

think family, think community:

the role of directors with combined responsibilities
for children's and adults' services



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introduction

From September 2004 the Children Act placed a requirement on top tier local authorities to have, by April 2008, a nominated director of children's services (DCS) to lead an integrated children's service, combining education and children's social services. There was a parallel requirement from the Department of Health for councils to designate a director of adult social services (DASS). Most councils created two separate departments, replacing education and social services. Around 10 per cent have chosen to combine both roles in a single post.

This project set out to examine how the combined model works and to look at its advantages and disadvantages. Data was gathered through interviews with 10 joint directors of children's and adults' services.

Their professional backgrounds varied – some had come from adult social care or probation and some from children’s services or education. There was a general trend for directors to spend more time working on the children’s side. Alison Waller, director of children, family and adult services at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, said around 70 per cent of her time was spent on children’s issues: “I think that’s quite common...that’s where the balance sits.”

Universally, the combined model had been introduced to provide more integrated and cross-cutting services and to focus on families. In some councils it was part of a corporate restructure reflecting the people/places agenda.

A number of directors interviewed also mentioned the cost benefits of a combined directorate, but stressed that this had not been the primary motive. However, the possibility of achieving efficiencies – and adding capacity in the process – did appear to have helped garner political support for structural change.

Ann Baxter, former corporate director for children, education and social care at Stockton-on-Tees, said: “We decided that bringing

together all the ‘people’ services and all the ‘places’ services was a way to focus on families and communities as well as individuals.” Elaine McHale, corporate director of family services in Wakefield, said their Local Area Agreement had a strong focus on total family support so it made sense to place adult care with education and children’s services.

The combined approach ensured that there was a “people’s champion” on the corporate management team, said Alison Waller. “It was also about spotting some of the difficulties that other authorities were experiencing when splitting up children’s and adults’ social care – the gulf that was forming between them.”

At West Sussex, John Dixon, executive director for adults and children, said: “There’s a lot of synergy on infrastructure and shared services support, and it didn’t make much sense to have it separated.”

Among the four councils that introduced joint directorates in 2008 – West Sussex, Medway, Havering and Bracknell Forest – there was a general desire to improve services and customer focus, particularly

for vulnerable citizens. These councils had the added advantage of having seen the model operate successfully elsewhere.

Tony Eccleston, former director of social care and learning at Bracknell Forest, said the council had adopted the model in order to build on its experience of integrating services for children, “and to see if we could get added benefits by bringing adult social care closer to the reorganised children’s services”. Work on issues such as substance abuse had already been crossing the children/adults boundary.

Each combined directorate brought together a combination of services from a pick-and-mix menu including adults, physical disabilities, older people, safeguarding and family support, education, lifelong learning, commissioning, performance and partnership, health promotion, and access and inclusion. A minority also included housing and/or leisure, culture and sport. Redcar and Cleveland’s combined directorate had a particularly large brief, incorporating leisure and housing and spending around three-quarters of the council’s budget.

Directors had teams of up to nine service heads, and all of them emphasised the importance of an extremely capable tier of management at this level. Ann Baxter said: “As long as you’ve got a strong team and everyone has clarity of purpose, this model works.” Jim Gould, director of learning and care at Windsor and Maidenhead, added: “What [this model] does is to raise the game of the next level down.”

All ten reported that combining the directorates had received full or substantial political support. Combined directorates were generally represented by two or three cabinet members.

In terms of the main benefits, many said it had shifted the focus onto families. Alison Waller said: “It’s more natural, it’s much more inclusive and it cuts down on bureaucracy.” Each side could learn from the other, she added: “There’s a lot that children’s services can learn from the adults’ world in terms of fully delivering on integration... and the emerging safeguarding agenda in adults’ services can learn a huge amount from ... children’s services.”

The value of being able to look at vulnerable families from a holistic point of view was emphasised.. Elaine McHale said: “Our purpose is to work towards maximising the potential of individuals, families and communities.” She noted that a combined directorate could aid intergenerational work and ensure better use was made of buildings, staff time and expertise.

Another benefit was a smoother care pathway for children with complex needs and an opportunity to review demarcations. “For a child with a disability, 18 is probably not a very good cut-off point for transfer from children’s to adults’ services,” said John Dixon, who is looking at the possibility of alternative age groupings such as 0-14 and 15-25.

Partnership working was also reported to be easier in combined directorates. In Stockton-on-Tees, six of the nine heads of service were joint appointments with the PCT, and this had proved useful in tackling national agenda issues such as health inequalities.

Andrew Ireland, group director of social care and learning at the London Borough of Havering, said it helped to have all negotiations

and commissioning with the NHS taking place within one directorate as there was “no excuse for people not talking to each other”.

Mike Dillon, of Redcar and Cleveland, said better links between children’s and adults’ services brought benefits for young people moving on from the care system. He added that combined services had the potential to repair some of the damage done when the formation of children’s services departments created divisions in social services. He is looking towards a system where integrated teams deliver services within localities, working from community bases.

