agencies viewed collaboration through the establishment of formal procedures and protocols as a method for avoiding accusations of letting vulnerable clients slip through the gaps in the service system in the blame culture in which they were situated.

There was evidence to suggest that agencies sought to maintain their own autonomy, which also indicates a desire to pursue *organisational* rather than *collective* interests. This was demonstrated by the survey results which revealed that the coordination tools employed by agencies were the least ambitious ones which posed little threat to organisational independence. Chapter eight confirmed the idea that agencies perceived certain tools to be more threatening than others and that this inhibited adoption of these tools.

There was also a backdrop of competition which involved pulling and hauling between agencies. As discussed in chapter five, voluntary sector agencies were in direct

competition over clients and resources. This led them to act in a possessive manner over their clients, to withhold information from other bodies and to project an image of success rather than to share problems, actions which militated against collaboration and had inhibited the development of specific horizontal coordination tools. The competitive nature of inter-agency relations was alluded to by numerous interviewees. The suggestion by one interviewee's that clients were 'pawns' caught up in a 'game' between agencies serves as a powerful metaphor for this.

The third component of the bureaucratic politics models, that power is unevenly distributed and that the outcomes of negotiations favour the most powerful actor, was also largely borne out by the evidence. Power inequalities were evident both at central and at local level. At the level of central government, the greater power of certain departments compelled other departments to assist with their agendas, suggesting that the powerful departments were the 'winners', with the Home Office/ CLG relationship serving as the most pertinent example. The type of 'collaboration' which ensued was therefore highly asymmetrical. As previous studies indicate, collaboration is less likely to occur where the actors involved perceive there to be a lack of reciprocity. In this case there was evidence that failure to reciprocate was undermining trust between bureaucrats in different government departments. Thus while certain actors gained, there was a 'net loss' for the system as a whole.

At local level, contrary to the view expressed in some previous network theory which posits that networks are morphologically 'flat', the homelessness network was uneven. Although relationships were not formally hierarchical, power inequalities were manifested in agencies' asymmetrical access to resources. Those agencies that commanded greater resources were viewed as most powerful, and personnel from smaller organisations viewed these more powerful agencies as the ultimate winners in many funding decisions. These inequalities created tensions between agencies which fostered competition rather than collaboration.

Overall, as discussed in chapter five, local authorities held greatest bargaining power, as commissioners of services. Their service commissioning role made the local authority *primus inter pares* within the local network and its greater power comparatively to other bodies was a major contributor to the tensions of bureaucratic politics which pervaded local service provider networks. Power inequalities were also found within formal group collaboration modes such as forums and other multi-agency structures. It was often in these arenas that the tensions resulting from power inequalities were played out. An example of this concerned multi-agency forums chaired by the local authority in one area, which had become a 'public relations exercise' for the other agencies attending,

who ‘went cap in hand’ to these meetings with the local authority rather than using the groups as a means of tackling problems such as externalities in the homelessness service system.

Table 10.3 The bureaucratic politics of collaborative decision-making

- Differing priorities of government departments; homelessness a priority for one department;
 - Lack of consistency of message from different government departments;
 - Powerful departments most likely to gain assistance from other departments with their agendas;
 - Differing priorities of local agencies rather than collective dominant interest;
 - Collaboration pursued by local agencies to protect their own agencies against risk;
 - Collaboration pursued to leverage resources as part of an organisational survival strategy;
 - Ambitious forms of collaboration avoided to protect organisational autonomy
 - Collaboration, including formal horizontal tool development, inhibited by strategies used by agencies in a competitive environment to protect their position, including failure to share information, possessiveness over client ‘outcomes’ and projecting an image of success as opposed to sharing problems;
 - Power inequalities at local level created tensions and competitiveness between agencies rather than collaboration;
 - Issues of bureaucratic politics manifested as challenges of developing and managing formal horizontal coordination tools.
-

In summary, both rational-administration and bureaucratic politics models capture some elements of collaborative decision-making in the context of multi-organisational service provider networks. However, the bureaucratic politics perspective is much more fully supported by the evidence. Although decisions around collaboration are taken in a partly rational manner, the context in which agencies are located is a competitive and uneven one. When actors do pursue collaboration, this is principally as a means of securing the interests of their own agencies. However, because agencies pursue strategies to protect their own interests, this often results in implementation ‘failure’, manifested as a lack of collaboration. The uneven nature of power in the local arena allows certain agendas to dominate, and creates tensions when agencies attempt to work together. Returning, then, to first explanatory question raised in the introduction, collaboration decisions amongst local actors to collaborate are driven more by bureaucratic politics than by rational considerations.

10.2.3 Assessment of the top-down perspective

The second explanatory question sought to determine the influence of top-down and bottom-up factors as explanations for collaboration patterns. As discussed in chapter three, top-down perspectives of implementation theory assume that the central state is the sovereign actor, the legitimacy of which enables it to set policy and to transmit this down the line to those charged with policy implementation.

In practice, a top-down approach by policy makers involves clear prescription of their aims and the use of measures to ensure that implementers comply with these, in ways which secure a tighter grip over bureaucracy. Top-down measures include tighter monitoring, greater clarity of mandates and reducing the number of links in the policy chain. As discussed in chapter one, the approach pursued by New Labour administrations since 1997 to foster collaboration at local level is generally considered to have been relatively top-down, at least during Labour's first term in office.

The present study has found considerable evidence of government *attempting* to set collaboration policy centrally, and using the tools at its disposal to encourage local agencies to work together. Some of these tools do provide evidence of a top-down approach. For instance, the government exhortations of the need for agencies to collaborate within central policy strategies and guidance are evidence of an attempt to send out a clear message. The fact that personnel in local housing authorities were aware of government's collaborative agenda with respect to homelessness indicates this message was effectively transmitted to housing authorities at least.

Several of the measures used to encourage compliance with this agenda can be characterised as top-down. Authority-based approaches were part of the strategy, and included the introduction of a new requirement under the 2002 Homelessness Act for social services departments to assist with local authority homelessness strategies. This supplemented the existing statutory duties contained in the 1996 Housing Act which require cooperation between specified agencies. The statutory code of guidance accompanying the 2002 Act clarifies to local housing authorities the nature of statutory requirements to collaborate, and advocates a range of formal collaborative measures to local authorities. Centrally recommendations on forms of collaboration and particular collaborative linkages are also provided in best practice guidance. These measures provide evidence of government attempting to increase the clarity of its policy aims.

Monitoring and regulation were also used in various ways, including indirect forms such as research and self-assessment. The introduction of homelessness 'key lines of enquiry' to measure collaboration within Audit Commission inspections suggests that the regulation of collaboration is increasing. Furthermore, the direct, hands-on approach of CLG with regards to homelessness, exhibited in its use of visits to local authorities and

road-shows, can be considered an attempt to reduce the number of links in the policy chain, another top-down method.

Therefore some of the vertical tools used to encourage collaboration do conform to the top-down model of policy implementation. However, a top-down model also assumes that local actors are *responsive* to government mandate. This study has reported that local actors do believe that it is legitimate for government to mandate collaboration between certain agencies. However, it has also revealed that vertical tools to enhance collaboration are only partly successful.

The successful aspects of vertical tools were identified in chapter seven which demonstrated that local authorities interact more with agencies prioritised by government in law than with other 'non-mandated' agencies. The chapter also revealed that the horizontal coordination tools suggested by the central state are more likely to be implemented than alternative 'bottom-up' tools decided locally. Furthermore, government incentives and information provision through direct contact are positively associated with collaboration. Overall, this indicates a degree of implementation 'success' in terms of government's collaboration policy.

However, interview data revealed weaknesses with vertical coordination tools. For instance, interviewees suggested that collaboration required in law is difficult to enforce. Local housing authority staff in particular regarded the law on collaboration as too vague, and they argued that this should specify *how* agencies should collaborate, and that there is a need for effective mechanisms to enforce the law. In addition, information sources produced by government are not always read. Incentives in the form of funding for multi-agency projects encourage agencies to come together to obtain funding, but there interviewees expressed doubts over the quality of partnership working which ensued. There were participation problems with centrally mandated horizontal coordination structures, such as homelessness groups and joint commissioning bodies. Centrally mandated horizontal coordination tools were subject to the same problems of bureaucratic politics as locally devised coordination structures, perhaps even more so because of the way in which these were imposed and lacked local ownership. There was also evidence that pressure to comply with top-down collaborative mandates could lead to tokenistic compliance. As noted in chapter nine, street level bureaucrats sometimes responded to authoritative network constitution tools in a 'tick-box' manner. This chimes with Elmore's thesis (1979) that hierarchical controls can encourage standardised approaches and restrict problem solving capacities.

