

**The dynamics of governance and system change: the
case of local collaborative relations to support
adults with complex needs**

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Glossary

ACE - Adults facing Chronic Exclusion

CCG - Clinical commissioning group

CCT - Compulsory competitive tendering

Complex needs - Used primarily in this research to refer to adults with multiple and complex needs/disadvantages. Within primary research refers to adults meeting the eligibility criteria for the CSP, experiencing at least three out of four needs - homelessness, offending behaviour, substance use, mental ill health

CSP - Case Study Partnership: A multi-organisational partnership designed to provide a local collaborative response to working with adults with complex needs. This represented the primary site of research

CSP lead agency - Lead agency for the CSP. Formed out of an existing Third Sector organisation, the CSP lead agency had a primary organising role in establishing and maintaining the CSP

Health and Wellbeing Boards - Established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 so as to provide a forum for key leaders from local health and care systems to collaborate to improve the health and wellbeing of the local populations.

ICP – Integrated Care Partnerships, joint forums for NHS and LA commissioners to work in partnership together with alliances of NHS providers.

Keyworker - In this research this refers to a new frontline professional role created by the CSP lead agency to work directly with adults with complex needs.

LA - Local Authority

MEAM: Making Every Adult Matter - A coalition of national charities established to support local areas in working with adults with complex needs.

NHS - National Health Service

NPM - New public management

NPG - New public governance

PCT - Primary Care Trust

TSO - Third sector organisation

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Abstract

Collaboration between organisations and actors in the provision of public services has long been recognised as a self-evident virtue and a key component in the response to increased levels of service fragmentation and specialisation. The identification of approximately 60,000 adults within England and Wales that combine needs around homelessness, mental health, offending and substance misuse has led to the recognition that traditional models of service provision have been unable to adequately respond to these articulations of ‘adult complex needs’. It is in this context that there has been a renewed interest in the promotion of innovative strategies and structures to re-conceptualise collaborative working at both central and local levels often embedded within broader calls for ‘system change’. This research seeks to add new knowledge to an emerging group of literatures around institutional and professional responses to complex needs through the lens of the governance of public services. In doing so it looks to explore the intersecting relationships between collaboration and innovation at the local level in the context of powerful influences from the national state conceptualised through a Gramscian-influenced model comprising ideas of an extended state, governmental state, civil society and the integral state. The complexity of these relationships is researched through a case-study strategy focused on a city-based, multi-year pilot project, referred to as the Case-Study Partnership (CSP) and its collaborative ecology. The perceptions and reported behaviours of local actors, located in their differing relations to the governmental state are reported from interviews conducted over the period 2017-2019. The thesis argues that working within the tensions of governance ‘verticalities’ and ‘horizontalities’ led to a series of hybridised and adaptive collaborative behaviours, conceptualised as ‘adaptive system management’. This hybridised outcome, comprising a series of dominant and subordinate relationships, was to impact the possibilities and horizons of local system change to support the adult complex needs user-service group.

Introduction to the thesis

A governance focus on complexity and collaboration

Collaboration between organisations and actors in the provision of public services has been seen in both academic literatures and policy documents as a key strategy in the response to increased levels of service fragmentation and specialisation. This thesis explores a local response to these supposed 'system failings' in relation to support for the service-user group of adults with complex needs. The research is focused on the complexities and dynamics of local collaborative activity between key actors in the Case Study Partnership (CSP) that brought together a range of agencies including organisations from the criminal justice system, health and care services, housing organisations and Third Sector actors working in relation to drug and substance use. As part of this exploration, the thesis proceeds to consider the nature of possibility of local system change in relation to collaborative working.

Acknowledging the various ways in which this group of people are described and in line with recent academic work (e.g. Dwyer *et al.*, 2015; Dobson, 2019a), this research uses the term 'complex needs'. While the research shows a broad appreciation of the key characteristics of adults with complex needs, its focus is not on this group but on the people and organisations collaborating to support them. In discussing different reflections of complexity and the motives for collaboration, the thesis suggests that the most significant feature of the service-user group is the inter-dependence of their conditions of vulnerability and how these interact with the local service ecology.

Researcher positionality

My interest and connection with the research focus were two-fold. Firstly, prior to becoming a full-time doctorate student I used to work as a frontline worker within a Third Sector homeless service with adults that could be accurately characterised as having complex needs. In doing so, I was interested by the multiple and, at times, competing roles that I found myself working with,

in an environment increasingly influenced by performativity and resource constraint. Secondly, I am a qualified social worker and worked for several years within adult social care, including time within a cross-service arrangement that looked to develop greater levels of collaboration and integration between health and social care. I often reflected on the ways in which we as a team appeared to contain many of the elements described within the literature as enabling of horizontal working, yet despite this we still ultimately failed at bridging the gaps. This research topic thus provided a unique opportunity, in a new geo-social setting, to investigate the dynamics behind these apparent contradictions in order to explore a local collaborative innovation with all its possibilities and limitations.

Chapter structure – literatures, key concepts and the research

The thesis, as its title suggests, employs a governance perspective that re-conceptualises collaborative working at the local level through intersecting relationships between horizontal forms of working and vertical state influences. It has three primary aims:

1. To explore debates around the role of the state in relationship to collaborative working to support adults with complex needs. This first aim leads to a critical literature review and the conceptual framework.
2. To understand the role of local stakeholders and actors involved in complex governance relationships. The second aim leads to the primary research involving a case-study strategy.
3. To consider the impact of these dynamics on different scenarios of system change. This aim leads to an analysis of organisational and professional hybridity and adaptation.

Derived from these aims, the research questions reflect the multi-tier concerns of the overall study. Question 1 is primarily concerned with the macro-level of central policy and legislation that impact on the local expressions of inter-organisational collaboration, providing the contextual analysis in which the local primary data sits. Question 2 shifts towards the meso- and micro-level of analysis, using local empirical data to explore the question. Question 3 focuses on how these two levels interact in ways that may shape the ways in which inter-organisational collaboration can be envisaged and acted upon as part of system change.

The research asked three key questions in relation to collaboration and system change to support adults with complex needs.

Q1. What are the essential governance dynamics influencing the development of local collaboration in relation to complex needs?

Q2. How do stakeholders and local actors 'mediate' central forces and local conditions to collaborate in relation to working with those with complex needs?

Q3. What possibilities of system change arise from the analysis of settlements/equilibrium in relation to organisational collaboration and complex needs?

These questions have been addressed through the six chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 1 focuses on the context of governance, state and policy to provide a system and historical framework within which contemporary collaborative activity in the field can be viewed. Particular attention is not only placed on governance and network debates, but also the vertical powers of the governmental state.

Chapter 2 builds on this by reviewing literatures and issues of collaboration and system change in relation to adult complex needs and, in comparison to Chapter 1, can be viewed as an exploration of more horizontal local relations.

Chapter 3, the conceptual framework for this thesis, is derived from the dialectic of 'verticalities' (factors and forces that are broadly identified with the governmental state) and 'horizontalities' (factors and forces that are broadly identified with civil society) to produce a '45-degree' political and governance analysis. This wider state analysis is fused with Benson's (1975) dialectical model of local superstructural and sub-structural relations to produce an overall conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 5.

Chapter 4, the research approach, describes the research philosophy, strategies and methods employed to research the complexities of the CSP and its service ecology.

Chapter 5 reports the main findings of the field work - perceptions and perspectives from strategic local actors and the frontline workers located across different service boundaries.

Chapter 6, analysis and conclusions, brings together the key concepts of verticalities, horizontalities and intersections applied to the research findings from Chapter 5 to produce ways of looking at collaboration and system change, through the concepts of organisational and actor hybridity in the local context, to produce ways of looking at versions of system change.

With its dialectical focus on the 'intersections' of vertical and horizontal influences state and civil society, this research aims to add to knowledge on how local actors collaborate in complex environments in order to support members of this particular service user ecology.

Chapter 1. Collaboration in relation to complex needs: the contexts of governance, state and policy

Introduction

This introductory chapter comprises three major parts. The first is centred around a critical review of governance literatures and key concepts concerned with approaches to governance and the role of the state that influence views and practices in relation to local collaboration. The literature-based themes here include conceptual distinctions between networked forms of governance/the governance of networks and meta-governance/governmentality. This part of the chapter begins with an initial proposition, explored in more detail in Chapter 2, that articulations of more ‘horizontalist’ forms of governance (e.g. relational activities between local actors) play key roles in the design strategies and articulations of contemporary inter-organisational collaboration around complex needs most notably in relation to ambitions of innovation in the field, often referred to as ‘system change’ (e.g. Cornes *et al.*, 2018; Randall and Anderson, 2017). At the same time, these horizontalist concepts of action are constantly affected by ‘vertical’ influences emanating from what will be termed the ‘governmental state’. One of the primary aims of this research, therefore, is to offer a critical appraisal of some of the assumptions and potentialities that lie within these articulations of governance and their relationships to models of change for locally-based organisations and professionals working in the field of complex needs. As such, this research suggests that the use of a governance lens to analyse the dynamics of inter organisational and multi-actor collaboration in the field could be productive in moving beyond the normative status that it has in some parts of the literature.

The second part of the chapter seeks to move beyond these governance debates by exploring the Gramscian concepts of ‘extended’ and ‘integral’ characteristics of the state that conceptualises the dialectical relationships between governmental/political state and civil society and the intersections between ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ factors and forces that influence patterns of collaboration and the possibility of system change at the local level. The particular focus on intersections leads to a review of concepts of hybridity and welfare mixes, suggested as

both features and potential sites of tension and contradiction within contemporary responses to public services responses to complex needs. There is, in addition, a brief review of the contribution of the work of Foucault and, in particular, his concepts of governmentality, biopolitics and neoliberalism.

The third part comprises a historical overview of policy development and conceptions of the role of the state including the period of Office of New Labour, the Coalition Government up to and including the Conservative Governments under Prime Ministers David Cameron, Theresa May and now under Boris Johnson. The aim of this historical section is to show how policies impacting complex needs and relevant systems of governance have evolved over the past two decades, with particular concern to the relationship between its dominant and subordinate characteristics; the combination of which is examined through the Hall's (2005) concept of New Labour's 'Double Shuffle'. The historical approach has been designed to inform the more conjunctural analysis of the modes of governance that influenced the approach to complex needs and the challenge of system change in the period of research 2016-2020.

The impact of austerity in the UK context features heavily, with the dualism of 'austerity-localism' (Featherstone *et al.*, 2012), providing a crucial framing for the exploration of collaborative dynamics at the local level. As an economic strategy, the definition of austerity provided by Blyth is a useful starting point, outlining its basic premise as:

"a form of voluntary deflation in which the economy adjusts through the reduction of wages, prices, and public spending to restore competitiveness which is [supposedly] best achieved by cutting the state's budget, debts, and deficits" (Blyth, 2013: 2).

In the context of the UK, austerity has become shorthand for the various economic strategies of successive governments in responding to the global financial crisis of 2008, primarily referencing dynamic cuts to public services and welfare provision. The Conservative-led Coalition

Government embarked on a headline fiscal approach that set out unprecedented cuts to public spending. Yet, while the rhetoric of communal budget tightening was promoted and broadly across-the-board budget cuts pursued between 2010 and 2015, the largest cuts were aimed towards local government (Gray and Barford, 2018), further complicating the scalar complexity of governance at this time.

Austerity, therefore, may not simply be considered in economic terms, but as a component of a broader political project that looked to redefine the state at national and local levels, together with the relationships between state and individual. It represents both a rapid cut in state expenditure and a “*powerful political discourse*” (Gray and Barford, 2018: 541), going beyond specific cuts or macro-economics and towards “*a complex ideological phenomenon*” (Bramall, 2013: 3) that impacts and defines social and cultural politics as well as financial realities.

The third part of this research concludes by locating issues of both collaboration and complex needs within the broader context of ‘austerity-localism’ (Featherstone *et al.*, 2012) that recognises the dualism of resource constraint and partial devolution as major framing factors of the governance terrain. The final part introduces three governance-related concepts – *verticalities*, *horizontalities* and *intersections* – that can be applied to understanding how collaboration and system change in relation to complex needs might be conceived at the local level – the focus of Chapter 2.

Part 1. Governance and collaboration: a review of key debates

This part of the chapter provides a definition of governance and the relationship between governance and inter-organisational collaboration. In suggesting a relationship between ambitions of change and theories of network and collaborative governance, it considers the application of those theories towards multi-actor collaboration at the local level. At the same time, it introduces a more agnostic or skeptical literature concerning the articulations of networks, notably in relation to the prescriptive status that much of it holds. The chapter thus

presents governance as highly contested in both theory and practice, with differing interpretations, emphases and aims. In exploring key critiques of governance theories, particularly those associated with articulations of network governance, this part of the chapter suggests that, while many governance literatures emphasise the role of state 'steering' through governance technologies, further research is needed to establish the levels of autonomy and agency of those working towards new ways of working together to address the deficiencies in coordinated responses to adult complex needs.

Defining governance

"Governance is now everywhere and appears to mean anything and everything"
(Frederickson, 2005: 286).

Governance has become a highly influential concept across multiple disciplines as new theories have drawn attention away from the traditional institutionalist centralities of governmental and state structures. Emerging in the early 1990s, a new focus on 'governance' was initiated by the recognition of the contestation and problematisation of traditional forms of government, primarily bounded with the perception that states and state actors have become increasingly reliant on an increased number of non-state actors from the private and voluntary sector in order to manage and deliver policies and services (Bevir and Rhodes, 2016). In this generalised form, governance studies can be broadly grouped as concerned with the coordination of state and civil society primarily motivated by exploring patterns of *change*. For Carmel and Harlock (2008):

*"any mode of governance depends on the interaction of two mutually constitutive but analytically distinct dimensions: the formal, or substantive dimension which defines **what is to be governed and by whom**, and the operational dimension, which defines **how governing is to be done**"* 2008: 157, original emphasis).

Thus by *governable*, what is meant is that social subjects are able to be organised by means of regulation, management and coordination by state actors.

Despite its popularity, governance remains ‘slippery’ (Sorenson and Torfing, 2018), used across disciplines often with disparate typologies and often contradictory terminologies. Part of the confusion often arises from the multi-use of the term in describing both the general processes of central steering towards certain economic and societal goals and particular forms of *networked* governance that focus on self-organised multi-actor collaboration rather than hierarchies (command and control) or markets (competition) (Keast, 2016; Sorensen and Torfing, 2018). It is used both in a general, portmanteau form to enable the articulation of different *forms* of governance and also as a *particular* form that is pitted against other ideal types (Offe, 2008). Thus, governance simultaneously takes on the qualities of conceptual lens and prescriptive action. This is particularly pronounced with regards to the political and institutional responses to complex societal problems, often referred to as ‘wicked’ problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973 cited in Crowley and Head, 2017) that transcend organisational, sectoral and professional boundaries such as complex needs. As such, Torfing and Sorensen (2014) warn of the implicit danger in asserting a categorical shift from *government* to *governance* in that an overly simplified image suggests that governance works as a “*zero-sum game*” (2014: 258). The conceptual ambiguity within much of the governance literature is augmented by the tendency to not refer to styles or modes of coordination (e.g. partnership, horizontality, heterarchy), but rather taking on the explanatory roles of entire political structures (Walters, 2004).

This research starts from a more critical position, recognising the contention within the literature as to the ‘transformation thesis’, that is the:

“premise that a transformation has occurred, or is occurring, where the rise of the network heralds and emerging postmodern or reflexively modern condition feed from the ossified hierarchies of the mid-20th century” (Davies, 2011: 2).

However, it acknowledges that the coordination of state and civil society is *dynamic*. It therefore sees value in establishing the various articulations of centre-local relationships, power and agency when considering how multi-actor collaborations impact on ideas and ambitions of innovation change in the field of complex needs. This chapter thus sets out to identify the key ways in which a governance perspective shapes both the conceptual framework and the field of research.

In order to avoid confusion arising from a range of definitions, this research recognises Stoker's (1998) summary of governance as the starting point for understanding that:

“the development of governing styles, in which boundaries between and within public and private actors, has become blurred” (1998: 17).

With its concern with public service provision and coordination, Jessop's articulation of governance is also useful and serves as a foundational definition:

“... “governance” refers to any form of coordination of interdependent social relations - ranging from simple dyadic interactions to complex divisions of labour” (Jessop, 1999: 351).

The state, governance and networks

At the heart of the governance literature and the proposition of a shift from hierarchical government to new forms of governance lies a fundamental problematisation as to the role of the state ; from *government* to *governance* (Sorensen and Torfing, 2014). This conceptualisation sees traditional understandings of state authority recontextualised within global trends away from hierarchical control and towards multi-level and spatial formations, from the *de-*

nationalisation of statehood, the *de-statification* of politics and the *internationalisation* of policy development and implementation (Jessop, 2002a).

“Old and new state powers are displaced upwards to international and transnational organisations; downwards to local governments, public service institutions and user boards; and outwards to emerging cross-border regions and global city networks” (Torfing and Sorensen, 2014: 29).

Thus varying conceptualisations of governance have led to a wide range of literatures as to how the UK is governed in the modern day. These include the role of self-organising networks within articulations of the hollowing out of the state (Rhodes, 1994); the interdependencies and resource exchanges between new non-state actors (Brandsen and Johnston, 2018); debates around the reconfigurations of the state (e.g. J. Davies, 2011; Skelcher *et al.*, 2005) and the extent to which governments take on the role of ‘steering’ through financial inducements in place of direct control and delivery (Fenwick *et al.*, 2012).

For Jessop a shift from ‘government to governance’ is identified within what he articulated as a move from a Keynesian Welfare National State towards a ‘Schumpeterian Workfare Post-National Regime’ (Jessop, 1999: 355). Jessop’s use of regime theory conceptualises governance as multi-faceted systems of inter-organisational and inter-sectoral relationships and corresponding models of coordination. He goes on to outline three primary and idealised forms of coordination - the “*anarchy*” of exchange (e.g. market forces), the “*hierarchy*” of command (e.g. imperative coordination by the state) and the “*heterarchy*” of self-organization (e.g. networks)’ (Jessop, 1999: 351, original emphasis). The organisational reality on the ground is, of course, more complex and may involve hybrids of all three ideal types.

Kjaer (2004) provides a historical overview of how ‘governance’ assumed a key role as both a conceptual framework and practice in the UK. As a response to the rigidity to the traditional

governing structures characterised by hierarchy and bureaucracy, together with the perceived power of the professions in coordinating closed policy communities, the Conservative Governments of the 1980s instituted reforms associated with New Public Management (NPM).

The key features of this approach included:

- The adoption of private sector, business-like principles towards the public sector in the name of efficiency.
- The privatisation of public goods and encouragement of contracting out as a “*milder version of privatisation*” (J. Davies, 2005: 315).
- The promotion of agencification in order to institutionalise the difference between policy and implementation strategies.
- Competition through quasi-markets being introduced into the public sphere under the banner of ‘choice’.
- The pursuit of responsiveness through de-centralisation of functions to the lower tiers of governance.
- An interpretation of citizen empowerment where accountability mechanisms are integrated at the local level through which service users are able to influence provision.

As discussed further in the historical section of this chapter below, under successive governments NPM has helped inform the wider governance frameworks within which conceptions of networks and collaboration have been formulated.

These features of NPM can be understood as constituting the dynamics and tensions of a neoliberal era. While the term ‘neoliberalism’ has been overworked and can lack specificity (Ferguson, 2010), the foundational understanding within this research is that “neoliberalism is a political project that is justified on philosophical grounds and seeks to extend market forces, consolidate market-friendly constitution, and promote individual freedom” (Jessop, 2012: 1).

Gaining influence following the economic and social crisis of the 1960's and 70's, neoliberalism is identified as a dominant commitment to the expansion of markets through a different type of state activity and the active enrolment of civil society. This broad understanding allows for neoliberalism to be both an (ever incomplete) hegemonic project, yet also spatially and politically differentiated rather than being able to be defined in unchanging singular terms.

As such, the term “actually existing neoliberalism” (Peck *et al.*, 2018) is potentially insightful in recognising the incompleteness of the social-political project, yet also the ability of neoliberalism to form distinct relationships with various social formations.

As discussed further in the historical section of this chapter, in the UK context under successive governments operating in the neoliberal era, the concept of NPM has helped inform the wider governance frameworks within which conceptions of networks and collaboration have been formulated. It represents a conjunctural understanding of the “*elevation of market-based principles and techniques of evaluation to the level of state-endorsed norms*” (W. Davies, 2016: 14). Put another way, both neoliberalism and NPM are understood as supporting “*the disenchantment of politics by economics*” (W. Davies, 2016: 14).

Network governance, governance networks and the governance of networks

While distinctions between these three terms might appear somewhat arcane, in the context of this thesis they are important. *Network governance* is understood as an ideal type approximating to an ideology of governance. *Governance networks*, on the other hand, is used as a descriptive term that recognises the diversity of forms of networks in modern society. The *governance of networks*, however, seeks to understand the potential and limitations of networks within the

wider frameworks and influences of the state that are under consideration in this chapter and in the thesis as a whole.

Network governance

Governance theories tend to orientate themselves towards concepts of heterarchy, that is horizontal relations towards self-organisation between mutually interdependent actors, rather than a *“rigid polarization between the anarchy of the market and the hierarchy of imperative coordination”* (Jessop, 2000: 16). From this perspective, governance remains attracted to analysis of both market and state failure, proposing that reconciliation is attempted through the utilisation of procedures and practices that work horizontally across state and market divides. These practices include ‘interpersonal networking, interorganizational negotiation and *“de-centred inter-systemic context steering”*’ (Jessop, 2000: 16).

A central tenet of the governance literature over the last 30 years has been the growing appreciation in and operation of networks, both in terms of networks themselves and network-governance based innovations such as collaborations, partnerships, alliances and ‘joined-up’ enterprises (Keast and Mandall, 2014). While a network at its base level refers to *“a set of nodes and the set of ties representing some relationship, or lack of relationship, between nodes”* (Brass *et al.*, 2004: 795), the term is predominantly used within public administration, political science and organisational theory literatures to denote sets of relationships between actors and organisations that have *“specific meanings accorded to them”* (Davies and Spicer, 2015: 223) particularly around issues of governance. At a basic conceptual level such network action can be defined as the involvement of:

“structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of others in some hierarchical arrangement”
(O’Toole, 1997: 45).

With a focus on trust, reciprocity and mutual gains, networked modes of collaboration necessitate a shift from hierarchical modes of coordination to more horizontal measures that emphasise equality and relational models of interaction (Ansell, 2000). Within public administration literatures, network governance has two primary articulations. It describes the changes to the public sector through fragmentation caused by neoliberal reforms, together with the aims to join up policy and service provision through coordination between multiple departments, agencies and organisations. In the English policy context this is discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter. Secondly it also refers to an interpretation of British government that rejects the traditional “*Westminster model*’ of analysis, suggesting a broad shift from the powers of a strong executive to governance through networks” (Rhodes, 2007: 1246). Figure 1 illustrates the concept of networks contrasted with both state and market-led approaches to governance.

Figure 1. State, market and network approaches to governance

Governance Mode	State	Market	Network
Service focus	Public good	Private good	Social good
Locale	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Firm	Community
Decision-making	Vertical, top down	Horizontal (internal)	Horizontal (broader)
Relationship focus	Dependent	Independent	Interdependent
Integration Mechanisms	Legal authority, formal rules, regulations, policies and procedures	Arm’s length contractual transactions, price, structures, supply and demand	Social exchange, relationships, common vision or purpose, mutuality, reciprocity
Negotiation style	Rule-based, procedural	Bargaining, competitive, self-interested and short-term focus	Win-win, interest based, longer-term focus

(Keast, 2016: 443 - adapted from Powell, 1990)

The use of *network*, in both metaphorical (e.g. Dowding, 1995; Bevir, 2011) and empirical (e.g. Henttonen *et al.*, 2016) form, is a central component of common understandings of contemporary governance, both within ‘policy network’ (e.g. Rhodes, 1997) and ‘governance network’ (e.g. Koppenjan and Klijn, 2015) accounts of state-society coordination. Where policy network approaches tend to employ networks as metaphor, emphasising the contested nature of policy making within domain-specific subsystems by interdependent actors, governance network literature predominantly articulates the perceived rise of networks as evidence of a transformative paradigmatic shift from state-based hierarchical and market-based regulation towards devolved, self-regulation of complex systems.

Network-based models of coordination, based on horizontal transactions of trust and reciprocity across an increasingly complex organisational landscape, are often set in historical context. These are seen as a series of responses to broader changes in societal and economic life variously termed as post-fordism, post-industrialisation or post-modernity that have seen the reduction in state capacity to direct and enforce policy implementation or change (Blanco, *et al.*, 2011; Connell *et al.*, 2019). Some network advocates have gone as far as to suggest that the identification of new organisational and connectionist forms have the power to become the dominant form of societal organisation, a dynamic that is moving us towards “a *society of networks*” (Raab and Kenis, 2009: 199). The identification of the potential power of networks is premised on the potentially unlocking of an alternative set of relations between state and market “*extending the public sphere, empowering communities and cultivating inclusive policy making*” (J. Davies, 2011: 2).

Proponents of network governance tend to not only acknowledge the identification of network models of co-ordination but look to identify certain qualities as to their potential, particularly in relation to the coordination of actors and resources in approaches towards complex, cross-cutting social issues within fragmented service ecologies. It has found support in articulations of ‘New Public Governance’ (Osborne, 2006) wherein the state is recognised in both plural, “*where multiple interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services*” and pluralist, “*where*

multiple processes inform the policy making system” (Osborne, 2006: 384) formations. Network styles of governance also tend to place emphasis on the promotion of relational capital, relational contracts and trust as core governance mechanisms. In the more optimistic readings as to the potentials for networks in the pursuit of deliberative pluralism these take on *“the Habermasian consensual notions of values in partnership working of mutual trust, sharing, willingness to learn and mutual respect”* (Kokx and Van Kempen, 2009: 1235). Rather than the primary duties of bureaucratic and hierarchical coordination, a de-centred state’s role is re-imagined towards the development and protection of consensus and cooperation through the provision of a shared vision and the regulation of horizontal activities in support of achieving plurally agreed outcomes (Penny, 2017).

There remains, therefore, a tendency within network governance literatures to see network models as the key way of addressing and resolving cross-cutting, complex issues of hierarchy and market. For example, from a *public value* perspective that maintains value beyond market/economic considerations, Bennington (2011) identifies three specific potential network benefits:

Legitimation - networks can provide the ability to co-opt a broader range of conflicting or competing interests into models of shared responsibility.

Innovation - networks can help spread the risk and reward of innovation between a number of partners.

Social problem solving - networks have the potential to provide opportunities to solve complex, cross-cutting issues that traditional silo-based organisational models are ill-equipped to manage.

Network modes of governance are, therefore, deemed particularly suitable for complex, interdependent issues such as service provision for complex needs with the development of interactive relationships reliant on loyalty, reciprocity and trust. Without administrative fiat, networks in their ideal state are supposed to take on highly voluntaristic characteristics with

conflict resolved on the within the network aligned with members' reputational interests (Lowndes and Skelcher, 2002).

Governance networks and the governance of networks

This research follows J. Davies (2011) in making an analytical distinction between the terms 'governance network' and 'network governance'. *Network governance* should be seen as an:

“ideal type, the post-traditional claim that the network modes of coordination are proliferating and fostering ethical virtues such as trust and empowered reflexivity, heralding a rupture with the past” (J. Davies, 2011: 3).

Governance networks thus refer to the resource exchanges between state and non-state actors, whether in recurring or in institutionalised form. The sheer multitude of potential configurations of governance networks adds to the complexity of both theorisation and investigation as to the impacts of networks as forms of coordination, with a particular challenge in defining the object. Geddes (2008) identifies a large range of governance networks, including public-public, public-private, public-citizen, public-private-citizen and private-citizen collaborations. These collaborations can be variously time-limited and focused on a particular project, others have more strategic objectives and are multi-dimensional. Some collaborations are brought together through voluntary action, others through statutory need.

This distinction is vital to the research as, while often confused, an increase in network governance is often referred to as a worthwhile ambition within complex needs and public service governance literature (e.g. Cornes *et al.*, 2018; De Corte *et al.*, 2017). The key dilemma posed by Davies (2011) is one of rhetoric and reality, why governance networks often appear to fail to live up to the ideals of network governance. He expands on the challenge:

“The impossible challenge of systematically evaluating the vast literatures on this topic is further complicated by the variety of labels given to governance networks. Terms such as

advisory board, partnership, tri-sector partnership, interactive governance, joined-up governance, interactive policy making, community governance, participatory governance, participatory management, collaborative governance, collaborative management, stakeholder governance, urban regime, policy community, issue network, the new public governance, the new public service and new social partnerships often describe similar practices but can also disguise important differences” (2011: 33).

The multi-level nature of governance literatures adds further to this complexity, representing a realisation that exchanges are not just conceptualised horizontally within tiers of governance, but also as “*negotiated, non-hierarchical exchanges between institutions at the transnational, national, regional and local levels*” (Peters and Pierre, 2001: 132; cited in Sullivan *et al.*, 2004: 246). This points to the “*re-ordering of political hierarchies*” (Jessop, 2013: 19), most commonly in reference to the impacts of trans-national institutions and relationships. Yet more recent developments such as the reimposition of certain types of national sovereignty following Britain leaving the European Union or the dualist notion of ‘austerity localism’ (Featherstone *et al.*, 2012) discussed later in the chapter, call for certain relationships between centre and local to be further reconsidered. The complex contexts within which networks operate could, therefore, give rise to the third distinction – that of the *governance of networks* that conceptualises the array of state and civil society forces that provide the essential terrains upon which networks operate.

Partnerships

The development of new formal and informal horizontal interactions between public, private and civil society actors, evidence-based decision-making and innovative, flexible policy implementation become virtuous in application. This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the English context by the popularity of the partnership form, particularly in relation to local government (Geddes, 2006; Fenwick *et al.*, 2012). As this chapter will discuss further in Part 3, successive governments have looked to embrace various idealisations of partnership working and co-governance.

“Partnership conjures up a relationship and a discourse with which it is hard to take issue; it is difficult to be against partnership. It appears to be pragmatic, consistent with the ‘what works’ approach. It reduces the burden of funding that falls directly on the public sector. It sounds inclusive, appearing to offer an alternative to the private sector model and, at least superficially, to the neoliberal agenda” (Fenwick et al., 2012: 406).

For Skelcher et al., (2005) the idealised promise of partnership is held in the potentially democratic credentials of network governance, opening local policy making systems to those traditionally excluded by bureaucratic coordination where the:

“participatory discourse is couched in terms of the value of inclusivity reinforced by a notion that partnerships imply equality of standing and power between the actors involved” (580).

Yet Torfing and Sorenson warn of a ‘Faustian bargain’, where these propositions are indicative of an idealisation that *“only see the positive aspects of the deal and ignore the darker and more problematic aspects of governance”* (2014: 330). Where terms like network and partnership appear to instinctively imply a level of collaboration and consensus, as Lowndes and Skelcher show, there has been a tendency to invest too much hope in networks or partnerships operating within the shadow of a hierarchical state.

“The co-operation and mutuality implied by the ideal-typical network mode of governance can too easily be read on to actually existing partnership organizations, fostering assumptions of pluralism and benign state action” (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998: 331).

There are also significant warnings within the literature against the direct conflation of networks with specific forms of collaboration, particularly partnerships (e.g. Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998)

and to note the impact of different modes of governance. Skelcher *et al.*, further suggest that that collaboration through partnership has the potential to conceal “*significant power differentials*” (2005: 578) marking the need to be aware of various iterations and constructions beyond simple classification.

Network skepticism

As such there is a significant body of work that is far more skeptical about theories of network governance. Together with concerns as to ideas of accountabilities, equity and democratic legitimacy (Penny, 2017), wider critiques have focused on the development of common pathologies of network theories and practice despite continuing “*horizontalist expectations*” (Grote, 2012: 94). These include the failure to acknowledge power asymmetries within network settings (Bell and Hindmoor, 2009), the apparent ability of networks to function in environments of distrust and ongoing hierarchical influence in the form of funding models from the centre (Grote, 2012) and the tendencies towards elite capture or closure by dominant elements (J. Davies, 2007).

The case studies of Laffin *et al.*, (2014) concerning economic development and housing services are claimed as counter to the idea of a paradigmatic shift towards network governance, finding little evidence of the weakening of vertical interconnections or the strengthening of horizontalities across service delivery boundaries. In terms of service delivery, they acknowledge evidence of increased *numbers* of horizontalities, particularly in the form of partnerships and in rhetoric, but these are situated as relatively weak compared to the continued role of the vertical state.

There is also a tendency noted as to the potential for de-politicisation, both in application and in evaluation, with those such as Hill and Hupe (2011) suggesting that network governance’s pluralist assumptions tend to mask traditional political concerns of contradiction and contrasting logics. As Torfing and Sorenson remind us, while governance thrives on collaboration “*since the*

public and private actors come to the interactive forums and arenas with different interests and resources, there is no guarantee that collaboration will prevail over conflict” (2014: 39). They offer caution as to a particular set of public management discourses that inherently promote networks as a necessary and *pragmatic* response towards problem solving in a fragmented and differentiated modern society. The issues become ones not of strategies of power and politics, but of management towards the *“smooth exchange and pooling of knowledge and resources”* (Torfing and Sorenson, 2014: 37). This notion of the ‘management of smooth exchange’ rather than addressing issues of strategy and power was to prove to be very important in understanding the position of local actors in the field.

Interestingly, skeptics now include key scholars and contributors to the ‘first-wave’ of governance debates, including Rhodes (Bevir and Rhodes, 2016) and Stoker (2011). Stoker admitted to *“a little self-doubt and recrimination”* over interpretations of advocacy towards local governance:

“I worry that we ... may have sold local government ‘a pup’, that is the idea of local governance and the role of community governor” (2011: 16).

He went on to emphasise the continuing and necessary role of ‘hard power’:

“Local government systems need a substantial amount of hard power in order to exercise soft power. You can’t win with the losing hand. That is the fatal flaw in the community governance vision” (29).

For Davies and Spicer, the problem remains one of ‘network boosterism’, that is:

“the tendency to attribute excessive analytical and normative weight to the role of networking in organizing and regulating relationships between governments, corporations, and citizens” (2015: 225).

J. Davies (2011) goes further, proposing that the promotion of networks and networking at multiple levels indicates ideological relationships to connectionism that are tied to the broad global trends towards the expansion and maintenance of particular types of neoliberal hegemony. He argues persuasively that network governance (as an ideal type) is a crucial dimension within the realisation of the 'network state' which represents a '*project* not an accomplished outcome, a project undermined by its material foundations in competition, conflict and crisis' (J. Davies, 2011: 113, original emphasis). He thus notes the:

"tendency for the hegemonic ideology and the institutional practices associated with it to fail, insofar as the outcome is the roll-forward of practices such as hierarchy, creeping managerialism and network closure" (J. Davies, 2011: 114).

This is perhaps supported by the observations of Bevir (2005) and Kjaer (2011) who examine the relationships between network governance and certain political projects, most notably New Labour's articulation of a 'Third Way', with Bevir identifying an intersecting set of actors that offer a combination of *"the Third Way, Network Theory and Institutionalism to a recognizable package"* (2005: 30).