Directors also noted the benefits of creating a joint strategic needs assessment which embraced both children’s and adults’ services.

On a personal level, all agreed that having a dual role was a challenge. “It is a huge agenda,” said Elaine McHale. Rose Collinson, director for children and adults at Medway, agreed: “You have to make sure you don’t attempt to do everything and do it badly, but also that you don’t miss anything out.”

Jim Gould said: “I would imagine that my reading pile is double what a children’s or adults’ director would be given to read, but it’s important to make sure you’re up to speed with national initiatives.”

Jenny Goodall, director of community and children’s services at the City of London Corporation, said the biggest disadvantage was “keeping up one’s expertise in all of the areas... [it] does double the amount of reading. There is still an expectation that you will be an expert on all the areas.”

Asked whether they would recommend the combined approach, all the directors said councils should be free to choose the right model for them. John Dixon said: “I wouldn’t want to make too big a deal about the structural side ... We need to have good outcomes for children and adults, so that’s what the government should be focusing on. Locally there will be a whole range of different ways in which those outcomes can be achieved.”

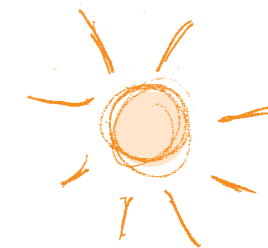
Ann Baxter added: “We should not be prescriptive in what councils do. This model can work with the right people, in the right councils and under the right circumstances, but other models are working

too.” Mike Dillon said: “My own personal view is that there is more good than bad in this model, but there are challenges – no doubt about that.”

Overall, directors stressed the commonalities between children’s and adults’ services. “They’re both about maximising the potential of individuals and maximising independence,” said Elaine McHale. “There are five outcomes for children and seven for adults, and there’s a lot of crossover.”

Rose Collinson agreed: “Everyone is working towards the same preventative partnerships and improvement ... if you can cut through some of the differently used language then you can make the linkages across services.”

Alison Waller said councils should consider enhancing the director of adult social care’s role – possibly by merging it with the PCT chief executive. “This should ensure the role continues to have both the clout and responsibility of their children’s colleagues.”



The City of London Corporation is unique. It is not strictly a local authority but carries out most local authority functions. The resident population is less than 10,000, and over 300,000 workers commute into the 'Square Mile' each day.

Jenny Goodall is director of the department of community and children's services. She says the overriding factor behind the introduction of a combined directorate three years ago was the size of the corporation. "It came about when they needed to have a director of children's services and a director of adults' services, and they didn't quite feel that they could justify two officers.

"It also gave us an opportunity to bring one committee together. We don't have a cabinet and scrutiny structure here, we have a committee structure, and one committee covers

children's and adults' services. However, at the moment we are looking at breaking that down with sub-groups, which would make it easier for committee members to play a full part."

Jenny's department has four sections: adult services; children, family and young people; housing; and support services. "We run most of the city's local authority 'people' services. The city isn't a local authority but does carry out functions including housing, education and social services."

The biggest advantage, she says, is the ability to work across services – a real benefit in an authority with a small number of service users. There is currently an emphasis on cross-generational working – projects such as a knitting club at the primary school which brings older people and children together.

Jenny agrees with other joint directors that the amount of information you need to absorb is a challenge: "It is hard to really keep on top, that's the biggest disadvantage – keeping up one's expertise in all of the areas. I know lots of directors of adults' services have broad portfolios anyway, so I don't believe that's exclusively an issue for joint directors.

"Every week you get a communication on children's issues and one on adults' issues from the government, so running a combined directorate does double the amount of reading. There is still an expectation that you will be an expert on all the areas. It's different for a chief executive, who wouldn't be expected to know such detail: at our level you are."

Services provided by the city are outstanding. Adults' services have three stars, with excellent delivery

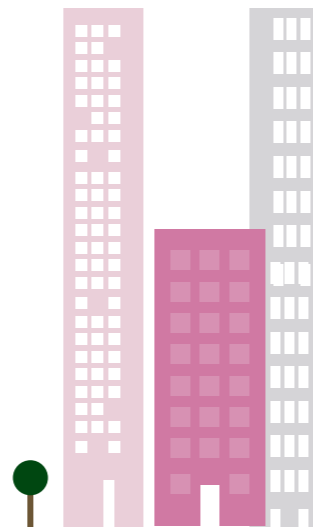
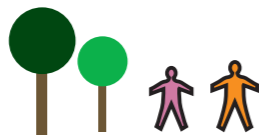
of outcomes and excellent capacity to improve. Children's services are grade four across the board.

Ofsted's latest report praised the corporation's partnership working with organisations including the primary care trust, mental health services, employers, police and fire authority: "Collaboration with ... partner agencies is very effective from planning through to service delivery. Services are provided in a flexible and well integrated way, with a clear and well articulated focus on early identification, intervention and prevention."