Despite the use of some top-down policy tools, the approach pursued by central government is not entirely top-down. For instance, CLG seems to some extent to

incorporate evidence collected from local areas to inform its collaborative policy. This is demonstrated in its use of information ‘detecting’ instruments which collect information on examples good and bad collaborative practice, distil these lessons and provide guidance – either formal or informal – to local authorities. This possibly indicates a dialogic rather than top-down approach to policy-making. Furthermore, there was much inter-personal contact between central and local levels, with civil servants stating that most authorities received a visit from them at least once a year.

However, street level actors did not feel they had much ability to influence central policy. Some characterised central government as very far removed from the realities of practice. Although there was a fairly high degree of contact between CLG and local authorities, local actors were unsure how much the department listened to and acted on their views. The purpose of meetings, they suggested, was for CLG to impart advice rather than receive feedback from local level.

Therefore, while there is some interaction between central and local levels, this seems to be used principally as a form of monitoring and information provision than a device for receiving feedback. This does not conform to the optimistic version of a ‘recursive’ policy style put forward by Barrett and Fudge (1981) where policy is formulated in dialogue, but rather to their ‘compromising’ version in which policy action space is constrained.

In summary, there are significant top-down components to central homelessness collaboration policy, but these do not adequately explain local collaboration patterns. Local actors are only partially responsive to central strategies to promote collaboration, and it is far from clear that central government defines collaboration as practiced in local areas. Furthermore, government steering is only one influence on local collaboration. As identified in chapter seven, there are additional factors, both interpretive and contextual, which are associated with this. Additional contextual factors which influence collaboration include institutional structure, geographical proximity and number of personnel. Interpretive or individual level factors include length of time working on homelessness and prior experience working in non-housing agencies. This indicates that government is only one of many influences on local actors’ collaborative decision-making.

Table 10.4 Top-down influences on collaboration

- Central attempts to stimulate collaboration through vertical tools;
- Some use of authority-based tools;
- Evidence of ‘top-down’ approaches including attempts to strengthen regulation, increase clarity of mandates and reduce number of links in policy chain;

- *Degree* of responsiveness to vertical tools;
 - Centrally mandated agencies and tools more likely to be ‘implemented’ than non-mandated agencies or tools.
-

10.2.4 Assessment of the bottom-up perspective

Unlike top-down models of policy implementation, bottom-up models view those involved in implementing policy as enjoying greater autonomy from the state. Those who are conventionally thought of as the ‘implementers’ are perceived as possessing policy-making or, at least, *policy-shaping* capacity. In some models this is construed as a product of central policy makers’ inability to prescribe policy because they lack the necessary information to do so. In others, particularly the ‘street level bureaucracy’ accounts, local implementers are viewed as compelled to make policy decisions because it is at this level where policy is executed and only at this stage where it becomes fully formed. Many accounts view street level discretion as desirable in order to maximise creativity and discourage standardised responses and uniformity.

In chapter three it was hypothesised that bottom-up models were likely to be appropriate for explaining collaboration. The evidence collected in this study provides considerable support for this hypothesis. First, collaboration in the case study areas was an incremental process. As outlined in chapter eight, the development of formal horizontal coordination tools was gradual, occurring over time. Once the process of horizontal coordination mechanism development in local authorities had begun, it often gained momentum, with one tool leading to the development of others. This indicates that collaboration is a process, and as such is arguably not something which can simply be mandated by government.

Second, collaboration was heavily dependent on *informal* relationships, which were themselves based on trust. Informal collaboration was important for a number of reasons. As noted above, the survey evidence suggested that informal interactions perhaps played a more central role than formal horizontal tools. In addition, chapter eight indicated that the development of formal tools was facilitated by informal interactions. For instance, ad-hoc multi-agency meetings sometimes developed into more regular and formalised case panels. There was also evidence that vertical meta-governance tools were more effective where there was a certain level of pre-established interaction within the network. This applied particularly to funding streams which sought to encourage joint bidding. Where agencies were already networking amongst themselves, funding bids were

more easily put together; where they were not, agencies found it difficult to respond quickly enough to bidding deadlines.

Third, local collaboration was heavily dependent on the influence of key individuals who facilitated collaboration. As discussed in chapter five, the commitment of senior managers was deemed particularly important in supporting collaborative efforts amongst practitioners and frontline managers. Individuals with particular skills and even personality characteristics were also central to collaborative endeavours, supporting previous work which highlights the importance of boundary spanners.

When asked about key facilitators of collaboration, many interviewees commented on such individual level factors, and only a minority mentioned government programmes as a driver of collaboration. Indeed, government policy was frequently regarded as undermining collaboration because of the differing priorities of departments, inflexible funding regimes and bureaucratic reporting requirements which left little time for networking and partnership activities.

These themes provide support for bottom-up models of collaboration. However, the notion put forward in some previous literature that local networks coordinate themselves spontaneously from below is *not* supported by this evidence. While actors did in many cases feel compelled to collaborate in order to achieve their aims and to draw in necessary resources, the challenges of collaborating were often greater than the reasons for doing so. It was also clear that agencies sometimes failed to collaborate, despite government mandates or inducements to do so. For instance, there is limited contact between local housing authorities and many of the agencies with which government suggests they should be cooperating. Where such contact exists, the testimonies of street level actors suggest that there are tensions in these relationships, deriving from issues such as disagreements over roles and responsibilities, and differing priorities. These themes indicate that although in many respects a bottom-up process, collaboration may be unlikely to occur without some form of central direction, as discussed further below.

Returning to the second explanatory question raised in the introduction to the thesis, collaboration in the present empirical setting is subject to the influence of some top-down and some bottom-up factors. On balance, however, bottom-up factors are most influential.

Table 10.5 Bottom-up influences on collaboration

- Certain tools (esp. authoritative) are difficult to enforce;
- Importance of local informal relationships to collaboration;
- Formal tools often arise from informal interactions;

- Implementation of certain ‘vertical’ tools (eg govt funding of collaborative projects) dependent on pre-existing networks in local areas
 - Tool development in local areas an incremental process
-

10.2.5 The rival models assessed

Based on the above discussion, it is possible to assess the rival models of collaboration.

The first model, **the top-down rational administrative explanation**, made the following hypotheses:

H1a Local agencies collaborate because government tells them to; government’s aims are unified and unambiguous;

H1b *The values and objectives of collaboration policy are defined by government, and neutral bureaucrats search for the most efficient means of delivering these objectives.*

Hypothesis 1a is *rejected* because government is only one influence on local actors’ collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, local agencies do not comply perfectly with government mandate. Government’s aims are not unified and unambiguous. As demonstrated above, although central and local actors believe that local collaboration is a priority for government, the message transmitted by different central departments to their respective local service providers is not a unified one. Homelessness is a clear priority for one department, but other government departments’ priorities lie elsewhere. Hypothesis 1b is also *rejected* for the following reasons. While there is evidence that government does appear to set the direction for and values of government collaboration policy, there is no evidence that these values are sovereign. Local actors’ own motivations for collaborating are at least as important as guiding influences, and they cannot be described as value neutral in their collaborative decision-making. The clear separation of government as ‘value setter’ and bureaucrats as neutral implementers advocated in the ‘classical’ rational-administrative approach associated with Woodrow Wilson, is not borne out with this evidence. Overall, there is little evidence to support the top-down rational administrative model.

The second model, **the bottom-up rational administrative explanation** presented the following hypotheses:

H2a Collaboration is locally defined and local agencies collaborate because they see this as the most effective mode of action for attaining their aims and for meeting clients' needs; local agencies' aims are unified and unambiguous;

H2b The means pursued are the most administratively efficient to meet these aims.

Hypothesis 2a suggests *that local agencies* are sovereign, and that they set both the aims and means of collaboration policy. Hypothesis 2b suggests that the means selected are rational, involving a weighing up of alternative courses of action. The model suggests that motivations to collaborate are mainly client-centric, with collaboration pursued when it is likely to meet client needs. The model as a whole is reflective of a bottom-up view of local action which places discretion with local professionals. This model suggests unity of goals at horizontal level but a degree of vertical conflict between central and local actors, since non-compliance with government policy is likely. It accords with views of authors discussed in chapter three such as Elmore, James Q. Wilson, and Wood and Waterman, who argue that it is normatively preferable for those implementing policy to have discretion about how this is achieved. Such accounts highlight ways in which those at local level are better able to make decisions and tailor government policy, perhaps even subverting it, but in ways which secure the public interest.

This model and the hypotheses within it are not well supported by the evidence and *the model's hypotheses are thus rejected*. While collaboration is to a considerable extent locally defined, government policy on collaboration is also influential. Furthermore, the altruistic model of collaboration it presents does not capture the complexity of motivations that local actors hold for collaborating. As the discussion above has illustrated, instrumental motivations are important and may even take precedence over altruistic motivations. Neither are local agencies' aims unified or unambiguous, and this is one of the reasons why collaboration is often problematic. Agencies also have differing motivations for collaborating, some of which are greater than others.