Networks and governance mixes

It should also be recognised that the reality of the ideal network rarely emerges within the literature as empirical structures. Ideal types might *"serve as a useful starting point"* (Bradach and Eccles, 1991: 289; cited in Lowndes and Skelcher, 2002: 309), but the presupposition of those ideal types as mutually exclusive does little to augment understandings of the potentialities of collaborative undertakings. Entwistle *et al.*, (2007) go further, noting the distinctive issues associated with each ideal type each provide accounts of forms of partnership failure, with a partnership's reliance on the dominance of one type consequently increasing the likelihood of that form of failure. As such, the implication is that partnerships as a form of collaboration are

dependent on the mixing of governance modes in order to avoid dysfunction. For Rhodes (1997) the selection between modes of governance becomes a practical matter in the pursuit of effectiveness. However, there is a level of consensus within the literature that partnerships or other forms of collaboration do look to infuse network-like qualities into modes of governance, even if it does not mean the full-scale adoption of an ideal-type of coordination.

*“If there is a common thread linking these very different uses, it lies in presumptions about individual and organisational behaviour rather than structure. **Inter-organisational and interpersonal relationships are supposed to be different in a partnership**” (Entwhistle et al., 2007: 65, my emphasis).*

Rhodes (1997) contribution remains vital:

“It is the mix of governing structures which distinguishes services one from the other. These governing structures may mix like oil and water” (Rhodes, 1997: 51).

This appears to have significant implications for models of change built *from* the local level. One must also be aware of the potential pitfalls with regards to the reification of hierarchy, market and network. J. Davies (2012) advises that the ongoing coercive power of the state, in dialectical unity with articulations of consent and as discussed in more detail below, highlights the ways in which each form of coordination may in fact work in ways in which they:

“... simultaneously embody coercive, trust-based, and contract relations, becoming hybrid configurations of hierarchy, market, and network; neither one thing nor the other, but all three” (J. Davies, 2012: 2700).

Calls for increased network co-ordination in the field of complex needs, whether through the establishment of partnerships or various other collaborative governance arrangements, can

therefore be recognised as attempts to increase the status of network-based relationships within the *mix* (Entwhistle *et al.*, 2007). The challenge is not as much the identification of particular configurations or settlements as “*horizontal and consensual, or hierarchical and coercive*” (Penny, 2017: 1370), but to recognise these dualisms as continually present. This reorientates questions towards consideration of “*which term of the relationship is the most prominent in any spatio-temporal and scalar conjuncture*” (J. Davies, 2010 cited in Penny, 2017: 1370).

Collaborative governance

Within interpretations of governance networks and collaboration around public service provision and complex social issues, the broader articulation of collaborative governance is prominent within the literature. Where network governance is articulated as an ideal type usually associated with an economic base, collaborative governance refers to the methods towards collective action usually associated with the implementation of public policy or in search of public value. Ansell and Gash provide a concise definition of collaborative governance while looking to complete a systematic literature review on the topic. Collaborative governance is thus a:

“Governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-governmental actors in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-orientated, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets” (2008: 544).

However, for the purposes of this research and the completion of an empirical case study wherein a multi-organisational partnership had a level of distance from the central state, Emerson *et al.*'s (2012) wider definition is employed wherein collaborative governance refers to:

“...the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of

government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished” (2012: 2).

This recognises forms of collaborative governance beyond formal arrangements initiated by the state while responding to the observation made by Ansell and Gash that too much focus has been made towards the *“species rather than the genus”* (2008: 544) of collaborative forms of governance. Collaborative governance is therefore used in this research to describe the methods and processes in which joint working towards consensus-orientated outcomes in the search for *collaborative advantage* (Huxham, 1993), discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

“Based on the liberatory force of the information and communications revolution, vertical hierarchies are being overlain by horizontal networks; centralized systems are being counterbalanced by devolved and decentralized patterns of working” (Geddes, 2008: 21-22).

Collaborative governance can, therefore, be seen as a central component of contemporary approaches to tackle complex social issues including what we understand as complex needs. This is demonstrated within the emerging literatures around ‘system change’, that actively looks to promote reconceptualisations of local public services as:

“less paternal, more empowering; prioritising local collaboration over centralised hierarchies; holistic not fragmented; and facilitating the contribution of citizens and a broad range of organisations and activities to improve outcomes” (Randle and Anderson, 2017: 8).

The creation of a multi-organisational and actor partnership in order to provide a joint approach to working with complex needs is thus an example of attempts towards collaborative governance in the field. These literatures suggest a continuing questioning of traditional forms of governance

based around fixed hierarchies, both organisational and spatial, and the promotion of inter-organisational networks as more effective to both policy making and implementation within challenging and complex political environments.

The quasi-market state, networks and collaboration

Within the studies of social welfare issues, including around complex needs, there has been a longstanding challenge in recognising and articulating the changing ways in which social policy is organised, steered and enacted. The problematisation of the state as the primary actor within the provision of both transfers and services as part of broader multi-level and multi-scalar shifts in governance has seen a greater level of attention towards the changing dynamics of management, administration and co-ordination of public services (Daly, 2003). One dynamic, particularly pronounced within homelessness strategies, has been around the articulation of “*quasi-market governance*” (Bode, 2006: 346), materialising as part of a ‘contract culture’, with NPM-style language and business-like operations evidenced within a complex organisational landscape of service provision and policy making.

However, market-based modes of coordination, notably around performance, arguably sit alongside shifts towards the service provision being recognised as products of ‘*co-production*’ (Brown *et al.*, 2012). Brown *et al.*, suggest that the use of vehicles for joint action in the form of collaboration and partnership working in homelessness service provision consistently appear popular yet suffer from a lack of understanding as to how to undertake joint action or to evaluate it. They situate Third Sector organisations towards a more active role alongside state and non-state stakeholders in the form of collaborations and partnerships. For Keast and Waterhouse (2014), it is within new collaborative arrangements that the potential for innovation is increased based on new collaborative and co-management ties between multiple actors. These examples illustrate the situation of complex needs within a broader literature around the governance of ‘wicked issues’ where models of network governance are said to contain the potential to resolve or reconfigure complex issues as complex adaptive systems.

The question here is whether collaborations, particularly at the local level, display network-ideal characteristics and how these interact with the continued presence of vertical modes of coordination associated with the governmental state. This brings us to a consideration of key literatures around the role of the vertical state in relation to horizontalist governance – meta-governance and governmentality.

Meta-governance

*“The unilateral exercises of state authority have largely been replaced by formal or informal negotiations, in policy formulation as well as in policy implementation, between governmental actors and the affected individuals and organisations...but these are typically negotiations under the **shadow of hierarchical authority**”* (Scharpf, 1994: 41, my emphasis).

Primarily viewed as a critical response to the ‘new orthodoxy’ of first-wave network governance models (Marsh 2011), meta-governance can broadly be defined as the ‘governance of (self-) governance’ (Torfing and Sorenson, 2007) and is distinguished by its recognition of the strategic role the state plays in the selective adjustment of the mix of hierarchies, markets and networks in the regulation of self-organisation at lower levels. It has, therefore, served as a way of conceptualising how the *“institutional and organizational structure of the state affords government the ability to manage networks”* (Baker and Stoker, 2012: 1028) even where traditional hierarchical ‘hard’ tools (Bailey and Wood, 2017) are not available or appropriate.

Within the literature there are two diverging emphases towards the conceptual use of meta-governance. Firstly, a post-structuralist view where meta-governance is conceived as the *practice* of political agents (at multiple levels) through the employment of political mechanisms to initiate processes of self-governance in the form of networks and/or to steer them in desired directions while facing a *“plurality of interpretive logics and situated practices”* (Pedersen et al., 2011: 375). Here techniques of vertical coordination are reintroduced to the governance of

networks through meta-governance yet conflated with horizontal coordination as verticalities are in constant, transformative interaction with multiple actors within the pluri-centric model employed. The research emphasis, therefore, turns to the practice of the 'meta-governors' and their employment of various techniques of steering or framing in the management of networks (Torfing *et al.*, 2012; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2012). In their systematic literature review around different conceptualisations of meta-governance, Gjaltema *et al.*, (2019) note that the vast majority of uses of meta-governance understand it as an "*act of agency*" (2019: 7) undertaken by specific actors (meta-governors), primarily within the public sphere, who employ strategies so as to shape the activities of others. They note, however, that while meta-governors are most often understood as individual actors, they are often not clearly defined, emphasising the loose association of the term with acts of coordination of modes of governance.

Moseley and James (2008) provide one of the few empirical applications of meta-governance theory in the analysis of central state steering of local collaboration of homelessness services in England from this perspective. They identify a series of "*vertical policy tools*" (Moseley and James, 2008: 119) used to instigate, encourage and/or shape collaborative behaviour at the local level, outlining these as authority-based (e.g. through legislation), *information-based* (e.g. written guidance, events) and *incentive-based* (e.g. funding streams to reward collaboration). Acknowledging homelessness as a cross-cutting issue, they suggest a combination of these tools is necessary in the field in order to alleviate the fragmented systems associated with the field. Another important consideration comes from Connell *et al.*'s (2019) study of meta-governance strategies implemented by the Welsh Government including towards homelessness provision in which they conclude that there was a high level of individual agency exercised within these strategies.

Those with more regulationist and/or Gramscian orientations are more cautious about the retreat or transformation of both vertical modes of coordination and the role of the state. Usually employing a critical realist epistemology (contrasted with the interpretive influences of the post-structuralist meta-governance accounts), meta-governance is conceived as the 'governance of government + governance' (Jessop, 2004), taking place in the 'shadow of hierarchy' (Scharpf,

1994: Whitehead, 2003), challenging the dualistic representation of governance as a movement away from government. According to Jessop:

“whilst the state may have become less hierarchical and less centralised, that trend does not necessarily exclude a continuing and central political role for nation states” (2004: 66).

Rather than meta-governance as practice within a pluri-centric environment, here the concept is used to reintroduce the state as a complex, diverse social structure and as part of the attempt to “forge and sustain a *“successful” political project and scalar fix*” (Macleod and Goodwin, 1999: 516). The Gramscian influences on this interpretation can be seen through an *integral* understanding of the state that primarily looks to retain power and maintain hegemony through a combination of discourses, ideologies and ‘soft technologies’ such as networks. Meta-governance research from this perspective is concerned with the dynamic, or potentially dialectical, interactions between modes of state-coordination and the self-governed networks embedded within them, in contexts that Jessop describes as *“negotiated decision-making”* (1999: 23).

Both schools of meta-governance described can be seen to share a primary focus on the restructuring of the *“rules of the game and then seeking to enforce rules through control mechanisms”* (Dommett and Flinders, 2015, 3). However, it could be argued that a Gramscian reading of meta-governance aids the conceptualisation of local collaborative working and its potential relationship to articulations of innovation and system change because it offers a counter to the assumptions that appear in parts of the more prescriptive elements of the network governance literature. Jessop’s (1997) conceptualisation of meta-governance differs from more pluri-centric accounts in that it situates meta-governance as a counter process to governance.

“Countering the shift towards governance is government’s increased role in meta-governance. Political authorities (at national and other levels) are more involved in organizing the self-organization of partnerships, networks, and governance regimes. They provide the ground rules for governance” (Jessop, 1997: 575).

The demarcation between the two schools of meta-governance should also perhaps not be overstated, with Torfing (2016b) acknowledging that while a network actor with the necessary policy tools may theoretically act as a meta-governor, in reality state actors have inbuilt advantages due to their command and abilities to deploy a larger range of tools, for example funding and legal coercive powers.

Meta-governance can, therefore, be seen as the modes of coordination that ensure that self-organising forms of governance, particularly at the local level, do not violate the essential scalar fixes of state or ideological projects. Meta-governance involves mediating the ground rules for governance - shaping the context rather than the development of specific strategies and initiatives for them. Bailey and Wood (2017), in their investigation towards English devolution under the Coalition Government, use Sorensen and Torfing's (2005) differentiation between 'hands off' tools of meta-governance, which include network design and network framing, and 'hands on' tools which include direct participation and network management. Crucially for this research, they demonstrate the continued expressions of power from the centre towards local articulations of network relations partly through processes of "*fiscal conditioning*" (Bailey and Wood, 2017: 977). This echoes Griggs *et al.*'s (2016) recognition of the combinational effects of austerity and localism in unequal forms, leading to patterns of de-politicisation expressed at the local level.

Foucault, governmentality and neoliberalism

"Rather than asking ourselves what the sovereign looks like from on high, we should be trying to discover how multiple bodies, forces, energies, matters, desires, thoughts, and so on are gradually, progressively, actually and materially constituted as subjects, or as the subject" (Foucault, 2004: 28).

Another key set of literatures within critical governance theory that can be found in Foucauldian influenced accounts of network governance (e.g. Hobson, 2010; Triantafillou, 2004). Central to these critiques are the development and implementation of Foucault's conceptualisations of *governmentality* and *biopolitics*, drawing particularly from his analysis of neoliberalism in his 1978-9 lectures at College de France. A brief overview of these concepts is considered here, together with a consideration as to the potential benefits (and problems) of incorporating such theoretical standpoints alongside a Gramscian understanding of the State.

Governmentality

Foucault's work on governmentality centres on the identification of changes in the ways that power could be imagined and exercised within society, with governmentality focused on the *art of government*, that is the administrative power that *"has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge and, apparatus of security as its essential technical instrument"* (Foucault, 2007 cited in Bevan, 2021: 260). Included within this articulation is the identification of a type of politics and mode of governance that prioritises the management of the population over that of territory (Jessop 2006).

Less concerned with definitive state theories, Foucault instead focused on *how* polities function, *"how specific rationales are brought into being and enacted, and the diverse mechanisms that attempt to enrol a wide array of actors into attaining particular outcomes"* (Hobson, 2010: 253). Governmentality studies are thus often concerned with articulations of 'soft power', how practices of government encourage the creation of certain forms of truth within societal, political or cultural spheres, or for Lemke the study of the *"autonomous" individual's capacity for self-control and how this is linked to forms of political rule and economic exploitation"* (Lemke 2001, 52). For example, Bevan (2021) uses governmentality as a frame for contemporary homeless legislation, notably the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, conceptualising the technologies employed through a neoliberal governmentality framework, leading to an analysis of the role that the discourse of risk plays in the re-imagining of homeless people as *"an active,*

responsibilized member of a “risk” group exhorted to take personal responsibility” (Bevan, 2021: 272).

Foucault also promoted the idea that power should not be only considered as enacted as restriction, but also be understood as having productive capabilities (Gunn, 2006). He used the concept to advance the role of diverse techniques of power and intervention, a claim that has significant parallels with the network society theses (Hobson, 2010). However, as Newman (2004) suggests, the self-governance envisioned by Foucauldians is antithetical to the reflexive subject found in some network governance proponents idealisation *“whose emergence onto the historical stage produces a need for new forms of collaborative governance”* (Newman, 2004: 81). Rather than empowered individuals operating horizontally, a Foucauldian account would characterise the network as a *“medium of social control in which individuals are trapped”* (J. Davies, 2011: 70).

Foucault and neoliberalism

If governmentality can be understood as the potential of *soft power*, then neoliberalism is often held as its most hegemonic expression (J. Davies, 2011). Foucauldian-influenced accounts of neoliberalism tend to stress the biopolitical dimensions of neoliberalism, suggesting that neoliberalism should be understood as a *“regime of subjectification geared towards the production of resilient subjects capable of adapting to the neoliberal mechanisms of production, exploitation, accumulation and dispossession”* (Mavelli, 2017: 490). This posits the view that neoliberalism has thus proved resilient in the face of disruption such as the 2008 financial crisis due to the resilience of those subjects, drawing on Foucault’s conceptualisation of neoliberalism as a *“regime of subjectification revolving around competition”* (Mavelli 2017, 491). Foucault maintained that one of the central components of neoliberal thought is the promotion of a new *homo economicus* that *“is not a partner of exchange, as it was in classical liberalism, but rather an entrepreneurial being”* (Gane, 2014: 9) or what Foucault describes as an *“entrepreneur of himself”* (Foucault, 2008, 226). Thus the critical feature of neoliberalism for Foucault was

extension of the entrepreneurial being towards the analysis of every social actor and every situation, particularly those “*domains of behaviour or conduct*” (Foucault, 2008: 268) lying outside the usual domains of the market.

Foucauldian inspired conceptualisations of *governmentality* can also be of use when considering the potentialities of network and horizontalist ambitions within much of the ‘system change’ literature around complex needs. A Foucauldian framing stresses the use of technologies of power through the constituting of governable subjects (McKee, 2009) offering post-traditional theory-driven critiques of network governance wherein the roles of networking are bound with the development and expansion of neoliberal governmentalities. This can be seen within the claim that governments display dependencies on “*technologies for ‘governing at a distance,’ seeking to create locales, entities and persons able to operate a regulated economy*” (Rose and Miller, 1992: 173). These accounts look to displace or de-centre government and/or the state as centered elements of analysis through an insistence that governance takes place through the interactions of multiple agencies, relations and practices (Newman, 2005). As such, Bevir identifies the shared enthusiasm for “*opening the black box of the state*” and skepticism as to conceptualisations of the state as a “*dependent or independent variable*” (2011: 457) within both governmentality and many governance studies.

Within this approach the supposed neoliberal aim of a smaller state or government encourages us to view the diffusion of governmental power towards new locations of action, disaggregated from the state. Studies in homelessness and social exclusion have observed the creation of new forms of governable citizen (Farrugia and Gerrard, 2016), highlighting strategies of ‘responsibilisation’ where active citizens are framed as responsible for their own individual welfare as part of a re-articulation of the modern welfare state. Newman (2004) suggests adding public service managers as subject to similar dynamics “*constituted by new managerial discourse as the coordinators of the fragmented array of organizations and services produced by the neo-liberal state reforms*” (Newman, 2004: 81). The post-structuralist accounts of governmentality might, therefore, call into question claims of collaborative governance or empowerment through

viewing them as part of broader governmental strategies, with local actors simultaneously constituted as empowered and subject to *“new strategies of control”* (Newman, 2005: 2). As discussed later in the chapter, one area of particular concern considering the dynamics of the devolution of austerity to local government post-2010 can potentially be considered within this framing.

The impact of governmentality and post-foundational literatures can therefore also be seen in relation to the objects of governance research. Bevir and Rhodes’ (2016) articulation of de-centred theory actively engages with issues of governmentality, looking towards the discourses and narratives that surround ideas of austerity, networks and markets. Yet this also orientates them towards the interpretation of these discourses by local actors, *“how they have responded, anticipated, reproduced, or resisted the designs of the elites”* (Bevir and Rhodes, 2016: 15).

Therefore, within complex needs collaborative structures and other locally based multi-organisational collaborative efforts, questions of governmentality orientate the research towards levels of agency at the local level. While governance theories suggest a relatively high degree of autonomy from the state as power is dispersed and fragmented among multiple actors, theories of governmentality point the research towards questions as to how collaborative strategies are negotiated, enacted and potentially contested at specific sites. As such, engaging with post-structuralist conceptualisations around governmentality calls into question some of the normative assumptions that lie in some calls for increased network governance around complex needs. Ideas around governmentality and responsabilisation are of particular concern considering the large role of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) within the complex needs service ecologies. This is not to say, however, that local actors are powerless, but it does call into question more idealistic claims around the power of networks as both methods and features of substantial change in the area. This chapter now considers the dynamics of the extended state as a way of understanding the scope for agency of local forms of collaboration aimed at assisting this particular marginalised group of people.

Foucault and Gramsci

Several scholars have pointed to the potentially productive dialogue that can exist between Foucauldian and Gramscian understandings of power and change (e.g. Jessop, 2006; Ekers and Loftus, 2012), noting the resonances between two traditions that concern themselves with dispersed modes of control, power and the central position of types of knowledge within the material concerns of practice and apparatus.

This is particularly pronounced when looking to understand neoliberalism and processes of *neoliberalisation*. Barnett *et al.*, (2008) view this as a response to a conceptual problem that lies within accounts that consider neoliberalism as a “*coherent programme of socio-economic and political transformation*” leading to the inherent question as to “*how top-down initiatives to ‘neoliberalize’ economies, institutions, or spaces actually work out in practice*” (Barnett *et al.*, 2008: 624-5). That is, how macro-level processes and dynamics are connected to micro-level dynamics of subject formation.

Gunn, however, notes the difference in orientation, “*whereas Gramsci tended to look **through** the modern state to its role as a vehicle for class interests...Foucault sought to look **at** it, at how governmental power worked as a mode of rule*” (Gunn, 2006: 710, original emphasis). This leads to differences between Foucauldian and Gramscian conceptions of power and governance. Where Foucauldian insights are significant in their ability to explore how power is operating subjectively in what might be understood as a form of self-regulated civil society, Gramscian perspectives serve to bring the state back in as “*a strategic-coercive actor, better juxtaposing governmentality, coercion and resistance*” (J. Davies, 2011: 73).

This research takes the position that governmentality perspectives towards network governance, enriched by the Foucauldian perspective, are significant explanatory vehicles of the guiding parameters of constraint and the dominance of certain practices; for example the notion of ‘austerity behaviours’ discussed in Chapter 6. In Gramscian terms, governmentality can provide

explanatory value of the practice of hegemony at particular conjunctures, in which the powers of the central governmental state can be seen to limit governance networks as examples of soft power in civil society. In this sense, differences of orientation emerge as a complementarity between Gramscian and Foucauldian perspectives, with significant consequences as to how political change is understood. Together they can be seen as a dual warning about the perceived ideological and political naivety of the governance network perspective that may exaggerate the potential for the 'transformation' of collaborative relations at the local level.

Part 2. Political State, Civil Society and the concept of the Integral State

The extended state and its parts

The broader historical and political context for the discussion of governance, networks and collaboration lies in the relationship between the political or governmental state and civil society, conceived as two interdependent dimensions of an extended or expanded state that has evolved in advanced capitalist societies over the past 150 years. The idea of the extended state can be understood in two related ways. First, the totality of connective relationships between governmental state and civil society (political society + civil society) and secondly, the evolving relationship between the two dimensions; that is to say the tendency towards greater coordination by the governmental state of elements of civil society that previously had greater levels of autonomy. This relationship will be explored later in the chapter through the concept of the 'Integral State' and its dynamics. In order to define and clarify these relationships this research takes a Gramscian position in considering the state in its *totality*, wherein the state is not something that sits atop civil society, governing through hierarchy, regulation and coercion, but instead is a "*complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules*" (Gramsci, 1971: 244). Gramsci links hegemony to the concept of what can be viewed as the 'extended state' acting in an 'integral' way:

“...the general notion of the state includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society... in the sense that one might say that the State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony armoured with coercion” (Gramsci, 1971: 263).

Gramsci’s conceptualisation of the Integral State analysed the complex and inter-dependent tools and technologies of consent and coercion under capitalism (Humphrys, 2018). Thus within the conceptualisation of the integral nature of the state, processes of consent (hegemony) within civil society are as equally important as explicit state rule (domination) (Humphrys, 2018).

However, the relationship between the political or governmental state and civil society raises the question as to the nature of the latter. Civil society is in itself a disputed concept, taking on differing formations and roles within differing imaginations. While often invoked, it is not always clear as to what exactly is being referred to. As Buttigieg warns, *“the definition of civil society as more or less cohesive formation that stands in opposition to the State may be strategically disabling”* (2005: 35-36, original emphasis). Civil society is thus not recognised simply in *“liberal terms as the domain of free expression”* (J. Davies, 2011: 105), or in network governance inspired articulations of *partner* of the (governmental) state (Bode 2006). Rather it should be regarded as the *“terrain upon which social classes compete for social and political leadership or hegemony over other social classes”* (Gramsci, 1971: 262-263).

The potential use of the Integral State thus looks to capture the relational and dialectical qualities of the state in its *totality* (Carley, 2020). It is this articulation of the *integral state* that is of use here, with Thomas (2009) arguing as to its under-appreciated centrality to Gramsci’s conceptualisation of state and civil society hegemony. He stresses, however, that hegemony cannot be disentangled from domination, but remains *“strategically differentiated forms of a unitary political power”* (Thomas, 2009: 163). Coercion is, therefore, not simply employed in the last resort where hegemony has failed, but is:

“situated in dialectical relationship with consent on a continuum from the everyday compulsion of juridical enforcement, the carceral state and routine, petty-fogging bureaucratic control-freakery to physical violence and warfare” (J. Davies, 2011: 105).

As such, the distinction between consent and coercion cannot be articulated as Foucauldian expressions of governmentality and armoured force, but rather between *“internal or biopolitical regulation (governmentality) and external regulation (disciplinary power)”* (J. Davies, 2011: 105).

“Just as consent operates on a continuum from passive and grudging to active and enthusiastic, so compulsion is a continuum from bureaucratic obstruction to armoured force” (J. Davies 2011, 105-106).

The important point here is that when considering the differing relationships between the various sectors, organisations and actors working around the issue of complex needs and the governmental state, is the continued disciplinary potential of the governmental state and its ongoing interactions with civil society in relation to both state and civil society functionaries and a particularly vulnerable service user group. A key set of literatures has looked at the issues around homelessness through use of the ‘revanchist’ thesis that broadly considers homelessness as subject to coercive and vengeful dynamics from cities in the promotion of attracting mobile capital within a competitive global market (e.g. Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2010; Scullion *et al.*, 2014). In relation to local governance Penny (2017), in his case study of Lambeth Council’s ‘Cooperative Council’ agenda within a time of both local restructuring and centrally driven austerity, identified a tendency of Council actors, despite early idealisations towards co-production with civil society actors, to *“revert to hierarchical and coercive modes of governance when consent cannot be secured”* (Penny, 2017: 1368). He thus locates a fundamental issue of collaboration between civil society and the (local) state in that power relations ensured that where material realities countered the promises of consensus and consent, there was an

identified retreat from the promises of horizontalist, network governance towards the exercising of coercive practices:

“At a time of deepening and seemingly permanent austerity, the balance between horizontal networks and hierarchy, between soft and hard forms of power, and between consent and coercion seems likely to tip inexorably to the latter” (2017: 1371).

Hegemony within civil society thus remains underwritten by coercion, putting a sharper and more totalising emphasis towards Sharpf’s *“shadow of hierarchy”* (1994: 41). It is, therefore, proposed that an expanded reading of the state recognises civil society as bound within a totality with the potential for coercion from the governmental state that re-orientates local collaborative governance networks as a form of the integral state at the micro-level associated with local activity.

The micropolitics of the Integral State

While J. Davies (2011, 2012) looks to draw on the concept of the integral state to theorise the tendency for both hierarchical coordination and coercion to be considered as pervasive in character across all scales, from supra-national considerations such as the actions of the International Monetary Fund, to state violence and revanchist articulations of power within urban governance, his broad conceptualisation provides a useful framework of the dialectics of consent at the micro-level, orientating the research towards the *“micropolitics of the integral state”* (J. Davies, 2011: 117).

The concept of the Integral State when considering the implications of ambitions towards collaboration at the local level draws attention to the role of strategic actors and stakeholders in the pursuit of more networked models of working. The shift towards ‘managerialism’ emphasised under New Labour (Clarke *et al.*, 2000) also brings into question the competing demands of stakeholder roles within contemporary public service. J. Davies (2011) expands on

the dialectical relationship between the multiple and conflicting roles through a re-imagining of the contemporary public manager as:

“Someone committed to disavowing their own coercive power, fostering adaptive behaviour and networking in a complex environment, but also ‘responsive’ to ever increasing pressures to ‘deliver’ in the face of public dissatisfaction and scarce resources”
(J. Davies, 2011: 117).

The difficulties in establishing local models of change are, therefore, complicated by the dialectics between coercion and consent. The integral state reimagines local actors as operating under competing logics. Organisations and professionals are understood as able to form network connectionist relationships to negotiate complex environments, while simultaneously remaining responsive to the regulatory ideals of the state. The promises of network and collaborative forms of governance at the local level are thus subject to the resolution of these potentially competing and contradicting idealisations.

The relationship of the Integral State and system change is suggested to be one that emphasises these potentially competing logics and functions. It also says something about the differing institutional responses to the identification of a need for change in relation to complex needs dependent on differing relationships to the state. These features of welfare mixes and the expansion of governable terrains within the context of public service delivery contribute to the dilemmas of collaborative governance and partnerships at the local level. This appears particularly pronounced in relation to potentials for innovation which are then placed within local governance debates as to whether partnership arrangements are instruments of co-optation or contain transformative potentials (Blanco, 2015; Pill and Guarneros-Meza, 2018). Geddes (2006) suggests from his research around local partnerships that partnerships tend to accommodate the state by restrictive working:

“While local partnerships are weak in their ability to change the way in which powerful interests and organizations act, they seem much stronger in their ability to restrict local policy and politics within narrow parameters” (2006: 93).

Dobson interacts with similar concerns in her research as to institutional responses to complex needs. She suggests that these responses, which would seem to include what this research understands as the ambitions of system change and the development of new modes of collaboration, can initially be conceptualised in two ways. Firstly, as coalitions of potential resistance to the verticalities expressed in the need for system change. Dobson (2019a) expands on this potential viewpoint:

*“...given that responses are articulated by non-statutory advocates as progressively oriented to the care and support of vulnerable adults, they can be understood as a successful **acting-back** against neoliberalism” (Dobson, 2019a: 6, original emphasis).*

If statutory institutions, national and local governments are able to be convinced as to the need to reconceptualise complexity of need it would represent evidence of the success of this more confrontational approach. The alternative viewpoint, however, is that of the *co-option* of both understandings of complexity and those institutional responses towards market-principles and neoliberalism.

Dobson, however, goes on to argue from a critical and cultural governance approach that there are significant conceptual limits to these approaches. She suggests that a more complex relationship between governance and neoliberalism is required, resisting the attempts to understand neoliberalism as an *“essentialized entity”* (Dobson, 2019a: 6) articulated at the level of the state that has colonising qualities. The fear here is that the language of co-option and ‘acting-back’ leads to overly ethically charged articulations of social reality and human experiences.

Welfare mixes, governance and collaboration

The notion of the Integral State at the local level suggests competing logics affecting local actors that blur the line between state and civil society in practice. This hybridisation of the localized integral state can be associated with 'welfare mixes' within public service provision (Bode, 2006) and notably around articulations of complex needs. Within the era of NPM, Bode (2006) argues that contemporary welfare mixes appear as 'disorganised' formations, representing a shift from the idea that the state was ultimately responsible, and had the capacity, to both provide and steer transfers and services in attempts to ameliorate some of the worst excesses of capitalist production towards a pan-European trend in which additional actors with varying degrees of autonomy are necessary in both the organisation and provision of welfare services. This fits within the broader articulation of fragmented and increasingly complex service provision that sees the "*blurring of organisational boundaries between state and non-state actors*" (Carmel and Harlock, 2008: 155), thus not only changing how public services are delivered, but how those non-state actors "*themselves are constituted in delivering these services*" (Carmel and Harlock 2008, 164). Carmel and Harlock, therefore, look to conceptualise how governance processes enacted by the state, constituted of both discourse and technologies of government and including examples of collaborative governance and partnership, enable previously more autonomous parts of civil society, in this case voluntary and community organisations, to operate on a "*governable terrain*" (Carmel and Harlock, 2008: 167, original emphasis).

Further still, Bode identifies a paradox that lies at the centre of contemporary welfare mixes in which there is greater opportunity for innovation and simultaneous propensity for "*organisational failure*" (2006: 347). There is a serious consequence of these new mixes, wherein local management of resource dependencies and inter-actor communication are identified as critical for the ability of services to provide adequate standards while organisational performance remains dependent on broader contextual dynamics. The disorganisation is also argued by Bode to provide a convenient veil for organisational failure, where all stakeholders are "*inclined to take*

bad performance as a consequence of local mismanagement while simultaneously assuming that viable alternatives ... exist” (Bode, 2006: 356).

Hybridisation

The transportation of the Integral State to the local level and the existence of multiple governance systems working simultaneously can be further explored through the concept of hybridisation. This represents an emerging literature around the modes of governing public service provision, including fragmentation and the adaptive qualities of NPM, which has provoked theorisations and investigations of processes of hybridisation, particularly in the third sector (e.g. Evers, 2005; Skelcher and Smith, 2015; Hustinx *et al.*, 2015). Working within conflicting environments suggests that multiple, and potentially contradictory, interactive system dynamics and logics may be experienced by organisations and actors at any one time, leading to hybrid identities, organisations and strategies.

Millbourne and Cushman (2013) observed that relationships between the government and the third sector continued under all governments to be characterised by the exercising of power, with targets *“centrally defined with minimal space for negotiation”* (2013: 502). The inter-relationships between TSO’s and statutory partners is a key section of the next chapter, but the point being developed here is that governance from the state enforces sometimes conflicting logics on these aspects of local civil society. One key aspect of Foucauldian influenced scholarship, that impacts on complex needs service provision and collaboration, is the repositioning of TSOs as ‘community of service providers’ (Hustinx *et al.*, 2015). Understood as within the broader shifts in governance, the auxiliary role traditionally occupied by the Third Sector in service provision has been rearticulated less as networks and more as distinct service providers.

Pill and Guarneros-Meza in their case studies of inter-organisational partnerships in Cardiff note the multi-scalar nature of how hybridities are realised at the local level, incorporating combinations of national infrastructure, local agency and their *“scalar positioning in terms of the locus of decision making”* (Pill and Guarneros-Meza, 2018: 412). Thus hybridity is recognised as

multi-dimensional, identified at the levels of policy, organisation and individual actors working within contexts of situated agency. For example, within their case study they observe and identify tensions between 'state logics' and 'TSO/community logics' for professionals who found themselves in hybridised roles, with a constant need in *"reconciling the TSO's core or community logics with state logic compliance"* (Pill and Guarneros-Meza, 2018: 418). While not explicitly using a governmentality frame, with particular reference to problem-solving and innovation within local multi-sector partnerships operating under austerity, they note that professionals working towards innovation constantly felt the need to stress their independence, looking for the development of space yet continually constrained by nationally driven 'austerian' logics.

The idea of welfare mixes and differing relationships in relation to the extended state remains one that is often underexplored or prone to sweeping generalisations. Ackroyd *et al.*, (2007) provide one of the few comparative investigations towards the impacts of NPM-inspired reforms towards sectors with very different relationships to the state, in the form of the NHS, housing services and social care services. They conclude that while all were subject to reformist dynamics, the impact of those reforms should be considered *"against the organization of key professional groups and the extent to which this has acted to mediate change"* (Ackroyd *et al.*, 2007: 23). Where professionals were able to entrench their own traditional values and working practices reforms had less or more fractured impact.

Managerialism, competitive environments and new markets of vulnerability

Perhaps most of use when considering the impact of governance strategies and technologies on the possible dynamics of inter-organisational collaboration is the ability to conceptualise the use of tools of performance management and agency as part of broader strategies that discipline operational dynamics. As Sywendouw suggests:

"The socially innovative figures of horizontally organised stakeholder arrangements of governance that appear to empower civil society in the face of an apparently overcrowded

and 'excessive' state, may, in the end, prove to be the Trojan Horse that diffuses and consolidates the 'market' as the principal institutional form" (Sywendouw, 2005: 2003).

Two key issues appear to be of importance here. Firstly, that dominant overarching structures (e.g. austerity) could potentially have the power to influence the self-governing networks themselves, disciplining potential resistance. Secondly, as Lotia and Hardy suggest in their exploration of inter-organizational relations from an explicitly Foucauldian perspective, that once a dominant narrative of collaboration is established it encourages:

"prospective partners to resist collaboration; making it more likely that governments will fund collaborative initiatives at the expense of individual ones; and also making it harder for researchers to resist functionalist views of collaboration" (2008: 12).

