

Moving forward together: integrating workforce strategies in children's services

Update autumn 2009

Integrated workforce strategy project



Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA)

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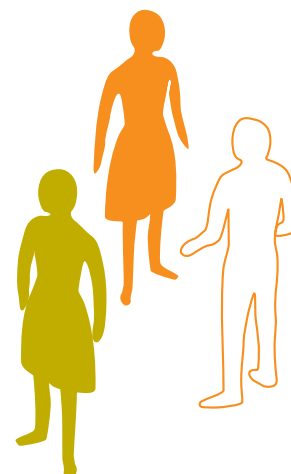
This report was commissioned by the CWN with Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) as the funding partner.

The Children's Workforce Development Council leads change so that the thousands of people and volunteers working with children and young people across England are able to do the best job they possibly can.

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Introduction

The Improvement and Development Agency's (IDeA's) integrated workforce strategy project explored, with participant local authorities and their partners, the challenges and benefits of tackling workforce issues together. It took the form of action learning from seven study areas in six different areas of the country. In three of the areas – Barnet, Calderdale and Walsall - the focus of the project was integrated workforce initiatives in the field of children's services.

The project started in June 2007 and the first study area activities began in November 2007. An IDeA consultant worked with each study area for a period of eight months. The results of the project were published in March 2009, in a report called *Moving Forward Together: joining up workforce strategies* (see below). This additional report was commissioned by the Children's Workforce Network (CWN). It serves as a supplement to the main report, looking specifically at the learning coming from the children's services study areas and drawing on some follow-up work by three of the IDeA consultants in 2009 following the completion of the main project.

Nationally the project was funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health (DH). The DCSF funding was channelled through the CWN and Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), both of whom have been jointly supporting and advising the project.

Regionally the project was supported by the Yorkshire and Humber, West Midlands and London Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships. The Project Steering Group had representatives from CLG, DCSF, DH, Local Government Employers (LGE) and the three Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships. North West Employers' Organisation jointly organised the national event with IDeA as well as organising an additional event because the demand for places was so high. CWN then funded an extended phase of the project, focussing just on following progress in the children's services study areas, resulting in this publication.

find out more

The full version of the *Integrated Workforce Strategy Project Final Report* is published separately by the IDeA and is available as a download from the IDeA website. Further material from the project, including more detailed case studies and checklists, can be found on the IDeA website, www.idea.gov.uk/joiningupworkforce.

Overall success factors

The children's services study areas in the integrated workforce strategy project were located in three different parts of the country – London, the Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber – and offer insights into different aspects of workforce development in integrated or multi-agency contexts. The project did not attempt to survey or encompass the full gamut of activities being undertaken in each area. Instead, we focussed on particular initiatives.

Each of the local authorities and their partners in the study areas are undertaking very valuable initiatives. We describe these in the appendix and further case studies are available on the IDeA website.

In all the study areas, leadership, vision, the investment of time in building cross-agency ownership of fully shared goals and matching that with appropriate resources are all key building blocks to success. The type of work being undertaken to integrate workforce strategies varies considerably but most areas are making progress with developing and implementing a joint local strategy, providing a much greater coherence and integration of workforce planning and development than in the past. The One Children's Workforce Tool, produced by the Children's Workforce Development Council, is being used actively to engage all the key children's workforce partners.

The greatest impetus has come from initiatives where partners have focused on tangible joint action on workforce issues, agreeing specific practical priorities either

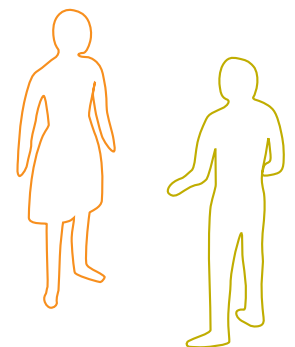
to address shared workforce challenges or workforce issues that flow from integrated or joint working. The most important common success factors, the project identified were:

A clear strategic context – where projects are clearly linked to priorities that are of demonstrable strategic importance to the local authority and its partners and given top leadership backing, they carry weight and are more likely to overcome some of the barriers that come from working across boundaries.

A strong practical focus – the initiatives that have progressed most successfully typically have a strong practical focus, enabling participants to see benefits for their work, to measure progress in terms of achievable goals and improving outcomes for children and young people.

Inclusivity and engagement – taking time to involve different teams and agencies, understand their situations and develop appropriate mechanisms for their input and for them to gain benefit has been core to most successful initiatives.