While the corporation is unique, Jenny says it does have lessons to share: "We're small, but I think the model that we've got is applicable if you translate it on a neighbourhood basis – you could see it as a neighbourhood model, and I would

certainly be happy to share our ideas with anyone who asked."

Any authority considering a combined approach should be very clear why they are doing it, she adds, and have clear lines of responsibility. "Does it include the wide range of responsibilities that lots of directors of adults' services have, such as housing, leisure and licensing? Where do they all go – do they stay within the directorate? If so, that's a big area of responsibility. Any structure brings its problems and its advantages."



Bracknell Forest Council switched to a combined children's/adults' services directorate on 1 April 2008. Lesley Heale joined the council as director of social care and learning in July, when interim director Tony Eccleston – who saw the council through the structural change – retired.

"There were three reasons for doing it," explains Tony. "The first was that in March this year we transferred the housing stock to a housing association, leaving behind what was quite a small department responsible for the housing client side and for adult social care. We decided that it was better to restructure the council to create three departments of more comparable size in terms of the number of staff working in them."

The second reason was "to build on the experience of integrating services for children, and to see if we could



get added benefits by bringing adult social care closer to the reorganised children's services. This included an integrated approach to families, and it recognised that some of our work – on issues such as substance misuse – already crossed the child/adult boundary."

And the third reason – although not the most important – was the financial motivation of achieving efficiencies.

Political support for the restructure was "pretty unanimous" says Tony. Alongside the new department of social care and learning is a department covering environment, culture and communities. The third cog in the wheel is corporate services.

He predicts that the new structure will improve management of services

working with young people, which will be of particular benefit to service users as they approach 18. There will be an enhanced ability to look at vulnerable families (those with substance misuse issues or where there is evidence of domestic violence, for example) from a more holistic point of view.

"I hope it will also help with safeguarding," he says. "We've been judged to be good in terms of our safeguarding of children and adults, but we would like to achieve more consistency in terms of the lines of accountability and use better integration as a means of identifying possible neglect or abuse of children."

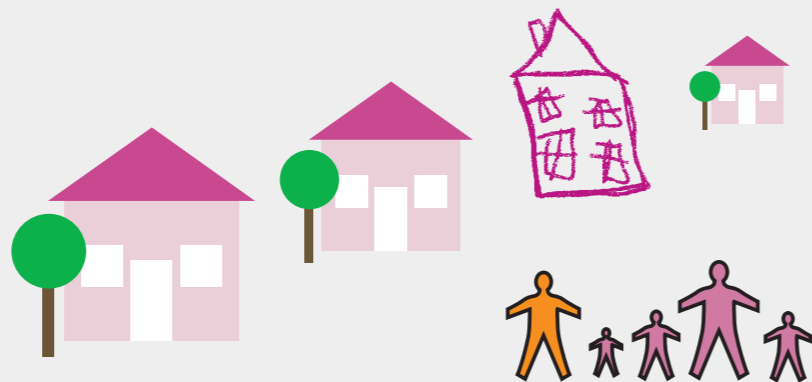


Bracknell Forest has enhanced the role of the directorate's five branches – learning and achievement, access and inclusion, children's social care, adult social care, and performance and resources. "Inevitably the role of the director has to become more strategic," says Tony. The council made its decision to introduce a combined directorate from a very strong position – it has a four-star rating from the Audit Commission and is judged to be improving strongly. Both children's and adults' services are performing well.

Tony does have one concern – the issue of succession planning. "It's not only true for combined departments, but combining services does exacerbate it. With our structure the service heads are only one step away from being director, and actually giving those people engagement

in the development of policies and strategies across the whole of the department span will be one of the challenges for the next couple of years.

"We have to set out deliberately to make sure that we don't have silos."



A combined directorate cuts down on bureaucracy and on arguments, says Alison Waller, director of children, family and adult services at East Riding of Yorkshire Council since November 2007.

Alison joined East Riding when a combined directorate was already up and running. She says the council's original decision to adopt the model was essentially about having a "people's champion" on the corporate management team. "It was also about spotting some of the difficulties that other authorities were experiencing when splitting up children's and adults' social care – the gulf that was forming between them."

Alison feels that a combined directorate helps to shift focus onto the family. "What is increasingly happening [elsewhere] is, for

example, an adult with mental health difficulties being assessed as an adult, rather than as an adult who is also a parent or a grandparent; and children's services seeing children too much in isolation.

"As the director for children, adults and families, any need that's occurring is part of my responsibility ... you actually look at what the family's needs are rather than trying to compartmentalise things. It's more natural, it's much more inclusive and it cuts down on the bureaucracy."