The potential for forms of network idealism as a self-reinforcing dynamic is clear. Dobson refers to these developments in the field of complex needs as *"new markets of vulnerability"* (Dobson, 2019a: 3). She draws on Clarke *et al.*'s conceptualisation of policy as *assemblages* of *"objects, narratives, practices, families, gods, places, ancestors, ghosts, technologies, ambitions, temporalities and institutions"* (2015: 160 cited in Dobson, 2019a), capturing the sense that policies are constantly being rearticulated, reproduced and mediated with. By presenting the articulation of complexity as one filled with antagonisms, tensions and different interpretations, it rejects a *"totalizing, 'top-down' and cynical view of power"* (Dobson, 2015: 7).

"This is because policy - understood as multiple practices, subjects and objects - does not exist a-priori and outside of the multiplicities and assemblages of human agency and governing practices at different scales" (2015: 8).

Dobson notes that in viewing complex needs in this way, it is possible to explain the current popularity of the term as a policy problem, yet simultaneously realising that understandings, experiences and work around the issue are not universal and neat. Instead, the understanding of complexity and the institutional responses are in constant states of *"becoming"* (Dobson, 2015: 8). Dobson, therefore, uses institutional responses to complex needs to add a theoretical

conceptualisation of contemporary homelessness welfare mixes within contested and adaptive trajectories of neoliberalisation. This approach to complex needs bears similarities and resemblances to Gramscian articulations of meta-governance wherein the state is reintroduced as a complex, diverse social structure and as part of attempts to both expand and support a particular political project, in this case neoliberalism.

However, as this section has shown, this raises new questions as to levels of agency within the meso- and micro-levels of public service provision and collaboration in relation to complex needs. These questions within the field are important in considering the potentialities for innovation and change within complex service environments and calls within the associated literatures for more *“collaborative or network-based forms of governance in order to prevent fragmentation and other systemic issues from arising”* (Cornes et al., 2018: 11).

The potential impact when considering the current governance of services for adults with complex needs and collaboration, as well as the potential for system change is obvious. Differing governance systems presumably influence each other. Local collaborative governance does not happen in a vacuum. The key issue is that collaborative actions involve actors with very different vertical and horizontal relationships across multi-scale and level governance systems. Ansell and Gash conclude that collaboration is most likely to become embedded when it delivers *“small wins”* (2008: 561), thus furthering the development and maintenance of trust and commitment within virtuous cycles. How far this is achievable by collaborative working within the spaces offered by the Integral State is further explored in Chapter 2. This chapter now moves on to look at the evolving policy environment over the past two decades in order to examine ways in which these debates, perspectives and literatures interacted with broader political life.

Part 3. From New Labour to the present: policy trends in relation to governance of collaboration

New Labour's co-ordinated and 'realist' approach to local networking and collaboration

Introduction - New Labour's neoliberal inheritance

New Labour's inheritance with regards to the governance of collaboration to support public service provision can be characterised from the literature as one that had already seen a rupture in the hegemonic status of the post-1945 Keynesian welfare state. Both the Thatcher and Major-led Governments had sought to prioritise competition via the market as a route towards innovation through a market-based paradigm (Newman, 2001). A purchaser-provider split in healthcare and the shift towards a more mixed economy in the provision of adult social care were just two examples of a governance approach that looked to expand the promotion of structural competition in public service provision within a broader set of aims that looked to subordinate social policy to the dominant economic strategies (Jessop, 1993). Agencies, internal markets, market-testing and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) were increasingly prominent, with competition vigorously promoted by central government particularly towards local authorities. Often referred to as 'New Public Management' (NPM), albeit with some contestations around definition (Hood and Peters, 2004; Osborne, 2006), and initially associated with a 'New Right' agenda, the installation of business-like behaviour and managerialism within public service organisations was key to a realignment of ideologies and interests in a post-Fordist society.

It was within this context that an emergent governance literature was developed around the perceived displacement of powers from the state "*upward, downward, and, to some extent, outward*" (Jessop, 1993: 10). As state functions were dispersed, new relationships between central and increasingly multifaceted local stakeholders were established; what Rhodes referred to as a 'differentiated polity' (1997). The emphasis on networks and partnerships grew in this increasingly fragmented ecology, underwritten with a greater shift towards competition and private sector styles of management. Yet these developing modes of governance had led to a

series of unstable settlements (Clarke and Newman, 1997), with contradictions and tensions between traditional styles of management and a new entrepreneurial culture, bureaucratic and consumerist accountability models together with rearticulated relationships between the centre and local.

New Labour's Third Way approach

"The Third Way ... recognises the need for government to forge new partnerships with the voluntary sector. Whether in education, health, social work, crime prevention or the care of children, "enabling" government strengthens civil society rather than weakening it, and helps families and communities improve their own performance ... the state, voluntary sector and individuals working together. New Labour's task is to strengthen the range and quality of such partnerships" (Tony Blair, 1998: 14 cited in Kendall, 2000).

As New Labour came to power in 1997 a wave of public sector reform was promised under the banner of the 'Third Way'. Central to this transformational agenda was the conviction that traditional hierarchical or market-based modes of governance could no longer manage the complexities of modern society. Instead, collaboration, 'joined-up government' - presented as the antithesis of departmentalism and vertical silos (Christensen and Lagreid, 2007) - and a shift towards network governance would be made key to the presentation of New Labour as a transformative government capable of the 'modernisation' of public services (Newman, 2001). 'Partnership' was predominantly the delivery system of choice with broad attempts to institutionalise collaboration across service platforms, with Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) identifying over 5000 partnerships of over 60 different types within New Labour's first administration. The promotion of a 'Third Way' looked to present new, modern structures of governance that would address the limitations of the post-1945 paradigm of state hierarchies and Thatcherism's promotion of a market-based paradigm connected to NPM.

In relation to the field we now identify as adults with complex needs, New Labour largely applied its commitment to partnership and collaboration in line with the broader Third Way articulations. A significant initial focus was on bridging the “*Berlin Wall*” (Ranade and Hudson, 2003: 32) between the NHS and social care, while there was significant interest in ‘whole systems’ approaches to social policy around issues such as social exclusion, community safety and other ‘wicked issues’. Incentives for partnership working were offered, coordination of activity between governmental departments was prioritised and the necessity of policy integration emphasised. Statutory agencies, private actors and the third sector in a broad range of settings were brought together as a direct response to the fragmentation that had occurred as a result of increased marketisation under NPM.

Within the collaborative rhetoric and discourse lay the apparent belief that the dualistic antagonism that had characterised private and public service provision under the Conservatives could be bridged in favour of the synergy of partnership, while contradictions could be resolved in a pragmatic manner, with evidence-based policy making leading the way (Newman, 2001).

New Labour and managerialism

However, New Labour’s relationship with NPM and its own idealised vision of a paradigmatic shift is contested within the literature. Some (e.g. McLaughlin, 2002; Osborne, 2006) maintained that New Labour’s approach to NPM would be better characterised as a recognition of the pluralistic nature of the state, where concerns towards marketisation had shifted towards concerns towards governance. Others, such as Janet Newman in her influential work on ‘modernising governance’ (2001), argued that New Labour’s approach to partnership working, at least initially, presented a challenge to the hegemonic status of NPM, with a more explicit focus on partnership as a “*mode of governance*” (Newman, 2001: 105).

However, within these re-articulations of central-local relationships, NPM remained as a dominant organisational regime set within a broader modernising agenda (Newman, 2001; Snape

and Taylor, 2003). The retention of many of the organisational forms of the former administration continued alongside a broad range of new mechanisms and technologies of governance so as to promote their vision of both vertical and horizontal collaboration. The identification and testing of these policy 'levers' included a mix of mandatory, voluntary and market-based incentives towards collaboration and partnership, encompassing structural re-organisation and the development of new duties to collaborate often coupled with efforts towards financial deregulation.

Partnerships were now expected to contain broader ranges of stakeholders, particularly in relation to complex cross-cutting issues that required holistic approaches. Ranade and Hudson (2003) make the point that rather than network modes of governance superseding hierarchy and markets as the dominant modes of coordination of collaboration, it is more useful to conceptualise them as *"overlaid on each other"* (Ranade and Hudson, 2003: 36), co-existing in a series of complex relationships. In this context, the governance of collaboration could be identified as 'hybrid' in nature containing often contradictory elements. While New Labour spoke the language of collaboration based on ideal network-type transactions and the necessity for local actors to be free to innovate in how they worked together, competition was retained as an organising element and centrally controlled performance management systems continued to hold dominant positionality (Snape and Taylor, 2003). 'Modernisation' by Blair's second term became increasingly concerned with public sector reform, situating partnership and collaboration within these dominant concerns.

Central - local relationships: the case of rough sleeping

"There are no permanent boundaries between government and civil society"

(Giddens, 1998: 79-80).

New Labour's articulations of central-local relationships, particularly in relation to both local government and TSOs can be seen to embody the contradictions and paradoxes within their approach to the governance of collaboration (e.g. Buckingham, 2009; Milbourne, 2009). The re-articulation of central-local relationships under New Labour was prominent in the 'Compact' between statutory and voluntary agencies launched in 1998. The intention of these agreements was to establish a framework of engagement through which parties could interact, with 'partnership' representing the guiding ethos and apparent structural formation (Rummery, 2006), signifying the ideological rejection of both Labour's traditional statist relationships with the third sector and the Conservative's vision of TSOs as an alternative to state provision.

New Labour's approach to both vertical and horizontal coordination around homelessness is illustrative of these dynamics. Central to the government's identification of rough sleeping as the most visible demonstration of social exclusion, the recognition of the inter-dependencies of service provision in managing the issue can be seen within policy literature, notably in relation to the state's relationships with third sector organisations (Levitas *et al.*, 2007). The 2002 Homelessness Act made local authorities responsible for the regulation of local service providers, altering the landscape of provision and performance monitoring. The prominence of TSOs within housing and rough sleeping service delivery (May *et al.*, 2006), together with the introduction of the Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) and Supporting People Programme created new collaborative relationships between central and local government together with TSOs predominantly operating on the front line of service provision. In line with the broader governance agenda, responsibilities for planning and purchasing were often devolved to local welfare providers (Buckingham, 2009). Whiteford notes the dynamic effect this had on the third sector, with companies and charities forced to compete for increased (short-term) funding, changing the culture within the homelessness service ecology together with its credentials as "*a genuinely independent and critical voice within civil society*" (Whiteford, 2013: 11). The introduction of *Best Value* in place of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) enabled the state to exert greater control over how 'partner' agencies delivered services, with tendering processes

enabling a high level of central authority over the policies and procedures then enacted by local agencies in order to gain access to service contracts (Milbourne, 2009). The emphasis on outputs and targets associated with NPM modes of governance led in effect to the dominance of what Ling refers to as “*fit partners*” (Ling, 2000: 90) within local service ecologies.

Milbourne (2009) argues that local commissioning arrangements, holding within them competitive contracts related to central performance frameworks, undermined collaborative working and encouraged mistrust of state strategies. This central-local dynamic was also supported by Ahmed and Broussine’s (2003) empirical research around public sector modernisation processes that found a concern of chief executives around the augmentation of state control. Whiteford’s (2013) ethnographic study of an emergency daycentre for rough sleepers further supports this assertion. He remarked that it was “*immediately apparent that the day centre was caught in the capacious and capricious dragnet of responsabilisation*” (2013: 19), where every day working processes were under the “*impregnable flotilla of community voices and statutory actors*” (19).

However, there is contestation within the literature over the perceived legitimacy of central governance of local horizontal collaboration. A comparative case study by Entwistle *et al.*, of ten partnerships managed by either the UK or Welsh Government paints a picture of tension and dysfunction as hierarchical performance management technologies were combined with a narrative shift towards horizontal working (Entwistle *et al.*, 2007). Acknowledging that coordination of partnerships includes a mix of governance technologies and approaches, the research illustrates a combination of vertical *and* horizontal dysfunctions as hierarchical and market-based forms of coordination were privileged over ideal network-types of “*equality, trust and reciprocity*” (2007: 76). The authors concluded that there was a deep reluctance among partnership members to relinquish the use of vertical technologies of coordination to enhance network working, with many calling for “*better hierarchy not less*” (2007: 77).

State-led 'realist' collaboration

Rather than a paradigmatic shift in governance (partnership *as* governance), new forms of collaboration enabled by New Labour ran alongside or within more vertical forms of coordination. Furthermore, collaboration became increasingly recognised as a tool to be used to advance other policy priorities, rather than a universal or ideological commitment in itself, manifesting often in hybrid form, yet subordinate to other ideological commitments within the modernisation agenda. For example, New Labour's discourse around social exclusion and citizenship became intrinsically linked to employment, perpetuating "*a narrow definition of social inclusion based on participation in the paid labour market*" (Dobson and McNeill, 2011: 582). This was reflected in the performance related technologies utilised at the local level that conditioned local collaborative responses to issues of rough sleeping, drawing potentially critical actors into the government's own agenda. While advocates of network-based governance tend to emphasise the expansion of actors able to engage and shape policy, the experiences of local government and TSOs under New Labour could often be seen as ones that drew local actors closer to the participation in the government's agendas and enhancing state capabilities in enforcing its objectives.

The second issue evident within the literature that is of concern is the pragmatism towards partnership and collaboration that appears to have characterised much of New Labour's approach. Collaboration in the form of a policy tool is often based on '*altruistic*' assumptions towards the potential for actor and organisational behaviour (Hudson *et al.*, 1999), often finding problems when coming into contact with local realities. Yet within New Labour's approach was not only a retention or increase in state power, but a distinct sense of *realism* as to collaborative dynamics. Newman sees this as a particular form of managerialism:

"That is, partnership working became embedded as a politically legitimated but essentially managerial strategy to be selected as appropriate by government as it learned from its

experience (about the costs as well as the benefits of partnership) and adopted new political priorities” (Newman, 2001: 125, original emphasis).

The New Labour legacy

Over its 13 years of government New Labour evolved what can be seen as a *state-led realist model* of collaboration. This ‘Third Way’ approach to the governance of collaboration in relation to complex needs, as evidenced through the case of rough sleeping, comprised dominant and subordinate strands. Inter-agency collaboration at the local level (the subordinate element) was ‘steered’ by a dominant array of state governance instruments that could be seen as part of what Newman (2001) referred to ‘adaptive managerialism’. Analytical reflections on this particular form of combinational politics are considered in Chapter 6 when applying Stuart Hall’s (2005) concept of the ‘Double Shuffle’ to hybridisation.

Towards 2010 and the election of the Coalition Government, a narrative of centralism and crisis of localism had emerged that provided political and ideological space for another version of collaboration to emerge from the newly elected government. This, together with the impact of 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity agenda, is discussed in the next section.

The Coalition and Conservative Governments – the boundaries of austerity

Introduction

This section reviews the literature around the dominant approaches to the governance of collaboration in this ongoing period of austerity, emphasising the continuities and changes from the approaches of New Labour. It concludes by summarising the current central/vertical dynamics that impact on the governance of inter-organisational collaboration around complex needs. In doing so, it suggests that two dominant, interconnecting organising features are evidenced within this time-period - the impact of the decisions to pursue historic cuts to public services and local governance structures under an austerity agenda, together with the re-articulation of central-local relationships through accounts of ‘localism’ and devolution. This

section seeks to build a picture of the vertical accountability and governance structures that TSOs and statutory services are working with today, while situating this in its historical context to better understand the relationship between locally based partnerships and vertical dynamics that provide part of their contextual setting, thus forming part of the foundation for the conjunctural analysis of the Case Study Partnership (CSP) in the current political context.

The Coalition Government (2010-2015)

With the election of the Coalition Government in 2010, a new era of collaborative politics was promised. As a response to the perceived ‘control freakery’ of late-New Labour Government, the Coalition projected a collaborative rhetoric and discourse, presenting collaboration as part of a less top-down and more devolved concept with more autonomy for civil society and local professionals. This was exemplified in the ‘Programme for Government’ strategy (HM Government, 2010), which through the language of collaboration proposed to increase the range of providers of public services and the creation of new markets for private and third sector provision. At the same time, The Localism Act 2011 was presented as *“the biggest transfer of power in a generation, releasing councils and communities from the grip of central government”* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011 cited in Padley, 2013: 343).

Sullivan *et al.*, (2013) highlight the promise of a ‘new politics’ that was contained within early Coalition approaches to collaboration, noting the tendency to valorise its potential to signify consensus and an implicit rejection of political contestation. Sullivan (2010) compares this to the dominant approach under New Labour, arguing that it comprised a new discourse of collaboration *as* governance. While similar to Newman’s (2001) presentation of New Labour’s initial approach of *“partnership as governance”* (Newman, 2001: 105), Sullivan recognises this new dynamic as distinctly post-political in expression. Where ‘Third Way’ collaboration was inherently tied to conceptions of *modernity* and evidenced-based policy making, Sullivan presents collaboration under the Coalition as *“beyond politics all together”* (2010: 16). Using the Gramscian reading of ‘common-sense’ in relation to a perceived understanding of the problem

to be solved (the deficit), collaboration is expressed as *“the ultimate expression of governing in a post-political world”* (Sullivan, 2010: 16).

Yet this collaborative ‘post-politics’ could also be viewed as another form of adaptive politics with the Coalition Government being seen to have built on key New Labour reforms, most notably around two primary elements - quasi-market processes set along with elements of both centralisation and performance management (Greenwood and Mills, 2020). The key difference was to be the dramatic change in government investment and dualist approach that have seen levels of both agency and scarcity devolved to the local level.

Austerity as a ‘disciplining tool’

“This government will not cut this deficit in a way that hurts those we most need to help, in a way that divides our country or that undermines the spirit and ethos of our vital public services” (David Cameron PM, 2010).

Following the 2008 financial crisis and the election of the Coalition Government in 2010, an unprecedented period of cuts to public services and local government was undertaken in the name of cutting the national deficit. It was argued at the time that this represented *“the most far-reaching and precipitate attempt to achieve fundamental restructuring in an established welfare state... in recent years”* (Taylor-Gooby, 2012: 61). Under this instigated austerity, the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review proposed a 27 per cent cut to local government together with further substantial cuts to funding streams impacting local communities (Lowndes and McCaughie, 2013). By 2015, the budget for central government allocation of local government funding had seen a real-terms cut of almost 40 per cent (Beatty and Fothergill, 2014).

The impact of austerity on the governance of locally based collaboration under both the Coalition Government and the subsequent Conservative Administration is still evolving. However,

academics have made considerable effort to both evidence and theorise the impact of years of substantial cuts to both public services, local government and impacts on models of collaboration (e.g. Gardner, 2017; Lowndes and McCaughie, 2013; Newman, 2014; Pill and Guarneros-Meza, 2018). Local government has been presented as central to processes towards the restructure and reconceptualisation of centre-local relations as simultaneously “*site and target*” (Ward *et al.*, 2015; cited in Penny 2017: 1352).

Part of these dynamics have been the local authorities were given a large amount of control as to where the cuts impacted most, with significant variation in terms of distribution, with central funds disproportionately impacting on those authorities with larger numbers of vulnerable groups. This devolution agenda has been characterised as an ongoing interactive set of dynamics referred to as “*austerity localism*” (Featherstone *et al.*, 2012: 1). Initially this was founded on the promise of an empowerment to local communities and greater civil society roles within the design and delivery of public services under the banner of the ‘Big Society’, presented as the solution to a “*broken society*” (Corbett and Walker, 2013: 452).

The Big Society and localism

Sullivan questions the notion of the ‘Big Society’ representing state retreat in which the Coalition Government appeared to pair localism and the Big Society as “*two sides of the same coin*” (Sullivan, 2012: 146). Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley (2014) caution against the presentation of the Big Society as a departure from the perceived big government and centralisation of the New Labour years. Rather, they argue that the Big Society was an example of *governmentality*, with individual and group identities regulated to the extent that “*membership of (the big) society becomes conditional on certain types of behaviour*” (2014: 453). Rather than simply a veil for cuts, they argue that the Big Society was about more control over individuals and groups, through “*bigger and better government*” (Bulley and Sokhi-Bulley, 2014: 453, original italics).

Jacobs and Manzi (2012) go further, suggesting that the Big Society drew on earlier attacks on the political capacity of local government and enabled a discursive space to pursue a distinctly political agenda that looked to undermine central tenets of the post-war welfare settlement. They question the adoption of entrepreneurialism as a means of acquiring legitimacy and as a tool of undermining potential criticisms around inefficiency. Localism in this context is presupposed to shift responsibility away from the state while simultaneously opening up opportunities for capital and private investment in areas traditionally considered the realm of government. Jacobs and Manzi locate these dynamics within the historical context of a localist agenda dating back to the 1970s, noting the ambiguous nature of the term that can simultaneously appeal to both progressive and reactionary forces. This concern with presentation and legitimacy, together with the inherent ambiguity of localism, was used to draw a veil over an ideological programme of a broad restructuring of the state and public services set amidst the planned cuts (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, 2011). The short-lived discourse around the Big Society appropriated the language (morality, mutuality) that had been marginalised under the more technocratic discourse of New Labour re-animating older forms of 'compassionate conservatism' through the prism of an anti-statist ideology (Newman, 2014).

At the same time as austerity, the Coalition Government also enacted a series of initiatives related to local government. Lowndes and Pratchett (2012) argued at the time that the Coalition's reforms in relation to local government contained within them both an ideological commitment to 'localism' yet holding within them contradictions related to long-term ideological commitments to either 'one nation conservatism' or New Right-post Thatcherism. They point to the way in which this could be seen as an entrenchment of New Labour's reforms to local governance with the emphasis on partnership and performance.

Colley (2012) suggests the development of new challenges for public sector practitioners operating under the context of austerity, with identified tensions around professional ethics and the audit culture associated with what Clarke and Newman term the 'managerial state' (1997).

Drawing on Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *illusio*, that is broadly people's beliefs and agency within the creation, maintenance and transformation of meaning, Colley's empirical research around practitioner role, identities and practices in the delivery of public services under austerity that found repeated evidence of antagonisms between the commitment to professional values and the managerial requirements of "*austerity politics*" (Colley, 2012: 29).

Conservative Governments (2015 - present)

Super austerity and the smarter state

With the surprise majority for the Conservative Party in the 2015 General Election, both the key policy agendas can be seen in continuing, albeit in rearticulated terms. There were two primary issues – centre/local governance relationships in relation to austerity and a renewed emphasis on devolution (Lowndes and Gardner, 2016). While the 'localism' espoused under the Coalition Government could be seen to have had broader discursive groundings, inherently linked to a conceptualisations of the Big Society, following 2015 there was a distinct shift towards a more economic approach that located policy in a new phase of austerity – what Lowndes and Gardner term "*super austerity*" (2016: 358).

This fed into new ideas of a smaller, more streamlined state. In this, the twin ambitions of devolution (localism) and austerity cannot be disentangled from each other despite their potentially paradoxical ambitions. Writing at a time in which austerity was really beginning to bite at a local level, Lowndes and Gardner (2016) questioned the devolution/austerity paradox expressed through Cameron's concept of the smarter state.

"So how are the Conservatives proposing to address what could be seen as a devolution/austerity paradox? Cameron ... proposes that building a 'smarter state' will mean that 'more can be delivered for less'. The smarter state will be characterised not only by devolution, but also by efficiency and reform." (2016: 365).

Austerity localism: the context for collaborative action

Featherstone *et al.*'s (2012) articulation of 'austerity localism' can therefore be seen to provide a guiding framework for considering the contexts in which various state and civil society actors and organisations found themselves in at the time of this research. Clayton *et al.*, suggest that this form of localism entails "*an inter-play between forms of (non)-intervention*" (2016: 724) in which third and voluntary sector organisations are increasingly drawn into distrustful relationships with statutory actors at the local level, fuelled by scarcity and declining capacity. Fitzpatrick *et al.*, (2020) readily acknowledge the devastating impact of austerity on the services and support available for those at risk of homelessness and the use of localism in delivering on the austerity agenda. However, they reorientate the debate towards the impact of localism on marginalised groups, often characterised by complex needs, even outside of times of austerity. This argument is based upon the inappropriate devolution of responsibility to local actors for structurally driven social issues, with these local actors rarely having the power or leverage to sufficiently impact the relevant welfare policies (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2020). Clarke and Cochrane refer to the "*non-autonomous*" nature of local needs which often are a consequence of "*decisions made far beyond local borders*" (2013: 14).

The preceding analysis, therefore, suggests that collaboration and partnership working at the local level has been situated with a complex set of forces comprising strong influences from the centralised state – notably in the form of austerity and neoliberal policy thinking – while, at the same time, there may be constant efforts by local actors to utilise whatever spaces are afforded by localism and a devolution agenda.

At the same time, it should be noted that Third Sector and advocacy coalitions for complex needs have recognised the potential space for agency and increased visibility within this context of devolution deals. 'Make Every Adult Matter' (MEAM) highlighted the possibility of "*creative use of powers*" (2016: 5) that could be used by devolved regions around budgets and policy decisions. They also suggested that areas without new devolved powers could make use of 'informal'

devolution involving the transfer of responsibilities or the pooling of budgets within defined areas. In the context of devolution arguments have been made for realising more radical and holistic public services leveraged by economic 'deal-making' (Kippen in MEAM, 2016). This is suggested to be key to building better relationships between statutory, private and third sectors organisations and providers.

Lowndes and McCaughlie describe a commissioning scenario in which 'commissioning for innovation' required active "*market making*" (2013: 539). In their exploratory case study research around the local authority responses to austerity, they found concern and anger around the introduction of 'payment by results' schemes directed at social enterprises. The authors expand the analysis of New Labour's 'crisis suppressing' approach to local government as it looked to 'modernise' by suggesting that the Coalition took a new approach of "*crisis indifference*" (2013: 543), determined to avoid ideological debate with local government actors. They identify this shallowness within the localism and civil society plans, staying close to New Labour ideas around devolution, third sector involvement and private investment, yet constantly entwined with historic cuts. They also point to localism as, in part, cover for the austerity agenda, shifting the blame from the centre to the local, with the Big Society simultaneously placed in the virtuous position of civil society picking up the pieces. Crucially, they found no sense of a "*bold new vision*" (2013: 543) for centre-local relations but, instead, a high level of continuity with fewer resources.

This approach had a rippling effect at the local level marked by a retreat to protectionism. Lowndes and Pratchett (2012) recognised that cuts were leaving both public and private sector organisations to go into defensive mode and focused on their own survival. While the political rhetoric focused on devolution and professional freedoms, the reality was that materially austerity was the guiding discipline which, historically, would become seen as the dominant theme. Conversely, collaboration could be viewed as the subordinate theme in which austerity

provided the frame through which collaboration was allowed to operate and to which local actors had to adapt.

It is into this contradictory governance terrain that we can begin to understand the full role of austerity. Sullivan *et al.*, (2013) provide a theoretically informed analysis of the impact that austerity has had on collaborative processes in public service delivery. Reflecting on the discourses that lie beneath ambitions of inter-organisational collaboration, they use boundary object theory to consider how austerity has and could influence the forms and practices of collaboration. They identify four primary discourses that inform both academic and professional work on collaboration - efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and cultural performance. In doing so, they consider the potential for the promotion of power to solve complexities at the local level while retaining a laissez faire attitude to structures. This led to what they describe as an “*anti-collaboration*” discourse (2013: 126) to emerge within public policy-based on skepticism around resource use, impacts on inter-professional working and the inability to fulfil anticipated outcomes.

Collaboration and statutory services - the case of Health and Social Care

Under the Coalition was also seen the development of significant structural changes to the relationships between health and social care services in the form of the Health and Social Care Act (HSCA, 2012). In terms of the broader contemporary landscape impacting on complex needs, where collaboration is impacted by multiple governance structures operating simultaneously, this represents a fundamental piece of legislation. It is also illustrative of broader Coalition governance reforms, displaying a hybrid-style shift towards de-centralisation through market mechanisms while retaining central control through the technologies of performance management (Speed and Gabe, 2013).

The primary mechanistic change under the HSCA can be seen in the introduction of Clinical-Commissioning Groups, which replaced Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) as the primary commissioners

of health services modeled on corporate lines and intended to further develop the status of “quasi-market processes” (Greenwood and Mills, 2020: 1079). This corresponded with the expansion of private and third sector abilities to bid for tenders from CCGs under ‘any qualified provider’ contracts. Greenwood and Mill’s (2020) case study around the impact of the HSCA on the cross-cutting issues of diabetes care is perhaps instructive in how to consider some of the potential impacts with regards to contemporary governance of NHS services and complex needs. They emphasise the necessity for fostering integrated care approaches, particularly in relation to preventative service models and note the development of Integrated Care Systems (ICS), large forums that are able to pool resources and provide partnership forums for CCGs, hospitals and local authorities. For Greenwood and Mills, the development of ICS demonstrates the limitations of competition through quasi-market as technology of coordination.

Ham *et al.*, (2015), however, highlight that despite the rhetoric around joint working and integration, many of the barriers associated with collaborative failure persisted and were even reinforced by their own reforms (Exworthy *et al.*, 2017). As Figure 2 shows, in a complex needs context, the health care and social care systems can be seen to be working with quite different governance systems.

Figure 2. Health Care and Social Care

	Health Care	Social Care
Accountability	Executive; National (to Secretary of State)	Democratic; Local (to elected councillors)
Policy	Overseen by Department of Health (also has responsibility for adult social care policy)	Local Government is overseen by the Department for Communities and Local Government
Charges	Free at the point of delivery	Means-tested and subject to charging
Boundaries	Based on GP registration	Based on geography and

		council boundaries
Focus	Individual (medical) cure	Individual in their wider context
Culture and Training	Strongly influenced by medicine and science	Strongly influenced by the social sciences

(Glasby, 2017 sourced in Exworthy *et al.*, 2017, 1125)

Under the Coalition Government there was little structural change in terms of central/horizontal relations. Health and adult social care policy remained under the Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards have been established, providing a potential forum for the discussion of joint health and social care priorities, yet evidence has suggested that these joint forums have found difficulty in establishing collaborative relationships (Miller and Glasby, 2016). In the context of the retention of different vertical governance systems, Miller and Glasby (2016) argued that the Coalition Government looked to devolve responsibility for the development of locally appropriate design for particularly complex issues that have long been recognised between health and social care, while simultaneously retaining central control when it suited their own policy agenda.

In this relatively unreformed landscape, the focus moved to developing a range of localist experiments.

“While integrated care remains a stated aim of policy, it still feels as if we have struggled to move beyond demonstrator projects, pilots, pathfinders, trailblazers, Pioneers and/or Vanguarders to get to a state where the new ways of working become part of the mainstream” (Miller and Glasby, 2016: 180).

Impact of austerity on the ground - border work and discipline

The literature and previous studies also appear to evidence the need to situate local practice within broader governance trends, with several studies showing the power market and audit-driven technologies have had over practice (e.g. Dobson 2011; Colley, 2012; Daly, 2017).

Both Gardner and Lowndes (2016) and Davies and Thompson (2016) make use of Bevir and Rhodes' (2016) recommendation of de-centred accounts of governance so as to explore central-local relationships during times of austerity. For Gardner and Lowndes, acknowledging the perceived resilience of local government in the face of severe resource constraint, the question is one of how local actors have been able to negotiate paths through the difficulties and dilemmas of austerity. Within a context of austerity localism they note the paradox between financial constraint and a *"surprising latitude for exploring local meanings and forging new practices ... capitalising on the absence of central direction"* (2016: 126), but that this is taking place within severe resource constraints.

"In the space between the local drive for continuity and an absence of national prescription, change is therefore fragmented and locally specific, centred around the annual challenge of identifying sufficient savings to deliver a balanced budget" (Gardner and Lowndes 2016: 126).

In their case-study of an English Council found evidence of hybrid discourses leading to new settlements, with strong foundations of local knowledge. Davies and Thompson, however, paint a bleaker picture in their case-study of governance of homelessness services in Leicester. They found tropes of *"agency denial"* (2016: 156) and *"austere realism"* (2016: 148) from participants, noting a tendency for modernist idealisations of a distant but coercive state. The governing strategies of local authority actors towards TSOs brought into a more formalised homelessness partnership were also highlighted. Where the council viewed the changes as the pragmatic response to the issues caused by austerity, the combination of reduced budgets,

commissioning practices and the performance management strategies enforced were creating a “disciplinary pincer” (2017: 155) that served to undermine the influence of the voluntary sector and activists. These observations correspond with Newman’s (2013) articulation of the ambiguous relationship that local actors can often have within local governance networks, where different locations may privilege and empower certain actors based on political rationalities.

From the Coalition to the Conservatives and back again to New Labour

There are strong lines of policy continuity between the Coalition and the two subsequent Conservative Governments led by Cameron and then May. Austerity remained a key constant, but the tone changed somewhat. The Coalition Government (comprising neoliberal Conservatives and Orange Book Liberals) tended towards collaborative idealism heavily linked to market-led localism. The Conservatives followed with the notion of the Northern Powerhouse and combined local authorities and with a greater emphasis on NPM and outsourcing. However, beyond 2016 the general balance of national/local relations do not alter significantly because of the increasing influence of the EU Referendum and Brexit. What emerges are hybrid systems at the local level as a response to perceived centralism.

There is, however, cause for an additional historical reflection spanning New Labour and subsequent Conservative-led administrations. New Labour’s centralism was concerned with how the local was structured, for example, through mandatory collaborations, because they wanted to ensure local ‘delivery’ of national investment priorities. The Coalition and Conservative Governments, on the other hand, have retained the predilection for top-down control to ensure that, amidst the devolution of risk approach and the laissez-faire rhetoric of their marketised policy agenda, that any local initiative could not conflict with the dominant national policy agenda.

Part 4. Conclusion – conceptualising and researching the complexities of vertical and horizontal relations

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide an overview of the meta context in which the CSP, operating at the local level, was both born and within which it continues to operate. It has evaluated the literature around the dominant strands of governance towards the local and makes the argument that both the Coalition and the subsequent Conservative Governments approached local governance and the governance of complexity with austerity as the dominant frame. While there were differing levels of commitment to both localism and devolution throughout the last decade, it can be argued that these were both subordinate and in constant states of interaction with an overarching ideological commitment to reshape the state.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, there is disagreement within the literature as to how this restructuring of the state represented a retreat or 'roll-back', or how much the austerity, the forms of localism and new welfare mixes pursued required an active state (Sullivan, 2012).

This chapter suggests that by conceptualising austerity as an organising/dominant framework, governance strategies are able to be viewed in adaptive/hybrid forms. It is this contradictory landscape that provided the 'horizon of opportunity' within which the CSP and those professionals working within it have been able to construct and articulate ways of working together horizontally to promote 'system change' while at the same time navigating the powers of vertical relations.

Chapter 2. Complex needs, collaboration and system change

“Failure to work together is the problem, therefore the solution is to work together better!” (Hudson, 2000: 253).

Introduction – exploring the dynamics of collaboration and system change

Thus far this research has considered governance theories and debates as an organising framework and has outlined the key features, in particular the intersections of vertical and horizontal dimensions or the extended state, to illuminate the dynamics affecting multi-organisational collaborations at the local level. In doing so, Chapter 1 has presented the wider context for coordination and practicalities of collaboration at the local level as sites of potential contestation and tension. This chapter builds on this analysis to suggest that the ways in which collaborative activities and systems are assembled, articulated and reassembled at the local level have significant implications for ambitions of ‘system change’ in the field of complex needs. It also suggests that should contradiction and contestation be present at that level, then the resolution of these tensions have shaping effects on the potentialities of ambitions of innovation projects. Towards the end of the chapter attention is paid to the mediating role of local actors – those with strategic functions and front-line workers with reference to ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky, 1980) – in relation to collaborative activity and local system building.