The third model, the **top-down bureaucratic politics model**, contained the following hypotheses:

H3a Government or central bureaucrats set collaboration policy aims and means, and local agencies are generally responsive to their parent government departments;

H3b Government policy is, however, not unified, with different departments pursuing their own interests and the outcome favouring the most powerful department.

The evidence provides partial support for this model. In relation to hypothesis 3a, while local agencies are not totally compliant with the agendas of their parent government departments, they are heavily influenced by these. Indeed, this is one reason why local agencies' aims are often in conflict. The evidence presented above indicates that government departments have differing aims (which supports hypothesis 3b). However, as the above discussion of bottom-up influences indicates, government does not set collaboration aims and means. These are at least partly locally defined.

Hypothesis 3b seems to capture the dynamics of collaboration in central government more accurately than the corresponding hypothesis in the rational-administrative model (Hypothesis 1a). As the discussion of bureaucratic politics above indicates, the differing priorities of government departments militate against collaboration. They are each compelled to priorities their own issues and without a shared responsibility for homelessness, there is little likelihood that this will change. There is also some evidence that power inequalities between government departments result in some departments assisting others' with their collaborative agendas more than others. Therefore, *hypothesis 3a is rejected but 3b is accepted*, providing partial support for the top-down bureaucratic politics model.

The fourth model, the **bottom-up bureaucratic politics model** suggested that:

H4a Collaboration decisions (both means and ends) are generated from the bottom-up; however aims are not unified;

H4b Collaboration decisions are the outcome of strategic and instrumental moves between actors in the local arena, each promoting their own interests; the outcomes favour the most powerful local agencies.

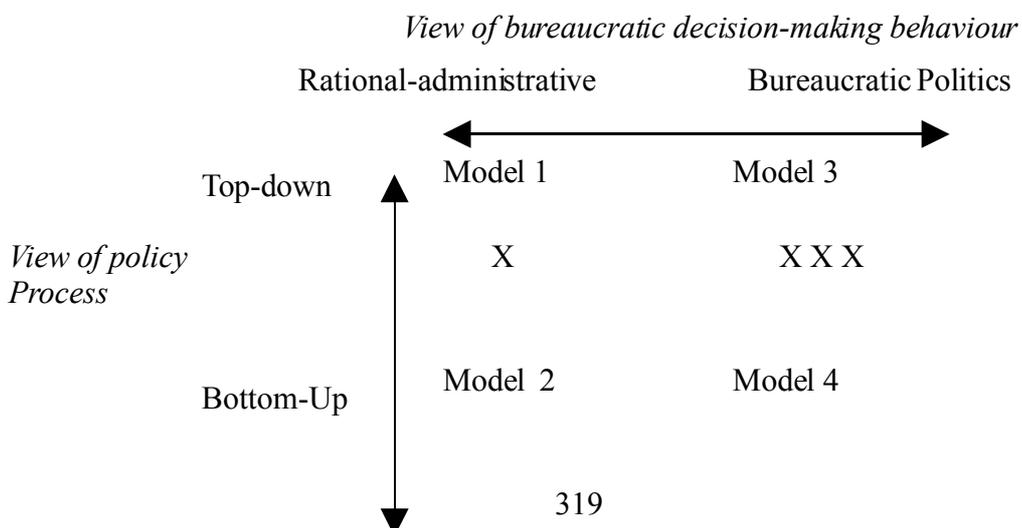
Hypothesis 4a is partly supported. As already discussed, collaboration policy setting is not *entirely* bottom-up, however, the assertion that aims are not unified is supported, and is more realistic than the idea of a dominant common purpose. Hypothesis 4b is generally supported by the evidence. The strategic and instrumental nature of collaborative decision-making has been demonstrated, including tactics such as withholding information and behaving possessively over client outcomes, in order to protect agencies' positions. In addition, there is some evidence that the powerful agencies dominate the local arena. While it is not necessarily the case that collaboration favours these agencies

more than others, it is certainly true that their greater power creates tensions which militate against collaborative working.

As noted in table 10.1 at the start of the chapter, there are two variants of model four, one of which has a ‘no collaboration’ outcome; the other with a ‘partisan mutual adjustment’ outcome (Lindblom 1965). The latter is more optimistic than the former and indicates that coordination from below may be possible without a central coordinator. Certainly it is not the case that agencies did not collaborate at all, although there were times when the challenges involved, many of which were associated with bureaucratic politics, did prevent this from occurring. There is some evidence to support the latter view which implies that partisans pursue their own interests through negotiation and persuasion. However, because of the costs associated with collaboration and the challenges of doing so, it is unlikely that these bargaining and negotiating processes would be sufficient to compel local actors to collaborate without any central direction or facilitation whatsoever. Of all four models, *the bottom-up bureaucratic politics model most accurately depicts the nature and level of collaborative decision-making*. Although not a perfect description of collaboration, there is more evidence to fit this model than any other.

The following diagram provides a visual representation of the preponderance of evidence supporting each of the rival models. Each ‘X’ constitutes evidence to support the relevant model based on the conclusions reached in the above discussion. While there are some findings to support each of the models, the weight of evidence falls behind model four, the ‘bottom-up bureaucratic politics’ model. Although the hypotheses of models one and two are ultimately rejected, there was a degree of evidence to fit the models, and this is reflected in the diagram.

Fig 10.1 Preponderance of evidence to support each of the rival models



XX

XXX
X

10.3 The Effectiveness of Horizontal and Vertical Coordination Tools

The evaluative questions of the research examined the effectiveness of both horizontal and vertical coordination tools. Effectiveness is considered in relation to the ability of these tools to help strengthen collaboration, and to alleviate externalities in the service delivery network, such as gaps in services, duplications, and forms of incoherence including accountability problems.

This research suggests that horizontal coordination tools do in some ways help to iron out externalities associated with the fragmented homelessness system. A major externality in the homelessness system is the problem of no agency taking responsibility for clients with multiple needs who did not fit easily within a single service remit. Joint protocols have the potential to help improve accountability in relation to such clients, by defining the responsibilities of specific bodies. This can help reduce the likelihood of agencies attempting to shift responsibility onto other agencies.

A second major problem of the multi-agency service delivery system is its complexity, and it can seem impenetrable both to clients and to staff. Various formal structures such as joint databases, service directories, and jointly funded coordinator posts help by reducing and making sense of this complexity. Such structures can also reduce duplication of information collection. Collective forms of data management such as joint directories of services and common databases can also be beneficial in this respect. Duplication is evident in relation to service provision, and co-located services and multi-agency teams are a potential means of addressing this.

Finally, multi-agency forums and case panels are a means of identifying and addressing problems of incoherence, gaps and duplications. The manifest nature of such structures, as compared to informal forms of collaboration, also provides an entry point for personnel wishing to work collaboratively. This may be particularly important for new staff without pre-existing networks and contacts in the local system.

However, realising such benefits of horizontal coordination tools is contingent upon effective management of the processes involved. This study highlights considerable challenges of developing horizontal coordination tools and ensuring they operate effectively. The challenges of tool development relate to the differing needs and priorities of the agencies concerned, lack of willingness to stand forward as the agency to lead on these, and other local contextual issues such as the corporate priorities of the local authority. Tool management itself was also difficult because coordination structures often brought tensions between agencies to the fore, providing arenas for disputes to surface. Lack of participation was a problem with respect to certain tools such as forums, and

there were difficulties enforcing joint agreements in some cases. This does not imply that such structures always result in these problems, merely that they require active management.

It is important to note that well-managed horizontal coordination tools also served as mechanisms for addressing the problems and challenges of collaboration that are well-documented in existing research. For instance, the problem of a lack of domain consensus was attenuated through joint protocols, while multi-agency forums and events helped to foster trust and mutual understanding.

With respect to vertical tools, as discussed in section 10.2.3 above, these are *partially* effective in enhancing local collaboration. Tools such as incentives were effective amongst those local authorities that had been beneficiaries. Similarly, vertical contact and information provision is generally valued by local actors and is associated with greater collaboration. The reasonably good interaction levels between housing authorities and those with which collaboration was mandated indicates some success of authority-based tools. Furthermore, many of the centrally recommended horizontal coordination tools are implemented locally. While vertical coordination tools themselves may not *directly* reduce externalities, they do assist with this *indirectly* by encouraging adoption of local collaborative structures which have the capacity to do this.

A key finding which highlights the limitations of vertical steering of local collaboration, however, is that legislation requiring cooperation is difficult to enforce. The majority of interviewees thought that such laws were ineffective and suggested that greater specification was needed of the nature of collaborative working. A further important finding is that agencies outside of the direct purview of CLG are far less likely to be influenced by its meta-governance strategies. In some cases interviewees in such agencies were unaware of the government's collaboration agenda, and received no information from government. Consequently many were uninformed of collaborative funding streams to which they could have applied.