Another advantage is the opportunity for services to learn from each other. "There's a lot that children's services can learn from the adults' world in terms of fully delivering on integration, particularly with health colleagues; and the emerging safeguarding agenda in adults' services can learn a huge amount

from the tortuous path that children's services have been on."

East Riding has a population of 330,000. It's a four-star authority with good scores for both children's and adults' services. "I think there's an optimum size [for combined directorates]," says Alison, who doubts that the model would work so well in a large council. Her work is supported by an assistant director, who has responsibility for children and young people's services, and five heads of service: inclusion services, improvement and learning, child care services, adult services and business management. Capable support is essential, she says, as it's "a rare beast" who is expert in education, social care and adults' services.

The council benefits from supportive elected members who "allow directors to get on with their





jobs". There is a strong corporate identity with clear priorities and clear delineation between roles. Two portfolio holders support the directorate, one for children and schools and one for adults. Formal meetings with the director take place once a fortnight and include a joint session with both members.

Alison concedes that there are huge demands on her time: "You are operating at a higher level, almost like a chief executive – I think lots of children's services directors also feel that way, but I am conscious at times that I don't know all the detail."

Around 70% of her time is spent on the children's side. "I think that's quite common. It's been somewhat exacerbated by the fact that we've just had our JAR [joint area review]. Also I'm from a social care background and am far more

competent on that than on schools, so I've thrown myself into the schools side of things. But I do think that's where the balance sits.

"If I was a director of adult social services, and that's all I had, I think I would be bored," adds Alison. "That's something that councils need to consider. There's an opportunity to enhance the director of adult social care role – combining it with PCT [primary care trust] chief executive is an obvious choice. This should ensure the role continues to have both the clout and responsibility of their children's colleagues."



West Sussex moved from having separate adults' and children's services to a combined directorate in April 2008. The move was part of a fundamental whole-council service review aimed at transforming service provision and introducing a more customer-focussed approach.

West Sussex is a four-star local authority, but is not resting on its laurels. The review involved a complete overhaul of the top tier of management. The decision to combine adults' and children's services had full political support, and John Dixon – former head of adults' services – was appointed executive director for adults and children.

Initially wary of the combined approach, John has since come to appreciate its benefits and opportunities: "There's a lot of

synergy on infrastructure and shared services support, and it didn't make much sense to have it separated. We are moving quite fast to integrate that. There is an opportunity to bring together services for children in some areas – if you have a child with complex needs then they will often have adults with complex needs around them."

He welcomes the chance to review demarcations: "For example, for a child with a disability, 18 is probably not a very good cut-off point for transfer from children's to adults' services ... there is the possibility of moving to a 0-14 age group then a 14-25 grouping. We do not want to rush into any of that, but we are exploring these sorts of opportunities."

John feels that children's services around the country have suffered

from micro-management by Whitehall. Meanwhile, adults' services have benefited from a period of intense development in areas such as personalisation and individual budgets.

He praises the approach taken by the Department of Health in its Putting People First concordat: "They have been demonstrating an adult approach to working with local authorities on more of an equal basis. I think this is the way of the future, and will become adopted more widely across Whitehall."

West Sussex has taken part in national pilot projects for both 'In Control' and for individual budgets, and both have been very successful. The county has seen a "sea change" over the past few years, says John: "Adult services moved across and were seen as part of the council in



a way they never had been before, while children's services created a new silo which relates to Whitehall."

He sees this as one factor behind the current trend for councils to consider combined services: "I think it's to do with the feeling that we have to get children's services back within the corporate family."

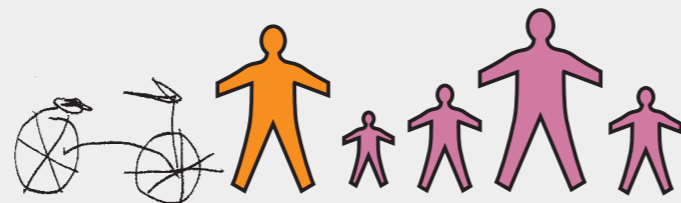
John, who began his career in the probation service, has been assessing the priorities for the two strands of his work. On the adult side, he wants the council to remain at the forefront of work on personalisation and developing the self-directed support approach, fitting that in with the corporate focus on customer service.

And, for children's services: "It's to get things back under control without losing the work on integration, which has been very

positive." (West Sussex was one of three Beacon authorities for integrated children's services).

"I wouldn't want to make too big a deal about the structural side," John adds. "Local authorities need to be able to decide things in the way that works for them locally and not have central government interfering too much in that."

"We need to have good outcomes for children and adults, so that's what government should be focussing on. Locally there will be a whole range of different ways in which those outcomes can be achieved."



Havering combined its children's and adults' services into one directorate in June 2008. Previously, adults services had been housed within the sustainable communities directorate.

The decision to explore options for change stemmed from budgetary problems within adults' services, along with a desire to improve the services on offer. Andrew Ireland, then the director of children's services, was asked to assess alternative approaches. He knew that other authorities had successfully combined children's and adults' services, so the option was placed on the table.