An exploration of the dynamics of local collaboration is undertaken in three ways. First, it provides a definition of the issues of *complexity* associated with the service user group, together with both institutional and policy responses, in order to identify particular forms of ‘system failure’ that frustrate meeting the needs of the user group (Hough, 2014). Second, the chapter situates the role of inter-organisational collaboration within ambitions of innovation, predominantly discussed within the field in relation to ‘*system change*’. It looks to provide definitions around issues of collaboration, but also points to the ways in which theories of collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2004), and potentially ‘network idealism’, can be

applied to some system change literatures. Moreover, it is argued that ambitions of local actors to undertake more 'horizontalist' ways of working in a governance environment dominated by 'verticalities' have the potential to interact in ways that are neither straight-forward nor easy to resolve.

These literatures are selected and viewed from a governance perspective, in particular I look at the collaborative literatures that can cast some light as to the intersections between those verticalities and horizontalities. A critical review of these literatures will try and cast some light as to how collaboration can emerge as a set of hybridised activities at the local level, reflective of what has previously been described as welfare and governance mixes. There is also an acknowledged tendency within the literatures used towards a primary focus on homelessness which is also reflected in this chapter. This is perhaps due to the evolution of complex needs from articulations of multiple-exclusion homelessness (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2011) and is taken as a starting point in the discussion of an emerging consensus around complexity.

This form of analysis is used to propose the researchable element – a focus on forms of local collaboration leading illuminated by the conceptual framework and the collection of primary evidence as part of a case-study methodology. By focusing on the changing governance environment surrounding inter-organisational collaboration, it is argued that contemporary responses to adults with complex needs create new spaces, relationships and problematic dynamics at the local level that provide an interesting and valuable researchable opportunity.

Part 1. Inter-organisational collaboration in the field of complex needs - defining the issues

Understanding the complexity of adult complex needs

The past decade has seen a significant rise in homelessness in England. As of 2019, 71 per cent of local authorities reporting to 'The Homelessness Monitor' stated that homelessness was once again increasing, while nationally 2017/18 saw homelessness numbers 42 per cent above the low

point of 2009 (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2019). As of December 2019, Shelter reported that 280,000 people were recorded as homeless in England, with the actual number likely to be higher due to the even more difficult to measure 'wider' or 'hidden' homelessness (Bramley, 2017; Shelter, 2019). Long-term research looking into the drivers of homelessness point to poverty, accessibility to suitable housing, failure of prevention measures and lack of suitable housing (Bramley, 2017). Moreover, homelessness acts as a catalyst in relation to other dimensions of need. Being homeless adds to the likelihood that statutory intervention will often be crisis led, often via hospital admission (Revolving Doors Agency, 2012).

Yet, alongside these long-term trends and headline statistics, significant work has been done to move the understanding of homelessness beyond undifferentiated, linear accounts of individual or structural causes in order to emphasise the intersecting and overlapping dynamics that contribute (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2011). Through an analysis that stresses the breadth and intersectional approaches to surrounding complexity of needs there has emerged a growing consensus around the identification of a group of people who combine long-term issues around homelessness with other health and social care needs such as poor mental health, substance misuse and offending behaviours (Bowpitt *et al.*, 2011; Cornes *et al.*, 2011; McDonagh, 2011). A literature review completed for the Scottish Executive (Rosengard *et al.*, 2007) identified many terms such as *multiple disadvantage*, *complex needs* and *severe/chronic exclusion* used interchangeably across various disciplines, while there is now a common reference to approximately 60,000 adults in England annually who have been estimated to combine those needs and have ineffective contact with services (Bramley and Fitzpatrick, 2015; Lamb *et al.*, 2019). As such, the intersection of needs and disadvantages makes intervention problematic, with a series of conditions "not fully understood or resolved by material-fiscal *"bricks and mortar solutions alone"* (Dobson, 2019a: 2).

The use of 'complexity' looks to capture this sense of various combinations of both breadth *and* depth of need, together with *"something in the interlocking nature of these needs that made*

them particularly hard to address” (Johnson, 2013: 128). This complexity is augmented by the fact that identified needs often combine both systemic articulations of disadvantage or need with biographical articulations, such as trauma (Dobson, 2019b). The extreme nature of these interlocking articulations is, therefore, not necessarily found in the severity of one issue but in the cumulative impacts (Bramley *et al.*, 2015; Duncan and Corner, 2012). Furthermore, these patterns of need and disadvantage also mediate with social identities such as age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Dobson, 2019b; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018).

Complexity and its interaction with service ecologies: the anatomy of ‘system failure’

The growing understanding of complex needs and a widespread recognition of the requirement for inter-organisational collaboration has, nevertheless, been confronted by what has been termed “*system failure*” (Hough, 2014: 12). This includes both the understanding of not only the interconnection of need articulated, but also of the service and institutional response. These refer to the long-standing institutional factors, for example siloed or individualised organisational behaviours, differences of professional perspective and the impact of governmental accountability systems; all of which have been exacerbated by austerity that make local collaborative interventions for a marginalised and vulnerable client group less likely to be effective and sustainable. The term also reflects a more difficult message in the understanding not only as to the effectiveness of service interventions, but their potential complicity in the augmentation of need and disadvantage. These dynamics are noted at both the level of strategy, management and frontline service provision.

Organisational individualism and siloed working

One of the primary issues located within the literature is the extent to which services that people with complex needs come into contact with tend to operate in an individualised manner, struggling to cooperate, coordinate and collaborate with one another. The multiplicity and

interdependence of issues meets a fragmented service response (Anderson, 2011). There has been long recognition of the problems of compartmentalisation with regards to welfare services.

Recognition of complexity and interdependency of both needs and service response also identifies significant difficulties in addressing need within contemporary service design. While it has been common to refer to the 'silo-based' nature of public service provision, Cornes *et al.*, (2011) provide a slightly more nuanced take on the "*process of compartmentalising needs*" (2011: 519). The difficulties that those with complex needs have in accessing service provision is associated with both the historical sectorisation of care (De Corte *et al.*, 2017) and the fragmentation of provision associated with NPM reforms. This bifurcation has arguably augmented the autonomy of relevant policy domains, which are characterised by their own relationships with central government, legislation and accountabilities.

Individualised organisational impacts have had particularly negative effects on the needs of services that highlights the need to develop new and more collaborative ways of working. Different services working at different points and stages of contact might not have the knowledge, skills and understanding in working with people with interdependent needs. Scanlon and Adlam (2012) note the difficulty in both evidencing and treating trauma, mental distress and addiction using traditional *medical model* diagnostic labels. Issues around dual diagnosis remain, with mental health issues and substance misuse often treated as causal factors in the continuation of the other despite increased knowledge in the field (Public Health England, 2017). The evidenced challenges with regards to collaborative working around complex needs reveal long-standing issues identified within the field of organisational studies. Problems attached to organisational individualism have long been recognised as inadequate responses to perceived growth in task cooperation (Hudson *et al.*, 1999), referring to the extent to which an issue can only be solved through multi-actor or multi-organisational response.

“If greater knowledge persuades us to see problems as multi-faceted, then we will be pushed into more complex kinds of co-ordination mechanisms” (Hudson et al., 1999: 238).

As such, the service ecology that the prospective service-user and associated professionals have to navigate remains highly complex and opaque. Gowan (2010) makes reference to the ‘archipelagos’ of various agencies and organisations that tend to operate within service provision. While there has been evidence as to the potential benefits of ‘hubs’ and ‘one-stop-shops’ (Scullion *et al.*, 2014), the complexity of service provision adds to both the difficulties of negotiating the landscape, but also towards efforts of strategic and frontline collaboration.

Furthermore, sectoral tensions can be seen given the dominant role that the third sector plays in both homelessness services and in the delivery of integrated care schemes for homeless people (Cloke *et al.*, 2011; Renedo, 2014) has been further consolidated within government legislation and strategy (HM Government, 2018). This provides an even greater role for TSOs and promotes their involvement as one that directly implies greater civil society engagement. At the same time, what can be seen as a ‘care/civil society nexus’ has the potential to complicate the relationship with national agencies that have prime responsibilities in the criminal justice system, conceptualised as part of the ‘control/governmental state nexus’.

Differing conceptualisations of the problem

Issues of professional role and identity can also be seen as long-standing issues in the field, particularly around client-facing functions and roles. This is particularly pronounced when taking into consideration differing sectoral relationships with the state. Professional models of care, including long-standing reflections as to the different ways complexity and homelessness, are recognised through medical and social professional lenses (Stone *et al.*, 2019; Stafford and Wood, 2017), tend to interact with complexity within those singular frames of reference. These differing interpretations can lead to conflict, particularly in relation to *“compulsory’ services where a role*

has both a supporting and monitoring function, but where there is, or is perceived to be, an imbalance between the two functions” (Anderson, 2011: 20).

Maesele *et al.*, (2014) describe a broader, pan-European trend towards the realisation of homelessness as a problem of poverty. This marks a shift away from conceptualisations that encourage a criminalisation of the problem, situated in the language of “*vagrancy*” (2014: 1718), that still influences professional practice in the field through the continuation of elements of coercion structured around the “*ambiguous*” (2014: 1730) ways in which homelessness remains conceptualised and acted upon. Nevertheless, clashes between supportive agendas, such as the goals of ending rough sleeping, and controlling agendas such as the management of anti-social behaviour continue to contribute to lack of professional and policy consensus in the field.

The tensions between care and control

Allied to this there is also long-term association of complex needs with behaviours that professionals and organisations find difficult to deal with. Complex needs are, therefore, often understood on the frontline of service provision through challenging behaviours that problematise the perceived ability to function within existing service frameworks and exhibit the personal changes that are deemed necessary. These behaviours can also provoke regulation or surveillance by local authority agencies, including homelessness organisations (Whiteford, 2013; Watts *et al.*, 2018). This has corresponded with some service users or those in need of service provision being denied access through assumptions that their needs cannot be addressed within the current service frameworks. This can lead to a paradox in which those most in need of support are “*de-facto deprioritized and often remain in emergency shelters or back out on the streets*” (Quirouette, 2016: 334). These difficulties coexist through a perceived lack of knowledge around complex needs, but also the organisational priorities generated through regulation and audit within contemporary welfare mixes (Bode, 2006; Buckingham, 2012; Dobson, 2015).

Austerity and national inhibiting factors

The lack of national framework for specific engagement with the cohort is identified as problematic for local responses. A national policy environment, predominantly defined by individualised funding and outcomes model with separate accountability channels, is argued to promote a “*culture of silos working on specific issues within organisational boundaries*” (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and MEAM, 2015: 5). There is also a clear issue as to the marginality of interest towards adults with complex needs from key parts of service ecologies (Crane *et al.*, 2006). This is primarily attributed to the uneven costs associated with the service user group towards different organisations and services. For example, in Battrick *et al.*'s review of the evidence from a series of pilot projects designed to work with adults with complex needs, they found early evidence of significant falls in terms of costs associated with crime and mental health, while other costs remained “*broadly constant*” (Battrick *et al.*, 2014: 13). This is coupled with an identified dilemma of strategy and commissioning practices where there has been a deficiency in willingness to adequately fund preventative services due to them being seen in economic tension with more reactive service funding levels (Anderson, 2011).

One result is that service users with complex needs are often unable to successfully access appropriate services. There is a startling observation within Marcias Balda's account of institutional responses to multiple needs where the author observes two perverse dynamics within the field.

“The first is that the commissioned organisations and their frontline staff are forced to choose between their financial interests and their clients' well-being. The second is that service providers are incentivised to work with the clients that are more prone to achieve these outcomes; and people with complex needs may be excluded once again” (Marcias Balda, 2016: 35).

Furthermore, the complexity, embeddedness and sheer size of organisations necessary within collaborative responses to complex needs should be acknowledged. For example, the difficulties with regards to attempts towards change within health systems are well established (Hendy and Barlow, 2011).

Dobson (2019a) acknowledges the way that institutional barriers towards coordination of services are often compounded at the local level through a legislative and economic environment that remains hostile to those on the margins of the society, with the implementation of austerity practices over the period in question. Austerity also has a direct effect on the role of funding mechanisms in relation to service provision. It is not only that the quantum is reduced, but that the funding mechanism itself becomes top-down and, despite the rhetoric of devolution, there is fragmentation in terms of outcomes (Macias Balda, 2016). This top-down dynamic produces contextual limits to holistic approaches with each service primarily concerned with outcomes directly related to their field, with funding mechanisms that match this approach. Macias Balda goes further and notes the cultural bureaucratic characteristic known as a “*silo mentality*” among public service providers (2016: 31).

Moreover, an austerity-led environment has fuelled historic difficulties of coordination and financial gate keeping between statutory and third sectors. Mason *et al.*, (2017), for example, describe homelessness practitioners’ relationships with the local authority as often at odds with the local authority as the latter looking at the problem through the prism of financial gatekeepers. In addition, Hewet and Halligan (2015) suggest a general view that health services have often tended to view homelessness as primarily an issue for housing and social care services. As local actors struggled for resources, there were also internal struggles within the Third Sector. The effects of devolved austerity have produced an environment in which local forces that were meant to collaborate found themselves in competition for resources, exacerbated by forms of individualised and defensive organisational behaviours.

It is important, therefore, to try to understand the degree and in what ways long-standing trends of both service individualism and fragmentation – understood here as a component of ‘system failure’ – has been affected by the lead policy of austerity and, more recently, counteracted by other policy attempts to address complexity.

Part 2. Central policy responses to complexity

*“Government alone cannot solve the complex challenges facing society, such as loneliness, rough sleeping, healthy ageing or online safety. **Government can help bring together the resources, policies and people who, between them, can do so**” (Civil Society Strategy - HM Government, 2018: 12, my emphasis).*

The identification of complex needs has also driven further exploration as to the impacts of central legislation and how these interact with both complex needs and service user provision at the local level (Cornes *et al.*, 2014a; 2018; Dobson, 2019b; Mason *et al.*, 2017). The Care Act 2014 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are most prominent within the literature, representing the two pieces of legislation introduced within the last decade that have most engagement with both articulations of complex needs. Crucially, in relation to the service user group in question, both engage specifically around ‘personalisation’, while both have been identified as offering new approaches to both engagement with the service user group and potential foundations for how organisations and professionals work together (Cornes *et al.*, 2016; Dobson, 2019b). Research of the impact on collaborative behaviours in the field is most clearly represented with a series of works reflecting on the impact of Communities of Practice around the Care Act 2014 (e.g. Cornes *et al.*, 2015; Mason *et al.*, 2017) and the relationships between social workers and housing support or complex needs ‘link-workers’. These are referred to in more detail later in the chapter.

These two pieces of legislation when considered within the broader dynamics of governance, further evidenced by the strategies present within the Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 and the Civil

Society Strategy 2018, appear to fundamentally support the proposition of dominant vertical dynamics made in Chapter 1. While both can be seen to echo much of the language of complexity, each represents certain settlements containing dominant and subordinate characteristics. In the broader context of austerity-localism, potential inter-agency tension around policy implementation (e.g. Cornes *et al.*, 2018), suggests both differing interpretations of policy direction and also contested senses of agency.

The Care Act (2014)

The Care Act 2014 was argued at the time to be the *“most significant reform of publicly-funded care and support in England in 60 years”* (Cornes *et al.*, 2014: 211). This inspired a series of work (e.g. Cornes *et al.*, 2014; Mason *et al.*, 2017; Dobson, 2019b) that considered the impact of the Act towards issues of homelessness and complex needs. The key change can be seen around the institutionalisation of personalisation, replacing former legislation in order to provide the foundations for a single route to assessment of entitlement to funded support now available for homeless populations; a group that were previously held as ineligible for personalised support. However, personalisation remains a contested concept, identified by some as signalling a turn towards an understanding of the public as consumers and shifting public provision as a matter of individual responsibility (Whiteford, 2013; Barnes *et al.*, 2017). It can broadly be understood as the establishment of personal budgets so as to facilitate individualised commissioning of support through the devolution of budgets towards the level of the individual. In their review of the potential impacts of the Care Act, Cornes *et al.*, (2016) suggest that it represents a potential step forward for those experiencing homelessness, primarily through the removal of reference to ‘eligible’ and ‘ineligible’ groups ensuring that, at least within legislative terms, *“any adult with any level of need will have a right to an assessment”* (Mason *et al.*, 2017: 4).

“To make the law fair and consistent, we want to remove many anomalies, which treat particular groups of people differently. We do not want people to be dealt with differently

based on the type of service they need or where they receive it" (Department of Health, 2013: 1).

Mason *et al.*, (2017) warn that the Care Act and subsequent case law does not "*necessarily mean a "new deal" for homeless people*" (2018: 4), although it does suggest a level of clarification around issues that have caused issues for adult social care in their interactions with the cohort in the past. However, the impact of austerity has called into question the potential for positive changes in engagement, notably the increased workloads of public sector workers, particularly social workers with the new duties to assess eligibility in the client group. The key intersection noted within much of the literature around both the Care Act and the broader personalisation agenda is the increasing duties, responsibilities and powers for local authorities, while at the same time implementing large-scale cuts to public spending.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)

The Homelessness Reduction Act was largely inspired by an independent review completed by the housing charity Crisis and the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report into homelessness (Cowen, 2019). The Code of Guidance (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018a), published alongside the Act, continues the central recognition of complex needs in advising that priority need can be evidenced through "combining factors" that if viewed individually may not designate vulnerability (s.8.39). In relation to collaboration, the Code directly relates strategic coordination between criminal justice, health services, social care and voluntary/third sector organisations together with housing providers. A new Rough Sleeping Team consisting of "*homelessness experts ... with specialist knowledge across a wide-range of areas from housing, mental health to addiction*" (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018b) was established to advise local authorities. The Ministry of Justice was also tasked with ensuring that prison and probation services engaged in joint work with local authorities to identify prisoners and offenders at risk of rough sleeping (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018b). While there have been new central initiatives to

promote inter-agency collaboration, the structure of these arrangements is not prescribed and there is little acknowledgement of the long-standing issues of collaboration in this field. The policy approach is essentially devolved and voluntarist.

The Code allows for the outsourcing of key duties and local authorities are advised that they “**will wish to agree arrangements with relevant authorities**” (s.4.10, my emphasis). Collaboration around complex needs is again framed in relatively passive terms where:

*“Authorities are **encouraged** to establish arrangements with partners that go beyond referral procedures, aiming to maximize the impact of shared efforts on positive outcomes for service users who may have multiple needs” (s.4.11, my emphasis).*

In keeping with the dominant central trends in the previous chapter this too is ultimately framed in economic terms.

“Such arrangements can advance the objectives of partner agencies and deliver efficiencies for the public purse” (s.4.11).

Dobson, in her review of the legislation, notes that “*multi-agency responses are discussed in vague terms*” (2019b: 316), while expressing surprise that the Police are not included as a referring body (public bodies with a ‘Duty to Refer’ where they believe a person is homeless or at risk of homelessness) considering their interaction with rough sleeping. She, however, identifies the difficulties that can emerge from the government’s interaction with complex needs, such as what appears to be recognition of a shift towards acceptance of the role of “*combining factors*” towards homelessness while a failure to address the “*socio-political climate still subject to the power of a medical model*” (Dobson, 2019b: 316).

The Act also represents a reconceptualising of national state and local government relations. Cowen (2019) suggests that the Act may in fact be working to “hide long-term systemic issues in the housing system” with a failure to attend to the shortage of low-cost housing meaning that although significant alterations have been made the likely result is “*a re-ordering of the deckchairs on the Titanic of housing policy*” (Cowen, 2019: 106). Cowen goes further, arguing that this re-ordering “*expands the local state to outside areas*” (2019: 126), encouraged as a “*tutelary state*” (2019: 125) towards a re-imagined citizen-consumer, looking to “*reaffiliate the homeless within the private sector marketplace*” (2019, 124). New versions of gatekeeping are “*hard-wired*” (2019: 127) into the Act, while there remains little to address the reasons why people become homeless in the first place or significant distribution of power while those systemic issues remain unaddressed.

Complex policy settlements as arenas for local collaboration

The previous chapter made the case that the dominant dynamics from central government towards inter-organisational collaboration could be summarised as dominant forms of ‘austerity-localism’ (Featherstone *et al.*, 2012), with subaltern themes of integration and market-led idealism. These legislative and policy settlements related to complex needs should be seen to possess multiple characteristics appearing to co-exist and interact in dominant and subordinate form. To some extent each has been met with some level of optimism among provider and advocacy services in relation to complex needs - the promotion of the right to assessment, the devolution of both responsibility and agency towards the local level and the recognition of complexity are all examples of changes that represent, at least to some extent, a responsiveness on the part of central government to the discourses and demands of provider and advocacy networks. However, concerns continue to be raised around the dominant roles of personalisation, the continuation of arms-length governance from the centre and the strong framing role played by austerity (e.g. Mason *et al.*, 2017). All of these can be seen to continue to exert strong vertical influences on the potential spaces for agency identified as policy is implemented at the local level.

As such, it is suggested that these legislative and policy frameworks should be considered as complex settlements possessing both dominant and subordinate characteristics. In the context of 'super-austerity' (Lowndes and Gardner, 2016) and the interactive relationships outlined within the concept of 'austerity-localism' (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012), the dominant features emanate from the governmental state (economic policy and mandated responsibilities), while the subordinate elements refer to certain affordances of professional agency at the local level and representing a new terrain of horizontal interaction. The question remains is how these complex relationships are viewed, experienced and played out on the ground. Evidence as to how these combinations are interacted with by professionals looking to work horizontally is discussed in more detail below, but also represent significant questions for the case-study research.

Part 3. System change and collaboration

With the growing interest and research base in relation to complex needs, new approaches have evolved over the past decade offering innovative practice and models of delivery. The identification of complexity and the necessity of new ways of working with this group of people now extends beyond advocacy networks and third sector organisations with recognition as to the need for innovative and joint approaches now within government policy documents (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018a). The horizontal transfer of knowledge and resources in attempts to produce adaptive responses to these cross-cutting issues are subject to exchange across multiple different organisations and agencies (De Corte, 2017; Provan and Lemaire, 2012). This includes ideas of complexity and systems thinking that now form major part processes towards innovation in the field.

Complexity and systems theory

“Addressing wicked problems requires a high level of systems thinking. If there is a single lesson to be drawn from the first decade of the 21st century, it is that surprise, instability and extraordinary change will continue to be regular features of our lives”

(Kickbusch and Gleicher, 2012 cited in Haynes *et al.*, 2020: 66).

“Talk of complex needs might now be read more systematically, as a kind of new-found humility, a recognition that there are some things that the earlier commissioning culture, over-specifying overly narrow and measurable “outcomes”, and so removing the necessary flexibility from front-line services, has actually made worse” (Johnson, 2013: 131).

At its most fundamental level, the analysis proposed by systems change literature is that *“social problems are the product of networks of cause and effect”* (Abercrombie *et al.*, 2015: 3). As we have seen, this places the institutional and service responses to complex needs as interconnected with the identification of complexity. Thus collaboration takes up a dual role as both problem and solution, with a renewed emphasis on establishing new ways for organisations, professionals and services users to work together. Part of the response has been the establishment of a growing research base, policy networks and locally based practical efforts, often in the form of pilot projects, to improve service coordination and collaboration towards this identified group (e.g. MEAM, 2009; Lamb *et al.*, 2019; DHA Communications and Lankelly Chase, 2020). A key component within the aims of these coalitions and advocacy groups has been the development of ideas and interventions modelled around conceptualisations of ‘system change’.

Both ideas of complexity and systems have become an increasingly popular conceptual lens using theoretical insights from life-sciences with *complex adaptive systems* becoming *“common parlance within leadership circles”* (Miller and Appleton, 2015: 24; see also Lankelly Chase, 2018).

Complex adaptive systems are distinguished by non-linear behaviours that are defined by interconnection and unpredictability. Miller and Appleton use the classic example of birds in flight to illustrate the connective concept:

“Each one makes an instinctual response based on predetermined and simple rules such as maintaining a distance from others in their flock – these actions seem independent but enable them to successfully interact as a whole” (Miller and Appleton, 2015: 24).

Both complexity and systems theory are thus not only used in attempts to understand the various conditions of need and disadvantage shown by a vulnerable population, but also to try and understand the ways in which organisations and individuals work in ways that impact on each other. There is a proposed need to consider actions and interventions in their full context, from a reflexive sense of self to broader systems of government and governance (Abercrombie *et al.*, 2018).

The applications of systems thinking, and particularly that of adaptive systems, also potentially highlights the long-term issues around organisational and professional resistance to change. For example, Chapman (2004) invokes the adaptive nature of ‘autopoietic’ organisational practice, in which organisations establish internal dynamics that look to ensure the effect of *“reproducing the organisation over time”* (Chapman, 2004: 52). Whether direct correlation or metaphor, autopoiesis refers to the recognition that all living things share a common organisation. An autopoietic organisation is a *“network of production processes in which the function of each component is to participate in the production or transformation of the other components in the network”* (Chapman, 2004: 52). As such, the autopoietic network is in a constant state of becoming. However, Chapman uses this conceptualisation to suggest that organisations replicate this dynamic, setting up internal processes that look to maintain the institution and protect it from external changes.

The capacity of institutional and policy responses to enact ambitions of change are therefore understood as both connected and deficient in the face of the complex problems and multi-level institutions working within organisational constraints. Systems thinking is perceived as appropriate for the understanding of the 'wicked' nature of certain issues, wherein social issues are understood as intractable, with multiple causes, are characterised by uncertainty and conflicting situational viewpoints (Ferlie *et al.*, 2011; Peters, 2017). Moreover, the policy environment surrounding complex needs is subject to dynamic constraints, including pressures from diverse stakeholders subject to their own demands and expectations, highly politicised decision-making mechanisms and the expectation of quick and effective responses (Haynes, *et al.*, 2020). Complexity is further augmented through the highly open systems within different locations and levels (e.g. nations, service systems, communities, individuals) at which policies are enacted making it difficult to accurately predict where correct points of action should be located. Contemporary responses to complex needs have, therefore, increasingly used systems theory as a paradigm through which to try and re-conceptualise policy development and intervention.

System change

While there is significant consensus around the identification of systems in relation to complex needs, whether in metaphorical or other form, the difficulty comes when thinking how it impacts on ambitions of change. This posits that the knowable world is based on systems comprising interdependent elements that act synergistically, adapting in nonlinear ways that often prove resistant to 'logical' interventions (Haynes *et al.*, 2020). As such, system thinking orientates policy makers and stakeholders towards trying to identify causal patterns in place of independent forces and "*root causes rather than symptoms*" (Haynes *et al.*, 2020: 66). This paradigmatic shift is intended to assist in the identification of alternative strategies and points of leverage in supporting change while encouraging reappraisals of traditional models of action (Meadows, 2008). Thus, within this conceptual context collaboration is recognised not through the prism of efficiency, but as a key component of system understanding and with the potential to "*disrupt*" (Haynes *et al.*, 2020: 66) contemporary settlements. System change has therefore been

embraced by many, particularly in the third sector, as offering new ways of understanding and acting within highly complex environments:

“... systems change approach is generating a wave of enthusiasm about the potential for making meaningful social progress” (Abercrombie et al., 2015: 39).

A different perspective can perhaps be seen within Dobson’s (2019a) identification of an *“enterprising zeal”* (Dobson, 2019a: 4) in how sections of the service ecologies, most notably within the third sector, have engaged with complex needs. The term lends itself to both the *“way organizations combine social missions with pursuit of ‘innovative’ solutions to apparently intractable problems”* (Dobson, 2019a: 4), together with the ways in which actors build narratives of success to build the power of new ideas. Dobson suggests that these elements can provide the foundations for *“new sets of norms, rules, practices and potentially new organizational forms”* (Dobson, 2019a: 4).

While Dobson does not refer to system change directly, it would appear that the term has become part of the *enterprising* lexicon, with Abercrombie et al., (2015) noting the ways in which the term has been adopted by many, particularly within the third sector as a way of trying to shift practice and funding models to address root causes of social issues. System change here can be seen to take on multiple identities. It provides an organising framework and theory-driven understanding of change (Abercrombie et al., 2015), while also offering an object of the future, a framework for the development of new practice and potential funding models.

The status of collaboration within models of system change

As complex needs are identified by levels of interdependence and interconnectedness, both in terms of breadth and depth, system change literatures seek to encourage a way of conceptualising institutional and policy responses as equally multi-dimensional and multi-layered. Solving one problem or dimension of the cumulative issues will not necessarily have the

impact immediately imagined. As such, increased local networked architecture is proposed to link institutional and policy responses in relation to complex needs.

“Network building and social connection are just as important as service delivery” (Randle and Anderson, 2017: 6).

It is also worth noting that systems thinking can be adapted to different political arenas. At least the level of rhetoric, system change has reached Westminster, with the Civil Society Strategy (2018) actively using the same language found in system change literature.

“Rather than being seen as a place of distinct policy priorities – health or crime or educational underachievement – a community will be seen as a ‘system’ of interconnected parts, each of which impacts the others” (HM Government, 2018: 106).

Much of the perceived success of coalitions and organisations working to advocate change in relation to institutional responses to complex needs has been establishing a research base and strategic response to the identification of interdependent needs. Within this, both inter-organisational collaboration in terms of service delivery, forms of collaborative governance and the broader incorporation of a range of stakeholders are held as key components of ensuring a system (or set of systems) is both understood and acted upon (Davidson-Knight and Olsen, 2018; Hough, 2014).

“People and partnerships are the beating heart of system change” (Cawley, 2017 cited in Abercrombie, 2018).

“There is a tangible sense from all quarters that now is the time; that emergent practice around self-directed support, public social partnerships and joint improvement between commissioners and providers could portend a future in which decisions on service delivery

will not be driven by scale and cost, but will be determined by quality relationships and outcomes” (Kippin and Swinson-Reid, 2014: 3).

A clear example as to the importance placed on collaboration, both at the level of strategy and delivery, can be found in Randle and Anderson’s work around *“infrastructure for system change”* (2017: 1). They argue for a reframing of complex social issues, such as complex needs, towards issues of public service delivery and social outcomes based on collaborative, place-based infrastructure.

“Change the assumption that public services alone can solve problems; recasting them as part of a local system (including people, families, communities, local organisations and institutions, the third sector and businesses) that can influence outcomes, and build local ways of working that consider the reality of people’s lives” (Randle and Anderson, 2017: 5).

This research makes the proposition that the literature in relation to system change discussed above can be linked to broader and emerging articulations of *collaborative innovation* within public service provision (Torfing, 2016). The articulation found within system change literatures as to the need for increased collaborative or networked models of governance involving multiple actors and organisations with very different relationships to the service-user, each other and the state speaks to more than a search for increased effectiveness, but towards ideas of public innovation.

“Collaborative forms of governance in networks and partnerships might even, at least in certain respects, provide a better vehicle for public innovation that both the traditional bureaucratic forms of organization and the new forms of quasi-markets in which public organizations and private firms compete to produce and deliver public goods and services purchased by public authorities” (Torfing, 2016: 3).

The interpretive governance theory proposed by Bevir and Rhodes (2016) also points us to the prospect that innovation is conditioned through interlocking discourses, stories and narratives that are able to provide concept and problem framing. As such, it highlights the possibility that the issues of complex needs can be framed as both urgent and possible, and system change as desirable and manageable. Network management theories (e.g. Klijn and Koppenjan, 2015), however, would orientate towards the collaborative possibilities when self-interested actors mediate within inter-organisational forums due to the identification of a mutual resource dependency. In relation to complex needs this could bring about innovation while needing to manage collaborative uncertainty with the potential to limitations of collaborative creativity (Torfing, 2016).

The association of system change with conceptualisations of collaborative governance also situates the research as related to emerging literature around the relationships between collaboration, innovation and ongoing conditions of austerity. Both collaboration and innovation within this context can be viewed as efforts towards negotiating structural, organisational and professional boundaries in the search for efficiency and effectiveness together with the adoption of new ideas and practices (Diamond and Vangen, 2017). Diamond and Vangen's multi-year work with collaborative efforts towards innovation within public sector children's services, with one of the authors operating as "*reflective practitioner and insider researcher*" (Diamond and Vangen, 2017: 47), developed two interlinked concepts - "*modelling collaborative innovation*" and "*retreat to the known*" (48), that is the observation that conditions of local austerity could be seen to produce both "*enabling conditions for collaborative innovation*" (Diamond and Vangen, 2017: 48) or a fundamental retreat towards traditional and familiar working practices. Crucially, they identify local contextual factors based around inter-agency trust and qualities of adaptive leadership as the key factors as to which of these two concepts were realised. The identification of collaborative innovation as a means of reducing expenditure appears vital. The acknowledgement of austerity as a form of 'crisis' at the local level links resource dependency understandings that organisations in situations of 'non-equilibrium' (Benson, 1975) will be forced

either into collaborative or competitive behaviours in order to secure scarce resources. These dynamics are returned to and form a significant part of the conceptual framework chapter.

In making this proposition it is suggested that the tendencies within articulations of system change towards certain types of collaboration, in this case networks and service integration (e.g. MEAM, 2016; Turning Point and Collaborate CIC, 2016) can be both identified and linked back to the discussions of governance in Chapter 1. According to critical reflections on network governance in the literature, there is a danger of what I have referred to as network idealism, which we will see in analytical terms could be described as the tendency to overestimate the power of networked activity within civil society and underestimate the powerful influences of the governmental state. For example, in the previous chapter reference was made towards Carmel and Harlock's (2008) argument that processes of state-third sector interaction, including articulations of collaborative governance, can be seen in reality to include the expansion of state control, where the third sector becomes the *object* of governance rather than an expression of equal relations. Furthermore, Chapman *et al.*, note the tendency between some cross-sector collaborative prescriptions and commentators who embrace the pluralism of collaborative governance arrangements to place too much emphasis on the "*can-do enthusiasm of advocates*" (2010: 614).

Chapter 1 looked to problematise some of these broad trends, noting the way that governments and key public service stakeholders often look to appropriate the language of networks within dynamics that can actually reinforce or expand verticalities and/or levels of state control. As J. Davies notes, "*talk of 'complexity', 'whole systems thinking', 'adaptivity', 'diversity' and 'inclusivity' is pervasive in Anglophone public sector discourse*" (J. Davies, 2011: 113), something he links to broader ideological projects tied to the promise of idealised conceptualisations of network governance.

The question of leadership

Abercrombie *et al.*, (2015) suggest that there is little consensus on what *type* of leadership is most effective within initiatives towards system change. Nevertheless, they suggest that leadership should be *distributed* both through individual organisations and also through networks. The concept of leadership is also crucial towards collaborative innovation with Torfing invoking Gramsci's articulation of the 'organic intellectual' (Gramsci, 1971) in his articulation of collaboration being dependent on the necessity for actors to exercise "*political and moral-intellectual leadership*" (Torfing, 2016: 65). Collective wills are, therefore, framed and expanded through the potential for key actors to offer innovative and persuasive rearticulations of the world that make the change look realisable and desirable. Chapman *et al.*, for example, point to the tendency for the Third Sector to produce "*community champions*" (2010: 617), that is those who are perceived and recognised as holding particular personal skills and qualities that work to gain political or capital in support of their cause, while Kippen and Fulford suggest that a level of 'betrayal' is required by system leaders, placing broader understandings of social good over organisational loyalties (2016).