A championing resource – ensuring there is resource to promote capacity for an initiative and, in many cases, to 'champion' the project is often key to success in a multi-agency context where finding 'time away for the day job' is a key constraint.



In focus

Building confidence, promoting independence / Barnet

"It's given front-line staff a feeling of empowerment. They now feel if they go to visit a family and there are real issues they've got a responsibility to do more than just make a call to social services. They actually take it on themselves to be doing something."

IDeA associate Shirley Billington reflects on the confidence being built among a range of agencies in Barnet as a result of the council's programme of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) awareness-building, support and training throughout the local children's workforce. The initiative covers a range of services, including the voluntary sector and housing officers, whose work involves contact with families. Services that would not normally see themselves as leading on children's matters are gaining the confidence to initiate CAFs where they encounter families whose circumstances merit such an assessment. The key aspects of the initiative included:

Engaging all sectors, including those hard to reach

Midwives, small voluntary organisations and schools were particularly hard to reach. A CAF coordinator focused initially on promoting training and integrated working by attending team meetings, practice forums and staff study days. The result has been a massive increase in CAFs.

In particular, schools with relevant staff, such as a learning mentor or inclusion manager, are taking a lead professional role. All schools now have an identified CAF link.

Engaging practitioners outside the children's workforce

This was done by establishing a rolling programme of half-day awareness raising courses, open to all. It covers the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) agenda, including the CAF. An indication of success was a recent call from a GP checking whether there was a CAF on a child that had recently been seen. This was the first instance of this type of enquiry.

Communicating with more than 1,500 practitioners throughout the children's workforce

The council's main website, Barnet Online, has been used to develop a range of pages on integrated working. These include details of the CAF, lead professional role, ContactPoint and information sharing. A page is specifically aimed at CAF practitioners and offers, in one place, all the resources needed to undertake a CAF.

Promoting integrated working

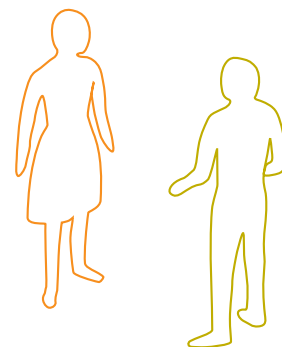
A CAF Practitioners' Forum has been established and meets every two months. Agencies take turns to host the forum, which promotes the message of integrated working. Meetings have taken place in schools, children's health and youth centres.

Bringing about changes in practice

An interim CAF advisory team was established in January 2008. The advisers were deliberately drawn from different professional backgrounds. This was to enable a good skills mix and to help practitioners feel that their needs were understood.

The role of the advisers is to provide practical support to help practitioners start using the CAF. Support includes:

- assisting with preparation of the CAF and actively engaging the family or young person
- brokering and/or locating services
- advising on the appointment of the lead professional, using the 'team around the child' process and CAF reviews



Key learning

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success"
(Henry Ford).

Developing effective joint working arrangements is not easy or straightforward. Multi-agency working presents agencies with a range of challenges but the gains from greater integration are many. They include a more effective response to the needs of children and young people, a better 'customer' experience and improved outcomes.

Across the board, two sets of challenges were commonly encountered by practitioners in the study areas. First, the barriers presented by crossing boundaries between different departments and agencies and, second, the difficulty of prioritising workforce strategy and development, which can seem quite a long-term issue when set against pressing short-term priorities.

Sustaining a focus on workforce strategy and development in what can often be a fraught and pressing children's services context can be difficult. The success factors outlined in the previous section are key building blocks. But what further learning can we glean?

Enabling empowerment – a clear brief and the right level of support are important in developing a greater level of confidence among practitioners. In turn, this helps deliver a self-sustaining project momentum with staff taking their own initiative.

Reinforcing the importance of workforce initiatives – the importance of initiatives such as workforce mapping and training to the early intervention and safeguarding agenda needs to be constantly re-emphasised to avoid people falling into an 'it can wait' trap which would, in the long-term, undermine effective early intervention and safeguarding.

Listen to the logic of local needs – workforce strategy and integration is often planned at a high level but it is the practical issues and ideas encountered at a very local level that are likely to be the driver of the most effective change. Locality working needs to be supported by 'permissions' that encourage and allow front-line staff to develop flexible workforce solutions.

Make the most of available tools – don't reinvent the wheel. Resources such as the One Children's Workforce Tool and the health service 'six steps' methodology for integrated workforce planning can help you steer an effective course to better multi-agency workforce planning and integrated working. Workforce planning tools can also prove a productive way of involving private and third sector organisations in coordinated workforce planning.