Lastly, the evidence highlights that it is particularly important for local agencies to develop a sense of ownership of collaborative structures. When these are viewed as imposed, tokenistic compliance may result. Government-mandated coordination tools such as compulsory multi-agency homelessness strategies and joint commissioning bodies were vulnerable to this. In summary, formal coordination tools, both horizontal and vertical, have both strengths and limitations. Despite the challenges associated with developing and managing these, they do provide a means of increasing the likelihood of agencies working together.

10.4 Positioning the Research

Before proceeding to the closing remarks, some brief reflections are warranted to help position the research. This final section considers the contribution of the research to existing knowledge, its limitations and suggests areas for further enquiry.

10.4.1 The Contribution of the Research

Empirical contribution

The question of why and under what circumstances organisations collaborate has occupied scholars from a diverse range of disciplines. Previous work, particularly within fields such as organisation theory, business and management, has focused predominantly on the *horizontal* level of activity. This rich body of literature tells us much about collaboration and its antecedents, as well as offering practical insights for organisations seeking to develop forms of collaboration. The literature is also theoretically diverse, and perspectives on collaborative advantage, managerial craftsmanship, resource dependence and exchange provide interesting and useful frameworks for analysis.

However, in the context of the public sector it is essential to consider the role of the State in the collaborative process. Unlike the market place, local public services do not exist as autonomous, self-governing units free from the hand of government and bureaucracy. Their operating contexts are highly structured by the State. Local statutory agencies are themselves the local arm of the State, and voluntary sector actors and quasi-public bodies contracted to provide public services are increasingly subject to forms of control conventionally associated with the public sector. This research makes a contribution to the existing literature on collaboration by exploring the dynamics between local collaboration and central government. To borrow a now well-coined phrase (Scharpf 1994), the research examines horizontal collaborative activity ‘in the shadow of hierarchy’.

This research contributes to debates within the literature about the possibility of government-driven local collaboration, some of which critique the ‘top-down’ nature of collaborative agendas of recent British governments. It adds a new empirical contribution to this literature by investigating the relationship between central steering and local collaboration in one policy sector. The focus on ‘tools’, both horizontal and vertical, allows for an in-depth examination of range of alternative strategies which can be pursued at a national and local level to structure and enhance collaboration. This study also

contributes to wider debates in the contemporary public policy literature which questions state capacity in the era of 'governance'. It investigates the potential of a particular form of 'meta-governance' for enhancing control and coordination in this environment.

The added value of the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework employed provides a lens through which to assess the empirical questions of the research, and draws attention to issues which have been under-explored in existing work. Studying collaboration from a political science perspective directs attention towards power relations in the collaborative process. Theories of bureaucratic politics are particularly relevant in this respect, and help to illuminate the tensions and dynamics of collaborative working in the challenging environment of local public services. By employing a bureaucratic politics perspective it has been possible to highlight not only the differing priorities of actors in the system, but the way in which these actually affect the interactive behaviour of agencies and have implications for their capacity to collaborate.

However, a bureaucratic politics perspective alone does not adequately explain collaboration. The inclusion of an implementation perspective within the theoretical framework adds another layer of analysis which is important in view of the particular interest in the role of government. As discussed in chapter three, the bureaucratic politics perspective has been criticised for neglecting the role of hierarchy. Incorporating implementation theory into the analytical framework has helped to overcome this limitation.

10.4.2 Limitations and Avenues for Future Enquiry

This research has focused exclusively on the views of central and street level bureaucrats. While this focus is justified given the nature of the research questions, further research investigating on service users' experiences would provide an alternative perspective on collaboration. Measures of collaboration could be developed focusing on service users' perceptions, such as the degree to which they view services to be 'joined-up', the number of services used and their 'pathways' through the homelessness service system. Such approaches could be applied in a wide range of cross-cutting service areas where citizens straddle different systems of care or services. Another potential angle for investigating service users' experience would be to further investigate some of the issues raised in this research specifically around accountability deficits for those with multiple needs who fall between services. This group appear to be particularly vulnerable to problems caused by a lack of collaboration.

Another fruitful direction for future research may be to further investigate the role of national non-governmental or quasi-governmental bodies in relation to steering local collaboration. The present research has focused predominantly on the role of central government departments in the process, and could be complemented by further study of a wider range of national bodies including regulators, national voluntary sector bodies and other relevant representative organisations. In addition, the parts of the research which examined the politics of inter-agency relationships focused mainly on the horizontal relations between local service providers. In future work the bureaucratic politics framework could also be applied more specifically to the relationship between levels of government to identify how the politics of central - local government relations impacts on the centre's ability to steer local collaboration.

The question of the *impact* of collaboration on homeless outcomes was outside of the scope of the present study. Instead the focus has been on how collaboration is, or can be, promoted by the central state, and the effectiveness of these attempts in terms of the level of collaboration and their capacity to alleviate problems in fragmented service systems. The research is to some extent premised on the argument that collaboration *per se* is a good thing. Certainly all the indications in the literature suggest that multi-agency collaborative approaches are important for tackling homelessness. However, the research has also highlighted the opportunity costs associated with collaborating. Further research on the effectiveness of collaborative endeavours on service outcomes would assist practitioners to ascertain the circumstances under which pursuing collaboration is likely to be a worthwhile expenditure of effort.

Finally, it should be noted that the study was carried out in a single policy subsystem within the English context. The context was a unitary state where there is fairly strong central direction, and where there is a mixed economy of service provision but with local authorities as key delivery agents with statutory responsibilities. The research is therefore likely to bear most relevance to contexts which share some of these features. Homelessness has parallels with many other areas of human services and other cross-cutting policy issues, and is an example of an issue which cuts across the boundaries of different sectors of service provision. The research therefore may be relevant to similar policy fields where there is multi-agency involvement.

10.5 Concluding remarks

This research has investigated the influence and dynamics of both horizontal and vertical coordination tools in English homelessness services. The particular vertical tools considered are those which are used to stimulate collaboration in local public service delivery networks, and have been construed as tools of ‘meta-governance’. The horizontal tools investigated are the formal collaborative structures employed at local level to ‘join up’ services.

The results suggest that vertical coordination in the form of meta-governance does help to foster collaboration. However, strategies are only partially effective because of limitations to State capacity, such as the restricted ability of government departments to influence actors outside their direct line of authority, the bottom-up nature of the collaborative process, and problems associated with bureaucratic politics. Government can help to facilitate and foster local collaboration, but this is only one part of the process. The governance of collaboration also requires effective local management of horizontal coordination tools and processes. While horizontal coordination tools have the potential to alleviate externalities associated with fragmented systems and to enhance collaboration, local agencies operate in competitive environment which encourages their personnel to protect their organisational interests rather than pursuing a common dominant interest.

The meta-governance techniques discussed in this thesis are dependent on government influencing collaboration via local statutory providers. The authority which central government holds over these bodies and their employees is what permits meta-governance to take place. Government has much weaker influence over local bodies outside of the public sector such as voluntary sector agencies and accommodation providers, which have less contact with and receive less information from government,

and are therefore much less attuned to government priorities. It is therefore questionable the extent to which meta-governance as a technique for joining up local services would be possible in the context of further erosion of the public sector element of housing services. The research has found evidence of a weakened ability of local housing authorities to perform their statutory duties because of their increasing reliance on non-public or quasi-public bodies over which they have little authority.

Government can use its resources and powers to catalyse, stimulate and facilitate collaboration but is reliant on local housing authorities to take the collaborative process further at a local level. In an important sense local housing authorities are therefore the natural strategic leaders for fostering collaboration in local areas. However, because of the service commissioning role of these authorities, they are not perceived by other actors in the local system to be impartial arbitrators of inter-agency relations. This conflict is a salient challenge facing local authorities in the contemporary environment where there is a move to strengthen their local strategic capacity, while at the same time enhancing the service provision roles of voluntary and private sector agencies.

This research relates to broader themes in contemporary public policy literature including issues such as the 'self-organising' nature of networks, and the loss of control and accountability inherent within network forms of social organisation which are associated with the 'hollow state'. The research finds that homelessness service networks do exhibit control and accountability deficits, as well as problems of incoherence.