"The main concern, politically, was the potential impact on children's services," says Andrew, now Havering's group director of social care and learning. The lead member for children's services was among

those needing reassurance that services would not suffer. The issue then became caught up in a wider restructuring of the London borough's senior management team.

Eventually, Havering opted for a people/places approach. The culture and community directorate includes streets, culture and leisure, housing and regeneration; the social care and learning directorate incorporates children's and young people's services, adult social care, schools, commissioning, and learning and achievement.

"As well as adult social care I've taken on adult education, supporting people and the drug and alcohol team, so within that I think I've got a very coherent portfolio," says Andrew. At the moment he is "re-jigging" the management arrangements and working to bring

the directorate together – both culturally and structurally.

He is mindful of the need to monitor the pace of change, and also aware that some existing projects – primary modernisation and building schools for the future, for example – need to carry on and not be hindered by the changes.

Andrew is enthusiastic about the possibilities of an integrated approach. On the education side, he wants better links between the 14-19 agenda, commissioning for 16-plus services and adult skills. "That's a big issue for this authority – we have a high level of GCSE achievement but a low number of graduates. Now I've got that thread within my own directorate, right down to the provision of adult education."



On health issues, too, Havering is seeing the benefits of closer working now that all negotiations and commissioning with the NHS falling within one directorate. "I was talking with a colleague just today about the possibility of a primary school being able to share a site with a primary care centre."

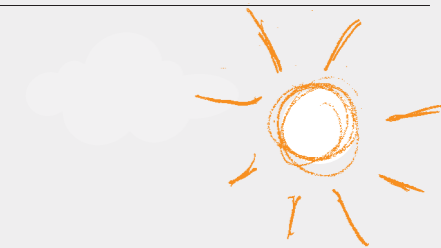
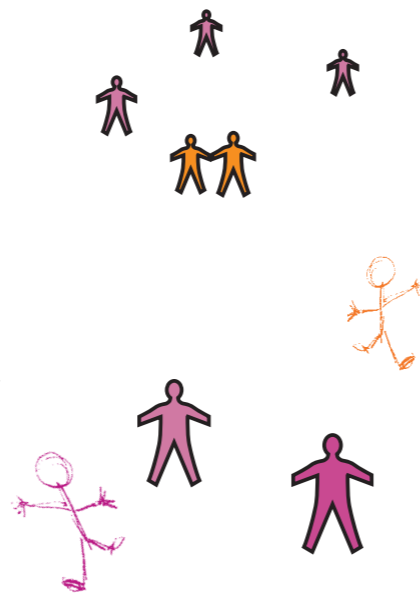
An assistant director is currently being appointed. "It's absolutely important that we get the structure right, the right people in the right posts. I've also moved from having one lead member to having three. The span is enormous: I have to be more disciplined with my time and the things I get involved in. I can't dabble a bit as I did before."

Also on the agenda is maximising opportunities for coherence in performance management arrangements, policy, research and



development. The reorganisation is a chance to achieve efficiencies and add capacity in the process, says Andrew. "Look at the JSNA [joint strategic needs assessment], for example: you can have one discussion ranging from cradle to grave."

"We wouldn't have done it if there weren't some real key advantages – the ability to work more effectively with whole families and take adults, disability and transition issues alongside each other. There is no excuse for people not talking to each other if they're all part of the same directorate."



Medway Council's corporate structure could be described as minimalist. The unitary authority has just two directorates: children and adults – caring and learning; and regeneration, community and culture.

Medway brought its children's and adults' services under one roof in April 2008. The move came about through "circumstance and direction" says Rose Collinson, director for children and adults. Changes at the council – including a move into new corporate headquarters – made it an ideal time for a structural review. The decision reflected a desire to "make sure that our vulnerable citizens had the best services they could have, without gaps," says Rose. "This was how we decided that we could use the resources we had in the best possible way."

The directorate covers the gamut of children's, youth and adult services and includes education, elderly care, disability services and health promotion. Three cabinet members support the directorate's work – one each for adult services, children's services and children's social care. There was a broad consensus for change. "The opposition were concerned about whether there was enough senior leadership capacity... but there wasn't total antipathy. It would be unfair, though, not to say that there were some questions and issues raised."

Rose has an assistant director for each of five service areas: learning and achievement, children's social care, inclusion, commissioning (a joint appointment with the primary care trust, currently concentrating on children's services), and adult social care.

It is early days for Medway's new structure. So far, Rose has been looking at the major issues, making key links and identifying the cultural similarities and differences between services. "It's been interesting to look at the differences – for example, the heavy focus on outcomes in children's services and the more process-driven approach in adult social care. In my position I can look at wrapping the services around what the customer, client and family wants and needs."

Plenty of common ground is being unearthed: "Everyone is working towards preventative partnerships and improvement – those things are the same. So if you can cut through some of the differently used language then you can make the linkages across services."