In focus

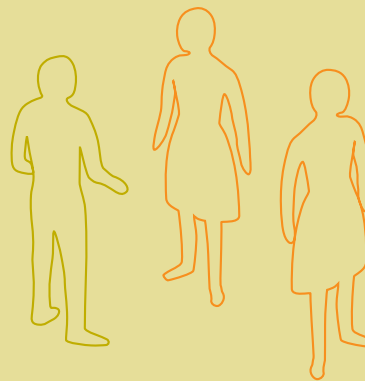
The value of locality workforce data / Walsall

"From developing the minimum data set, I've seen people gaining insight into the workforce resource that they have at a local level but also realising that, by knowing better what is there, they could have more control over it."

Julie Bowen, the IDEa associate working in the Walsall study area, has seen how multi-agency locality working through the Children's Area Partnerships (CAPs) in Walsall can produce tremendous needs-driven bottom-up ideas. However, bottom-up ideas are of limited value if they are not matched with a bottom-up workforce strategy. Each CAP is contributing to the development of a local children's workforce minimum data set and using the One Children's Workforce Tool.

Both activities are proving useful ways of raising awareness about workforce development and encouraging thinking at the CAP level about how to take workforce development further. Julie Bowen gives examples: "There are a variety of voluntary organisations involved in a CAP but do we know how many workers there are in those organisations or whether there might be particular skills. Is there someone, for example, who speaks Serbo-Croatian who could help a family who has suddenly come to the area?"

The activity is proving beneficial in enabling people in local CAP teams to know what that local workforce resource is in terms of numbers, qualifications, skills, availability, retirements, flexibility in working hours etc. All these mean that the CAP itself is better able to plan how they respond to local needs. The dataset has been particularly useful at a local level in involving voluntary and private sector organisations who have not always been at the centre of children's workforce planning.



Developing further

Amongst the feedback from those using the One Children's Workforce Tool at a locality level is the feeling that integrated working sometimes feels more real at a front-line service level than it is perceived to be at the broader employer organisation level. Unless strategy between agencies is truly joined-up there will always be a limit to how far integrated working can be implemented at local level.

As well as strategic integration, terms and conditions can be quite different, posing barriers for working across boundaries. Different agencies will need to develop, as far as possible, open ways of maximising flexibility or working across their boundaries while minimising the inflexibility that can arise because of staff worries about losing terms and conditions, such as their pension arrangements.

Similarly, performance management arrangements and management of workgroups with different professionals can be more complex because of the existence of different national appraisal, reward and supervision, and continuing professional development arrangements.

All these factors contribute to the importance of recognising that the leadership and development of integrated teams and involvement in integrated working requires a special mindset and skills (see 'working beyond boundaries' panel). The range of professional backgrounds from which the children's services workforce is recruited is very diverse. Aspects of each workgroup's particular needs and expectations have

to be recognised and understood by workforce strategy managers and other change leaders across the children's trust partnership. Education, youth work, the health service, social care departments and voluntary organisations, the police and other partners have all developed individual cultures and histories that have developed largely in isolation from one another. Differing cultures and indeed professional languages have developed.

Finally, all local authorities and their partners are on a journey in terms of developing the best ways of promoting integrated working and, at the same time, moving to a stronger community and locality focus. Opportunities for local authorities and their partners to gain insight into what each other is doing on the workforce development aspect of this will be important to finding and spreading the most effective approaches.

The research indicates that children's trusts will benefit if they:

Are consistent about integration – back up integrated working at the locality level with a commitment to integration wherever appropriate at the strategic and employer level.

Address pay and conditions issues – have an up-front, clear and open understanding of the pay and conditions for each workgroup, their interpretation in practice and their application to cross-boundary working.

Understand the different cultures that can contribute to a 'one workforce' culture

– creating a team culture among people from different backgrounds entails the development of shared goals, trust and language across all workgroups while developing a mutual respect and understanding of different professional backgrounds. Encourage flexibility and creativity by involving team members from a variety of backgrounds in management decisions.

Recognise the special staff qualities demanded by cross-boundary working

– be aware of the more flexible and enabling mindset needed by those both working in and managing integrated cross-boundary settings and think through the implications for recruitment, staff development and performance review.

Loosen individual professional boundaries to enable role flexibility

– encourage people to work outside their traditional work area and take on broader elements of professional work within an integrated team.