Previous literature indicates that weaker forms of collaboration such as loose networks and voluntary linkages are based on principles such as reciprocity, trust and loyalty. This study has illustrated that in the increasingly competitive environment of contemporary public services it may be unrealistic to expect collaboration to be maintained on the basis of such principles. The analysis presented also questions the notion that agencies, in the absence of a central coordinator, will coordinate themselves purely on the basis of their interdependence and through negotiations and bargaining. Interdependencies and the need to pool resources in order to maintain organisational survival may compel agencies to collaborate in *some* cases. However, on balance, the differing priorities of agencies and the environment in which they operate mean that collaboration remains problematic. The research therefore indicates a need for central intervention and suggests that if agencies and networks are left to self-organise, such problems will remain and will ultimately restrict the ability of service providers to deliver the services needed to homeless people. This thesis, through analysis of the strengths and limitations of the tools of meta-governance, provides ways forward for the type of intervention which may be effective.

Appendices

Appendix A: Postal Survey Respondent Letter

Appendix B: Postal Survey Follow-Up Letter

Appendix C: Research Project Information Sheet

Appendix D: Copy of Questionnaire

Appendix E: Survey Respondent Information

Appendix F: Interview Schedule: Local Level

Appendix G: Interview Schedule: Central Level

Appendix H: List of Interviewees' Job Titles

Appendix I: Data Tables for Contextual & Interpretive Variables

APPENDIX A

Contact: Alice Moseley
Department of Politics
Amory Building
University of Exeter
Rennes Drive
Exeter, Devon EX4 4RJ

E-mail: A.Moseley@exeter.ac.uk
Telephone: 01392 832205 or
07746 583669

Date

FAO: Name, Organisation

Dear Sir/ Madam,

We are writing from the University of Exeter to ask for your cooperation in helping us collect some brief information for a national research project on joint working in the homelessness sector. The research is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Economic and Social Research Council and Price Waterhouse Coopers. Although the research is endorsed and supported by DCLG, it is being conducted independently by Exeter University. Further details can be found on the information sheet provided.

We would be very grateful if you could arrange for the enclosed short questionnaire to be completed by **the lead manager or principal officer dealing with homelessness within your local authority** (e.g. the manager of homelessness strategy or advice), and returned in the pre-paid, addressed envelope. Most answers are tick box and it should only take around 10 minutes to complete. The results for each individual respondent will be kept strictly confidential and will be anonymous so that no individual or authority will be identifiable. We hope you can assist as the research is an opportunity for local authorities to provide feedback on this important issue. Each questionnaire is important to us and we need a certain level of responses in order to be able to generate meaningful information.

It would be much appreciated if the questionnaire could be completed and returned by **Friday 21st July** if possible. If you have any queries about the research please do not hesitate to get in touch using the contact details above. All participating authorities will receive a summary of the results on completion of the project. Many thanks in anticipation for your help.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Oliver James and Ms Alice Moseley
Department of Politics, University of Exeter

APPENDIX B

Contact: Alice Moseley
Department of Politics
Amory Building
University of Exeter
Rennes Drive
Exeter, Devon EX4 4RJ

E-mail: A.Moseley@exeter.ac.uk
Telephone: 01392 832205 or
07746 583669

DATE

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Approximately six weeks ago we sent a questionnaire to your authority as part of a national research study of housing authorities. The purpose of the research is to obtain information on joint working arrangements and inter-agency contact in relation to single homeless clients. The research is being carried out by Exeter University and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Department for Communities and Local Government and Price Waterhouse Coopers.

We are writing this as a follow-up reminder, as it appears from our list that we have not yet received a response from your authority. Participation is entirely voluntary, and we are writing this in case the original questionnaire has been lost or misplaced. We have enclosed another copy of the questionnaire and would be most grateful if you could arrange for this to be completed by the **lead manager or principal officer dealing with homelessness within your local authority** (e.g. the manager of homelessness strategy or advice) and returned in the prepaid addressed envelope. It is important to us that this person is from within the authority rather than an external agency. We would be grateful to receive responses by 15th September if possible.

This is an important study and your cooperation will be invaluable in ensuring a true picture is formed. All participants will receive a summary of the results. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch using the contact details above. Please be assured that all the information provided will be treated in absolute confidence and used solely for the purposes of this research project. No individual respondents or authorities will be identified in our report.

Many thanks in advance for your help.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Oliver James
Ms Alice Moseley
Department of Politics, University of Exeter

APPENDIX C

Research Project Information Sheet

Project title: Implementing joint working in the English homelessness sector: a study of the extent of and factors affecting inter-agency working.

Project team: Dr Oliver James and Ms Alice Moseley, Department of Politics, Exeter University.

Funding details: The research is funded under the Governance and Quality of Life Research Programme by the Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), the Economic and Social Research Council and Price Waterhouse Coopers (research award PTA-039-2004-00006). The research funding period is 1ST Nov 2004 – 31ST October 2007.

Background: The research is a study of joint working between organisations in the homelessness sector. It involves a postal questionnaire of all housing authorities in England followed by in-depth case studies with relevant agencies in selected areas.

Overall research aims:

To explore the extent of joint working and amount of contact between agencies in the homelessness sector in England in relation to single homeless people in the planning and delivery of services;

To identify the challenges and enablers of joint working;

To identify the mechanisms used to coordinate different agencies involved in homelessness provision;

To investigate views on central guidance and initiatives encouraging joint working.

Additional information:

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only. Third parties will not be allowed access to this information.

No names of individual persons involved in the postal survey will be revealed, and we will ensure that no individual or authority can be connected with answers given.

Part of the research will be written up as a PhD thesis. The results may be published as journal articles or publications and presented to relevant conferences and groups.

Participants will receive a summary of the research results on completion of the project.

Contact details:

For further information about the research please contact: Alice Moseley, Department of Politics, Amory Building, Exeter University, Devon EX4 4RJ. Tel 01392 832 205/ 07746 583669 a.moseley@exeter.ac.uk

The overall coordinator of the research is Dr. Oliver James, Department of Politics, Exeter University, o.james@exeter.ac.uk

APPENDIX D



Ref no.

Questionnaire:

Joint working and inter-agency contact in the Homelessness Sector

The questionnaire aims to gather information and views on joint working between your housing authority and other organisations involved in providing accommodation and support services to homeless people or those at risk of homelessness. The group we are interested in is **single homeless adults**, both statutory (i.e. 'vulnerable') and non-statutory cases, including but not exclusively rough sleepers. The research **does not** include children and families, young people or care leavers, or those affected by domestic violence. Please therefore answer all questions in relation to services for single homeless people.

The questionnaire should be completed by the lead manager or principal officer within your housing authority responsible for homelessness, for instance in the housing advice/ homelessness service or the housing strategy section. Even if the homelessness/ housing advice service is contracted out to an external agency, the questionnaire should be completed by someone within the housing authority.

Please write in answers, circle or tick the boxes as appropriate.

12. To the best of your knowledge, which, if any, of the following formal joint working arrangements between organisations are in place in relation to single homelessness in your local authority (even if these involve only some agencies or are present only for specific categories of single homeless people)?

Please tick as appropriate, also indicating if the housing authority is directly involved in the arrangement. If applicable, add up to two additional joint working arrangements not listed.

Formal joint working arrangement in relation to SINGLE homeless people	Yes	No	Don't Know	If YES, is the housing authority directly involved?	
				Yes	No
<i>Operational</i> level multi-agency group/ forum					
<i>Strategic</i> level multi-agency group/ forum					
Multi-agency staff training events/ workshops					
Staff placements in other agencies					
Joint client monitoring procedures/ multi-agency monitoring					
Joint case conferences/ multi-agency assessment panels					
Joint client assessment forms					
Outreach service involving more than one agency					
A dedicated post for forging inter-agency links					
Location of additional specialist services within existing agencies e.g. GP or benefits advice in hostel/ day centre					
Service level agreements					
Joint directory of information on local services					
Common directory of accommodation providers					
Client information sharing protocols/ confidentiality protocols					
Other joint protocols (<i>operational</i> level)					
Other joint protocols (<i>strategic</i> level)					
Multi-agency homelessness team, project or one stop shop					
Jointly commissioned services					
Joint budgets					
Joint local performance targets/ indicators					
Additional arrangements not listed (write in):					
1.					
2.					

13. How much contact (for example, by phone, e-mail, fax, or in person) does your housing authority have with the agencies listed in relation to service planning and delivery for single homeless people? Please circle the number which represents the amount of contact for service planning (column A) AND client referrals/ casework (column B). If there is no such agency locally, circle 6 (N/A). If needed, add up to 2 other bodies you think are important but are not listed.