“It’s been important to try and identify where things are different as well as similar – otherwise people feel they are becoming an amorphous mass. Where there are obvious synergies – young adults with learning and behavioural difficulties, for example – we can use those as a way of bringing people together that makes sense.”

For Rose herself, who has a background in education, getting to grips with adults services has been a steep learning curve. She works to ensure that no stakeholder feels forgotten: “You have to make sure you don’t attempt to do everything and do it badly, but also that you don’t miss anything out.” Here, she says, a strong management team is crucial.

Rose admits that the first few months leading a newly combined

service have involved “a mix of excitement and terror”. But she says the reward comes in making a real difference to the lives of service users and their families.

“It’s about vulnerability, but it’s also about giving the brightest future that we can to the people who need our services. If you can hold on to that idea it makes some of the decision making easier.”

And what does Rose most enjoy about the role? “When you start to see the connections and it starts to make sense for the teams you work with and your partners. When you realise that you are making a difference.”



Mike Dillon is just back from an Association of Directors of Children’s Services conference, where, he says, “the point was made that there are an increasing number of joint appointments being made, but the jury is still out on whether it works. My own personal view is that there is more good than bad in this model, but there are challenges – no doubt about that.”

Mike inherited a joint directorate when he joined Redcar & Cleveland Council in May 2008. The borough had reviewed service delivery when the previous director of children’s services retired.

Redcar & Cleveland is a four-star authority. Adults’ services scored two stars in the latest CSCI ratings, with good delivery of outcomes and promising capacity to improve. Children’s services were grade three across the board.

Mike can see pros and cons to a joint approach: “It addresses things like the importance of linking services for vulnerable people moving from the care system to adult services. If you don’t work together very closely on that, you get youngsters who suddenly become very vulnerable. There’s no doubt that under a unified directorate you can look at bringing some sort of continuity to the system and give them some progression as they go into adulthood.”

There are also practical advantages: “It makes a heck of a difference if you can do a JSNA [joint strategic needs assessment] which embraces both adults’ and children’s services – the challenges, by and large, can be found across the two.”

He feels that combined services can repair some of the damage done when the formation of children’s

services departments “fractured” social services. “In doing that there was a division of resources and personnel. Very often that fracture created discontinuities. If you don’t have to create that fracture then that helps enormously in terms of not having the arguments over which is better resourced and who is doing better.”

As well as adults’ and children’s services, Redcar & Cleveland’s combined directorate includes leisure and housing. It spends around three-quarters of the council’s budget. “That’s an opportunity and also a challenge,” says Mike, who has a team of seven assistant directors. “In terms of the demands on the time of somebody in a joint director’s role, there is a huge challenge. In the end you either send substitutes to meetings or you do nothing but attend meetings.”



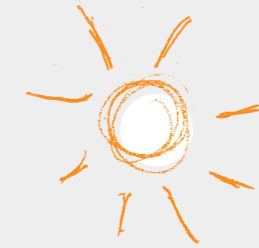
The council is currently considering further structural change. "Locally, particularly because of the size of the agenda and the imperative within our own borough to focus on regeneration, we are looking at creating a regeneration directorate – housing would then be aligned into that."

Mike is working on developing a system where integrated teams deliver services within localities. "I see that as a real imperative in both children's and adult's services. We are looking at working from community bases, which will be a delivery model for both adults and children. It's early days, but that's the direction we are moving in."

Reflecting on the challenge of integrating the children's agenda, he says: "The more you think about

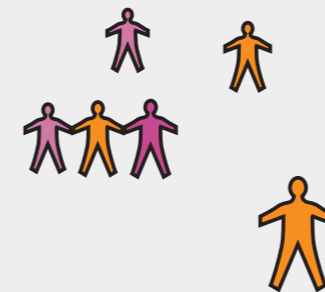
that, the more you recognise the centrality of family. That's what it all comes back down to.

"If you're able to live your early life within something as near as possible to a stable, non-chaotic family life ... all the evidence shows us that that's about the best thing you can do for young people. That's all the more reason for being able to look at services for adults as well as services for children. If we are able to support and encourage strong family units then it could address some of the very expensive problems we face...it's far better to look at an integrated and family-based approach."



Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council groups its core services into three areas: children, education and social care; development and neighbourhood services; and resources. Each group is headed by a corporate director, supported by heads of service with specific responsibilities.

Ann Baxter is Stockton's corporate director for children, education and social care. Put simply, she says, her role encompasses 'people' while her counterpart in development and neighbourhood services covers 'places'.



Ann's directorate brings adults' and children's services together with leisure, culture and sport. She manages nine heads of service, six of which are joint appointments with the PCT. Commissioning and delivery of both adults' and children's services are integrated with health. This model was established in 2005 with the aim of providing a more coherent basis for integrated and cross-cutting services.