Share experience of challenges and solutions

– at the team level, recognise the need to share professional concerns and learning openly without mistrust. At the regional and national level, focus on the workforce development side of integrated working and share experiences with other children's trusts.

In focus

Working beyond boundaries – a new sets of skills and culture / Calderdale

"We are in a context of working not just across boundaries but beyond boundaries. It demands a very flexible, imaginative and creative type of leadership. People need to be appointed who can thrive in a more evolving, dynamic cross-boundary environment and supported to do so."

Ian MacGregor is the IDeA associate who worked with Calderdale Council during the Integrated Workforce Strategy Project. He notes the importance of recognising the new set of skills and culture that integrated working requires. It implies a different approach to recruitment. 'What could you do?' becomes the lead imperative rather than 'what have you done?' The emphasis is on getting the best raw material and then building the specification. Ongoing mentoring and coaching are then essential when leaders take on their new roles.

The Calderdale Challenge (www.calderdalechallenge.com) is a programme devised locally to provide a vision and some scaffolding for children's services integration. It describes itself as campaigning "for us to work together better, so that we achieve our ambitions faster". Within this campaign the council has made clear statements about leadership development and multi-agency working and through this intends to address local issues in the leadership and management of integrated services.

In implementing a workforce strategy for the new children's service Calderdale Council appointed an officer to lead and drive change forward, consolidate pre-existing workforce and training functions from previously separate service areas and address what it means to lead and manage workforce change in the implementation of integrated services. The workforce strategy has been developed and reviewed and is making a considerable contribution to the overall Calderdale Challenge change programme. The workforce development team is now up and running providing coherence and 'joined up messages' about workforce development and change.

Leadership of "integrated" teams within children's services is being explored in practice by a number of children's services managers across Calderdale. They have been recruited from a variety of professional backgrounds and in some cases are employed by partner organisations rather than the council. They are managing multi-disciplinary teams, dealing with many challenges such as:

- different pay and contractual arrangements for different staff
- secondments of staff from or to partner agencies
- different performance management systems and different national arrangements for appraisal, reward and supervision
- different professional language and 'cultures'.

In dealing with these challenges Calderdale's managers suggest that the following help:

- having a clear understanding of the pay and conditions for each workgroup and their interpretation in practice
- having access to good and speedy specialist HR advice
- appointing team members who see the benefit to children of integrated approaches
- encouraging flexibility and creativity by involving team members from a variety of backgrounds in management decisions
- arranging work shadowing and joint working across professional boundaries within the team
- good team communications
- clear roles for individuals which relate to team goals
- having an overt policy of developing a team culture which emphasises integrated working around the child.

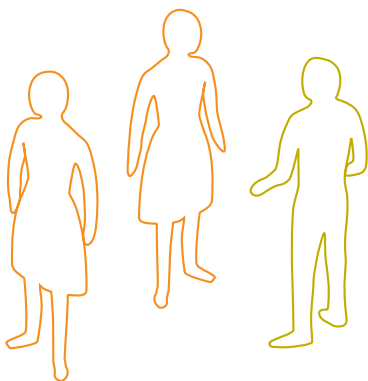
Calderdale managers recognise that a key feature of managing multi-disciplinary services is the leadership of change and the development of a "one workforce" culture. To do this they feel that they need to consciously:

- build a team culture
- develop a shared language and mutual

respect for each others' professional backgrounds

- loosen professionals' boundaries and encourage role flexibility and work outside of traditional areas
- encourage sharing of professional concerns openly, without rancour.

The challenge now is to develop training and support structures that help managers to feel confident to address those issues, using the Calderdale Challenge as the development framework.



Appendix: more details about the project study areas

In Barnet the council has developed a range of initiatives to increase multi-agency awareness and use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). The council believes that CAF should not be a blanket referral mechanism. It should be used as a targeted multi-agency planning and assessment tool in, for example, the provision of children's services. The emphasis is thus on a needs-led, not a service-led, approach. In Barnet, the CAF is used below the threshold of statutory assessments, although it may help to identify a child's additional needs prior to a statement or other specialist intervention.

The challenge has been to:

- raise awareness of Barnet's approach to the use of the CAF throughout the local children's workforce
- promote training related to the CAF
- convince staff of the benefits of integrated working.

Solutions have included:

- establishing in July 2006 a rolling multi-agency CAF training programme
- appointing a CAF coordinator to provide information about local expectations as well as the national context
- carrying out a training audit to identify and target sectors within the workforce that need to access training
- appointing CAF advisers to support practitioners through the CAF process.