Codes 1 = very little contact 2 = little contact 3 = a moderate amount of contact 4 = a lot of contact 5 = a very great deal of contact 6 = <i>not applicable/ don't know</i>	A – Contact in relation to general service planning for clients					B – Contact for client referrals/ casework						
	Very little deal		Very great		N / A	Very little deal		Very great		N / A		
STATUTORY AGENCIES/ LOCAL AUTHORITY DEPARTMENTS:												
Social Services	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Primary Care Trust (<i>GPs for column B</i>)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
NHS Trust (<i>hospitals for column B</i>)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mental Health Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Drug/ Alcohol Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Supporting People Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Police	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Probation Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Prison Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Housing Benefits section in authority	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other local housing authorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Local elected members	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
VOLUNTARY SECTOR AGENCIES:												
Housing advice project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Welfare rights service (eg CAB)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Meaningful occupation/ training/ employment project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Day/ drop-in centre(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mental health project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Drug/ alcohol project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tenancy support service(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Street outreach team/ project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS/ MANAGERS:												
Homeless hostel(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Relevant registered social landlord(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other relevant supported accommodation provider(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Private sector landlords	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Organisation (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
OTHER BODIES NOT LISTED:												
1.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

14. Next, we are interested in the *appropriate* amount of contact. How much contact would the housing authority *ideally* have with the agencies listed below to plan and deliver services for single homeless people, without hindering its ability to achieve its other organisational aims? Circle as appropriate for service planning (column A) and client referrals/ casework (column B). If there is no such agency locally, circle 6 (N/A). If needed, add up to 2 other bodies not listed that you think are important.

Codes 1 = very little contact 2 = little contact 3 = a moderate amount of contact 4 = a lot of contact 5 = a very great deal of contact 6 = <i>not applicable/ don't know</i>	A – Contact in relation to general service planning for clients					B – Contact for client referrals/ casework						
	Very little deal	Very great			N / A	Very little deal	Very great			N / A		
STATUTORY AGENCIES/ LOCAL AUTHORITY DEPARTMENTS:												
Social Services	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Primary Care Trust (<i>GPs for column B</i>)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
NHS Trust (<i>hospitals for column B</i>)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mental Health Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Drug/ Alcohol Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Supporting People Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Police	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Probation Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Prison Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Housing Benefits section in authority	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other local housing authorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Local elected members	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
VOLUNTARY SECTOR AGENCIES:												
Housing advice project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Welfare rights service (eg CAB)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Meaningful occupation/ training/ employment project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Day/ drop-in centre(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mental health project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Drug/ alcohol project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Tenancy support service(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Street outreach team/ project(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS/ MANAGERS:												
Homeless hostel(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Relevant registered social landlord(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other relevant supported accommodation provider(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Private sector landlords	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Organisation (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
OTHER BODIES NOT LISTED:												
1.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. Have you previously worked in any of the types of organisations listed in questions 13/ 14 above?

Yes No

If YES, Please write in up to 4 types of bodies from the list that you have previously worked in and tick if they were in the area in which you currently work:

List organisation(s) in which

Tick this box if the organisation

you previously worked
area

was in your current local authority

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____
- (iv) _____

16. We are also interested in the amount of contact from governmental and other regional and national bodies regarding single homelessness generally, both in terms of the amount of contact you think *there is* and the amount you think *there should be*.

Circle one answer in **column A** for each body to indicate how much overall contact there **is** in relation to single homelessness. Circle one answer in **column B** for each body to indicate how much overall contact there **ideally should be** in relation to single homelessness.

If applicable, please add up to two other regional/ national bodies you think are important which are not listed.

Codes 1 = very little contact 2 = little contact 3 = a moderate amount of contact 4 = a lot of contact 5 = a very great deal of contact 6 = <i>not applicable/ don't know</i>	A – ACTUAL CONTACT					N / A	B – IDEAL CONTACT					N / A
	Very little deal			Very great			Very little deal			Very great		
	—————▶						—————▶					
REGIONAL/ NATIONAL BODIES:												
Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly ODPM)	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Government Office for the Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Housing Corporation	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
National Housing Federation	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Regional Housing Board	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Chartered Institute of Housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
OTHER REGIONAL/ NATIONAL BODIES NOT LISTED:												
1.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

17(a) Finally, please estimate roughly what percentage of your work time over the past year *you personally* have spent in contact with external bodies regarding single homelessness.

Please write in approximate percentage _____

17(b) Roughly speaking, how was this contact time over the past year distributed between the following types of agencies? (these should add up to 100% in total):