"It was a strategic corporate decision," says Ann. Stockton set about re-structuring services in the light of the Children Act 2004 and made a "positive decision" to bring them together. This met with political support. "We decided that bringing together all the 'people' services and all the 'place' services was a way to focus on families and communities as well as individuals." The directorate's work is shared between three cabinet

members – one each for adult services and health, leisure and culture, and children and young people.

Ann believes that the approach has brought benefits in terms of outcomes, value for money and time. "As long as you've got a strong team and everyone has clarity of purpose, this model works. Another benefit is that we are not working in silos. Corporate linkages are vital – we work closely with colleagues across regeneration and economic development, and having that strategic overview is key."

Stockton has a strong focus on the development of commissioning arrangements and joint working with key partners. As Ann points out, partnership working is increasingly important – and most partner organisations tend to bridge the

adult/children's services divide. This structure makes it easier to work across boundaries, which is helpful in tackling national agenda issues such as health inequalities and poverty.

Stockton-on-Tees is a four-star local authority. In the 2007 annual performance assessment and joint area review, children's services were assessed as outstanding, with grade three/four scores across the board – including grade four for their overall effectiveness. Adult services have a two-star rating, with good delivery of outcomes and promising prospects for improvement.

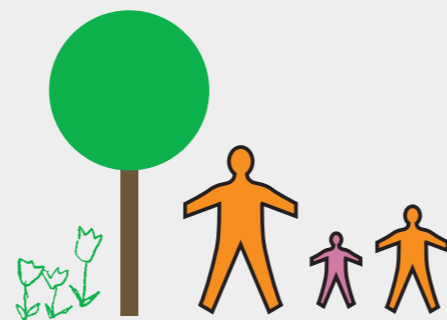
A joint directorate is clearly working at Stockton. However, Ann is keen to stress that councils should retain full flexibility in how they structure their services. "We should not be prescriptive in what councils do. This model can work with the right

people, in the right councils and under the right circumstances, but other models are working too. I've really enjoyed it, and our performance shows that it works for us."

After 12 years at Stockton, Ann is now preparing for a new role as director of children, schools and families at the London Borough of Camden. Looking back on the past three years, what would she say to others considering a joint directorate? "I would recommend people to consider it, but my advice would be to do it for the right reasons – not as a way of saving money or cutting staff. If the drivers are negative then it won't work.

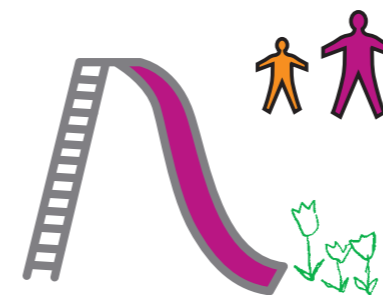
"It has to be a corporate decision and it has to have buy-in from the chief executive and politicians as well as from other colleagues. It

has to be a full corporate initiative and shouldn't be done 'in extremis' because things aren't working."



At Wakefield Council, the emphasis is very much on 'family'. The metropolitan district brought adults' and children's services together in 2005 and appointed Elaine McHale as corporate director of family services.

The challenge of managing a joint service was daunting at first, says Elaine. "If you believe in it and stick at it then it will come good, but I think it needs someone with previous director-level experience in one or other of the service areas."



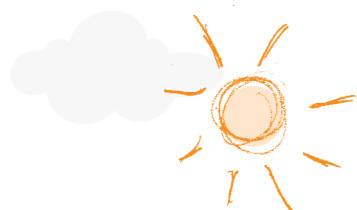
At Wakefield, councillors and officers decided that a large-scale restructure was unnecessary. But the proposed Local Area Agreement had a strong focus on total family support, so it "made sense" to place adult care in with education and children's services. "These were all people-focussed services, and because we believed in the 'total family support' concept we felt that doing so would greatly improve people's lives and help to develop our local communities."

The decision had full political support and was underpinned by best value. It was also seen as the right strategic fit for Wakefield to take forward the government's modernisation agenda and improve its overall performance. "People always start off with 'it's too big, is it manageable, can it be done?', but as long as you have a strong

team heading up the directorate it is deliverable," says Elaine.

The Wakefield model has five service areas: adults; physical disabilities and older people; safeguarding and family support; schools and lifelong learning; and commissioning, performance and partnership. There are two portfolio-holding members – one covers adults and health, the other children and young people.

Three years after the combined directorate was formed, the council and its partners are seeing the benefits of this way of working. "We are beginning to focus," says Elaine. "Our purpose is to work towards maximising the potential of individuals, families and communities." Wakefield is a three-star council, performing well. Children's services are grade three almost across the board, and adult



services have a three-star rating with excellent prospects of improving further.

Elaine is proud of the directorate's achievements, but feels that there is more to be done. "We're still a work in progress. We're beginning to see results around inter-generational work, in terms of being able to focus on localities and on families where there are several areas of the directorate involved. We are beginning to embrace and deliver on the 'think family' approach and we can make better use of buildings, staff time and expertise."