Unsurprisingly, its increasingly casual use has led to critiques. O'Reilly and Reed (2010) refer to leadership as 'leaderism' - a "*set of beliefs that frames and justifies certain innovatory changes in contemporary organizational and managerial practice*" (O'Reilly and Reed, 2010: 960). However, the authors suggest that the emphasis on leadership within public service innovation can be viewed as a product of 'managerialism' inherently linked to processes of hybridization and NPM and new governance practices. For O'Reilly and Reed, 'leaderism' represents an evolution of both entrepreneurial and cultural management ideology that are situated around a "*re-imagining' of the user of public services as consumer*" (O'Reilly and Reed, 2010: 960). This discourse is tied to a redefining of citizenship within the modernised state (Clarke and Newman, 2007). Crucially, in relation to this research the authors identify the ways in which leadership or 'leaderism' has not managed to displace or dominate managerialist practices or discourses but has used adaptive qualities that support the evolution of these dominant trends. For O'Reilly and Reed, the

evolution of leadership is associated in both analytical and temporal terms to the influence of consumerism within policy and organisational developments towards public services.

Collaborative advantage and inertia

*“...unless potential for real collaborative advantage is clear, it is generally best, **if there is a choice, to avoid collaboration**” (Huxham and Vangen, 2004: 42, original emphasis).*

The justifications for collaborative actions lie, implicitly or explicitly, within various articulations of aims towards ‘collaborative advantage’ (Huxham and Vangen, 2004). At its base level, collaborative advantage refers to the idea that for real advantage to be achieved through collaboration something must be achieved that would not be possible by any one organisation acting alone (Huxham, 2003; Provan and Kenis, 2008). As such it is intended to act as a *“guiding light”* (Huxham, 2003: 403) for the purpose of inter-organisational collaboration. However, this concept is counterposed by a second concept of ‘collaborative inertia’ which looks to capture the difficulties often faced where the actual practice of collaborative working is characterised by poor output levels, slow progress and negative feelings about the processes engaged with. Huxham and Vangen identify a key dilemma between advantage and inertia:

“If achievement of collaborative advantage is the goal for those who initiate collaborative arrangements, why is collaborative inertia so often the outcome?” (2004: 191).

Collaborative advantage is portrayed as an *“attractive alternative”* (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998: 313) to the market and contract-based models developed within NPM and managerialist influenced governance of public services. Collaborative advantage is primarily concerned with the development of *“synergy between organizations towards the achievement of common goals”* (Huxham and Macdonald, 1992: 30) that is contrasted to the idea of ‘competitive advantage’. Collaborative advantage is thus held as a key component of broader articulations of collaborative

governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Although not always directly acknowledged within broader governance literature, collaborative advantage can be viewed as implicit as a metric among most studies that look to analyse forms of collaborative governance or the governing of collaborations *per se* (Doberstein 2016, Vangen *et al.*, 2015). However, the assumption of automatic additional value arising from inter-organisational collaborations need to be counterposed with the question as to what advantages are gained by collaborative behaviours that are not deemed possible from traditional siloed or hierarchical methods.

Why collaboration persists when it may not seem to work

There is still an apparent reluctance within the literature to engage with ‘why’ joint working should be pursued. As we have seen there is an inbuilt assumption that collaboration has an inherent virtue.

“Whilst agencies are often required to work together by government, or local funders, they may not have invested significant time considering what impact joint working would have on the service. In this sense joint working has been seen as an end in itself rather than as a strategy to improve specific outcomes” (Cameron and Lart, 2012: 90).

While problems and barriers to collaboration are highlighted within the largely ‘grey’ literatures and evaluative materials, collaboration remains predominantly discussed in normative terms with few attempts to problematise its status as a key element in the response to complex needs. It has a ‘common sense’ (Gramsci, 1971; Crehan, 2016) quality presented almost as an inherent *“good thing that is rarely questioned”* (Cameron and Lart, 2003: 15).

Yet we can see from the literature that collaborative projects are prone to failure. Much of this may be due to the rhetorical power of collaboration. As McLaughlin writes when considering the rhetorical power of partnerships:

“To argue for the importance of partnerships is like arguing for “mother love and apple pie”. The notion of partnership working has an inherently positive moral feel about it and it has become almost heretical to question its integrity” (McLaughlin, 2004: 103).

The positive and prescriptive power of collaboration can also be used to more cynical effects. Dickinson and Glasby (2010) point to the marketing of Public-Private Partnerships under New Labour as an example of using the notion of partnership to cloud what was more accurately defined as a series of market-based relationships.

“However, by calling something a ‘partnership’ we reduce the likelihood of resistance and we automatically start to portray potential critics as unreasonable; for who could possibly be against the notion of partnership working?” (Dickinson and Glasby, 2010: 820).

Despite the power of the common sense of collaboration, the question remains as to how collaborative working operates in a top-down governance environment and whether it is possible for leadership of local partnerships to develop capable of connecting the macro (national) to the micro (local) (Moseley and James, 2008).

It is worth asking then as to why efforts towards collaboration in the field make up such a considerable part of ideas of system change when the difficulties are well pronounced within the literature and the evidence showing a clear link between collaboration and improved outcomes is difficult to find. Yet, as demonstrated by the models of innovation within the field of complex needs, collaboration retains its centrality. There is an acknowledged tendency for governments, organisations and individuals to view collaboration in *optimistic* terms based on assumptions as to the status of dynamics of rationality and altruism (Hudson *et al.*, 1999). Rationality is presumed in the belief that organisations and individuals within them where potentials for collaborative advantage are evidenced, while altruism refers to the assumption that those same organisations

and individuals are able to recognise and react to work together in ways that prioritise effectiveness for the group or community that they are looking to serve.

Dickinson and Sullivan (2014) offer a different perspective from the dominant instrumentalist perspective that dominates collaboration literature, arguing that it should also be considered as an *“expression of cultural performance associated with a quite different set of values and measures demonstrated through their social efficacy”* (2014: 161).

“For actors the ‘rightness’ and ‘goodness’ of collaboration may be a matter of faith, rather than evidence - it is the ‘right’ way to work” (Dickinson and Sullivan, 2014: 174).

At the same time, however, public agencies and now also TSOs, are subject to two primary pressures - to deliver on their core business targets while also participating in inter-organisational behaviour. As Ranade and Hudson note.

“To the degree that partnership working is still seen as marginal to the ‘real’ business of the organisation in terms of rewards and resources, delivering on the core business will inevitably take precedence” (2003: 41).

What can be seen here is the impact that vertical models of accountability and performance management appear often unsuited for measuring collaborative capabilities at the local level. Techno-bureaucratic understandings of collaboration appear to often fail on their own terms. There appears to be something beyond ‘effectiveness’ that keeps policy-makers and advocates returning to it as a solution to complex issues. In public policy, therefore, practice integration, collaboration and coordinated service responses to ensure holistic care remain espoused aims. However, this can lead to a *“policy implementation “gap” between desired practices and rhetoric, on one hand, and the experience at the frontline of work and receiving care and support on the other”* (Clark *et al.*, 2015: 289). Recent moves towards outcomes-based delivery and

development of place-based collaborative architecture in the broader field of complex needs can be seen as contemporary attempts to wrestle with these issues (e.g. Kippin and Fulford, 2016). Clearly, the problems of collaboration raise profound questions for system change, not least in the current environment. Should collaboration fail to provide efficiencies in an economic sense, will bottom-up ambitions of change be realised?

Communities of practice and mutual learning

The establishment of collaborative frameworks with regards to complex needs represents attempts to introduce stronger *horizontal* linkages between organisations and stakeholders in various forms. Collaboration between organisations working within public service provision can be coordinated through horizontal ‘tools’ that act as joining mechanisms as well as interpersonal relations between stakeholders and professionals working within different agencies (Moseley and James, 2008). Collaboration itself can be understood on a spectrum from tight integration to loose linkages. Forms of collaboration towards the weaker end of the spectrum are predominantly seen as requiring less risk-taking and little threat to the autonomy of each organisation. These looser ties include such collaborative endeavors as information exchange or the building up of interpersonal relationships (Kooiman, 2003). Shifting towards more integrated notions of collaboration is generally considered more ambitious, with higher potential costs and potential for conflict (Mosely and James, 2008). Examples of horizontal tools towards this end of the spectrum include joint-commissioned services, written agreement and multi-organisational bodies with formal status.

Communities of practice and joint learning environments are often proposed as delivery vehicles to address these issues of knowledge transfer within ambitions of both integration and improved collaborative working. Efforts to promote communities of practice and joint learning workshops for services and professionals working with complex needs have been established leading to an emerging research base as to their potential impact (e.g. Cornes *et al.*, 2014a; Cornes *et al.*, 2018; Mason *et al.*, 2017). Soubhi *et al.*, (2010) make the distinction between explicit knowledge, such

as that realised through written documentary materials, and tacit knowledge which is realised through non-linear developments of narratives, reflections and storytelling.

Interestingly, given the orientation of this research, Cornes *et al.*, (2014a), while emphasising the positive benefits of communities of practice in the field, found that theories of ‘collective capability’ (Soubhi *et al.*, 2010) did “*not adequately capture the extent to which the wider economic, cultural and political context can impact upon the translation and spread of any service improvement*” (Cornes *et al.*, 2014a: 545). The authors make use of a stark example in describing the contradictory pressures that communities of practice that promote levels of boundary crossing can enhance when coming into contact with apparent verticalities.

“...practitioners in that site reported that they would get into trouble if their managers found out about these practices because service delivery specifications and contracts were now so tight as to prohibit this” (Cornes *et al.*, 2014a: 545).

The picture developed within the literatures around these joint initiatives is of the production of tensions. Taking into account these dynamics, Clark *et al.*, conclude that communities of practice can deliver small-scale changes, yet these would likely remain “*characteristically more subversive than transformative*” (Clark *et al.*, 2015: 287).

Trust and its barriers

The role of trust is widely considered central both within inter-organisational collaboration and networked/collaborative forms of governance (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). While it is broadly recognised that more horizontal forms of steering are required so that multi-actor policy development and implementation can be achieved, organisations and stakeholders within networks will continue to attempt to realise their own interests (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2007). Decision-making can also be hindered by institutional complexity, power asymmetries and inability or reluctance of some actors to share information (Ansell and Gash, 2008: Ran and Qi,

2019). Trust is highlighted as one of the key features of attempts to overcome these barriers, both at the individual and organisational levels. Where hierarchy and market are for various reasons viewed as less suitable as means of coordination, as seen within the system change literature reviewed earlier in the chapter, trust is presented as a key mode of coordination. If greater horizontal, voluntary relations are seen as necessary to improve service responses to complex needs then trust is a key element that is required to keep the network together or to prevent resolving tensions and conflict into hierarchical resolution.

Literatures around trust share some general characteristics. Firstly, the dominant trait within trust is that of vulnerability. When an actor or representative of an organisation trusts another, they are able to assume open and vulnerable positions under the expectation that others will not take advantage (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2007). In the same vein, trust also suggests that actors within a network will take into account other stakeholders' interests when acting. This is related to risk and subsequent innovation, where actors are more prepared to take on risk because they believe the other parties to be trusted. The converse also appears to be the case, with an assumption that parties will not collaborate effectively (in a horizontal setting) should trust be absent. Lastly, trust has a relationship with expectations. The conceptualisation of trust infers a level of stability and predictability both in the intentions and actions of other parties. Trust therefore *“reduces unpredictability, complexity, and ambiguity in interaction because one can anticipate (some of) the behaviour of the other actor”* (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2007: 29).

The centrality of trust within horizontal coordination is based around the assumption that it allows the conditions for cooperation while reducing transaction costs traditionally identified with decision-making, coordination, administration and contract-based mechanisms (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). The other key role of the promotion of trust is its relationship to complex problems solving and innovation. This is particularly pronounced in the exchange of specialist information which rests on the knowledge that not all parts of the network are able to generate individually; in the case of complex needs to bring different knowledge bases round the table

while overcoming long-standing issues in relation to medical model and social models of disability. The same reasoning is applied to processes of change and innovation that can be threatened by unpredictability such as creating sufficient *“control mechanisms against opportunistic behaviour of other actors because nobody can know beforehand what kind of opportunistic behaviour one has to protect against”* (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2007: 32). Trust, therefore, can be used to facilitate innovation by reducing uncertainty around opportunism and the belief in common actions towards a common goal.

Trust is, however, identified within the literature as potentially deficient from two perspectives - between both service ecologies and service-users (or potential service-users) and between services and professionals themselves (Milbourne, 2009). As noted within the historical section of Chapter 1, the dominance of competitive funding regimes and key performance targets has now long been a feature of third sector interaction with the governmental state. As Milbourne identifies in her empirical study of community-based organisations, where competitive cultures between third sector organisations and broader service-to-service interactions are encouraged, not only do more experienced TSOs tend to operate within *“hierarchies of inclusion”* (Milbourne, 2009; 288), the level of trust assumed to be necessary for successful partnership working is undermined. Furthermore, competition can further exacerbate issues of trust through the difficulties in establishing motivations towards horizontal working or to further develop the terrain of openness.

The role of partnerships in the wider system of governance

The plethora of collaborations and partnership working within English social policy should be seen within broader shifts in governance; as responses to the fragmentation of market-based and network models of governance. Within this context the concept of networks has received significant attention (e.g. Hudson, 2004; Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

Partnerships represent the most common form of collaboration yet remains ambiguous in definition. The term 'partnership' is used broadly across academic and policy literature and has acquired a *"strong normative and virtuous association in the contemporary governance Environment"* (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 5). Part of the issue appears to be the differing understandings of partnership based on policy field and differing relationships with the state. Sullivan and Skelcher articulate these dynamics further.

"Voluntary sector definitions of partnership with the state are typically imbued with notions of dialogic and consensual decision-making and inclusive structures and processes. State agencies' views on partnership with the voluntary sector typically operate on design principles of committee decision-making shaped by powerful actors through pre-meeting caucusing" (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 5).

Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) make clear that partnership as organisational structure should be seen as analytically distinct as a form of governance than network as a type of governance.

"The creation of a partnership board does not imply that relations between actors are conducted on the basis of mutual benefit, trust and reciprocity - the characteristics of the network mode of governance" (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998: 314).

This failure to differentiate between partnership as an organisational form and the different modes of coordination that can appear within them continues to cause confusion within the literature and is worth distinguishing here. The literature suggests four key components to understanding the analytical distinction of partnerships as a mode of organisation. First, through the processes of *"joint decision making and production"* (Klijn and Teisman, 2000: 85-86), wherein 'partners' distribute responsibility

for deciding the necessity of group action, the type of action suitable and the ways in which that action should be carried out. Partnership also suggests a series of negotiations from diverse organisations and agencies with an emphasis on building lasting relationships. As such, there is a reflection of mutual dependency and an understanding on what behaviour can be used and what constitutes a violation of trust (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

Partnerships are also designed to add value or benefits that are not deemed possible through singular organisational action or through direct service contracting. Conceptualised as 'collaborative advantage', this requires that autonomous agencies and organisations agree to cede some power and influence while working together so that the potentialities for joint objectives being reached are enhanced. This is also linked to ways in which the collaborative advantage is measured or assessed for all beneficiaries (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

Partnership is thus primarily differentiated from contracts as a mode of coordination in which joint-decision making is intended to be delivered over the long-term. It is differentiated from a network through the formal articulation of purpose and links, usually through the creation of a partnership board. However, as Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) note, such distinctions between collaborative modes of contract, network and partnership rarely appear in idealised form in practice. As Entwistle *et al.*, (2007) note, while partnerships are always to some extent hybrids of coordination:

“the appeal to partnership rhetoric says something (or should say something) about the nature of the co-ordination mix. For a partnership to be a partnership, there really must be a ‘significant degree of network-type co-ordination’ (Entwistle et al., 2007: 76).

As such, this research takes a relatively broad definition of partnerships that can be summarised as:

“negotiation between people from different agencies committed to working together over more than the short term; aims to secure the delivery of benefits or added value which could not have been provided by any single agency acting alone or through the employment of others; and includes a formal articulation of purpose and a plan to bind partners together” (Dickinson and Glasby, 2010: 815).

Approaches to partnership working

Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) summarise theoretical approaches to partnership through the differentiation of *optimist*, *pessimist* and *realist* approaches. Optimist approaches rest on assumptions that partnerships are formed through desires to reach shared visions and a belief that collaboration will intrinsically result in positive outcomes for the whole system. Pessimist approaches envision partnership working through the lens of resource dependency, with one organisation seeking to maintain their power and resources at the expense of another. Finally, a realist approach is drawn to the broader environment where partnership working is a response to shifts in the political economic and social environments. Dickinson and Glasby (2010) add two more categories (see Figure 3). To the three original approaches they add ‘pragmatist’ and ‘memetist’ approaches. Pragmatists view partnership as a form of legitimisation, so as to justify more organisationally self-interested behaviours. The mimetist approach views partnership in more passive terms, as an automatic response to a given issue as it is assumed to be expected of them by local stakeholders.

Figure 3. Perspectives on collaboration

	Optimist	Pessimist	Realist	Pragmatist	Mimetist
Why collaboration happens?	Achieving shared vision	Maintaining/enhancing position	Responding to new environments	Partnership sounds like a positive concept, and it is hard for potential critics to argue against proposed changes	Becoming an automatic policy response to a problem - other people are doing it and it seems to be generally expected.
Key assumptions about other partners	Altruistic	Seeking personal or organisational gain	Realise need to change as society changes	Other stakeholders may object if the real organisational drivers were ever stated	Although not quite sure about specific outcomes, working together in some way must surely be a good thing
Key factors at work	Role of charismatic leaders/boundary spanners	Power or individual partners and desire for survival	Ability to adapt to changing environment	Political and organisational drivers justified in terms of positive outcomes for staff and/or service users	Desire to improve services, but imprecise and slightly naive approach without being clear about desired outcomes.

(Dickenson and Glasby, 2010 adapted from Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

Dickinson and Glasby argue that the:

“efficacy afforded to ‘partnership’ within an English context had perhaps accelerated the uncritical acceptance of this concept, but ultimately risks undermining the crucial role of public agencies working alongside each other for specific purposes” (2010: 815).

This analytical approach is important to the research in three ways. First, it establishes a theoretical grounding that attempts to shield the primary research from some of the confusion that surrounds the literature when partnerships are read as simply forms of network governance. It is, therefore, able to ground the CSP within certain expected life-cycle stages of partnership building. Secondly, it has significant conceptualising power for thinking as to how the governance of and through collaboration might look like as the collaborative project is coming to an end and what implications there are for ‘system change’. For example, the ambitions of sustainable change are altered and seen in new light when considered within the changing imperatives faced by the CSP and the necessary transition from dominant governance modes to others. Finally, it is able to view the workings of partnership and collaboration in relation to the wider contexts of the expanded state and, in particular, the intersections of vertical and horizontal factors and forces that operate between the national and the local.

Multi-agency vs inter-agency working

Joint working is often presented as a panacea to complex, cross-cutting issues. *“Organisations are unlikely to take up co-operation...simply because someone says it would be a good idea”* (Weiss, 1981 cited in Barton and Quinn, 2001: 51). One of the key issues for partnership working remains that evidence suggests that organisations will look to protect both their own autonomy and the procedures by which they have traditionally operated (Barton and Quinn, 2001: Crawford and Jones, 1996: Hudson *et al.*, 1999). There remains a dilemma as to the form of collaboration related to the proposition of conflict, but also of potential reward (Crawford and Jones, 1996; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002).

Crawford and Jones (1996) distinguish between multi-agency working and inter-agency working as ideal types. Multi-agency working identifies organisational collaborations where the work taking place does not significantly threaten the organisational structure or behaviour of each of the actors/agencies. Roles remain distinct, with each organisation retaining their autonomy with regards to core organisational tasks. Barton and Quinn suggest that in this scenario “*multi-agency work is grafted onto existing practices, making joint working as non-threatening as possible*” (2001: 51). The opposing end of the spectrum offered by Crawford and Jones (1996) is represented by inter-agency working, in which the formation of collaborations threatens the independence and identity of each organisation. Distinct working practices are created, with organisations entering into a “*form of inter-penetration*” (Barton and Quinn, 2001: 51). New structures and allegiances are forged under this model, with the recognition that these new dynamics and structures have the ability to threaten established practices and resource dependencies.

Crawford and Jones (1996) suggest a dilemma at the heart of collaborative work based on the recognition of inter-agency working promising greater potential rewards in terms of collaborative activity, while simultaneously increasing the level of threat to single organisational priorities and thus also the potential for inter-agency conflict. This is further problematised when looking at the preference for mandated or heavily vertically encouraged collaboration that formed, for example, a key part of New Labour’s strategy to ‘joined up’ working and governance (e.g. Lupton *et al.*, 2001). The argument here is that mandated joint work, often enforced via legislation, has the capacity to force situations of inter-agency working where local organisation preference may have favoured multi-agency working (Barton and Quinn, 2001).

At the same time, particularly in relation to frontline working with complex needs, there is an expressed recognition of the need for greater interprofessional working.

“Inter-professional working is not about fudging the boundaries between the professions and trying to create a generic care worker. It is instead about developing professionals who are confident in their own core skills and expertise, who are fully aware and confident in the skills of fellow health and care professionals, and who conduct their own practice in a non-hierarchical and collegiate way with other members of the working team, so as to continuously improve the [well-being of individuals and communities” (McGrath, 1991: quoted in Cornes et al., 2011: 521).

Much of the literature around integration related to complex needs is situated around the long-standing ambitions of government, never quite realised, of significant integration between health and social care. As a result, there has been a shift within integration literatures that emphasise contextual issues and local practice as *“crucial elements of integration and not just peripheral to the mechanisms that facilitates this”* and the *“craft and graft of integration”* (Dickinson, 2014: 192). This shows less concern with the definitive structures, mechanisms and processes looking to promote integration and more emphasis on actual practice; an approach that suggests viewing collaboration as sites of diverse actions and even political struggle. It is within this context that craft and graft are necessary in managing those inherent tensions when looking to establish networked or horizontal relationships, representing long-term commitments and difficult labour.

Hybrid local organisations – the challenges of co-option and system change

Where there have been links made towards co-option and ‘transformism’ within parts of the literature around complex needs as to these concerns are contemporary debates around co-option, relatively little attention has been paid to the potential transformative impacts of partnership arrangements or whether they are prone to co-option (Blanco, 2015).

As part of the extensive literatures around the rise of partnerships as policy solution, incorporating state, private and third sector actors has been the relationship between collaboration and ‘hybridity’ (Gross, 2016; Skelcher et al., 2015; Pill and Guearneros-Meza, 2018).

Hybridity in this context refers to the “*combinations of actors, interest, institutions and processes*” (Gross, 2016: 6). Skelcher and Smith conclude that public and third sector organisations do “*play in more than one game*” resulting in “*latent and overt contestation where plural institutional logics interact with actor identity mediated through professional and other structures*” (2015: 444).

Andrews and Entwistle (2010) suggest that hybrid forms of organisation, including partnerships, collaborations and networks are increasingly prevalent within public service configurations based on the presumption that both complexity and specialisation make the outsourcing of specific functions beneficial. While the predominant approach towards these collaborations has been to consider the ability to “*augment relationship capital*” (Andrews and Entwistle, 2010: 679) or collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2005), less attention has been paid to differentiating between what types of organisation are best to partner together and whether collaborations that look to introduce or increase network style qualities are able to produce the anticipated benefits (Provan and Kenis, 2008; Andrews and Entwistle, 2010). There is evidence that partnerships that combine public, non-profit and private sectors can see differing outcomes.

Taking into consideration the arguments made in Chapter 1 in relation to welfare mixes, hybrid organisations have the tendency to take on a myriad of functions that could be seen to be located in different parts of state and civil society; a point well illustrated by the long list of organisations and functions that comprise the CSP. These constituent parts are then subject to differing regimes of accountability that exist at different levels of the expanded state, together with the effects of market competition. Some also have financial gatekeeping functions. Hybrid organisations that are seen by government as Third Sector organisations and representatives of civil society are therefore sites of competing logics and identities. However, the effects of being pulled in different directions has consequences for these hybrid types to undertake transformative change at the local level.

The imperative to collaborate seen at the heart of system change can be seen to expand the potential site of tension, providing potentially competing logics when working with complex needs. One thing missing from many demands for increased collaboration around adults with complex needs and the competing demands made on individuals working as representatives of their organisations is an appreciation of the continued role of advocacy in creating competing logics. It could be that professionals retain citizen-centred focus, though evidence suggests that this appears to often sit in tension with bureaucratic and state demands (Marinetto, 2011; Pill and Guearneros-Meza, 2018).

Street-level bureaucracy as a mediating force

A key question, therefore, is how far local actors are capable of addressing the inhibiting effects of hybridity and mediating the powers of vertical state factors? Here it is argued that it is useful to think of the role of local actors through the lens of ‘street-level bureaucracy’ and the role that this layer of governance plays in the intersections of vertical and horizontal factors.

Hupe and Hill (2007), for example, make the case for including frontline workers (or street-level bureaucrats) within accounts of governance as their own distinct layer, regardless of administrative formality, where governance dynamics can be seen as multiple.

“Governance of and by street-level bureaucrats is practised in a variety of action situations, while street-level bureaucrats are held accountable in various relations: bottom-up as well as top-down, but also ‘sideways” (Hupe and Hill, 2007: 295).

One of the key issues of hybridity, therefore, is that actors working within organisations in the field of complex needs face potentially differing accountabilities and logics in their operational roles and also in their collaborative endeavours. A key tension, for example, can be found between advocacy and co-ordination. Those representing Voluntary and Community

Organisations (VCOs) play key advocacy roles in attempting to represent homeless people's interests, challenging societal attitudes and lobbying for policy change (Renedo, 2014).

Hupe and Hill (2007) illustrate a nuanced analysis, not only of professional agency, but of the ability for horizontal coordination or collaboration to in fact provide additional modes of holding professionals to account. An underexplored potential dynamic within innovative complex needs service provision is the creation of professional linkages that provide horizontal accountabilities.

“Street-level bureaucrats are held accountable in different ways and to varying degrees, but certainly in more ways than strictly from the political centre alone. Within the web of these multiple accountabilities which produce possibly contradictory action imperatives, street-level bureaucrats constantly weigh how to act” (Hupe and Hill, 2007: 296).

Hupe and Hill also proposed that street-level bureaucrats work within *micro-networks* that include both vertical and horizontal relations. *“Street-level bureaucracies are therefore functioning in more or less dense sets of inter-organizational ‘exchanges’ of various forms”* (Hupe and Hill, 2007: 284). As a result, Hill locates street-level bureaucrats as not simply working within organisations but *“essentially located at their boundaries”* (Hill, 2005: 237, original emphasis). This is particularly relevant to frontline workers within complex needs services, but crucially also with regards to strategic actors engaged in the promotion of inter-organisational collaboration. Both sets of actors are consistently in situations where negotiations, bargaining and consensus-building entail a level of agency in articulating and reassembling both organisational priorities and vertical accountabilities. Skelcher and Smith (2015), reflecting on the role of the individual actor when looking at the concept of hybridity in their study of the provision of public services by the third sector, link organisational and individual hybrid dimensions. Put another way, hybridised organisations give rise to hybridised workers. We will see later that the concept of hybridity has a profound effect on the role and identity of particular local actors in the CSP – the ‘keyworker’.

However, the influences of the governmental state are never far away. The relationship between boundary-located street level bureaucrats and powers of mediation appear to differ according to the specificities of national governance systems. Whiteford and Simpson (2016), observe similar dynamics in relation to the development of healthcare standards towards homeless populations. Where administrations in Scotland and Wales are identified as initially engaging in the development of statutory powers and performance monitoring systems in order to attempt to instigate joint service responses between health and housing services, the governance emphasis in England is characterised as one of similar policy development, but with impetus coming primarily from the “*bottom-up*” with Westminster taking on a ‘supportive and advisory role’ so as to “*allow local policy actors to shape policy and drive service innovation*” (Whiteford and Simpson, 2016: 41).

The multi-layered and multi-dimensional terrain, containing both representatives of traditional state institutions and more hybridised and networked based organisations, provides the context in which the role of the CSP and its functions in relation to system change in relation to complex needs can be conceptualised and researched.

Part 4. The Case Study Partnership (CSP): outlining the research environment

The Case Study Partnership – key features

This section provides an initial introduction to the CSP as a site of research, together with its relationship to the concerns of governance and collaboration highlighted within the previous literature reviews. As part of the case study methodology, explained in detail in Chapter 4, it is necessary to provide a description of the key features of the CSP and how they relate to both the issues covered within this chapter and how they represent a researchable project that has the potential to illuminate some of the dynamics discussed.

The site of research identified and approached was a recently established project and partnership with specific aims to improve service delivery towards those with complex needs in a city in

England. Following a successful application for significant funding from a national charity to develop a multi-year long pilot, the 'CSP lead agency' embarked on a dual process of establishing a new frontline service to work with adults with complex needs, while also inviting various partner agencies from the local service ecology to join a newly established partnership board. The site of research, outlined in more detail in Chapter 4, could therefore be identified as organised along two primary tiers of action. It looked to improve outcomes at the level of service delivery through increased collaboration at the strategic level, exemplified by the creation of a formalised partnership, but also with the introduction of a new service that sat alongside existing agencies with direct contact with adults with complex needs to which people could be referred to and assigned a keyworker. This distinct service, offered to those identified as experiencing three out of four needs - homelessness, offending behaviour, substance use and mental ill health - was run directly by the CSP lead agency so as to offer a level of intensity and long-term approach to personalised working that no existing service at that time was able to offer. Both the frontline and strategic approaches represented a joint commitment to 'system change' when looking towards the legacy of the project.

Vangen *et al.*, (2015) encourage framing of the governance of collaboration through three lenses - structure, process and actors. As we will see within Chapter 5, while there were some initial agreements to work together in partnership as part of the bidding process, the experience of the CSP at the strategic level could be characterised as voluntaristic, with no formal hierarchy or powers to hold partnering organisations within the collaborative space. Processes around communication, the sharing of responsibilities and decision making can be seen to emphasise this point, heavily reliant on the establishment of legitimacy through the development of joint plans, regular joint meetings via the partnership board, strategic meetings specifically around system change, with distribution of meeting minutes. The emphasis on learning as a key element of system change also enabled processes of workshops, learning and evaluative materials to be distributed. Within this research, actors are recognised on two levels - those with primary roles around strategy and commissioning and those with more client-facing roles on the frontline.

The frontline ‘keyworker’ role

Rankin and Regan have suggested that inter-organisational collaboration and inter-professional working both at strategic and frontline levels in itself is not necessarily a panacea in relation to this service-user group. While improving collaboration through coordination and co-operation is viewed as a necessary component of any long-term solution, they suggest that the complexity of the service ecologies required the development of a specific mediating role.

“A type of ‘service navigator’ or ‘service advisor’ could be developed who would have knowledge of all mainstream and specialist services, and who would work with the service user to develop a sustained pathway of care. This role would mean that every individual would have a lead professional to case manage their care, ensuring a coherent package of services to meet individual needs” (Rankin and Regan, 2004: 6).

This is particularly relevant for research around the CSP that provides the primary research environment for this study and raised two issues that continue to be worth exploring. One of the innovative parts of the CSP was to follow this model in the creation of a specialist role to work directly with those referred to the service in order to navigate the local service ecology. This role is referred to in generic ‘keyworker’ terms within the case-study. There is a question of specialism that emerges here. Is the introduction of this role a recognition of the need for specialism in complexity and coordination? This is further complicated by the advocacy role that is often associated with the development of these roles (Rankin and Regan, 2004).

The lifecycle of an ‘interdependent’ organisation

Understanding the effects of specific points in the lifecycle of the CSP is also important here. Pollitt identifies the tendency for collaborative projects to report ‘bursts of enthusiasm’ followed by a *“significant falling-away of energy as difficulties creep in over the longer-term”* (2003: 45). My interaction with the CSP was over four years into the project, when strategic and operational relationships should have theoretically been established and the early networking period

completed. One of the key ambitions for the funding organisation for the pilot project was the emphasis on sustainable changes to the broader systems engaging with adults with multiple and complex needs, with innovation looking to influence future service commissioning.

Some claim that organisations not dependent on direct government funding have a level of autonomy from the *"disciplining technologies of performance targets"* (Cloke *et al.*, 2011: 37). This appeared to be one of the promises of the CSP, with the lead agency receiving substantial funding specifically from outside of the governmental state. Chapter 1 explained and analysed the intersections between vertical and horizontal state and civil society factors and forces that mould the terrain for local activity. This chapter has shown local organisations, particularly of the hybridised type, need to be understood neither as pawns of the national state nor as an autonomous entity; rather their role may be better understood as that of mediating intersecting logics and tensions within practice and strategy of collaboration that 'impact those professionals *"ontological experience and knowledge practices"* (Renedo, 2014: 231). In this sense the CSP might be initially viewed not as 'independent', but rather as 'interdependent'.

Part 5. Conclusion – identifying the terrains for research

There have been long standing concerns that literatures around inter-organisational and inter-professional working contain a tendency to stress the inherent value of horizontalist notions of reciprocity and consensus while under-emphasising factors that impair collaboration (Lupton *et al.*, 2001). The starting point of this research project is, therefore, a more agnostic orientation towards collaboration; a position deemed necessary and valuable due to the identification as to the potential for 'network idealism' within some prescriptive system change literatures. One of the reasons proposed for the relative inattention to both barriers and conflict lies in the ways that networks are conceptualised (Lupton *et al.*, 2001). Used in its metaphorical sense, networks promote the idea of *"an inter-connected web of well-established relationships"* (Lupton *et al.*, 2001: 153). As such, the focus replicated in much of the evaluative work completed around complex needs is based on the structural components of a collaborative system. Less attention,

however, has been paid towards the 'dynamics' of inter-organisational and inter-professional networking within a governance environment comprising multiple intersections of vertical and horizontal factors and forces played out at the local level. A focus on the dynamics of relationships in this complex context is able to recognise not only consensus and virtuous partnership working, but also underlying tensions and conflicts that could undermine collaboration and local system change to serve the user-service group. The interlocking terrains of relationships are, therefore, the prime sites of research that focuses, in particular, on the perceptions of key actors – strategic and front-line – who find themselves as mediators in local system management and change.

Chapter 3. Conceptual framework

Introduction – conceptualizing the dynamics of the extended and integral state

Chapter 2 highlighted a tendency within system change literature to advocate increased network governance within the field of complex needs, primarily as a response to the siloed nature of contemporary service provision and the search for collaborative advantage inherent within networked coordination. System change literature around complex needs echoes many of the network governance advocates in contrasting the values and characteristics of networked governance with its relational models of coordination, based on trust and reciprocity with the large and inflexible hierarchies found within public service organisations and “*untrustworthy market-based relationships*” (Dickinson and Sullivan, 2014: 162). Collaboration can be seen to have a discursive relationship with network governance, even though literatures orientate us to acknowledge that collaboration can occur in non-idealised forms, accommodating different ‘mixes’ of hierarchies, markets and networks. It is these ‘non-idealised’ forms of networking that were of particular interest in the research.

This part of the thesis develops a conceptual framework to inform the primary research strategy, the reporting and analysis of the data collected as part of the case-study strategy, explained in more detail in the Chapter 4. This conceptual exercise looks to synthesise primary understandings, in the form of three propositions, built from the literature reviews around governance, collaboration and innovation within public service provision.

1. That state power can be conceptualised in relation to dominant modes of governance as part of an ‘expanded’ or ‘integral’ understanding – governmental state plus civil society. The analytical parameters of this approach allows for an understanding of hierarchies or systems of vertical coordination as a persistent influence on the construction of new horizontalities expressed through attempts to collaborate at the local level.

2. That there is value when thinking about ‘change’ in exploring those intersections of existing verticalities in relation to centre-local relationships and efforts to change the ‘mix’ of coordination towards more horizontal ways of working. The conceptual framework concerns itself with the role of self-organisational models of power and action in realising stated ambitions, while recognising that those models of self-organisation are themselves in a series of interactive relationships with vertical dynamics.
3. That these interactions can be analysed within a wider dialectical framework that is able to conceptualise processes of adaptation and mediation on the parts of both organisations and professionals working within them (see Figure 5).