Body	Percentage of contact time with this type of body
Other local statutory agencies/ local authority departments	%
Local voluntary sector organisations	%
Local accommodation providers/ managers	%
Regional/ national bodies	%
Total	100%

~~~~~

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS  
QUESTIONNAIRE,  
YOUR INPUT IS MUCH APPRECIATED

PLEASE RETURN IN THE PREPAID ADDRESSED ENVELOPE BY SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>  
2006

Contact details: Alice Moseley, Department of Politics, University of Exeter,  
Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ, Devon  
Tel: 01392 832205/ 07746 583669

## APPENDIX E

**Table 1 Profile of authority responses**

|                            |                        | <b>Respondents (%)</b> | <b>Population<sup>122</sup> (%)</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>LSVT authority</b>      | Yes                    | 48                     | 48 <sup>123</sup>                   |
|                            | No                     | 52                     | 52                                  |
|                            | <b>Total</b>           | <b>100</b>             | <b>100</b>                          |
| <b>Authority structure</b> | single tier            | 19                     | 22                                  |
|                            | two tier               | 81                     | 78                                  |
|                            | <b>Total</b>           | <b>100</b>             | <b>100</b>                          |
| <b>Geography</b>           | urban                  | 45.5                   | 50 <sup>124</sup>                   |
|                            | rural                  | 54.5                   | 50                                  |
|                            | <b>Total</b>           | <b>100</b>             | <b>100</b>                          |
| <b>Region</b>              | North East             | 6                      | 7                                   |
|                            | Yorkshire & the Humber | 6                      | 6                                   |
|                            | East Mids              | 12                     | 11                                  |
|                            | East                   | 11                     | 13.5                                |
|                            | London Borough         | 7                      | 9                                   |
|                            | South East             | 21                     | 19                                  |
|                            | South West             | 12                     | 13                                  |
|                            | West Mids              | 9                      | 9.5                                 |
|                            | North West             | 15                     | 12                                  |
|                            | <b>Total</b>           | <b>100</b>             | <b>100</b>                          |

**Table 2 Job titles of respondents**

| <b>Job title</b>                            | <b>%</b>   | <b>N</b>   |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Head/ Director of Housing                   | 6          | 13         |
| Housing Manager (Policy or Strategy)        | 8          | 16         |
| Housing Officer (Policy or Strategy)        | 6          | 13         |
| Housing Officer (Operational)               | 14         | 26         |
| Housing Advice Service Manager/ Team Leader | 44         | 83         |
| Homelessness Manager                        | 15         | 28         |
| Homelessness Officer                        | 5          | 10         |
| Missing                                     | 2          | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>100</b> | <b>193</b> |

**Table 3 Management position of respondents**

| <b>Management Position of respondents</b>         | <b>%</b>   | <b>N</b>   |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Primarily strategic management                    | 22         | 42         |
| Primarily operational management                  | 23         | 45         |
| A mixture of strategic and operational management | 51         | 98         |
| 'Other'                                           | 3          | 6          |
| Missing                                           | 1          | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | <b>100</b> | <b>193</b> |

<sup>122</sup> Refers to population of English local authorities

<sup>123</sup> DCLG. 'Completed LSVTs Dataset'. Updated 16/08/06  
www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1152563

<sup>124</sup> DEFRA Rural definition and classification of authorities dataset:  
www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural-definition.htm

**Table 4 Unit or Section of Housing Authority<sup>125</sup>**

|                                     | <b>%</b>   | <b>N</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Housing Advice/ Options/ Needs Unit | 43         | 82         |
| Housing Dept, no unit specified     | 32         | 62         |
| Housing Strategy Unit               | 10         | 19         |
| Homelessness Unit                   | 8          | 16         |
| Not housing authority               | 6          | 11         |
| Missing                             | 1          | 3          |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>100</b> | <b>193</b> |

<sup>125</sup> Almost all respondents (93%, n = 179) were from the local authority's housing directorate, with the remainder in the legal, regeneration, community, planning, environment or technical services department (or missing responses).

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Interview schedule: local agencies**

#### **Introduction:**

- Explanation of research aims etc
- Background information on interviewee, e.g. length in post, nature of role

#### **Section A: Local joint working**

1. a) Which other agencies does your organisation spend most time working with?  
b) What are your main reasons for being in contact with them?  
c) Do you work much with agencies in other local authority areas?
2. Do you feel that the way in which services and accommodation for homeless people are dispersed between a range of organisations poses any particular difficulties for clients? Examples?
3. How important, in your view, is joint working with other agencies in relation to homelessness?
4. Overall, how well do you think agencies in the local area work together?
5. Are there any things which make joint working difficult?
6. What are the things which have helped facilitate joint working?
7. Would you say there is any one agency locally which acts as a sort of coordinator for bringing together different homelessness agencies?

#### **(Extra qs for strategic council people only):**

- Do you feel housing associations are cooperative in terms of helping the council carry out its statutory homelessness duties?
- Has Social Services been cooperative in terms of assisting with the development of the Homelessness strategy?
- Statutory health services?

## **Section B: Horizontal coordination mechanisms**

1. Show list of mechanisms from survey:
  - Aware of these? Involved in them now or in setting them up?
  - How effective do you feel these mechanisms have been in terms of achieving a more integrated or coordinated approach
2. Homelessness Strategy
  - Was your organisation involved in developing this?
  - How well do you feel the process of creating this worked?
  - Do you think the homelessness strategy has helped bring organisations closer together?

### **(For strategic people only):**

In relation to other local structures or processes such as local area agreements and local strategic partnerships:

- Do you feel these have led to better coordination of homeless services? More joint working?
3. Have you heard about the Regional Champions Scheme? If yes, has your organisation had any contact with any so-called 'regional champions'?

## **Section C: Vertical coordination**

1. Do you feel joint working is something which is on the government's agenda?
2. What do you think government can do to make it easier for local organisations to work jointly together?
3. Do you feel extra funding through programmes like SP, Innovation Fund, Ethnic Minorities Innovation Fund, Hostels Capital Improvement Grant, Change Up help to promote better joint working?
4. Have you come across any guidance on joint working either from the government or elsewhere? (*prompts DVDs, information sent by DCLG or on their website, best practice guidance by DCLG or HA, joint commissioning framework*)
  - If YES, would you say this guidance helps to promote joint working?
  - If NO, do you think this sort of thing would be helpful?
5. Can you think of any ways in which government or other national bodies monitor joint working at the local level?
6. Some areas of legislation set out a duty for agencies to cooperate. Do you think cooperation is something which government can *require* of local agencies?
7. Are there any government policies or programmes that impact on your ability to work jointly with other agencies?
8. Do you feel you have the opportunity to influence government in terms of homelessness policy generally?

9. Are there other national bodies that you feel could or do play a role in helping facilitate local joint working?

**(For strategic council people only):**

Are you aware of the Homelessness Strategies Health check? Contains a self-assessment part relating to joint working. Did you find it useful?

**(For strategic council people only):**

Do you feel the regional tier has much involvement in homelessness issues? (eg GORs, Regional Housing)

**Section D: Perceptions of central joint working**

1. Do you feel that central government itself works in a joined-up way in relation to homelessness? Eg different government departments?

**End**

- Anything else you would like to add?

## APPENDIX G

### Interview schedule: civil servants

#### **Introduction:**

- Introduce research/ start recording
- For the purposes of this interview, I am interested firstly in your views on collaboration between local agencies; secondly, the strategies used by central government to encourage local agencies to collaborate and any challenges involved, and lastly, cross-departmental working at central level. Therefore interview in three sections, covering each of these areas.

#### **Background information:**

- Job title and nature of work you carry out.
- Length of time in post?
- Length of time in this Department?
- Previously worked in other teams/ departments?

#### **Section A: Joint working between organisations working at local level**

1. First of all, how would *you* define 'joint working' in the context of homelessness? (*prompt: sometimes referred to as collaboration*)
2. What would you say are the main reasons for joint working at local level in relation to homelessness? Can you think of any particular examples of homelessness related issues where joint working is important?
3. Do you think that local service providers working with homeless people are committed to joint working?
4. In your view, what are the main difficulties facing local agencies trying to collaborate or work together?
5. There are a number of different ways that local organisations can work together. Are there any particular methods or approaches that have been successful in your view? (*prompt - e.g. multi-agency forums, joint training, joint protocols, joint assessment, multi-agency monitoring*).

#### **Section B: Central/ local relationship**

1. Generally speaking, what can central government do to encourage local joint working?

2. How much of a priority would you say it is for your department to get local homelessness agencies to work together? Would you say it is a priority for other government departments?
3. (a) How has your department attempted to encourage joint working between local agencies? (*ask if any joint targets for local agencies*)  
  
(b) Are you aware of any other methods or strategies your department has considered?
4. Which methods or approaches do you feel have been most effective in encouraging local agencies to collaborate? (*prompt – Homelessness Strategies process? SP framework or other funding, legislation, best practice guidance, eg DVDs/ written guidance*)
5. Overall, do you think that attempts by the centre to encourage multi-agency approaches have led to greater joint working on the ground?
6. Have you encountered any difficulties encouraging local organisations to collaborate?
7. Do you think central government currently does enough to encourage local joint working?
8. (a) Which local service providers or bodies do you see as the main targets for attempts to increase local joint working?  
  
(b) Are there any particular local agencies or sectors that are hard to influence?  
  
(c) Which agencies do you see as best placed or best able to take a local lead on joint working?  
  
(d) Are there any local agencies that seem reluctant to work together? Any that work well together?
9. As far as you are aware, does your department actively monitor or evaluate local joint working? (*prompt: self assessment forms as part of Homelessness Strategies Health Check/ evaluation of Homelessness strategies process*)
10. (a) Does your department receive feedback from local bodies about their attempts at joint working?  
  
(b) Do local authorities/ bodies contribute to framing central guidance or policy on joint working? Are there any formal mechanisms for doing this?
11. How do you see the role of other national bodies in promoting joint working between local service and accommodation providers? (*prompt eg Housing Corp, GOR, RHB, CIH, NHF, Shelter, Crisis, Homeless Link*)

### **Section C: Central level joint working**

1. How 'joined up' would you say different government departments are in relation to homelessness?
2. What are the main challenges of achieving joint working between departments?
3. Which departments do you tend to work most closely with? Which have been more difficult to work with? Why?
4. Are there examples where departments have worked successfully together on homelessness policy?
5. Can you think of any examples where there have been conflicts or disagreements with other government departments? (*prompt – Examples where different priorities have made it difficult to work together? Examples where policies of other departments have contradicted those in yours*)
6. (a) Are there any formal arrangements or structures that you are aware of for enhancing joint working between departments (*prompt - cross-cutting groups, joint budgets, joint targets? Movement of civil servants between departments*)?  
 (b) How effective would you say these arrangements or structures are?
7. Which national bodies involved in homelessness other than government departments do you work most closely with?
8. Do you encounter any difficulties working with these bodies?
9. Are there any things that have helped to enhance joint working with these other bodies?

**End**

- Anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?