One disadvantage is that there are two very different performance streams – both wanting their annual submissions at the same time.

There is more to be done on the differences between education and social services, says Elaine – but this

is also a problem for authorities with separate children's and adults' services. Greater inclusion of schools is one ambition for the future, and work has begun here – schools are hosting luncheon clubs for older people, for example.

"One of the things that is very interesting is that the difference between the agendas of adults and children are not that great. They both have personalisation in them; they're both about maximising the potential of individuals and maximising independence. There are five outcomes for children and seven for adults, and there's a lot of crossover."

Would Elaine recommend Wakefield's approach to other authorities? "I don't want to be evangelical about it ... but I think councils should do their

own analysis on whether it is right for them."

Joint directors need a strong heart and excellent support, she adds, as it's a demanding role: "I love the diversity of the role and the challenge, but it is a huge agenda and it means you have to be extremely well organised – and you must have a good secretary!"



Windsor and Maidenhead divides its services on a people/places basis. A borough-wide restructuring in 2006 left just two corporate directors: one for community services, the other for learning and care.

Jim Gould is director of learning and care, a department that incorporates children's services, adult social services, learning and achievement, housing policy and residential development, and organisational development and support.

In the light of the Children Act 2004, borough managers began a review of children's services. The exercise then spread across the whole council, and a new corporate structure was put in place two years later. "The borough had a big Liberal Democrat majority at that point, and there was generally political consensus," says Jim. "Now we

have a big Conservative majority and this remains the same."

The executive includes three separate portfolio holders covering planning and housing, adult services and children's services.

The hardest part of the exercise, he says, was bringing children's services – education, youth services and social care – together. "They had worked alongside each other before but had never been part of the same set-up. All had very different cultures." He knows from talking to directors of children's services in other authorities that this is a universally challenging process: "I think everyone slightly underestimated the cultural differences involved in bringing these services together."

The director is supported by a joint management team. The key link role is a strategy and resources manager

at assistant director level, who works on issues such as information, workforce development and administration.

Having the right managers is crucial, says Jim: "What [this model] does is to raise the game of the next level down. They effectively do a lot of things that the director of children's/ adult services would do in other authorities." In fact, the one piece of advice he would give to others considering a combined service is to "make sure you resource the next level down properly" – pay enough to get the right people.

Newly combined services make progress in small steps. At Windsor and Maidenhead, adult social workers are now being trained to use the common assessment framework. The transition process has been enhanced for service users such as children with

disabilities. But Jim acknowledges that significant change will take time: “We are a long way off having integrated adults’ and children’s services.

“We’re currently trying to explore how we can bring things closer together in areas such as assessment, safeguarding, and the sharing of resources and facilities. There are plans for a new learning disability day centre, but with the focus moving away from day care we would also use it to do other things such as provide a children’s resource.” Other ideas include placing adult education within extended schools.

On a personal level, Jim has found the support of regional and national networks invaluable. But having a combined role can make it difficult to get involved at a national level with either the Association of Directors of Social Services or the Association of Directors of Children’s Services, he says, as you are caught in the middle. Conflicting demands on time and clashes between meetings and conferences mean that “you can’t always play the full role that you might want to” within the national organisations.

Like many joint directors, Jim says the biggest challenge is the amount of information he needs to know. “I would imagine that my reading pile is double what a children’s or adults director would be given to read, but it’s important to make sure you’re up to speed with national initiatives.”



A combined directorate is one of many ways in which local authorities can organise services for adults and children. Since 2004, around 10 per cent of eligible councils have opted to try this approach. One, Middlesbrough, has recently abandoned it, and it is being reconsidered in Surrey.

While the 10 authorities taking part in this study represent more of a trickle than a flood, in general they reported that the model was working well for them. This was backed up by good – and often excellent – inspection results: many of these councils are rated among the best in the country for children’s and adults’ services.

The model tends to be introduced during a programme of corporate restructuring, and councils not undertaking this process could be put off by the cost, disruption and challenge of bringing staff, resources and services together.

There are clear benefits, but also unique problems. On the whole, the directors felt that the model was right for their

conclusions

council, and all said they enjoyed the challenges of such a broad-ranging role. However, they agreed that others should think hard before adopting the model. Directors generally spent a majority of their time on children's services, and success depended on having a very capable team of service heads.

Other ways of organising adults' services – such as joint director-level posts with local health organisations – are likely to become more popular over time, with the joint children's/adults' directorate just one of a range of models councils can adopt to provide successful and efficient services.

Improvement and Development Agency

Layden House

76–86 Turnmill Street

London EC1M 5LG

t: 020 7296 6600

f: 020 7296 6666



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Written for the IDeA by Rachel Potter
With contributions from Andrew Cozens

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