As such, the conceptual model retains the potentiality for continued motivational impetus not simply placed at the local level but to understand hierarchical power from the ‘integral’ centre operating in an extended state. Yet, while the model retains a level of this understanding, it simultaneously draws attention to the ways in which this power is potentially realised, mediated and resolved at the local level. Chapter 2 reviewed literatures on the ways in which state strategy is both actualised and contested for those working towards change in relation to collaboration.

Part 1. Issues around evaluating collaboration (and limits of the framework)

How do we look to assess collaboration in the field? There are significant difficulties in establishing forms of assessment and evaluation of collaboration at the local level and relationships to broader governance trends. Torfing *et al*, (2019) define *effective* governance as a “*coordinated mobilization and deployment of resources, ideas and energies that contribute to the solution of policy problems or the provision of new opportunities*” (166-167). This offers a sound foundation as to the aims of increased collaboration in the field of complex needs and appears important in relation to the CSP as the implementation of horizontalist modes of coordination and working together is justified through aims towards collaborative effect. Collaborative forms of governance appear often as the assumed response to fragmentation and

silo-based service delivery systems. Yet the literature review and the conceptual framework draws attention to the ways in which actors situated at various locations within the strategic and service delivery systems that are subject to potentially contradictory logics; that of working horizontally towards innovation in line with the ideals of collaborative governance and the ongoing need to respond to state regulation and discipline.

In this dynamic governance context the assessment and evaluation of collaborative forms of organising remains contested. 'Effectiveness' is notoriously difficult to measure and needs to be understood in terms of 'effectiveness to what ends?' Chapter 2 identified the continued evidence of network idealism taking a prescriptive function despite evidence that collaborations often appear to fail on their own terms. Kenis and Provan note that this is particularly acute in the assumption that networks provide an effective "mechanism for encouraging collaboration, building community capacity, and for enhancing organizational and client-level outcomes" (Kenis and Provan, 2009: 440). Despite leaving the state of "network euphoria" (Kenis and Provan: 440) wherein the presence of networks is inherently considered beneficial, studies as to their effectiveness are still relatively rare particularly when the network itself is the unit of analysis. Kenis and Provan argue that to consider effectiveness of a network the entire network performance needs to be taken into account. Crucially, they point out that failure to specify what *type* of outcome the 'conditions or success factors contribute produces problematic recommendations' (Kenis and Provan, 2009: 442).

"It makes a difference, for instance, whether a health and human services network is assessed on its productivity or on the quality of care it provides. It has been shown again and again that most common criteria of performance are statistically uncorrelated. This implies that the same object of evaluation can receive a positive assessment on one criterion while at the same time receiving a negative assessment on another criterion" (2009: 442).

They warn of the potential for *operationalism*, that is implying scores as to measurements towards performance without being clear as to what in fact these measures operationalise. Any measurement of collaboration is both difficult in practice in establishing causality with multiple, intersecting and interdependent factors, but also in theory.

“It is far more difficult to first answer the question, ‘what is performance?’ and then to answer the question, ‘how should performance be measured?’” (Kenis and Provan, 2009: 442).

It is, therefore, common within literatures around network governance and performance to use the development or identification of values or behaviours often identified as crucial to horizontal working (e.g. trust or commitment), yet again this remains contentious. This shifts the focus away from effectiveness, performance and outcomes and towards the success in establishing new ways of working and behaving.

As such, this research does not look to address the measurement of collaboration in this way. Better equipped evaluation of the CSP is already in process with clearer links to effectiveness and outcomes and is beyond the scope of single-researcher study. Where this research could be of use to that process is to add a theory-driven exploration of some of the dynamics occurring within that search for ‘effectiveness’.

Part 2. Constructing the conceptual framework – verticalities, horizontalities and intersections

“Collaborations for public purpose, therefore, are about both the formal structures that emerge and the micro-politics of individual actors as their roles intersect across organizational, sectoral and geographical boundaries” (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002: 1-2)

Both a Gramscian influenced reading of meta-governance (e.g. Jessop, 2002; Whitehead, 2003) and the 'integral' nature of the state utilised by J. Davies (2011) focus the analysis towards the intersections of 'vertical' (hierarchical) and horizontal (networked) systems of coordination. As such, the research is orientated towards the *negotiated links* which are "*forged and contested between government and governance (or political bureaucracies and civil society; politicians and entrepreneurs; state rationalities and market forces)*" (Whitehead, 2003: 5). The previous two chapters have outlined how the governance, institutions and coordination mechanisms employed within complex services in England have significantly changed both horizontally as a response to fragmentation and vertically through processes of devolution. Yet both meta-governance and integral state analysis stress the persistent influence of hierarchical power in "*ratifying, licensing and guiding economic and political activity*" (Whitehead, 2003: 8). This approach, therefore, draws attention to the *structuration* (Whitehead, 2003) or *dialectical* interactions (J. Davies, 2011; Evans, 2001; Marsh and Smith, 2000) between self-organisational networks and the hierarchies in which they are embedded; what Jessop refers to as "*negotiated decision-making*" (Jessop, 2001: 17). As such, the conceptual framework attempts to provide a distinctive meso-level (middle range) analysis that recognises the difficulties in applying macro-level theory (in this case relating to the national expanded state) to concrete situations where processes of mediation are taking place and in applying micro-level analysis (level of the network) that can underestimate the impact of structural factors.

"Operating at the 'meso-level acts as a corrective device for ensuring that policy scientists don't lose sight of the macro- or micro- level questions, while simultaneously observing that much policy making takes place within multi-layered, self-organizing, inter-organizational networks" (Evans and Davies, 1999: 363).

However, there should be a note of caution in relation to this approach, primarily linked to the pursuit of a single case study that emerges in a critique from Bevir and Rhodes (2016) towards such 'mid-level commitments' (2016: 3). Bevir and Rhodes, taking an explicitly anti-foundational

approach, argue for de-centred accounts of governance that suggests a radical critique of the idea any level of fixed or uniform accounts of governance that operate on a *“reified notion of structure rooted in an explicit, formal logic”* (Bevir and Rhodes, 2016: 3). Where the use of governance theory can tend to emphasise generalisations and singular narratives, a de-centred approach explicitly prioritizes the potentially conflicting beliefs and practice of agents, thus rejecting linear accounts. For Bevir and Rhodes, this means rejecting structural accounts of governance towards an embrace of ‘situated agents’, focusing on the *“historicist genealogies of rationalities, ruling, and resistance”* (Bevir and Rhodes, 2016: 13).

The benefit of these arguments in relation to constructing a conceptual framework that it provides a way of looking at the micro-politics of individuals when offering a qualitative research study bound in one location. Through its articulation of the importance of meaning-making, beliefs and contingencies a de-centred analysis provides a way of approaching the field with an alternative micro-perspective to rational choice theory, that is the proposition of individual action always selecting *“the option among those available which they prefer rather than the one(s) they do not prefer...they maximise their marginal utility”* (Dowding, 1991: 23 cited in Bevir and Rhodes, 2016: 3).

While this conceptual framework is influenced by the positioning towards the actors located within the service and strategic ecology around complex needs found within de-centred approaches and recognises the need to explore agency within the field rather than assumptions of linear, uncompromised or technocratic accounts, it does not follow the proposition of Bevir and Rhodes that *only* narratives can provide explanatory value or that *only* the ideas and beliefs of actors can explain both state and social phenomena (Goodwin and Grix, 2010). Instead, it is influenced by Goodwin and Grix’s ‘border area’ approach to paradigmatic conceptions of foundationalism and anti-foundationalism, wherein the value of the de-centred approach is acknowledged without a commitment to an explicitly anti-foundational ontological stance, thus separating the de-centred approach from some of the interpretivist assumptions committed to

by Bevir and Rhodes. Goodwin and Grix (2010) term this position as ‘hard interpretivism’, rejecting the proposition that structures and institutions can only be explained when “*reduced to the beliefs and practices of individuals*” (2010: 541). While embracing the de-centred critique of positivism and an approach that emphasises meaning and interpretation, this research looks to combine ‘hard interpretivism’ with a dialectical approach explained below.

“So, agents matter. It is agents who interpret and negotiate constraints or opportunities. However, these agents are located within a structured context, which is provided by both the network and the broader political and social-structural context within which the network operates and those contexts clearly affect the actor’s resources. Most significantly, the agents do not control either aspect of that structured context. At the same time, they do interpret that context and it is as mediated through that interpretation that the structural context affects the strategic calculations of the actors” (Marsh and Smith, 2000: 6-7).

The focus on actors also reflects the case study strategy that is highly dependent on context and time (Torfing *et al.*, 2019: 87). However, it was felt that a model was needed that could include the perspectives of micro-politics, while not cutting off the relationship to macro and meso level dynamics (Hudson, 2004).

Vertical and horizontal axes – 45-degree analysis

The reviews of governance, collaboration and system change literatures have acknowledged recurring themes that inform the data analysis - power, agency, trust, reciprocity. Both chapters and the understandings gained from a more critical approach to governance and collaboration, emphasise the need for an analytical model that is able to capture the tensions and potentially competing logics of participants working within conflicted environments. The conceptual framework has acknowledged these influences in adapting Lawson’s model of ‘45-degree change’ (2019). Within this broad illustrative model, Lawson offers a way of conceptualising

change as dependent on the interaction of institutions and civil society. Lawson uses this model in a prescriptive sense to emphasise the need for combinational approaches of vertical power in the form of the Governmental State with the horizontal/networked power located in Civil Society. A metaphorical '45 degree' line is situated between these two axes around which those combinations take place.

Adapting the 45-degree framework, the conceptual model used to guide data analysis reimagines interactions taking place as related to the combinations of 'vertical' and 'horizontal' forms of governance. The 'vertical' axis represents hierarchical coordination, primarily in the form of policy directives and performance management systems. The horizontal axis represents collaborative forms of coordination, defined by lateral forms exchange and activity. As such, it bares similarities to Torfing *et al.*'s (2019) conceptualisation of vertical and horizontal forms of governance associated with their proposition of *interactive* governance.

"In interactive governance, horizontal governance is a strategy to address coordination problems. Such problems are not solved by the exercise of formal hierarchical command; had that been possible there would not have been very many cases of lack of coordination. Instead, coordination is attained through webs of more informal interaction. Vertical governance, on the other hand, could be seen as a meta-governance strategy to facilitate and steer interlocal and regional cooperation" (Torfing *et al.*, 2019: 103).

The research is orientated towards the intersections of these dynamics, suggesting that participants who are working within service and strategic innovation models and looking to increase the power of the 'horizontal' or 'networked' exchanges will have to do so through the resolution of potentially contradictory imperatives from the centre. This also leaves the potential for a dynamic wherein the state/vertical augments the scope for horizontal exchange.

Exploring the intersections

The framework is thus intended not as empirical measurement, but as an illustrative, relational model used to locate various points of intersection required to explore the potential assemblages that strategic actors and frontline workers have to negotiate. The model simultaneously leaves open to the potential for tensions to be resolved in unequal ways. However, to further investigate how these interactions work and to provide a more robust frame towards those interactions in relation to conceptualising the nature and degree of coordination within the collaborative environment of the CSP, the theoretical framework draws on the work of organisational theorist J.K. Benson (1975; 1977), a key inspiration for some of the first-wave governance accounts (e.g. Rhodes, 1996). Benson's influence can be seen with two key understandings; from a positional view that researchers around organisations and networks should take on a dialectical approach committed to exploring how contradictions within fields could be understood in relation to emancipatory ends and a resource-dependency framework towards inter-organisational networks and collaborations that emphasises the need to analyse surface collaborative relations with an understanding of deeper patterns of resource distribution and acquisition (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2008).

Part 3. Introducing the Benson model

A dialectical view

"A dialectical view is fundamentally committed to the concept of process. The social world is in a continuous state of becoming - social arrangements which seem fixed and permanent are temporary, arbitrary patterns and any observed social pattern are regarded as one among many possibilities" (Benson, 1977: 3).

What do we mean by a dialectical approach? Evans (2001) suggests that in the absence of a detailed definition that the term can be open to misinterpretation. Marsh and Smith in their exploration policy networks take a relatively loose definition of dialectical as an 'interactive

relationship between two variables in which each affects the other in a continuing iterative process' (2000: 5). Using this approach, the authors outline three interactive or dialectical relationships which can be similarly applied to that of inter-organisational relationships in relation to complex needs - *'between the structure of the network and the agents operating within them; the network and the context within which it operates; and the network and the policy outcome'* (Marsh and Smith, 2000: 20). They use the debate around structure and agency to illustrate their meaning.

"Here, action is taken by an actor within a structured context. The actor brings strategic knowledge to the structured context and both that strategic knowledge and the structured context help shape the agent's action. However, the process is one of almost constant iterations, as the action affects both the actor's strategic knowledge and the structured context, which then, in turn, shape, but of course do not determine, the agent's future action" (Marsh and Smith, 2000: 5).

Evans (2001), while embracing the acknowledgement of complexity and interaction, suggests that for the language of dialectics to be used it should be understood how the idea suggests not only interaction, but also the probability of tension and contradiction. Benson's articulation of a dialectical approach embraces those distinctions, identifying four dialectical principles that should shape a dialectical approach to network analysis - social construction, totality, contradiction and praxis.

Social construction

Benson's articulation of social construction is exemplified through his understanding of the social reproduction occurring within existing structural constraints – *"The production of social structure, then, occurs within a social structure"* (Benson, 1977: 3). Relating this to both strategic and frontline collaboration in the field of complex needs, this orientates the research to consider the ways in which those collaborative forms are established, maintained and reproduced. These

represent the dialectics of structure and agency, *“where social structures endow the actors attempting to maintain and transform them with causal powers”* (J. Davies, 2011: 126), through ideas and actions, interests and articulations of differentiated or asymmetric power relations.

Totality

“Networks should be understood within a broader totality of governance with multiple interpenetrating levels and sectors” (Evans, 2001: 546). The principle of totality suggests ways in which the collaboration relates to broader macro-structural features such as the broader political economy and state verticalities, and also towards the everyday activities of people and a more horizontal world of social exchanges. Evans (2001) uses Benson’s dialectical approach when considering policy networks, recognising two levels of organisational reality; that of morphology which refers to the conventionally accepted view of the organisation or network distinguished by network goals, structures, rules and linkages, and that of substructure. Sub-structure for a network provides the basis for changes in the network morphology, referring to the underlying processes that produce and sustain the observable patterns of organisational and professional behaviour. The governance approach and historical sections in the literature review are intended to provide some of the necessary context for the exploration of mediation and understanding by stakeholders within the network.

Contradiction

Contradiction remains the essence of dialectical accounts, including those ‘contradictions constitutive of a social order and contingent or secondary contradictions capable of resolution without threatening the order itself’ (J. Davies, 2011: 126). Evans (2001) urges caution when applying the notion of contradiction to networks. Should change in networks be understood as dependent on exogenous dynamics?

“We can, however, generate the proposition that even if the origin of change is exogenous to the network, the forces of change are likely to impact on the behaviour of actors within

the network which could stimulate ruptures, inconsistencies and incompatibilities in the fabric of interpersonal relations” (Evans, 2001: 547).

Praxis

Praxis refers to the potentialities for transformation and conscious resistance, the *“free and creative reconstruction of social arrangements on the basis of a reasoned analysis of both the limits and the potentials of present social forms”* (Benson, 1977: 5). Within collaborative structures this could mean that actors within networks retain the ability to shape and introduce new ideas, shifting away from deterministic readings and towards a more complex set of arrangements. Dialectical analysis is intended to aid this process through the *“de-reifying established social patterns and structures”* (Benson, 1977: 6). Benson goes on to describe the eventual outcome.

“From a dialectical perspective, then, specific theories are not in any simple sense to be set aside. Rather, they are to be superseded in a more encompassing framework” 1977: 17).

Benson articulated these principles not as a substantive theory of organisations, but as an approach to the *‘active reconstruction of organisations’* (1977: 19). J. Davies (2011), however, goes further and suggests that there is a set of dialectical relationships between *“connectionist ideology and the material conditions undermining it”* (J. Davies, 2011: 127).

In order to add another dimension to the exploration, this research looks to use an adapted version of Benson’s inter-organisational network as a ‘political economy’ as a means of exploring the relationships between the operational network actually existing on the ground while being able to link it to broader concerns around governance. As such, the use of Benson’s key concepts are used as a relational guide and not a form of measurement.

While writing in the 1970's, Benson's work around organisational theory was highly influential in the first wave of governance theory (e.g. Rhodes 1996), yet has been largely "neglected" (Hudson, 2004: 82) in recent application. The framework rests on the proposition that an inter-organisational network can be conceived as a micro-political economy primarily concerned with the exchange and distribution of two scarce resources - political power and economic capital (Benson, 1975). This 'resource dependency' approach located within the broader perspective of *exchange theory*, proposes that rather than altruism defining collaborative ventures, individual and group interests are multiple and divergent, resulting in competition, bargaining and conflict (Hudson et al. 1999). This is not to say that inter-organisational collaboration or networks are impossible or undesirable but, instead, works to 'problematise' collaboration (Hudson *et al.*, 1999) and present attempts at joint working as sites of contested relations.

Defining networks in a broad manner as "*a number of distinguishable organisations, having a significant amount of interaction with each other*" (1975: 230), Benson sought to embed these collaborative relations within broader political and economic forces as a response to traditional organisational studies' reluctance to engage with macrostructure (Boschken, 2017). In doing so, he argued that inter-organisational networks should be analysed in terms of two partially autonomous, but related concepts; that of superstructure (operational relationships) and substructure (contextual influences).

Superstructure: operational relationships

For Benson, the superstructure of an inter-organisational network can be found at the site of service delivery and core functions that represents the traditional site of organisational studies. It is contended that effective partnership working in network settings depends on the degree of 'equilibrium' across four key dimensions, with networks in states of strong equilibrium characterised by high levels of coordination, positive levels of cooperation, consensus and mutual respect.

Domain consensus - agreement as to the appropriate role and scope of each agency.

Ideological consensus - agreement regarding the nature of the tasks faced, together with agreement as to the best strategies for achieving them.

Positive evaluation - towards members of one organisation to the work of others.

Work-coordination - alignment of working patterns and culture.

This “*super-structure of sentiments and interactions*” (Benson, 1975: 235) represents a dynamic model of a provider network, with a basic systems theory approach that proposes that each of these dimensions, or “*components of equilibrium*” (Lupton *et al.*, 2001: 16) interact with each other so that improvements or decline in one dimension will lead to improvements (or decline) in others, often taking on dynamism towards or away from equilibrium before reaching a new settlement. However, equilibrium imbalances are possible to maintain and will impact on how the network operates. Benson identifies three typologies of operational imbalance.

Forced coordination - high levels of work coordination, low levels of domain and ideological consensus and positive evaluation.

Consensual inefficiency - high levels of domain and ideological consensus and positive evaluation, but low levels of work coordination.

Evaluative imbalance - high levels of work coordination, domain and ideological consensus, but low levels of positive evaluation.

Lupton *et al.*, (2001) make three additional theoretical possibilities of ideal-typical states.

Evaluative inefficiency - high positive evaluation, but low ideological and domain consensus.

High levels of ideological and domain consensus, but poor work coordination.

Forced consensus - negative evaluation.

These conceptual typologies for thinking about the surface level of collaborative relations within a network provide useful tools for the deductive thematic analysis of the data collection discussed below, with the ability to demonstrate levels of equilibrium helpful in illustrating areas of network effectiveness or weakness.

Substructure - contextual influences

However, to understand *why* the network has the surface characteristics that it does, Benson argued that it is vital to complement an understanding of the superstructure with analysis of “*deeper and more fundamental processes*” (Benson, 1975: 231) at the ‘sub-structural’ level that influence the behaviour of the organisations that make up the network. Rather than the starting point of analysis being the provider networks; instead analysis turns to that of ‘policy networks’ which are defined as:

“a cluster or complex of organisations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies” (Benson, 1982: 148).

These sub-structural networks also have four identified components (Hudson, 2004).

The fulfilment of programme requirements - each organisation’s key service delivery objectives.

The maintenance of a clear domain of high social importance - ensuring or increasing public legitimacy and support for the service agenda.

Maintenance of resource flows - being able to access adequate funding.

The application of defence of the organisational paradigm - a commitment to certain ways of working based on technologies and ideologies.

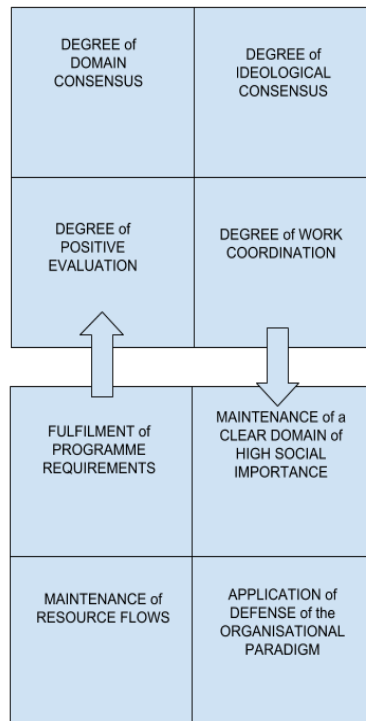
Applied in this way, the dynamics of an inter-organisational network should be viewed as a small-scale political economy in which participants behaviour is largely conditioned by a need to secure

these sub-structural objectives (see Figure 4). Benson’s identification of the criteria that govern inter-agency relations is enhanced with further articulations of equilibrium situations. Where a policy network is structured in a way that all organisations are able to meet their needs in relation to capital and authority without competition or domain disputes then effective collaboration is more likely to be successful (Hudson, 2004). Where disequilibrium situations are identified, with organisations forced into competitive behaviours where they actively struggle to defend resources, then this will also impact on the relations viewed at the level of superstructure.

“Agencies can agree on matters of domain and ideology only to the extent that such an agreement does not threaten their interests” (Benson, 1975: 237).

Figure 4. *Relationship between superstructure and substructure* (Hudson, 2004: 84)

SUPER-STRUCTURE: OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



SUB-STRUCTURE: CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Power, resources and legitimacy

The model also allows for differing levels of power, resources and legitimacy within inter-organisational networks, with some organisations being in better situations to both defend and augment their broader organisational objectives. This relative power is established from both location within the network (for example, this may apply to NHS services that have access to state legitimacy and resources), or from organisational links to wider patterns of social organisation (for example political parties, interest groups, social movements). Individual organisations may be in a position to leverage this power so as to further ensure their access to resources and political power.

Beyond the operation of the network, Benson goes on to make the case that this micro political economy should be understood in its full context (a political economy within a political economy), providing the basic terms and conditions in under which the network operates, determining supply of capital and authority. These contextual factors begin from administrative arrangements and service paradigms, which may dictate the mix of resource dependencies operating within inter-organisational networks. For example, the increased role of private sector provision within public services can be viewed as a deliberate attempt to alter resource dependencies that previously underpinned the dominant trends of post-war Britain (Ferguson, 2004). Power and interest group structures also impact on the dynamics of policy sectors, which may be influenced by the particular combination of the interests of demand groups (usually service-users), support groups (those providing political or financial resources), administrative groups, provider groups and coordination groups (regulatory groups). Tensions between these interest groups will inform the policy sector along with broader administrative changes and policy paradigms (Lupton *et al.*, 2001).

Furthermore, the operation of a policy sector is fundamentally constrained by the rules of 'structure formation', which are derived from the nature and operation of the state in capitalist societies. There are two fundamental kinds of rules; 'negative selection rules' - those that would

violate the essential character of the capitalist state, and ‘positive selection rules’ - those that further contribute to the reproduction of the state’s social formation. While these rules are not unbreakable, they act as restrictions on policy sector ambitions for change, placing boundaries on the operation of a sector without “*eliciting a counteraction*” (Benson, 1982: 161). However, Lupton *et al.*, (2001) infer that contradictions within the reproduction of the state’s social formation may cause significant structural re-organisation, pointing to the ways in which processes of reform within health and social care have been linked to the inherent crises of capital accumulation that impacts on the ability and desire of the state in the provision of welfare. It could be argued that post-2008 financial crisis, this idea is increasingly important in looking at the patterns of public service delivery in a time where there have been significant reductions in state spending.

Part 4. Application of the Benson model

The attraction of Benson’s model is therefore predicated on three main propositions:

1. The framework operates at multiple levels, both guiding an exploration of the inter-organisational dynamics occurring at the micro level of service delivery/provider network, while also urging the recognition of the material conditions that underpin those connectionist ambitions and actions. Within the social-economic context of reduced levels of public spending post-2008, this model appears able to generate new knowledge in the current political-economic context.
2. The framework appears a suitable component for a single case-study with the ability to capture change within a network rather than simply functional descriptions. It allows the mapping of relevant policy networks and their relationships towards the identified inter-organisational network, providing a holistic view of networks in action that can contribute to the trend towards “*whole systems working*” (Hudson, 2004: 76).

- The model retains an agnosticism as to the preferability of network modes of coordination and is able to capture dynamism within the system, including the tendencies of some networks to revert to hierarchies, competitive or hybrid modes of operation highlighted by sections of the literature review. The ability to look at the dynamics operating within and around the network may reveal underlying tensions and conflicts that surface level accounts of formal structure are unable to identify, while the ability to capture *change* is essential in the provision of “*evidence as to the dominant governance principles*” Huxham, *et al.*, 2000: 338).

Figure 5. *The Double Dialectic - combining the dialectics 45-degree change analysis and Benson’s dialectical political economy model*

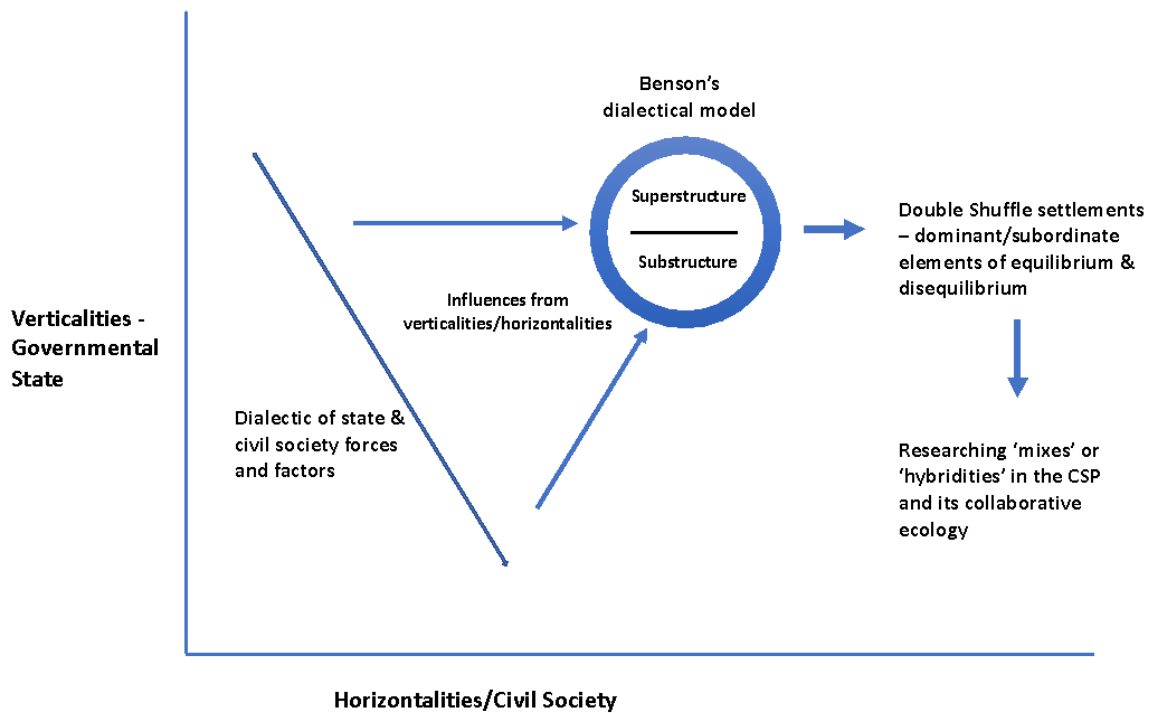


Figure 5, representing the operative conceptual framework in its totality, comprises a Gramscian adaptation of Benson’s double political economy concept. It fuses a governance-led analysis of 45-degree change with Benson’s dialectical equilibrium’ model in which the dialectic of wider

relationships with the extended and integral state (verticalities and horizontalities) provide the wider framework within which a sub-set of dialects of relationships operate within a particular setting. The fundamental interactions between different locations and forces of the expanded state (Governmental State + Civil Society) can be seen to produce a series of equilibria or 'settlements' in which each settlement represents a 'balance of forces' of dominant and subordinate elements, conceptualised in Chapter 6 through Hall's (2005) 'Double Shuffle' combinational politics. The combining of these elements produces a 'conjuncture' or 'moment' that is more or less stable. These correspond to Benson's different conditions of equilibrium and disequilibrium that could be manifested in the form of particular mixes of hierarchy, networks and markets or various forms of hybridity manifested at the local level.

Part 5. Conclusion – the research implications of a dualist view

The key idea proposed in this dual model is that a dialectical account of these interactions suggests the potential for adaptive or hybrid resolutions in particular local settings – in this case the CSP and its collaborative ecology. Yet it appears unlikely that these resolutions or settlements will be equal in power. One of the key questions, therefore, that the conceptual framework poses for the research is to how these dynamics are resolved. Are certain dynamics more powerful and, therefore, take a more dominant role in the interaction? When considering models of innovation and change, these dynamics not only have the potential to be shaping at the level of practice and place, but also should be considered when considering potential barriers to scale and ambition. Both concepts of meta-governance and the integral state essentially pull together around the same issue, that of the ability of the governmental state to shape local boundaries on the terrains of civil society. Where a pluri-centric account of meta-governance focuses on the role of the 'meta-governors', the use of the integral state suggests a more potentially coercive understanding. This raises at least two questions for research in the field – how far would there be active engagement of the vertical state in the process of potential system change and how far would local actors be able to forge space for new collaborative relationships as the basis for system change?

Chapter 4. Research approach

Introduction

Purposes of the chapter

The purpose of this research is to consider ways of researching the intersections of governance and inter-organisational collaboration for services and professionals working with adults with complex needs. As discussed in the previous chapters, while inter-organisational collaboration has been routinely identified as a key component to the dynamic of 'system failure/system change' in relation to how complex needs is conceptualised and addressed, further understanding is required as to how intersections manifest themselves on local terrains. It is in this context that the aims of this research centre around an exploration of both human agency and state power in practice. To achieve this, the data collection, distillation and analysis was located at the local level, using a case study strategy to explore the experiences of professionals working within a pilot partnership located within one locality. As such it can be seen as part of a broader effort to add empirical data and analysis of collaborative behaviours at the local/micro level, responding to the call from Huxham and Beech (2008: 566-8) for further research at this level so as to provide the *"missing link"* within inter-organisational relations and network understanding.

This chapter summarises and explains the primary research questions and their relationships with the contextual and theoretical issues developed within the literature reviews. It contextualises the decision to pursue a case study strategy that provided the necessary integrity and cohesiveness to address such methodological issues such as validity, generalisation and triangulation as well as the philosophical considerations that are implicit within the strategy. It describes the decisions concerning appropriate methodologies and research methods, distillation of data and analysis so as to meet the overall research aims, while also addressing the ethical issues that emerged.

Research aims and questions

Chapter 1 established three primary research aims:

1. To explore debates around the role of the state in relationship to collaborative working to support adults with complex needs.
2. To understand the role of local stakeholders and actors involved in complex governance relationships.
3. To consider the impact of these dynamics on different scenarios of system change.

The research questions reflect the multi-tier concerns of the overall study. Question 1 is primarily concerned with the macro-level of central policy and legislation that impact on the local expressions of inter-organisational collaboration, providing the contextual analysis in which the local primary data sits. Question 2 shifts towards the meso- and micro-level of analysis, using local empirical data to explore the question. Question 3 focuses on how these two levels interact in ways that may shape the ways in which inter-organisational collaboration can be envisaged and acted upon as part of system change.

Q1. What are the essential governance dynamics influencing the development of local collaboration in relation to complex needs?

The literature review has attempted to establish the foundational knowledge for this question, providing an overview of the current relationships between central and local in relation inter-organisational collaboration in relation to complex needs. The review of governance-related literatures has characterised the field as one that is highly complex, with often unacknowledged conflicts and tensions. Chapter 1 built a conceptual framework inspired by a Gramscian reading of meta-governance theory (Jessop, 1997; Whitehead, 2003), which is concerned with the 'negotiated links' between government and governance within existing hegemonic relationships,

suggesting that the resolution of those dynamic tensions could have a significant impact on the potential trajectories of what is termed within the field 'system change'. The building of this conceptual framework thus poses the question as to the dominant characteristics of these hegemonic relationships and how they interact with the local practice of inter-organisational collaboration in the field of complex needs.

Through purposive sampling guided by the conceptual framework, the primary research looked to capture, distil and analyse the views and experiences of stakeholders identified and approached due to their position both vertically (between 'strategic' and 'frontline' roles) and horizontally (across service boundaries). The key issue here is the relationship between how local actors perceive their own roles, together with the organisation that they represent, in the context to the central/local verticalities, responding to the challenge as to how to evidence the 'shadow of hierarchy' in an extended state. These issues present evidence-based challenges that led to particular forms of inquiry within the case and a focus on in-depth interviews with actors occupying various intersecting locations. The reintroduction of the state towards the CSP without direct state control poses questions as to the degree of framing at the local level and the degree to which this 'shadow' was accepted or challenged by the various actors or social partners.

Q2. How do stakeholders and local actors 'mediate' central forces and local conditions to collaborate in relation to working with those with complex needs?

Question 2 moves directly from the macro-level of analysis towards the meso- and micro levels of practice. It asks how the vertical forces and the policy desire for a more horizontal set of relationships are understood and acted upon at that local level, with those perspectives distinguished not only by positionality to the state, but also within organisations themselves. It also looks to the practical issues concerning forms of collaboration that are actually taking place within and around the identified CSP; the technologies of coordination being used; and what changes towards these types of collaboration have been instigated by the establishment of a

partnership. The research aims to tell the stories of those operating at the identified locations and explore the meanings established by key stakeholders at this particular point in the lifespan of the CSP.

3. What possibilities of system change arise from the analysis of settlements/equilibrium in relation organisational collaboration and complex needs?

Finally, the research attempts to establish potential relationships between the practice of inter-organisational collaboration in the field and the potentialities of 'system change'. Acknowledged as a stated ambition of the CSP and more broadly amongst similar projects around the country, there is a level of ambiguity around the term, which the literature review has suggested is open to contestation and redefinition. This research re-conceptualises the terrains of network activity in relation to the continued existence of vertical coordination that could give rise to differing versions of 'system change' as contradictions and tensions around the ambition for different types of horizontal coordination are resolved (or not). One of the primary contributions to knowledge of this thesis is to identify different versions of system change taking place within these intersecting conditions. In doing so, the research probes these different potentialities and dynamics, and as guided by the conceptual framework, what conditions might make them more likely to occur. At the local level, where most of the data collection took place, questions were included within the interview schedules around what local actors expected in relation to system change, giving space to their own articulations of the dominant dynamics moving forward. However, with this question representing a synthesis of the multi-level research approach, it could not be simply addressed through literature reviews and fieldwork, but also requires analysis. The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the key features of the site of research (the CSP) before looking to discuss each of the components that make up the research strategy.

