

Virtual coffeehouse conversation

We wanted to facilitate an open conversation to explore what “Collaboration” means in these current times in the context of planning and commissioning for the health and wellbeing of communities.

It was an opportunity to hear how collaboration is the key to successful transformation, and how you can increase collaboration within your organization and with others.

The guests were **Patricia Donnelly** CEO of The Mungo Foundation and **Kevin Beveridge** Commissioning and Planning Manager at East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Our presenter was **Edmund McKay** Strategic Planning Advisor from our Transformational Redesign Unit's Strategic Planning team.

The conversation centred on three core questions:

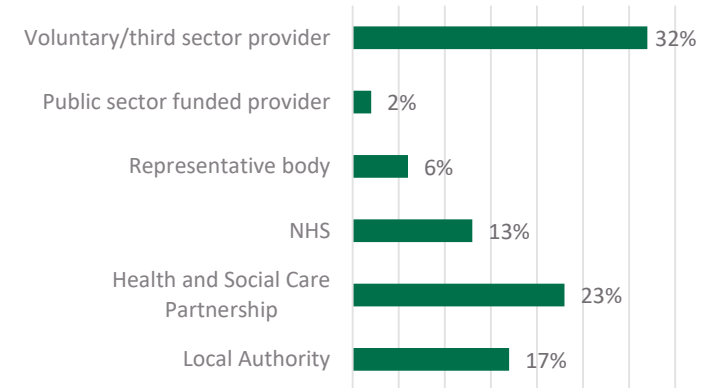
1. How do we plan for collaboration?
2. How would you increase opportunities for joint leadership?
3. Is this an opportunity to reset relationships?

There was an opportunity for attendees to contribute to the discussion using Slido.

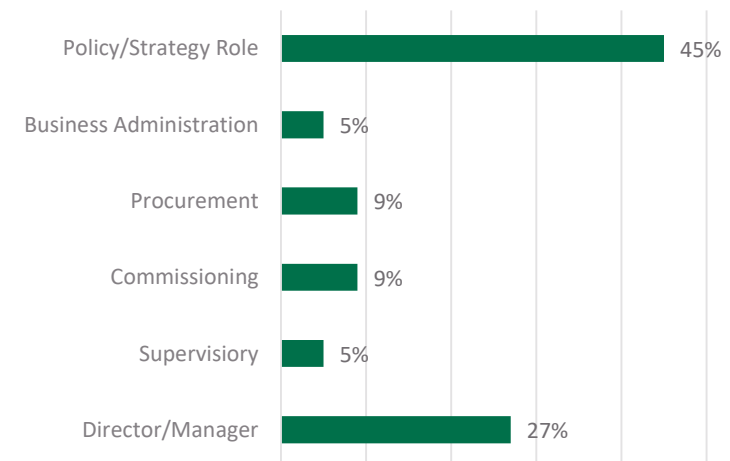
Things were kicked off by asking everyone – what does collaboration mean to you?



A total of 124 people attended the online discussion session from a range of organisations...



...and a range of roles.



Panel discussion

How do we plan for collaboration?

“Think long term”

- ‘Collaboration fatigue’ can occur as partners are asked to focus on something specific through a long process of test of change, piloting and launching.
- Changing priorities and challenges can result in disengagement – it is important to be open about how to come together again.

“Think big”

- Often the bigger picture can get lost when collaborating around a specific part of the system.
- It is important to keep asking questions – does this feel any different for people used to accessing a range of services? What does it say about the whole system?



How would you increase opportunities for joint leadership?

“We need to untangle leadership from hierarchy”

- Anyone can become a leader.
- The role of the hierarchical power is to amplify these voices and create the conditions for anyone to become a leader.

“Who does governance serve?”

- Governance arrangements are often focussed on protecting an organisation.
- Strict governance can stifle the initiative and creativity needed for leaders to emerge.



You said:

- Empower collaborators, staff and volunteers to make decisions and take action.
- Create an open and inclusive environment which encourages the sharing of diverse perspectives.
- Support and develop those at different levels to become leaders.

Is this an opportunity to reset relationships?

“If we lose this moment we lose it”

- A number of aspects of bureaucracy that have been switched off – this is an opportunity to pause and reflect before switching them back on.
- Services are beginning to ‘seek the reassurance of the status quo’ in the context of increased demand on services that had been stepped down.

“a real opportunity to recentre our values”

- Before COVID-19 needs were not being met and there was huge failure demand, these are things that still need addressing.
- What the experience of COVID-19 has taught is that we need to think of health a lot more holistically – including the health of our workforce.

You said:

- The third sector response has been rapid and essential– this needs to be recognised and be the starting point of new relationships.
- Power and resources need to be shifted away from the public sector.
- New relationships have to be maintained through sustainable funding.
- Perhaps it is not just an ‘opportunity’ but we have seen that it is a necessity.



Question session

Collaborations and relationships can be strained as some of the partners have changing priorities/something draws focus – what can we do about this?

This often happens when there is a dominant organisation/hierarchy driving the process, this needs to be replaced by genuine conversations, openness and honesty.

Collaborations with the third and independent sector happen within a context of resource and power disparity. It is often the case that the third sector is asked to fill gaps in provision in a way that is unsustainable for them. How can there be genuine collaboration in this context?

From the perspective of the public sector there needs to be an understanding that the third and independent sector are doing great, values based work and that there is a lot to learn from them.

There is also a need to redress some of the inequalities by recognising it as an issue, understanding the impact of it and then acting to change it.

One way to address this is to look at how to scale up the third sector approach and move it away from relying on ad hoc funding and requests from the partnership.

How might commissioning help enable services to engage with communities to understand and then meet need?

Commissioning conversations need to include a wide range of voices, including people who use services or living with a long term condition.

Engagement needs to be a requirement rather than an option – it can be challenging but this should not be an excuse.

Taking a neighbourhood approach can help with engagement as it is more immediate and reactive.

Next steps

This virtual coffeehouse conversation was part of the work we are doing to explore the experiences and lessons emerging through the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The discussion from this event and follow up survey will inform future online conversations and analysis
- There is information online regarding [the ihub Health and Social Care Learning system](#)
- Our [Good Practice Framework for Strategic Planning](#) is also available online

With thanks to