The London Borough of Barnet has also developed a Common Core training programme in conjunction with Barnet College and Middlesex University. The training is accredited by, Middlesex University. The overall aim is to improve service outcomes for children, young people and families by promoting a shared approach to workforce development across the services and agencies. Additionally, the programme is aimed at embedding integrated working arrangements in Barnet, including meeting the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards and the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Common Core of Skills and Knowledge. The training is available free of charge across all sectors, including the private and third sector. The programme is available at certificate level, delivered in partnership with Barnet College, and at graduate level, delivered by Middlesex University.

A significant number of staff have participated in the programme. The impact of the training in improving service delivery has recently been evaluated. A range of positive outcomes have been identified in relation to ways in which participants' skills, knowledge and work practices have changed. A significant proportion of participants, and their managers, feel that they now have a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities across the sectors. Key outcomes include increased awareness of the importance of good lines of communication and specific routes to follow in relation to safeguarding. Participants feel their communication skills

have been enhanced and they have greater confidence in dealing with parents and giving time to individual children.

The **Walsall** Children's Workforce Development Strategy was published in November 2007. A workforce development group with representatives of children's services, health, the council HR service and SERCO, which provides the education support service in Walsall, has overseen the delivery of the strategy to date. The strategy has five key strands, which were identified through a 'visioning' event held for all key partners in June 2007:

1. Workforce mapping and planning
2. The development of core and transferable skills
3. Recruitment and retention
4. Remodelling and new ways of working
5. Communication and engagement

In October 2008 the Walsall Children's Workforce Development Group was successful in bidding for funds from the strategic health authority for workforce planning. The first stage of this work involved commissioning specific workforce planning activities with Walsall Community Health children's services based on the 'Six Steps Methodology to Integrated Workforce Planning' published by Skills for Health. Walsall Council and health services then began to look at further opportunities for integrated approaches to workforce planning.

In Walsall the development of local Children's Area Partnerships (CAPs) has encouraged staff from different agencies and services to develop more 'joined up' working without the creation of new management structures. It was decided not to appoint CAP managers in the first instance, nor to bring staff together under one set of working conditions. The aim has been to allow CAPs to develop organically within a framework of clear 'ground rules' for all CAPs.

Each CAP aims to involve all local agencies and services, including the voluntary and private sectors, working with children and young people towards achieving the improved outcomes prioritised in the Children and Young People's Plan. A key challenge has been to try to develop effective integrated working across all services and agencies at local level without creating complications by trying to bring staff together formally into a single team.

The CAPs are now being used to pilot further developments in local workforce planning. The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) introduced the One Children's Workforce Tool in 2008, expecting all Children's Trust partnerships to review the development of integrated working against the standards outlined in the tool. At the same time the Walsall Children's Workforce development group had commissioned consultants to look at the next steps that could be taken in workforce planning. The consultants suggested that it would be a good time to engage with CAPs about a minimum

data set for children's workforce planning. A national minimum data set for the social care workforce is already in use - the proposal in Walsall was to ask CAPs to consider what workforce data was of most value to them at CAP level to assist them in planning for a local workforce that was fit for purpose in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people.

The development of a minimum children's workforce data set was piloted at the same time as asking a group of staff in a CAP to respond to the One Children's Workforce tool. The aims of this pilot were to engage CAP staff in thinking about local workforce planning and to gather response data about how well-integrated CAP staff felt the services for children and young people were at that point in time, as part of the One Children's Workforce Tool authority-wide analysis activity. CAPs had also been provided with a self-assessment questionnaire based on 'Championing Children: a shared set of skills, knowledge and behaviours for those leading and managing integrated children's services' (2006). The questionnaire was designed to help staff assess their needs with respect to the skills identified and consider whether they needed support from outside the CAP in meeting these needs. CAPs members were encouraged to seek central support for identified development needs.

The piloting of the local children's workforce data set proved to be an activity which engaged the interest of staff in the CAP and provoked a great deal of thinking about how the CAP could

influence workforce planning at whole-service or whole agency level. It was decided to extend this activity to other CAPs, at the same time as continuing to gather responses about integrated working for the One Children's workforce Tool analysis. One area in which the work with CAP was particularly effective was in the engagement of voluntary and private sector organisations in children's workforce planning.

The Walsall Children's Workforce Development Group had found it particularly difficult to engage voluntary and private sector organisations centrally in workforce planning. However members of voluntary and private sector organisations responded well to the invitation to attend the CAP level workforce planning events and contributed positively to the discussion and data gathering processes, referring to their often wide-ranging knowledge of their local community and its needs.