The Case Study Partnership (CSP)

The site of research was a project and partnership established specifically to improve service delivery towards those with complex needs, located within a city in the Midlands, England. The collaboration was initiated by the 'CSP Lead Agency', formed as an outgrowth of a housing organisation, who secured multi-million pound funding from a national charity for an 8 year-long pilot project with the intention to explore, test and evaluate new ways of providing joined-up and person-centred support for adults experiencing complex needs. As discussed in Chapter 2, the decisions taken by the CSP lead agency led to a hybrid state of both singular new frontline service working directly with those with complex needs, while simultaneously incorporating partners from the local service ecology at the level of strategy, formalised through the creation of a partnership board. Partners with both statutory and non-statutory responsibilities were approached at the beginning of the project, though no direct financial incentive was given. There was, however, an understanding in the initial phases that the bid for funding was an opportunity for significant resources to be brought into the city. As such, a high level of freedom in terms of organisational and partnership design had the potential to be realised at the local level, with relatively little prescription from the funding charity, other than a commitment to collaborative working and to constant evaluation and learning. Both frontline and strategic components were intended to contribute to a shared commitment to working towards, and better understanding, the potential for 'system change'.

In efforts to protect anonymity all services and locations are described in generic terms. Partners at the time of the research included:

- A Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) outreach service
- A Drug and alcohol service
- A Homeless support centre
- A Charity and housing association
- A Community and voluntary support service

- Health commissioning organisation
- The City Council
- The local healthcare trust
- The local police service
- A community rehabilitation company
- A women's centre
- A social enterprise specialising in advocacy.

As a hybrid project, incorporating both a new frontline service and a strategic consisting of existing services in the locality, the CSP was identified as a space in which multiple dynamics could potentially be observed at once in relation to both governance and more specifically complex needs. With regards to governance, while the CSP lead agency looked to formally bring organisations together, the largely voluntary status of the partnership headed by a third sector organisation, together with the multiple and varied sets of relationships between partner organisations and the state, was considered an important component of considering how actors and organisations looked to mediate and expand their horizontal actions with ongoing vertical commitments. Simultaneously, the CSP represented an important example of contemporary approaches to complex needs, where increased collaboration at the local level has been identified within the literature review as a crucial element towards improved outcomes, both for service users and partnering organisations themselves. The multi-year external funding, provided directly to the CSP lead agency, also provided a crucial dynamic, wherein long-term planning and the ability for ongoing evaluation was promised in an area where short-term contracts have been traditionally dominant. Crucially, the primary funding model did not come directly from the state, but instead introduced alternative, though time limited, resources in the local area. This presented an interesting opportunity to consider the impact on existing resource dependencies by this collaborative project.

Part 1. Overall research approach to address the key questions - a case study strategy

The overall research approach comprises the decision to employ a case study strategy; the theoretical and philosophical considerations emerging from such a strategy; notably epistemology, ontology and the necessity of analytical framework; decisions to employ particular data collection methods including sampling; analytical approaches including the process of 'triangulation'; and strategies to address issues of reflexivity, validity and transparency and research ethics.

Case study strategy

The literature reviews covered in the previous chapters situate the issues around the governance of collaboration within the sphere of complex needs at the macro-level of 'national' or 'system'. The theoretical framework and research questions, however, guide the research strategy towards the relationships between the macro-level of governance environment, the meso-level of local service ecologies and the micro-level of human agency in local settings. It positions the relationship between practice and 'system change' as reliant on a dynamic set of relationships between these levels, which may enable or constrain different potentialities of 'change'.

To explore these relationships in more detail in a manner that was both practical to a single researcher (Robson, 1993; Yin, 1994) and cohesive on both a theoretical and analytical level, a case study strategy was decided upon relatively early in the design process. The identification of a CSP that was accessible, could be seen as representative of similar projects/partnerships emerging within England and Wales and contained each of the primary services associated with complex needs established within the literature review (Housing, Health, Offending behaviour services and Alcohol/Substance misuse), can be seen to offer a clear example of a 'subject' (Thomas, 2011) that is argued forms the initial foundation of case study research. The analytical focus as to the nature of the experiences and relationships of those working at various intersections of vertical and horizontal coordination was seen to have lent itself to a case study

strategy, with a flexible methodological framework allowing the necessary contextualisation that could incorporate an exploration of the multiple levels of practice.

Case studies have a long yet sometimes contested relationship with academic inquiry. Traditionally considered a weak “*weak sibling*” (Yin, 1994: 13), primarily due to an association with singular, qualitative and hypothesis generating research, there is now a body of opinion that advocates and celebrates the potency of case study research (e.g. Simons, 2009; Yin, 1994; Thomas, 2011; Flyvberg, 2006; Starman, 2013; Miles, 2015). This is particularly pronounced within fields such as social work where there is more concern with the agency of individuals than aggregates and where issues of social complexity make all research findings more tentative (Donmoyer, 2000).

There are differing definitions offered as to the essential qualities of the case study as a mode of research, predominantly related to varied relationships to the development of knowledge, epistemological status and generalising credentials (De Vaus, 2001). Simons (2009) offers a review of the various attempts to provide a coherent definition, concluding that despite the different epistemological and practical starting points, it is possible to establish strong correlation of distinctions across disciplinary boundaries. She supports the contention that it is the case study’s commitment to the study of complexity in ‘real’ situations that gives it its primary distinctive character rather than the methods that it employs. Stake (2005) also supports this position, both placing emphasis on the understanding of bounded particularities whose parameters are set by certain factors, be they spatial or temporal organisational, rather than the methods used. Where some, such as Gerring (2004), maintain that the case study is indeed a method, dependent on the identification of a unit for covariation, there does appear to be a level of consensus that primacy is given to the ‘case’ or ‘cases’ through which the researcher is able to look at the complex dynamics in an intensive manner rather than the ‘variable-led’ dynamics of other types of research (Thomas, 2011). This is the ‘*trade-off*’ (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000: 2) that prioritises depth and richness of explanation within a heavily restricted number of cases

over the ability to generalise with confidence is offered by research that has a primary focus on the variable and incorporates larger samples of a broader population. Through this framing, it is not the methods employed that are of immediate concern, but the *“analytical eclecticism”* offered in distinguishing the case study from other forms of inquiry (Thomas, 2011: 512).

Thomas criticises the looseness of many case study definitions, maintaining that for a case study to constitute research it must comprise of two elements; a ‘practical, historical unity’ which makes up the ‘subject’ *and* an analytical or theoretical frame, which is referred to as the *“object”* (Thomas, 2011: 513). It is the dynamic relationship between these two elements that builds a case study. In this context the object is the malleable product of the researcher constantly asking themselves *“what is this case of”* (Thomas 2011, 515). The *object* becomes the analytical frame within which the case is viewed and the case exemplifies. He quotes Wieviorka:

“If you want to talk about a “case,” you also need the means of interpreting it or placing it in a context... Regardless of the practical approach for studying it, a case is an opportunity of relating facts and concepts, reality and hypotheses. But do not make the mistake of thinking that it is, in itself, a concept” (Wieviorka 1992 cited in Thomas 2011: 515).

Consequently, the research takes the definition of a case study as offered by Thomas:

“Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame—an object—within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates” (Thomas, 2011: 513).

The bounded set of particularities within this research are exemplified by the fieldwork conducted around the CSP and the time spent in the field. The spatial particularities can be seen with the bounded nature of the formalised partnership in one locality, with also the recognition that the research captures one particular period of time in the lifespan of both the phenomena in question (inter-organisational collaboration) looked at through the prism of the real-life context provided by the CSP. Thus, using Thomas' definition, the CSP defined by those contextual factors becomes the *subject* of the case study. The *object* is less straightforwardly identified. The broad analytical focus is that of the relationship between the governance of inter-organisational collaboration and 'system change'. Within that framing can be seen a series of sub-analytical tools, including the research questions and the conceptual framework employed. These tools are employed in a dynamic manner to build knowledge through the employment or generation of theory. The dynamic interaction between subject and object within this case study framework therefore uses the CSP at this particular point in time to create knowledge and understanding that was less immediately visible both about the subject. Using this framing, the object within this case study does not become fully apparent until the final chapters where analysis and conclusions are made.

Part 2. The conceptual framework and its role within a case study strategy

The role of a conceptual framework within case study design is often under-emphasised. Once a grounded theory approach had been rejected, it was decided that a conceptual framework could be used to orientate and deepen the research, enabling the data to be interpreted from a theoretical perspective that is often missing within the emerging literature on complex needs collaboration. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the use of a conceptual framework within a broader case study strategy serves three key purposes:

- Identification of suitable participants for the sample.
- Illustration of relationships based on theory and/or experience.

- Giving the researcher the opportunity to collate constructions into intellectual “bins” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 18).

In this way, the conceptual framework serves as an “anchor” (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 543) for the study and is the key lens through which the data is interpreted. Combining the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3 with a case study design can, therefore, be seen as a process of simultaneously allowing the depth and closeness of the data provided by the de-centred approach (described below) and the case study design, while retaining a theoretical distance in the analysis through the use of a purposeful framework for understanding the data. The conceptual framework can therefore be seen to have guided both the fieldwork and also the subsequent analysis.

Philosophical issues – ontology and epistemology

The decision to pursue a case study strategy can be seen to have epistemological and ontological implications inherently tied up with how the contemporary phenomena that forms the case can be both understood and analysed. Chapter 1, the review of literatures and the subsequent outlining of a theoretical framework used to frame the research approach and analyse the empirical data, discusses the philosophical implications of much of the academic work around governance of public services and networks. Acknowledging that one of the research aims is to add new knowledge to these ongoing governance debates, the approaches to what we can know about the world and the implications for both the research design need to be addressed.

Questions of ontology refer to theories of being, not to being itself (Fleetwood, 2019). As soon as reference is made to something that exists, a claim, even if implicit, to an ontology has been made (Hay, 2007). While the basic contentions of ontological position within qualitative research frameworks are well-rehearsed, what remains crucial is to show how questions of ontology are understood in terms of both research construction and explanatory logic. Research that relies on theories dependent on positivist assumptions as to the social reality of the inquiry should

employ methods that reflect those foundationalist positions, prioritising those that seek to produce objective, observable results (Healy and Perry, 2000). However, should the ontological position be one that views the world as socially or discursively constructed then methods that are able to collect and analyse subjective accounts, such as observations or interviews, should be employed.

Within this context, the key issue regarding the ontology of this study is the extent to which the methods used are coherent with the inferred positionality. As explored in the review of literatures, much of the recent material around complex needs services and inter-organisational collaboration comes from evaluative studies often based on normative assumptions around such collaboration. This research has looked to explore and problematise these issues, suggesting that calls for increased network governance, or even calls for increased service collaboration, should be understood as operating on complex and sometimes contested terrains. A Gramscian-influenced use of meta-governance theory contained within the conceptual framework orientates the fieldwork demands towards the lived experiences, understandings and actions of those local actors and presents questions as to the ongoing debates around structure and agency at the meso- and micro-levels.

As such, the ontological position in relation to the fieldwork is one that recognises that due to the level of complexity and context dependency within the agent-focused accounts around interactions between policy and practice that a variety of perspectives are likely to emerge. In particular, perspectives were found to be linked to the position of various actors within what we have described earlier as the 'extended state', comprising both governmental state and civil society and the degree to which their views of collaboration in multi-agency contexts were influenced by 'vertical' and 'horizontal' factors.

Within social science research, positivist or neopositivist approaches have often been employed as part of attempts to engage with the scientific paradigm, particularly around concerns with

validity and credibility. Positivist research places its faith in evidence that can be measured objectively and within academic work, notably around social work, has been associated with the trends towards *evidence-based* policy making. Chapter 1 explored some of these dynamics, particularly in relation to the commitment towards evidence-based policy making espoused under New Labour that played a key role in the ideological formations of 'Third Way' politics. It expanded on the issues that arise from applying large-scale quantitative approaches modelled on the natural sciences to local, context specific situations, with resulting emphases intended to influence commissioners and strategy leaders.

There are convincing arguments as to the value and use of quantitative data within a broader critical strategy (e.g. Dorling, 2015). The use of positivist methodologies can be seen within the field of academic and evaluative work in the field of complex needs with, for example, the initial identification of 60,000 adults in England and Wales who met the criteria for complex needs arguably a major key catalyst for the promotion of projects and initiatives in the field (Batrack *et al.*, 2014). Yet these positivist methodologies leave significant gaps in knowledge and understanding at the local level, where complex social situations are occurring, qualitative methodologies might be employed. The research methods used should, therefore, be able to explore and illuminate the complexities of understanding and action. The implications for the research strategy towards the fieldwork and subsequent analysis is that the broad de-centred approach concentrates the research towards the local and towards an interpretivist methodology.

Three key epistemological positions can be identified within the literature attempting to explain and explore the perceived shift from government to governance and the process of de-centering. First wave governance accounts (e.g. Rhodes, 1997) relied on many positivist assumptions in institutional and structural accounts of the emergence of more networked forms of governance where private and public agents work with "*significant autonomy from the state*" (Rhodes, 1997: 15). Rhodes later moved away from his early work in the field, working with Bevir (e.g. Bevir and

Rhodes, 2008; 2016) in establishing an explicitly anti-foundational tradition. These de-centred accounts were designed to recast approaches to the studies of governance with direct challenges towards the 'new orthodoxy' at ontological and epistemological levels. Whereas 'first wave' governance accounts relied heavily on singular accounts, the de-centred approach fundamentally looks to bring back in the agency of the individual, emphasising the diverse, sometimes conflicting experiences and practice of those agents operating within modes of governance that contradicted linear, technocratic accounts (Goodwin and Grix, 2011). The third broad position can be seen by those with sympathies towards critical realism.

In Marsh's (2008) response to Bevir and Rhodes (2008), he argues that their interpretivist approach ignores the causal powers of structures and that the "relationship between structure and agency is dialectical; that it is interactive and iterative" (Marsh 2008). Those from a critical realist persuasion would hold that structures that predominantly define the contextual environments agents act within. Yet, at the same time, agents themselves engage in interpretations of those contexts, mediating with their own experiences, beliefs and practices. Thus the relationships between material and ideational factors are dialectical (J. Davies, 2011).

This approach can be seen to meet the demands of the research questions, allowing an interpretivist methodology, largely based around qualitative interviews that looks to provide the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) espoused by the de-centred approach in looking to build a holistic picture of the local actors and groups within the unique context in which they are working. Simultaneously, it rejects the idea that *only* the beliefs and practices of those actors can tell us about governance and acknowledges the role that institutions and structures can have on actors, beliefs and actions (Grix, 2010). This is an important point in relation to Question 3 that looks to explore in more detail the relationship between vertical/horizontal modes of coordination and the beliefs and actions of those local actors and as such engages with an exploration of the dynamic relationships between structures and agency.

Thus the 'hard interpretivism' offered by Grix and Goodwin advances a fieldwork strategy that advances the use of a de-centred approach deemed suitable for the research aims and questions, without committing it to the anti-foundational ontological assumptions of Bevir and Rhodes. It can also be seen to be convergent with the methods used within a case study framework, allowing the 'thick descriptions' associated with the de-centred, interpretative approach (Miles, 2015). This work is considered to be 'on the border' and provides a cohesive epistemological position, while the ontological position is a process that includes the analysis in Chapter 6. Interpretivist accounts must be aware of the risks of solipsism and an inability to make any statements about traditions, stories or narratives without severe epistemological qualification (J. Davies, 2011).

The *"thick descriptions and the comparability and transferability of conclusions between cases allows for the common, everyday form of inference to the best explanation"* (Thomas, 2010: 577). Kvale (1996) talks about the way that a growing qualitative methodology is representative of something more than additional methods from which to choose but, instead, offer alternative modes of understanding based on different epistemologies.

Impact on the research strategy

A key part of the research project is to attempt to address *how* change has been occurring within collaboration around complex needs. This does not fit well with positivist or neopositivist methodologies, with Provan and Sydow (2008) critiquing the significant difficulties in exploring inter-organisational relationships in a manner that looks for objective accounts of definitive causalities. The level of complexity and context-dependency involved makes it difficult to state with any level of certainty what outcomes are a result of network structure and what would have emerged in its absence. Acknowledging these difficulties, this study looked to shift the research perspective explicitly towards the local level, reflecting the 'bottom-up' network strategy described within in the 'case' while responding to the epistemological and ontological positions described above. It is this 'bottom-up' quality established within the case selection that lends

itself to a de-centred approach wherein the focus can be on how meaning is created and acted upon at the local level. However, the conceptual framework through which this data is analysed relocates these meanings and actions as influenced by dynamic interaction with the 'integral' qualities of the state (Jessop, 2004) through a combination of discourses, ideologies and 'soft technologies' (J. Davies, 2015) such as networks.

In doing so the research approach recognises an interpretive perspective as most suitable to the immediate research aims with regards to the data collection and subsequent impact on the analysis, following an agent-focused fieldwork design concentrated at the local level to examine actions, beliefs and meanings. As such, the approach is sympathetic to the aims of Bevir and Rhodes to restore individual agency to understandings of governance and the challenge to technocratic accounts. However, it does not commit to the explicit anti-foundational ontological assumptions proposed within their frameworks; rejecting the idea that only narrative explanation is possible or that only the ideations of agents can explain social phenomena. It therefore takes the epistemological positioning of what Grix and Goodwin (2011) term "*hard interpretivism*", which in terms of ontological assumptions places itself in the "*border area*" (Grix and Goodwin, 2011: 541) between interpretivism and critical realism.

This research takes its starting position from the local that creates differentiated pictures of individuals, organisations and groups in their full lived context in the search for meanings and interpretations and using this as the emphasis for the primary fieldwork. However, the development of a conceptual framework that makes use of Gramsci's articulation of the Integral State (Gramsci, 1971) means that the analysis returns to dynamic relationships between structures, institutions and actor agency. As this framework looks to explore the relationship between horizontal and vertical modes of coordination in relation to inter-organisational collaboration, it problematises the space for individual agency, suggesting that agency is constrained or facilitated by the structures within that they operate. This approach acknowledges that discourse plays a hugely important role in understanding the world without

taking on an anti-foundational position that discourse entirely constitutes, or exhausts, the entire social reality (Fleetwood, 2004).

Chapter 6 (analysis and conclusions), therefore, looked to consider the role that institutions and structure (held within the articulation of verticalities) have on individual actors, their beliefs and actions (Grix, 2010). As such, the research is able to build from the de-centred critique of positivist science without removing the explanatory value of structural dynamics, while also emphasising the role that meaning and interpretation have at the local level of network practice. As J. Davies remarked, a political economy approach will always look to move beyond discourse and stories by drawing attention *“back to the conditions of their enactment and their material affects”* (J. Davies, 2011: 144).

Part 3. Case selection (typicality, representativeness, validity and generalisation)

A single case study selection and the issue of typicality

A decision was made to base the research on an embedded, single case design (Yin, 2009). While the CSP represents the main unit of analysis (put in a position to be compared to other similar units in environments recognisable to the reader), there are several sub-units that make up the broader analysis. This includes the intermediate units of the services involved in making up the partnership and the individual professionals that work within them. This decision was made on practical grounds, but that also had to conform with the required rigours of case study strategies with regards to issues of representativeness, validity and generalisation.

There is a responsibility within case study research to identify the reasons for case selection. The proposition of an interactive relationship between subject and object within the study raises questions as to how the subject is identified and its relationship to the object. As the subject cannot be selected as purely representative of a broader sample, its selection should be justified on the basis of its illustrative credentials in exploring or refracting the lineaments of the object (Thomas, 2011). We cannot look for ‘typical’ cases as there is no definitive way of understanding

what a typical case is or its typicality prior to investigation. De Vaus (2001) warned that the desire to find a typical case is caused by a confusion over generalisation.

“Since the purpose of case studies is not to generalise to a wider sample of cases (enumerative induction or statistical generalisation) there is little point in trying to find a typical case for a case study. The need is to find cases that will provide valid and challenging tests of a theory” (De Vaus, 2001: 240).

Yin (1994) outlines three primary reasons to undertake a single case study and the conditions that need to be considered. With regards to ‘representativeness’, the case as a bounded set of particularities is described in detail in Chapter 2. Concerning the question as to the relationship between inter-organisational collaboration and system change, the representativeness of the case affects what knowledge and analysis is possible. While the CSP contains the primary services elements of a complex needs oriented partnership, crucially it is not a mandatory or state-funded enterprise. It can, therefore, add to the debate around collaboration as a bottom-up dynamic, while offering a comparative unit for those looking at the differences between state/non-state-initiated partnerships.

Generalisation, representativeness and validity

Stake (2000) makes the distinction between the need for a generalisation of a particular case or to a similar case rather than generalisations towards a broad range of cases. If this is true then the demands of representativeness *“yield to needs for assurance that the target case is properly described”* (Stake, 2000: 23). As the audience recognises key similarities, so the foundations for a naturalistic generalisation are built.

The case study can also provide *representation* at the local level to complex practice in spatially/temporally unique contexts with *“multiple and bundles of trajectories”* (Miles, 2015:

316) by the contextualisation and theorising of practice to analyse the micro-level of everyday action and interaction, in doing so, problematising and theorising around the level of practice.

The external *validity* of case studies is augmented by the strategic selection of cases rather than through strategies of statistical selection looking to contribute to either literal or theoretical reproduction (De Vaus, 2001). At the same time, however, as Thomas states:

“The validity of the case study cannot derive from its representativeness since it can never legitimately be claimed to form a representative sample from a larger set. The essence of the selection must rest in the dynamic of the relation between subject and object. It cannot rest in typicality” (2011: 514).

The validity of the research, therefore, can be seen to rely on the dynamic of the relation between subject and object, not on its typicality (Thomas, 2011). The subject is selected due to its ability to provide something revealing or interesting or unusual.

“The trouble with generalizations is that they don’t apply to particulars” (Lincoln and Guba, 2000: 27).

As Lincoln and Guba state, *“there can be no set of generalizations, consistent with one another, that can effectively account for all known phenomena”* (2000: 34). The implications for this research are that there is little scientific value in approaching questions that deal with the weight of complexity offered by the imposition of the theoretical framework and complex arrangements explored at the site of research while claiming empirical evidence that the same dynamics are occurring within partnerships outside of the local conditions observed.

Rather than positivist claims to generalisation or expressly looking for causal relationships (Gerring, 2004) the validity of the interpretations and claims made within this case study can be

assessed by the reader. This is what Flyvberg is referring to when he talks about the “*power of the example*” (2006: 7); rejecting attempts to provide context-independent predictive theories that are unable to stand up to scientific scrutiny and instead focusing on ‘concrete, context dependent knowledge’ over a “*vain search for predictive theories and universals*” (Flyvberg, 2011: 7).

Hammersley contends that qualitative researchers often fail to apply sufficient rigour in working towards claims of both triangulation and generalisability as part of a series of “*defensive failings*” (Hammersley, 2008: 32) from criticisms from some quantitative researchers. He also warns of a constructionist “*cul-de-sac*” (34) of extreme relativism or reductive opposition to positivism.

While recognising the clear empirical limits towards generalisability that a single case study represents, this research does look to have concrete use for those looking at partnerships outside of the locality that has provided the site of research. It seeks to do this through two inter-linked processes; firstly by establishing the macro-context shared by the CSP and similar partnerships in the field (Question 1) while, secondly, providing sufficient contextual information of the local environment from which the data was collected that it enables the *reader* to make a judgement as to whether the information and analysis here is transferable to other contexts. This is what Lincoln and Guba (2000) refer to as ‘fittingness’; that is the degree of transferability between the two contexts is dependent on the congruity between them. This research looks to meet this responsibility by providing as much context as possible regarding the local dynamics that impact on the research while also engaging in ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) to aid the reader to understand the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). This aim is not without its challenges; notably the tension between this responsibility to the reader and useable knowledge, and the commitments made to participants around anonymity and confidentiality.

Given the recognition of the CSP as spatially and temporally unique while containing the basic elements that are being recreated among pilot projects throughout England, the primary concern

was for accurate, deep, valid description and analysis. The claim towards generalisability comes via the research's strength in these areas, allowing actors in similar situations to look at the analysis found here and be able to recognise similarities (Flyvberg, 2006).

Triangulation

Triangulation is a technique that mixes data or methods so that a topic is evaluated or analysed from more than one viewpoint, thereby helping to counter threats to validity. This should, however, not be confused with the search for uniformity, but instead opens up the potential for the identification of sites of conflict, mediation or negotiation (Robson, 1993). For a project that looks to identify and analyse the intersections of vertical/horizontal and the potentially dialectical relationships that occur at these points then the case study structure, with its capability for triangulation can be seen as coherent and appropriate. The triangulation strategy pursued in this research comprised the relationship between the following elements:

- The application of the conceptual framework and key research questions to guide the overall research strategy.
- The vertical/horizontal sampling approach, notably in relation to interviews with local actors from the strategic tier and frontline, together with a focus group discussion, in order to explore and contextualise data from multiple locations within the service ecology of the CSP.
- Documentation from the CSP that provided some background as to internal decision-making.
- Constant referencing back to relevant literatures in the field.

Part 4. Research sampling within a single case study

“In a case study, the analyst selects cases only because he (sic) believes they exhibit some general theoretical principle. His (sic) account’s claim to validity depends entirely on

demonstrating that the features he portrays in the case are representative not of the population but of this general principle” (Silverman, 1985: 113; cited in Rapley, 2013).

The sampling strategy was informed primarily by two dynamics that were not always in neat alignment, with this tension eventually leading to a recalibrating of the overall sample and temporal qualities of the case study. Firstly, the sampling was heavily informed by the theoretical framework developed within the review of literatures. The aim here was for ‘representativeness’ (Gobo, 2004) rather than generalisability, so that the generalisable value comes to the reader who is able to spot similarities.

Second, there were practical challenges. Identifying the sample also came up against ethical questions. It was difficult to name precise locations within the sample without compromising conditions of anonymity.

There were difficulties in accessing the most appropriate actor. For example, the original plan was to interview only those with a primary duty around commissioning at the level of each service. It quickly became clear that this would not be possible, with this sampling plan heavily reliant on the availability/willingness of single figures throughout the local service ecology. Instead, the sample was broadened to include those either in commissioning roles or those with a primary duty around strategic planning. This decision was made in the context that it did not appear to significantly weaken the relationship between the empirical data and the theoretical framework being used to explore the case. Strategic Leads were often aware of the challenges the organisation faced in relation to commissioning and were in a position to speak with credibility on the issues.

It also meant that there was an opportunity to expand the initial sampling design that was initially rigidly built around the primary services associated with complex needs within the literature. By this point in the evolution of the pilot project, more services had become to be engaged with the

project, including adult social care. There was also the opportunity to talk with strategic actors such as those heading Third Sector organisations dealing with particular complex needs service user sub-groups (e.g. women). This enabled a more accurate representation of the network while simultaneously allowing the horizontal axis to be more accurately populated with Third Sector representation.

Two-tier approach

The main sampling approach within the single case conceptualise, capture and report the data through a two-tier approach outlined to explore the lived experiences of those operating in 'Strategic' roles and those whose primary role involves service delivery on the 'frontline'.

The requirements from the conceptual framework in relation to the sample were to find a defensible sample from each of these layers. This initially appeared relatively straightforward but, on entering the field, the reality was that these were influenced by the micro-politics of the partnership and the key services. I thus had to respond to the imbalances between the analytical requirements and the practicalities. This was done in two ways. Firstly, by expanding the definition of 'strategic' to include strategy leads as well as commissioners. The second was to accept that there were limits on what data collection was possible during this time and to acknowledge the limits of representativeness within the sample. It should be noted that access to the field was not something that was always within my own control and the sampling strategy can be seen to be highly influenced by issues around access. It is not possible for me to say with certainty why certain potential participants did not respond to requests for interviews, potentially illustrating some of the limitations of the 'snapshot' feature of the case study design. Evidence from other interviews suggests that one service was not well represented within the sample due to a downturn in relations within the Partnership.

The two layers have been initially presented separately (see Chapter 5) so as to accurately reflect the multi-level approach held within a single case-study research strategy, with actors coded so

as to reflect their positionality towards the partnership and state (vertically) and across service boundaries (horizontally). Coding tables are introduced at the beginning of Chapter 5 that seek to identify the key characteristics for the analysis, while retaining the commitment to anonymity. As such they are identified by generic service description, whether their primary role was strategic or frontline and their immediate positionality to the state (statutory/non-statutory).

Strategic level

A Gramscian reading of meta-governance theory orientates the research towards the *negotiated links* between government and governance (within sets of hegemonic relationships). Reflecting this conceptual approach, individuals have been identified who hold a strategic and/or commissioning role within each of the primary services identified by the case-study partnership and broader literature (Housing, Health services, Offending behaviour services, Drug/Alcohol services, Social Care) together with strategic actors from the lead-agency for the partnership. The data from these interviews was reported via five main themes developed from the literature reviews and directly reflecting the research aims concerned with governance and system change (see Chapter 3).

Front line

The second layer of reporting looked to capture the experiences of those in frontline positions with a primary role around service delivery. During the development of the data collection strategy it was decided that the interview questions for this tier would be different to those in explicitly strategic positions, reflecting the different operational dynamics occurring at each level. Benson's (1975) model of an inter-organisational network as a political economy (within a political economy) has been used as a framework for those questions primarily due to its cohesive articulation of surface-level collaborative dynamics within the network operational relationships. This heuristic approach allows for the distillation of the data, giving an expanded view of the operational working relationships as they actually exist and are experienced, while being

incorporated into a framework that allows deeper processes linked to strategy and governance to be understood.

Part 5. Data collection

Timeframes

With regards to the temporal dimensions of the strategy the data collection can be seen as primarily a 'snapshot' study (Yin, 1994), looking to explore the case/subject particularities of one defined period of time as a critical conjuncture in the lifespan of the partnership. The data-collection period was situated over 20 months in total and conducted in two blocs. As a researcher I was aware that I was coming in at the mid-point of the lifecycle of the partnership and this moment of relations was beginning to establish itself and was moving towards thinking about legacy. Crucially this allowed me to begin to capture the ways in which the actors were having to adapt to the complex environment in which they were working, while the strategic actors were explicitly considering how complex needs services might be formulated beyond the pilot partnership. The snapshot, therefore, represented a defined window midway in the official life of the project and a window in which one was able to investigate potentially adaptive behaviours.

Question 2 has thus been addressed through a 'snapshot' of a limited times taken from within a multi-year lifespan of the CSP. Part of the original research strategy was to pursue a diachronic element so to further evidence elements of 'change' and supporting claims as to the potential of travel for the collaborative elements of the CSP. However, primarily due to practical considerations and the limitations of single researcher working this was not possible. The research recognises the idea central to the conceptual framework that vertical/horizontal dynamics, whether in loose networks or formalised partnerships, are part of a broader social world and should be recognised as being in a continual state of becoming (Evans, 2001). Yet on considering the prospective gap between potential repeat interviews of being, at most, several months within a multi-year partnership, this strategy was not pursued. Instead, Question 3 is

more speculative in its considerations of the observed dynamics and how they relate to the conceptual framework employed.

Sample, codings and types of data collected

While case study strategies allow multiple methods as part of a process of triangulation, the primary source of data were qualitative, semi-structured interviews (see Appendices 3 and 4 for the respective interview schedules). Interviews were completed in a city in the Midlands, England between October 2017 and July 2019, in two stages described below.

The data collection comprised:

- Total number of 30 participants
- First stage - Four initial interviews (strategic level) and group interview held with four CSP frontline workers. (2.5 hours).
- Second stage - 22 semi-structured interviews from the local service ecology. Interviews lasted between 45 and 85 minutes.
- The total number of interviews was 26, with 28 hours of transcribed data.
- Primary data was also used including policy documents, evaluations from both the CSP and similar pilot projects, together with minutes from CSP system change orientated joint meetings (2017-2019).
- First stage of data collection took place between October 2017 and March 2018. Second stage completed between November 2018 and July 2019.

The codings employed within Chapters 5 and 6 are intended to locate the position of each interviewee/actor along two primary axis, indicating their horizontal position across organisational boundaries, essentially by their parent organisation, and their vertical position, broadly whether their primary role is one of strategy (strategic leads, commissioning) or operational (frontline workers, operational managers). For example, SC/SA1 locates the

individual as working within social care (SC) as an actor with a primary strategic role (SA). H/OA1, however, can be identified as working in housing (H), but has a primary operational role as a frontline worker (OA). Figures 6.1 and 6.2 are used to illustrate this coding strategy, with additional information as to the primary field of work and whether their parent organisation can be identified as having statutory or non-statutory duties.

In total, 17 actors from the strategic level were interviewed across 9 organisations. 9 actors were interviewed independently on the operational level from 6 separate organisations. Additionally, four operational workers from the CSP lead agency took part in the group interview.

Figure 6.1 Codings of research participants from the strategic tier

Code	Primary field of work	Statutory/Non-Statutory
CN/SA1	Complex needs	Non-Statutory
CN/SA2	Complex needs	Non-Statutory
CN/SA3	Complex needs	Non-Statutory
CN/SA4	Complex needs	Non-Statutory
LA/SA1	Local Authority	Statutory
LA/SA2	Complex Needs	Statutory
L/SA3	Complex Needs	Statutory
MH/SA1	Mental Health	Statutory
H/SA1	Housing	Statutory
HEALTH/SA1	Health	Statutory
SC/SA1	Social Care	Statutory
SC/SA2	Mental Health	Statutory
O/SA1	Offending	Statutory
O/SA2	Offending	Statutory

DA/SA1	Drug and Alcohol	Statutory
DA/SA2	Drug and Alcohol	Non-Statutory
W/SA1	Women's services	Non-Statutory

Figure 6.2 Codings of research participants from the operational tier

Code	Primary field of work	Statutory/Non-statutory
CN/OA1	Complex Needs	Non-Statutory
CN/OA2	Complex Needs	Non-Statutory
CN/OA3	Complex Needs	Non-Statutory
CN/OA4	Complex Needs	Non-Statutory
CN/OA5	Complex Needs	Non-Statutory
CN/OA6	Complex Needs	Non-Statutory
MH/OA1	Mental Health	Statutory
H/OA1	Housing	Non-Statutory
SC/OA1	Social Care	Statutory
SC/OA2	Social Care	Statutory
DA/OA1	Drug and Alcohol	Non-Statutory
DA/OA2	Drug and Alcohol	Non-Statutory
O/OA1	Offending	Statutory

Semi-structured interviews and their protocols

The case study strategy discussed above provided an early framework for the research design, yet as Simons (2009) demonstrates a plethora of methods can be incorporated into said strategies. The methods of data collection and analysis chosen needed to reflect both the research questions and the practicalities of single researcher capabilities in a constantly shifting,

complex environment. The decision to pursue semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data within the case-study framework was a direct response to the research aims that called for an exploration of how local actors interpret and mediate complexity and potentially competing demands as reflected within the conceptual framework and philosophical considerations. In line with the epistemological and ontological considerations described previously, a broadly de-centred, 'hard' interpretive approach to the main data collection was deemed most likely to engage with the idea that local actors acting in locations of negotiated links (Jessop, 2004) are mediating within structural tensions and contradictions. In order to provide the necessary insights into these experiences, a data collection technique was required that was respondent to the needs of the research while, at the same time, able to provide depth and an ability to handle complexity. As Siedmann suggests:

"The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypothesis, and not to "evaluate" as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (2006: 9).