- Any additional contacts you would suggest might be appropriate to interview?

## APPENDIX H

### List of interviewee ID numbers, job titles and local authority

| <b>ID</b> | <b>Job Title</b>                                       | <b>Local Authority</b> |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ID1       | Local Authority Policy Officer                         | LA1                    |
| ID2       | Supported Housing Service Manager                      | LA3                    |
| ID3       | Local Authority Community Services Manager             | LA3                    |
| ID4       | Supporting People Manager                              | LA1                    |
| ID5       | Resettlement Manager                                   | LA1                    |
| ID6       | Supporting People Officer                              | LA1                    |
| ID7       | Local Authority Housing Manager (Operations)           | LA1                    |
| ID8       | Local Authority Housing Manager (Strategy)             | LA2                    |
| ID9       | Local Authority Housing Manager (Operations)           | LA2                    |
| ID10      | Local Authority Housing Manager (Strategy)             | LA2                    |
| ID11      | Voluntary Sector Accommodation Project Officer         | LA2                    |
| ID12      | Supported Accommodation Provider                       | LA3                    |
| ID13      | Housing Association Supported Housing Area Manager     | LA2                    |
| ID14      | Voluntary Sector Hostel Manager                        | LA2                    |
| ID15      | Housing Association Support Worker                     | LA1                    |
| ID16      | Voluntary Sector Homeless Outreach Project Manager     | LA2                    |
| ID17      | Voluntary Sector Meaningful Occupation Project Manager | LA2                    |
| ID18      | Voluntary Sector Project Manager                       | LA2                    |
| ID19      | Voluntary Sector Project Worker                        | LA2                    |
| ID20      | Voluntary Sector Day Centre Manager                    | LA3                    |
| ID21      | Voluntary Sector Drugs Project Manager                 | LA3                    |
| ID22      | Voluntary Sector Project Manager                       | LA3                    |
| ID23      | Voluntary Sector Meaningful Occupation Project Manager | LA3                    |
| ID24      | Voluntary Sector Housing Advice Project                | LA1                    |
| ID25      | Voluntary Sector Homeless Outreach Project Manager     | LA2                    |
| ID26      | Police Officer                                         | LA3                    |
| ID27      | Police Officer                                         | LA3                    |
| ID28      | Probation Service Accommodation Manager                | LA3                    |
| ID29      | Community Safety Manager                               | LA2                    |
| ID30      | Prison Resettlement Officer                            | LA1                    |
| ID31      | Prison Housing Officer                                 | LA1                    |
| ID32      | Prison Accommodation Manager                           | LA2                    |
| ID33      | Department of Health Civil Servant                     | N/A                    |
| ID34      | CLG Civil Servant (Supporting People Directorate)      | N/A                    |
| ID35      | CLG Civil Servant (Homelessness Directorate)           | N/A                    |
| ID36      | CLG Civil Servant (Homelessness Directorate)           | N/A                    |
| ID37      | CLG Civil Servant (Homelessness Directorate)           | N/A                    |
| ID38      | Supporting People Manager                              | LA1                    |
| ID39      | Housing Association Area Manager                       | LA1                    |
| ID40      | Health Visitor (Homelessness)                          | LA1                    |
| ID41      | Nurse (Homelessness)                                   | LA3                    |
| ID42      | Social Services Multi-Agency Outreach Team Manager     | LA3                    |
| ID43      | Public Health Manager                                  | LA3                    |

## APPENDIX I: Data Tables for Contextual and Interpretive Variables: T-tests

**Table 1 Contextual *intra*-organisational factors: Authority structure & Professional Qualifications**

|                                            | Authority Structure |                   | Respondent Holds Degree |                   | Respondent Holds Professional Housing Qualification |                   |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
|                                            | 1-Tier n=37         | 2-Tier n=154      | Yes n=111               | No n=41           | Yes n=104                                           | No n=60           |
| Formal collaboration mean score (s.d.)     | 10.68<br>(3.65)     | 9.17<br>(3.90)    | 10.06<br>(4.04)         | 9.22<br>(3.21)    | 9.33<br>(4.04)                                      | 9.75<br>(3.43)    |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                          | $t=2.14, p=0.034^*$ |                   | $t=1.204, p=0.230$      |                   | $t=-0.68, p=0.497$                                  |                   |
| Informal collaboration mean score (s.d.)   | 145.59<br>(28.17)   | 133.77<br>(28.05) | 139.22<br>(29.53)       | 132.02<br>(26.31) | 136.34<br>(28.71)                                   | 136.03<br>(28.12) |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                          | $t=2.30, p=0.023^*$ |                   | $t=1.37, p=0.172$       |                   | $t=0.067, p=0.947$                                  |                   |
| Individual collaboration mean score (s.d.) | N/A                 |                   | 17%                     | 22%               | 19%                                                 | 17%               |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                          | N/A                 |                   | $t=-1.92, p=0.058$      |                   | $t=0.53, p=0.60$                                    |                   |

**Table 2a Contextual *inter*-organisational factors: Geographical proximity (Rurality) & Fragmentation (Externalisation of services)**

|                                          | Rurality            |                   | Housing Stock <sup>126</sup> |                   | Housing Advice Service |                   | Homelessness Service |                   |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                                          | Urban n=88          | Rural n=103       | External n=93                | Internal n=157    | External n=33          | Internal n=157    | External n=26        | Internal n=162    |
| Formal collaboration mean score (s.d.)   | 10.18<br>(3.77)     | 8.84<br>(3.89)    | 9.27<br>(3.74)               | 9.41<br>(3.98)    | 9.70<br>(3.56)         | 9.41<br>(3.94)    | 10.04<br>(3.62)      | 9.38<br>(4.04)    |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                        | $t=2.40, p=0.017^*$ |                   | $t=0.66, p=0.51$             |                   | $t=-0.38, p=0.706$     |                   | $t=-0.80, p=0.423$   |                   |
| Informal collaboration mean score (s.d.) | 141.15<br>(25.02)   | 131.71<br>(30.42) | 134.28<br>(27.27)            | 136.23<br>(27.81) | 134.95<br>(27.81)      | 136.23<br>(28.08) | 129.07<br>(31.05)    | 137.75<br>(29.44) |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                        | $t=2.32, p=0.022^*$ |                   | $t=0.85, p=0.40$             |                   | $t=0.23, p=0.815$      |                   | $t=1.30, p=0.194$    |                   |

**Table 2b: Contextual *inter*-organisational factors: Government steering**

<sup>126</sup> Indicated by whether an authority has undergone the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer process

|                                          | Vertical contact from CLG |                      | Government Incentives to Collaborate: Regional Champions Scheme/ Beacons |              | Government Incentives to Collaborate: Innovation Fund |               |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
|                                          | High Vertical Contact     | Low Vertical Contact | Yes                                                                      | No           | Yes                                                   | No            |
| Formal collaboration mean score (s.d.)   | 10.06 (3.6)               | 8.05 (4.3)           | 10.60 (4.89)                                                             | 9.33 (3.75)  | 12.00 (3.04)                                          | 9.13 (3.87)   |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                        | $t = 2.01, p = 0.001^*$   |                      | $t = -1.27, p = 0.167$                                                   |              | $t = -2.87, p = 0.001^*$                              |               |
| Informal collaboration mean score (s.d.) | 143 (26.17)               | 120 (28.11)          | 152.9 (30.8)                                                             | 134.1 (27.5) | 150.6 (23.39)                                         | 134.2 (28.49) |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                        | $t = 22.51, p = 0.000^*$  |                      | $t = -18.8, p = 0.005^*$                                                 |              | $t = -16.4, p = 0.01^*$                               |               |

**Table 3: Interpretive factors: Professional background**

|                                                           | Previously worked in other agency from list |                | Previously worked in a non-housing agency |                | Previously worked in other agency within current authority |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|                                                           | Yes n=100                                   | No n=89        | Yes n=36                                  | No n=64        | Yes n=34                                                   | No n=64        |
| Formal collaboration mean score (s.d.)                    | 9.31 (4.04)                                 | 9.64 (3.77)    | 9.08 (3.99)                               | 9.44 (4.10)    | 9.68 (4.15)                                                | 9.16 (4.02)    |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                                         | $t = -0.58, p = 0.56$                       |                | $t = -0.42, p = 0.676$                    |                | $t = 0.60, p = 0.548$                                      |                |
| Informal collaboration mean score (s.d.)                  | 134.90 (27.98)                              | 137.28 (29.23) | 135.44 (24.15)                            | 134.55 (30.10) | 135.65 (27.02)                                             | 135.22 (28.71) |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                                         | $t = -0.58, p = 0.56$                       |                | $t = 0.15, p = 0.881$                     |                | $t = 0.07, p = 0.942$                                      |                |
| Individual collaboration mean score <sup>127</sup> (s.d.) | 24% (16.10)                                 | 17% (17.42)    | 25% (18.26)                               | 16% (15.73)    | 20% (17.21)                                                | 19% (15.26)    |
| T-Test/ Sig Level                                         | $t = 1.97, p = 0.052$                       |                | $t = 2.61, p = 0.011^*$                   |                | $t = 0.337, p = 0.737$                                     |                |

**Data Tables for Contextual and Interpretive Variables: Correlation tests**

<sup>127</sup> Percentage of time individual respondent spent in contact with external agencies

**Table 4**

| <b>Variables correlated</b>                                  | <b>Correlation (r)</b> | <b>r<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>% of variation explained by variable</b> | <b>P value</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Contextual variables</i>                                  |                        |                      |                                             |                |
| No. of Housing Advice Staff/ Formal Collaboration Score      | 0.252                  | 0.064                | 6%                                          | 0.000*         |
| No. of Housing Advice Staff/ Informal Collaboration Score    | 0.237                  | 0.056                | 6%                                          | 0.001*         |
| Level of Single Homelessness/ Formal Collaboration Score     | 0.289                  | 0.084                | 8%                                          | 0.000*         |
| Level of Single Homelessness/ Informal Collaboration Score   | 0.211                  | 0.045                | 5%                                          | 0.003*         |
| <i>Interpretive variables</i>                                |                        |                      |                                             |                |
| Years in post/ Formal Collaboration Score                    | -0.037                 | 0.001                | 0.1%                                        | 0.618          |
| Years in post/ Informal Collaboration Score                  | 0.119                  | 0.014                | 1%                                          | 0.103          |
| Years in post/ Individual Collaboration Score                | -0.069                 | 0.005                | 0.5%                                        | 0.180          |
| Years in authority/ Formal Collaboration Score               | 0.039                  | 0.002                | 0.2%                                        | 0.594          |
| Years in authority / Informal Collaboration Score            | 0.137                  | 0.019                | 2%                                          | 0.103          |
| Years in authority / Individual collaboration Score          | 0.038                  | 0.001                | 0.1%                                        | 0.305          |
| Years in homelessness sector/ Formal Collaboration Score     | 0.002                  | 0.000                | 0                                           | 0.979          |
| Years in homelessness sector/ Informal Collaboration Score   | 0.127                  | 0.016                | 2%                                          | 0.083          |
| Years in homelessness sector/ Individual Collaboration Score | -0.175                 | 0.031                | 3%                                          | 0.009*         |

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