Given the high level of interest and debate that took place during the pilot events, the Walsall Children's Workforce Development Group decided to extend the minimum data set activity to all 15 Walsall CAPs, to raise awareness of the importance of local workforce planning across all the services involved in the CAP. Up to June 2009 these sessions would also be used to gather data for the One Children's Workforce Tool analysis.

In **Calderdale**, a newly seconded workforce strategy manager embarked on a significant workforce survey in order to establish the issues that Calderdale Council needs to address in its workforce strategy. Through one-to-one interviews with more than 20 heads of service and nominated principal officers, the process has enriched the information and insights available, informed prioritisation and promoted buy-in. An audit tool was designed for the initiative, ensuring discussion was focussed around the key themes of:

- recruitment gaps and pressure points
- current workforce skills levels
- future skills set requirements attached to changing roles
- scope for further integrated working
- scope for locality working
- the range of current learning and development activity within each service area.

The two areas which led to the most interesting discussion and which were most useful for future scoping were the 'locality' and 'further integrated working' themes. The authority identified skills gaps in key areas as well as recruitment and pay and conditions issues. Other issues included the need for improved career progression routes and supply shortages for some skilled professional groups.

The authority has produced an action plan based on a thorough understanding of

need which takes into account ways in which the workforce will need to develop over the next few years to meet the Every Child Matters agenda.

The survey and its preparation has also uncovered a number of successful and small-scale initiatives where managers or teams are addressing workforce issues as they lead integration within their service areas. These include the reduction in professional barriers within specialist Special Educational Needs (SEN) services such as the appointment of a health professional to the management of a teaching group (and vice-versa) and, within the early years team, the integration of training for the third and private sectors with that for schools.

The children's services management team has brought together the council's training and development functions for children's services within a central team. This has avoided overlaps, improved coherence of messages and enabled investments in automation at a level which will be economic. The council is now leading discussion of integrated workforce strategy across the partners involved in the Children's Trust, including the local primary care trust and the voluntary and community sector.

Find out more

The full report - Moving Forward Together - and other information on integrated workforce strategies, including more detailed case studies and checklists, can be found on the IDeA website:

www.idea.gov.uk/joiningupworkforce

Other resources

One Children's Workforce Tool:

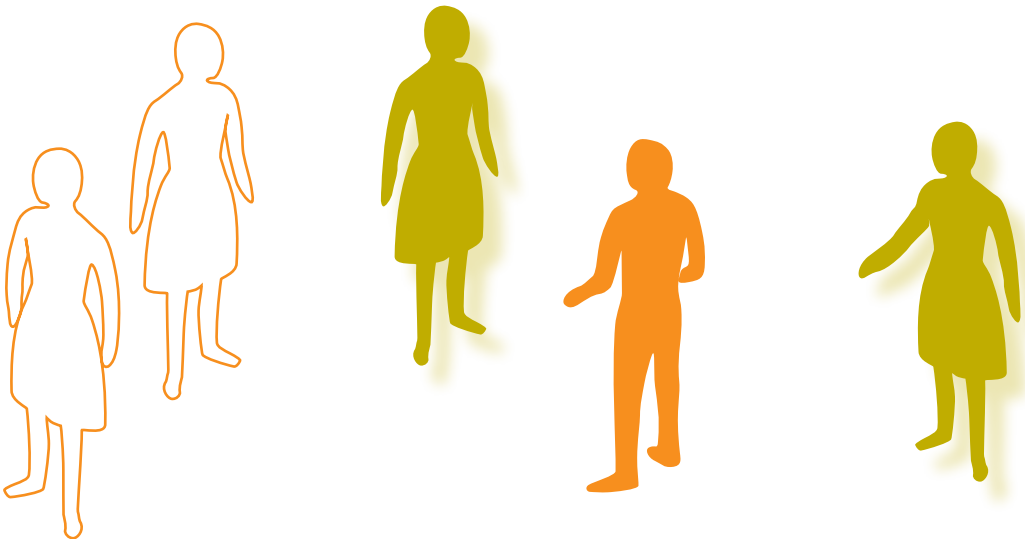
www.onechildrenworkforce.cwdcouncil.org.uk

Six Steps Methodology to Integrated Workforce Planning:

www.healthcareworkforce.nhs.uk

IDeA Workforce resources and good practice:

www.idea.gov.uk/workforcegoodpractice



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