Unstructured interviews were ultimately deemed inappropriate. Although the differences between unstructured and semi-structured interviews should be seen as on a continuum rather than a binary (Irvine *et al.*, 2012), there were practical reasons why an increased level of structure was shown to be necessary. The fact that within the sample, different actors had very different positionalities towards the CSP, in terms of their own personal relationship and the organisation that they represented, meant that I wanted to keep a level of organisation within the interviews around key areas of interest that were directly related to the research questions and conceptual framework. Structured interviews were also not deemed suitable, lacking the required flexibility necessary for the sample and more in line with positivist strategies that as discussed above were not conducive to the research aims.

In order to combine structure and flexibility I included multiple prompts so as to enable the questions to be expanded upon, conversations guided back to the intended topic or clarified. There were also attempts to retain an iterative quality to the analysis during the interview processes. Notes were taken during the interview clarifying certain elements and allowing reflections on the processes and a deepening understanding of the relationships between different interviews.

Nevertheless, there is a recognised issue concerning reliance on interview data. Popora reminds us that *“we cannot always assume that reported attitudes disclose behaviour”* (Popora, 2016: 346), that action cannot simply be what we carry *a priori* within our own heads, but that situational context matters. Therefore, the initial research design was more explicitly ethnographical in design, containing non-participant observation of collaborative situations such as multi-disciplinary meetings and partnership board meetings. However, it quickly became clear that this posed some practical and ethical issues in terms of gaining informed consent from such large groups of people, protecting the confidentiality and access of personal data of service-users whose lives were being discussed, as well as questions as to how these observations would add to the depth and validity of the data. In order to demonstrate integrity to the voices of the participants it is important to make the distinction between the reporting of perceptions and inferring behaviours. I could not observe behaviours, therefore discussion of the theme of ‘austerity behaviours’ was thus an inference from theoretical analysis of the data as well as a reading of the tendencies within the data. I thus remained alive to the distinction between reporting perceptions and reporting behaviours.

Elite interviews and their challenges

It became clear during the processes of data collection that there were certain parts of the interviews that certain participants did not want included as part of their responses, particularly when wanting to speak about relationships with other individuals or services within the partnership. As part of the ethical considerations (described in more detail below) and in order

to make sure that as many elements of the partnership were included as possible, it was made clear within the participant information sheet given out before interviews took place, that I would respect their wishes around leaving elements of the interview out should they wish and that they could also make clear that certain parts were 'off the record'.

However, early on in the interview process two issues did emerge around the data collection that led to some revisiting to the methodology, particularly around 'elite interviewing' using the definition of those who occupy senior management and board level positions within organisations as provided by Harvey (2011). This relatively narrow definition is used because there is significant overlap between it and the definition used for the strategic tier of interviews conducted that represented the vertical axis in the sample. Off-the-record comments were agreed to, with the reasoning that having a complete verbatim transcript did not outweigh the cost of losing some potentially revealing or important information given 'off-the-record' (Harvey, 2011).

The second issue was that of access, particularly to those within higher organisational positions within certain organisations included within the partnership. Empson (2018) highlights some of the issues researchers can face in gaining access to elite interviews; that is interviews with senior professionals within the services included as sub-units within the case study. Broadly relating to power asymmetry between interviewer and interviewee, there can be significant difficulties in accessing those services that have clearer power relations to the state.

One participant put this very clearly to me during the interview. While they wanted to participate in the interviews, the realities of their work and time commitments meant that the interview was only agreed to as it could be seen as directly relevant to the strategic work that they were currently undergoing.

“I’m meeting with you because I see a benefit in talking to you about this project, because you will then feed it in...But unless I think there is going to be a benefit to the (statutory organisation) I just don’t have the time and that is basically what it is like for all of the services now” (Strategic Actor).

Kvale (1996) points to the way in which interviews concerned with dialectics take issue with the *“coherence criterion of truth involved in hermeneutics with a good interpretation as a coherent Gestalt free of contradictions”* (Kvale, 1996: 57). Instead, dialectical approaches will be inherently skeptical of any qualitative analysis that emerges free of contradictions.

“If social reality is in itself contradictory, the task of social science is to investigate the real contradictions of the social situation and posit them against each other” (Kvale, 1996: 57).

Completing the interviews was often a difficult iterative process. The looseness of the partnership at certain points of the data collection posed challenges for the conduct of the interview. For example, certain services had only just begun to engage as partners, together with the fact that often the CSP was only one of many formal collaborations in which many participants were participating. This meant that I had to develop an interview style that could allow a dialogic exchange while structuring the interviews to a level that meant that the topics were engaged with at the actual site of research. The breadth of participants' experiences and the complexity of the organisational structures that they worked within meant that I often had to clarify meanings or positionality. One method of doing so was the use of clarification questions fed back to the participant as recommended by Holstein and Gubrium (1995) as influenced towards 'active' interviewing. As they put it:

“Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning or communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge - treasuries of

information awaiting excavation - as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviews” (1995: 4).

The group interview

A group interview was completed with four frontline workers at the beginning of the data collection process. These workers were from the new frontline role that the CSP lead agency had created. Invitations were sent to all frontline staff in this position at the time, with four people responding that they would be able to make it on that particular day. This approach was taken to expand the amount of voices from the field, yet this also added a level of value in the different dynamics of discussion that could be observed, potentially due to what Morgan refers to as the “*group effect*” (1996, 139) where through debates, acts of clarification and explanation between the participants. This could be seen to add to the level of triangulation, but also allowed the theme of ‘professional identity’ to be observed in real time. However, there were some issues with this approach reflected within Chapter 5. The use of voices and narratives from the group interview, perceived as highly valuable, does mean that there is a significant slant towards that frontline worker group compared to other services that have significantly less representation. However, given the focus on the impact of these new ‘keyworker’ roles is a key consideration of the research and the realisation that other frontline workers often had relatively infrequent interaction with the service-user group this was decided as an appropriate way to continue.

Part 6. Data analysis strategy

The commonality expressed within the conceptual framework’s dependence on the lived experiences of local actors and the use of semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data is the concern with the meaning that local actors make of their experiences and situations as well as how they act upon them. The data analysis strategy was, therefore, constructed with a high level of priority given to reducing and distilling the data that reflected these concerns. Hammersley reminds us that it is not desirable, or even possible, to grasp complexity fully in ways that are absolutely scientifically sound. Rather the production of knowledge must involve

selection and abstraction (Hammersley, 2008). The analysis was a constant process of working through multiple lenses to try and understand the evidence, informed by the conceptual framework and in particular the dynamic relationships between the vertical and the horizontal dynamics theorised within the previous chapters.

Kvale distinguishes between the role of the interviewer using two counterposing metaphors. Researchers taking a positivist approach to the interview data are characterised as a 'miner' who probes for "*essential nuggets of meaning*" (1996, 3). Within this picture, the miner's primary role is that of uncovering and exposing these meanings in objective, pure forms to be quantified. On the other side, the researcher becomes a 'traveller', with knowledge conceptualised as a story to be told on return home. Here the knowledge is the product of co-production between the interviewer and interviewees, a position supported by Alvesson's (2003) conceptualisation of the 'localist' approach to interviewing that treats the interview as an empirical setting of a social encounter. The interview takes on the role of uncovering "*situated accounts*" of the phenomenon in question and is particularly suited to complex interpretations of social or organisational phenomena through a dyadic interplay between interviewer and interviewee (Qu and Dumay, 2011: 242). These interpretivist constructions of the interview highly influenced the data collection strategy, providing a cohesive method that addresses the research aims and philosophical commitments made in the research design.

I was also alive to the facts of what people were actually saying, so inductive readings were completed based on what people actually said to me. As such, each interview was read several times with abridged, shorter formulations and meanings considered at the side of the page as recommended by Kvale (1996). For Kvale, processes of categorization of meaning are in line with "*a positivist emphasis on quantification of facts in social sciences*" (1996: 199). Instead a more flexible stance was taken, with the intent to tell the story of the CSP at a particular point in time, allowing the voices of those working within in it to be heard. Sub-themes were grouped within dominant organising themes that could be used to narrate the complex dynamics that were being

told before interpretation through the application of the conceptual framework in Chapter 6. For example, the dominant response from all participants as to vertical pressures on practice was that of austerity, so this became a key theme within the analysis through which other dynamics could be discussed, building an understanding of what has been termed 'austerity behaviours'. Reporting themes were also derived from the literatures, the theoretical framework and the ways in which these also influenced the research instruments – the interview schedules. Reduction and reporting was, therefore, not just through thematic analysis but also through level, with the distillation of data across vertical/horizontal axes.

I decided against the use of software assistance with the process of analysis. While the benefits of coding complex data were considered, I did not feel comfortable with the software when trialling it in terms of offering practical advantages over the process of condensing and reducing the data manually. In order to work towards the research aims I was aware that I would be organising the data both vertically and horizontally, but also looking to retain a dynamic relationship to the context from where the data was captured. While there remain long-standing debates as to whether software can distance the researcher from the data, the primary consideration over and above listening to voices of the participants was to apply a conceptual approach to meaning condensation (Kvale, 1996).

This research recognised that transcription cannot simply be reduced to mechanical selection and application (Davidson, 2009). Rather, transcription inevitably involves choices around information being made. Lapadat (2000) criticised the tendency for researchers to assume to a default positivistic position when transcription takes place. I decided, therefore, despite selective transcription being an option that I wished to transcribe each interview *verbatim*. The thinking behind this was that the research aims and analysis were initially dependent on an inductive reading of the data that would be partially compromised towards potential researcher bias, should I have decided that some elements of the raw audio data were not of use prior to analysis (or should I have not recorded the interviews). It also appeared an obvious starting point to

maximise closeness to the data, forcing me to listen repeatedly to the different words, pauses and reflections.

There is a recurring theme within guidance around qualitative analysis that analysis is not a process that is started at the end of the data collection, but a simultaneous and continuous process throughout the research. The primary purpose of an inductive approach is to allow the search for meaning. Considering the purposes of the research and the philosophical considerations of the research the aim has been to show concern with how local actors make sense of the governance dynamics around them.

Part 7. Ethical considerations

This research has been completed in line with the ethical guidelines published by NTU. Two separate applications for ethical approval were completed and approved at the start of the project and the midway section as the final data collection strategy was modified. I remain a registered Social Worker and as such consulted and conducted my research in line with the Social Work Education Committee (SWEC) Code of Ethics for Social Work and Social Care Research provided by the Joint University Council (JUC), as recommended by the NTU ethics guidance. As a registered social worker I was also bound by the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC), although no research guidance had been published at the time of writing. Acknowledging the different ethical demands for different organisations, prior to data collection I consulted the guidance from the Health Research Authority and did not require NHS REC approval.

The primary ethical issue confronting the research was the relationship between confidentiality, informed consent and the single case study design (see Appendices 1 and 2 for research participant invitation letter and consent form). I was aware from early within the process that a single case study design did not lend itself particularly well to anonymity, leaving the CSP potentially identifiable through its unique location, funding stream and distinctive attributes. As such, a compromise position was found in which I entered the data collection process with an agreement that I would prioritise anonymity by not naming specific positions or job roles.

Participants are thus identified by their relationship to strategic and statutory responsibilities, but individual service responsibilities are withheld. Therefore, individual services are described in generic terms, with no direct reference to the locality or primary funding source of the partnership. Issues around informed consent and GDPR were acknowledged in the participant information sheet sent to every participant prior to the interview, with consent forms signed on the day (see appendices for both). Member checks were offered to all participants, with a copy of the anonymised transcript available to be reviewed so that participants are able to judge as to whether their anonymity is adequately safeguarded.

Part 8. Summary – implications for researching in the field

A broadly interpretive methodology was deemed most appropriate. However, as J. Davies (2011) makes clear; a political economy approach constantly looks to bring those local accounts back to the material reality. The make-up of the questions and the final synthesis can be seen as an attempt to do this.

The following chapter distills and presents the empirical findings that are a result of this methodology. It does this in two ways; the key features of the CSP has been established in Chapter 2 so as to allow full contextualisation of the 'subject' (case), to better place the views of the local actors reported on in Chapter 5 and to support claims of 'fittingness' for readers looking to compare the subsequent findings and analysis to other similar situations. It then looks to distill the data in a manner that addresses the vertical and horizontal locations of the local actors, firstly offering a synchronic snapshot of a collaborative relations along the vertical/horizontal axis summarising these finding under thematic headings guided by the literature reviews and inductive readings of the data, thus applying the published knowledge in the field to this particular case.

Chapter 5. Governance and collaboration in relation to complex needs: perceptions and perspectives from strategic local actors and the frontline

Introduction – the organisation of the reporting themes

The primary function of this chapter is to present the findings of the fieldwork. In order to report the dynamics, perceptions and perspectives in a manner consistent with the conceptual framework employed, data is organised vertically along two tiers - those working with a primary role at the level of 'strategy' (e.g. commissioning and strategic leads) and those whose main duties were at the operational level (e.g. frontline staff and operational managers). While themes are organised within these tiers, the reporting strategy also looks to work horizontally, noting the ways that those themes were experienced across service boundaries. Data is thus reported by actor location both vertically and horizontally within the local service ecology that forms the primary site of research. As a consequence, the responses of the strategic tier are initially considered under a number of themes with a recognition of the potential influence of vertical factors such as austerity and accountabilities, while those of the front line were initially grouped around themes that more related to their horizontal modes of working.

While the interviewees were responding to a series of semi-structured questions, their responses have also been grouped with the help of the conceptual framework that looked towards identifying intersections of vertical and horizontal influences. In order to accurately reflect the intersecting nature of the themes as they were discussed, they are developed through narrative and blend into each other. These emergent themes are then divided into sub-themes, reflecting the concerns, the perceptions and perspectives of the interviewees that are supported by multiple quotes. The sub-themes were not articulated by all actors, but evidence of them were sufficiently present across a range of interviews to be deemed to represent a significant sentiment. The selection of quotes was also based both in incidence and the significance that I attributed to these views from the position of the conceptual framework. These conceptual themes were also reflected in the interview schedules. Some of the longer quotes have been

chosen because of their greater illustrative qualities. Finally, these data are supported by consideration of relevant strategic and evaluative documentation so as to offer a level of triangulation for interpreting the views of research participants evidenced within the primary dataset. Further sense-making of the evidence from the interviews and focus group is to be found in Chapter 6 through the application, in particular, of Benson's dialectical model.

Part 1. The strategic tier

This first part of the chapter, focusing on the strategic tier, is broadly structured around three themes - proximity to the vertical state (e.g. austerity behaviours); horizontal collaboration and its ambiguities; and intersections, issues of multi-agency and system change.

Austerity behaviours

The interview schedule did not include a direct question in relation to the impacts of austerity. Rather, a more generic, open question around the pressures from above in relation to individual role and horizontal collaboration was proposed. However, the overwhelming response to this was to trigger conversations around the impacts of financial constraint. This theme was so prevalent and pervasive that it has been identified as an organising theme in itself - *austerity behaviours* - that exercised profound influences on other factors and forces reported at the strategic tier. Closer examination has aided the identification of a number of sub-themes; notably defensive positioning, economic leverage and economic concept framing.

Participants across every organisation and from various vertical positions described an environment characterised by organisational "*retreat*" (O/SA2) and "*protectionism*" (LA/SA1). There was common acknowledgement that new approaches to working with complex needs were being forged within an environment where the organisations were under huge financial pressures. O/SA1 described a "*crisis of the state and public sector*", pointing out that six people had previously held the strategic and commissioning responsibilities that he now held within a single post.

Defensive positioning

As one of the partners initially approached by the CSP lead agency, H/SA1 provided a neat summary of the primary strategic issues that the CSP were facing.

“I think people are coming from different priorities, and you almost don't want to say it, but everybody is coming with their funding pressures and their systems of priorities. And everybody's coming from such different starting points where there have been changes in the way that they operate and different kinds of legislation impacting on them, all at different times”.

H/SA1's articulation of the heavily individualised environment that the CSP looked to address was supported by DA/SA2 who described the pre-CSP environment as one where the relevant organisations were:

“quite happy living on their own and blaming the other systems for things not quite working. They didn't work or play well together and in a sense that was to their advantage to a degree as you are only responsible for the things that you know, can see and can influence”.

The issue of defensive positioning was an apparent concern across all participants, with a consensus that long-term resource issues, compounded by austerity, were adding to the sense that organisations were looking to primarily protect their own resources before considering the impacts upon the broader service ecologies and efforts to collaborate.

“Having separate budgets and having extreme pressures on those budgets, there is an inevitability that it forces those organisations apart. And I would also say that some of

that has happened here too. So we're not perfect in any way, and too often it's the bottom lines that dictate what we do" (LA/SA1).

DA/SA2 provided an overview of the fundamental problem that each organisation was trying to mediate with – *"When services and systems experience cuts, one of the first things that you do is operate more within your silo"*. Crucially, he identified the effects on financial pressures on collaborative interactions.

"All of the other things about how you work with partners relies a lot on good will, a bit of charity. There is some capacity to do that as well, there is always the idea of sharing and joint assessments and all that stuff, but it all requires capacity and I think the cuts have resulted in some parts of the system really struggling" (DA/SA2).

The ability of key stakeholders to work horizontally, building network-type relations across service boundaries was reported as being within the scope of agency, yet still subject to economic discipline. As SC/SA1 put it:

"That's the pressure - No one cares if I go out and meet people, if I agree to collaborate, as long as it doesn't negatively impact on our spend".

For CN/SA1 defensive actions could also be interpreted as acts of self-preservation, particularly at management levels, noting:

"if you have two very large organisations, with multiple directorates and millions of pounds worth of budgets and you put them into one, I suppose on one hand you're pressing the self-destruct button for half the people that work there".

From the point of view of commissioning within the local authority, LA/SA1 suggested that austerity played a dominant role in the promotion of economism within the strategic tier. He described how *'pockets of investment'* that promoted joint working between organisations had sometimes become available, but that statutory organisations had pulled back after initial engagement. Describing historical work between health services and the local authority around homelessness prevention and mental health diagnosis, he suggested that mental health service commissioners had withdrawn from the partnership arrangement following scrutiny of their:

"bottom line, how it worked with their statutory responsibilities or sometimes a bit upstream of statutory responsibilities, and how they can divert people away" (LA/SA1).

For O/SA1 austerity was consistently an organising issue, foregrounding economic decisions in the way that commissioning roles looked to articulate multi-organisational collaboration:

"So the only precondition on any discussion is how much it will cost from a local perspective. So how do we prevent demand entering the system? Not how do we manage demand, but how do we spend 10 pence on grit so we don't have to deal with a broken hip".

It was also suggested that the ongoing impacts of austerity was hindering the enthusiasm and practical space for innovation. Predominantly, those with duties around commissioning were noticeably more tentative about the prospect of expenditure that included non-statutory responsibilities.

"Every piece of work that we have done here, I mean, the driver is looking at cost. But it is not to the degree that we are willfully ignorant of what that is going to mean to people ... you're aware that you are on the cusp of a crisis and the demand is going up, and as I said one of the drivers is around saving money. And my advice over and over again has

been that we need to be really cautious, because things are going to get a lot worse, there will be unbudgeted expenditure and we have statutory duties” (LA/SA1).

LA/SA1, however, pushed back against any idea that there were significant restrictions on how commissioning teams were able to conceptualise practice:

“I do remember one fairly senior guy saying ‘these are non-statutory services’ out of frustration so there has been that pressure of basically ‘we need to save money’, but I have never really felt compromised or unable to say something”.

There were some dissenting voices from this otherwise strong consensus. LA/SA4 felt that austerity had forced organisations to come together and look at joint agendas in order to seek savings. This also suggested that the collaborative culture developed long-standing within the city meant that the reaction to financial difficulties was to look towards collaboration for *“positive ways through”*. LA/SA3 echoed these thoughts, stating that the difficult economic environment – *“certainly helps in our agenda in supporting people to take on a collaborative approach”*.

Competitive attitudes

“We’ve got to somehow move from competition to collaboration” (CN/SA2).

It was not only defensive positioning that was reported within the data collection processes, but also that of competitive behaviours that had been encouraged by government policy over a number of years. This represented a tension for the CSP and one that was seen as in part a product of the dominant governance environment.

The extent to which competitive attitudes could reach was primarily evidenced through some of the reported behaviours from the beginning of the project. CSP lead-agency actors discussed the

mixed reaction towards the proposition of partnership and of the new frontline service. CN/SA1 described early meetings around the development of the CSP and being met with some hostility, particularly from services that felt that the new frontline service could potentially encroach on their own role.

*“I can remember in the early days going to meet someone who I knew well and I was going along for a ‘how can we work together meeting’ and got told literally ‘we don't need to talk to you, there’s no need for (the CSP), you can just f**k off’. And that was quite a senior manager!”*

“You have had political infighting and power struggles, where different organisations converge around a client group and do have some interest and involvement with them, but really operate in an appalling state of competition with each other and the people that you’re trying to help suffer” (CN/SA1).

CN/SA1 also described ‘bitterness’ within some early interactions, with a level of uncertainty about what the project was looking to achieve. The CSP lead agency was reported as being seen by some as having access to relatively large financial resources through their application for external funding, with some distrust around the “people who had suddenly turned up and got a massive pot of cash when most people were quite squeezed” (CN/SA1).

The sense of competition went further than inter-organisational within the field, and towards broader political priorities. CN/SA2 reflected on the fact that adults with complex needs are not always viewed as a particularly sympathetic service user-group.

“The reality of it is that we are competing for attention and resources. And in both perhaps political appeal and a numbers game, when you're dealing with isolation of the elderly or bed blocking,...young children. We're fighting an uphill battle”.

LA/SA1 expressed similar sentiments, displaying frustration that the issue of complex needs was seen as “*kind of peripheral*” and a “*fringe-issue*” to many potential partners. While policy genuflected and shifted to recognition of the complexity of factors affecting this particular service user group, the reality on the ground pointed to it as a much more peripheral issue for those who had other core business priorities.

Economic leverage and its effects

Another manifestation of austerity behaviours was what could be termed ‘leverage’. By this I am referring to the actions of the CSP lead agency in using the substantial investment that was being made towards the project in order to restructure its relationships with potentially more formally powerful actors. While all strategic participants with close ties to the CSP emphasised their personal commitment to working towards the needs of the service user group, economic considerations were often acknowledged as the dominant strategic concern, however personally disappointing that was. This also applied to actors from the CSP lead agency who acknowledged both the relative power that they had gained, but also the need to relate key dynamics such as evaluation and learning to costs. Leverage thus became a key presence within the CSP from its inception. This had the potential to cause hostility within the broader service ecology that had been starved of resources.

Strategic actors working on behalf of the CSP lead agency were not naive about the pressures of austerity while working to establish the partnership. Engaging in what Lowndes and Skelcher term “*pre-partnership collaboration*” (1998: 320), that is forms of network-type behaviours and attitudes characterised by informality so as to develop the outlines of partnership structure, together with the development of trust and identification of common-purposes, key stakeholders described how resource concerns both provided the context for the establishment of the partnership, but also impacted how they looked to establish initial inter-organisational relations. CN/SA2 described how there was very early recognition at the strategic level that the impact of

austerity was going to make it harder to hold organisations together. She acknowledged that the CSP consciously promoted their access to resources in the form of significant external funding and their ability to increase overall service capacity within the city towards potential partners:

“OK so I guess capacity is something that (CSP) has traded on, trading on the fact that they have a resource for a limited period of time” (CN/SA2).

CN/SA3 further summarised the intended approach:

“So yeah if you're in the city council you're thinking... ‘well how can (the CSP) help us in the face of funding cuts’ but we’re also like ‘how can we work better’. Hopefully we get to that question as well”.

LA/SA3 had also been involved with the establishment processes of the project and had assisted in the preparation for the bid for external funding. She acknowledged that the early primary driver in both the original decision to pursue a bid and in how to try and get other organisations to participate was an active decision to frame the problem as an ‘issue of public spend’... *“People don’t admit to that being at the forefront of people’s minds, but it is and it has to be” (LA/SA3).*

Responding to a prompt as to the difficulties in engaging potential partners at this early stage, LA/SA3 bluntly put it that the lead agency was bringing several million pounds into the city and that this was the initial driver of strategic collaboration, coming at a time of *“noticeable cuts in health and adult social care”*. CN/SA1 supported this claim:

“I think people realised at that point the value of bringing in (x) million pounds into the city, the prestige that would bring and the problems that would potentially solve”.

LA/SA4 felt that the development of the CSP offered a distinct break from previous attempts to provide collaborative and multi-agency responses to the identification of complex needs in that there was a conscious effort to look at the attribution of costs and how to collaborate around budgets, stating that:

“We’ve never really got to that bit before. And we’re still not quite there. It’s still budgetary restraints that seems to create that silo structure ... I mean the only good thing I can see about austerity is that it has forced collaboration onto the agenda”.

Simultaneously, the financial resources established by the CSP and managed by the CSP lead agency allowed a level of power and apparent credibility that was described as usually beyond TSOs. Discussing a co-location project that the CSP had for some time engaged with, LA/SA3 suggested that a series of unusual strategic dynamics were apparent:

“Part of the difficulty within the voluntary sector is that they do not have the resources to be able to put the hard-fast cash on the table. But actually being able to match that money showed a huge commitment” (LA/SA3).

At the same time, while the CSP lead agency could be seen as punching above its weight in relation to its interactions with larger statutory organisations, money was also a source of tension.

“There is no doubt in my mind that some of the original partners thought that when that pot of money was won that that money would be shared in some way and things could go on as they were. And that was not what it was about. And some of those people left the partnership in the first year” (CN/SA1).

Passporting of costs

A third austerity behaviour referenced within the fieldwork across the strategic tier was the extent to which organisations continued to engage in behaviours brought referred to here as the passporting of costs:

“When you are faced with making year-to-year cuts it's quite easy to slip into a pattern of cutting a service that doesn't impact on you, but effectively passports costs onto other agencies” (CN/SA2).

A common dilemma faced by those strategic actors was articulating as to whether collaboration had to be incentivised, and if so whether that incentivisation rested on material or resource benefits. This appeared to be somewhat of a dilemma for participants, who frequently made reference to the difficulty that it posed for them. There appeared to be a genuine disconnect between how strategic actors at the local level thought that collaboration *should* be incentivised, as dependent on altruistic understandings and reflecting their own concern for better institutional responses to complexity, and how they perceived it was or would be. DA/SA2 neatly expressed the dilemma;

“...the problem with things these days is that if you resource benefit one thing you're taking something away elsewhere. So the fact that you front load services that are excluding people, so you incentivise organisations not to exclude people, well then that is kind of rewarding bad behaviour! It's difficult. It's a fairly nice view of the world I accept that. But it does seem morally wrong that that is somehow the answer” (DA/SA2).

Looking across these three reported behaviours, while it is tempting to use the word ‘siloed’, this description does not do justice to the nuances of the attitudes reported. Instead, ‘defensive behaviours’ tries to capture the ways in which participants recognised the need for collaborative approaches, but also described finding that the forces and factors within everyday decisions made this a secondary consideration behind the protection of resources. The combination of

austerity behaviours could be seen as a syndrome of enforced reluctance, where horizontalism finds itself in subordinate relationship with vertical disciplines of austerity.

In the end it was money that talked.

“So if you want to get those organisations in there you have to show a benefit...something tangible. You know it has to be that your income is in some way dependent on your attendance and engagement, and if you're not you would lose a proportion of your income. That kind of thing would get people to the table” (DA/SA1).

Ambiguities of the horizontal terrain

The term ‘horizontal terrain’ refers to the ways in which these particular strategic actors reported their work with other professionals and organisations around the development of CSP. As Entwistle *et al.*, (2007) suggest, the development of a partnership at some level is looking to bring more network behaviours into the mix of coordination. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the effectiveness of a network and horizontal forms of collaboration is presented as highly dependent on high levels of trust-based informal relations as part of the dynamics of civil society.

Increasing informality

There was substantial appreciation for the CSP in allowing a greater degree of networking and informal working. One of the key findings of the research was the dominant perception throughout the fieldwork as to the importance of individuals rather than organisations or structures. This corresponds with Dudau *et al.*'s (2016) findings from their research around partnerships within child protection infrastructure in England where they emphasised similar perceptions throughout complex collaborative systems towards both the importance of individuals and their abilities to personally attempt to bridge sometimes competing demands of parent organisation and partners. Within this research, this could be seen in the consistent

identification of singular actors as representatives of organisations and potential strategies of influence. However, there did appear to be distinct limitations of this emphasis on the individual.

“I would say that all of my influencing is based on personal relationships that you build up. It does mean that you can pick up the phone if there is a specific case that you want to discuss and try and get things...that obviously works. But then to change the system of other people? That’s where you do need those meetings, to be influencing targets that are beyond most of us locally. And that’s why you need much more formal, or mandatory, ways of doing that” (W/SA1).

Austerity behaviours did not prevent or inhibit all forms of horizontal relationships. There was substantial evidence of a growth in informal relationships notably between civil society actor-to-actor. These relationships, with some exceptions, were widely commended within the interviews. Positive personal evaluation was high, with a distinct sense that participants both valued and enjoyed the joint work. However, they could be characterised as largely individually based rather than organisationally-based. Consequently, there was a perceived downside to this increased horizontal working when it came into contact with actors representing organisations with higher levels of vertical accountabilities. W/SA1 articulated a perceived tension between the willingness and effort made by smaller, less institutionally powerful organisations and larger, predominantly statutory organisations, to consider the impact of service delivery on certain groups such as women, remarking that *“it does often throw it back to the smaller organisations with that specialism to drive the change”*.

Trust and commissioning

“How do you commission trust?” (CN/SA3).

Some interviews offered an insight into the ways in which commissioning parameters affected issues of collaboration. In response to a question as to how commissioning services could incentivise collaboration, DA/SA1 replied.

“I don’t think you need to really. It’s just about having that belief that change is possible for your client or service user” (DA/SA1).

However, when asked to clarify, he noted that he had witnessed a fundamental change over time in relation to drug and alcohol services from feeling *“very precious about your client group”*. The crucial shift for him was the development of an agenda within drug and alcohol service commissioning that recognised a *“recovery agenda”* (see Roy and Buchanan, 2016). DA/SA1 then suggested that by shifting the underlying ethos of treatment, a more collaborative approach had inherently followed as *“you’re having to look at addressing other issues alongside substance use. That’s when you need someone like (the CSP) to work alongside you” (DA/SA1).*

Voluntary nature of the CSP and the issue of accountabilities

“You are not expected to do anything with it. And nobody is going to challenge you on whether you're doing it or not doing it” (CN/SA4).

Another reflection of the strengths and limitations of informality was the voluntary nature of participation within the CSP. This too was full of ambiguities. On the one hand, it represented a coalition of willing and relatively committed actors. On the other, it required an understanding of what exactly you were participating in and why. This included ambiguities of motive. While there was consensus over the moral case for collaboration, the terrain or motivation had its own ambiguities and potential imbalances.

Speaking with more distance from the partnership and from a statutory environment O/SA2 noted:

“It’s why (the CSP) is slightly tail-wags-dog. There is loads of money, so everyone wants to be involved with it. But it’s also a voluntary sector organisation with a voluntary committee”.

One of the foundations of partnership is the establishment of common goals. However, a partnership that is evolving rapidly under differing stresses and strains, in which people came and went, was finding it difficult to maintain ideological coherence. The dynamics of these instabilities is eloquently reflected in the following quotes:

“So people come into partnerships fundamentally at different points and you have to spend some time saying well how do we start the conversation. So you might have a project where everyone comes with a remarkable amount of goodwill, the system will spit them out at different points and there is nothing that goodwill can bridge. They needed to start with the system” (DA/SA2).

“If you look at statutory responsibilities, they don’t have the power over other agencies. So everything you are suggesting is driven almost morally. It’s saying ‘the system is failing, what are we going to do to make our city better?’ and you are trying to convince them about what is needed. And you haven’t got many levers really. No power to enforce any of it really” (W/SA1).

The voluntary nature of the partnership, even though there had been some level of formal agreements at the point of bidding for funding, raised questions among those interviewed as to the processes of accountability within a voluntary setting. As anticipated in the literature review, there was a feeling from certain partners that differing vertical accountabilities for each organisation led to a sense of confusion that was difficult to resolve.

“So the clash I feel has always been the local leadership which has the (the city) and its people in the forefront of its mind, and something like health which is driven by national targets” (W/SA1).

LA/SA1 bluntly suggested that where there had been difficulties within the CSP around varying degrees of institutional power, or closer relationships to the governmental state, and that this had led to a lack of accountability within the partnership. He remarked on the limited obligations of *“having to explain decisions or having to be present. I really don’t think it goes beyond that”*. Should organisations be operating in a way that was counter to the aims of the other partnering organisation or the overall project, then there appeared very little that was to hold them within those informal agreements.

The voluntary nature of the partnership ultimately exposed different levels of institutional commitment.

“I mean there's a big disparity because I think a lot of good has come out of the partnership board meetings and a lot of good that comes out of collaboration between exclusively voluntary sector organisations. But I do think of if key players are missing, the more broad aspirations for holistic services won't really be met” (LA/SA1).

“I do think there is an issue with attendance, if they are optional then people will choose to go or not to go, the whole thing can fall down or you can get a group where a whole group of like-minded people from the voluntary sector saying ‘I wish we could get this - let's write another letter guys’, and being frustrated” (LA/SA1).

Institutional distinctiveness and partnership ambiguity

“Even after 14 years of working with people who are involved in collaborations, I continue to be surprised about the number who are unclear about who they are in collaboration with” (Huxham, 2003: 410).

Literature around inter-organisational collaborations concerned with complex social issues point to the potential for partnerships to be characterised by themes of ‘ambiguity’ (e.g. Huxham and Vangen, 2000). This was certainly the case regarding those interviewed with multiple examples of imprecision around membership roles and subsequent powers and responsibilities. The most obvious ambiguity was the tendency of actors who were, at least on paper, key figures within the organisations involved in the CSP, to refer to it not only as a separate and defined organisation in itself, but also with a sense of distance from the decisions made by and within it. This was most apparent from those from organisations with dominant statutory responsibilities, including health and offending behaviour organisations.

CN/SA2 expressed frustration at this dynamic, though acknowledged that the decision to ‘trade on’ access to resources in order to build the partnership had actively engaged with this risk:

“... you see this with a lot of partnerships, or partnerships that I've worked on, where there has been a resource for some kind of central unit or team - is it that the entity or partnership comes to look at itself like a team and not a partnership of organisations. So now people talk about (CSP) as the ‘thing’, forgetting that they are part of it. Which frustrates me hugely”.

However, there was also evidence of further ambiguities. Huxham and Vangen note that in such collaboration there is an *“assumption that individuals are usually representing something beyond their own self-interest when they participate in a collaboration”* (2000: 10). It is common that

there is some level of ambiguity, or even confusion, as to whether those who take the most active roles within collaborative activities, such as sitting on partnership boards, do so as individuals or representatives of their parent organisations.

These ambiguities and perception of the CSP as a distinct organisation in its own right appeared to affect the commitment of some partners. For example, the establishment of a large email-list for the forwarding of minutes and partnership updates could be contrasted with an attendance list that was considerably smaller. Thus the concept of the CSP referred to as 'the thing', could be seen to represent the partnership at its narrowest.

There was, however, a notable exception to this kind of ambiguity which came in the form of very conscious reflection around the issue of trust. One actor, representing women's issues as a strategic leader of a TSO located deep within local civil society, presented a highly conscious reflection on the possible sacrifices that she would make in terms of the immediate interests of her client-group. She described conflicting feelings over her apparent prioritisation of the partnership agenda over the dynamics of advocacy for the appreciation of how complex needs interact with service provision for women.

"I suppose what I find interesting reflecting now that you've just asked me that, is that I probably don't go with our own agenda! I go and I listen to what the (CSP lead agency) agenda is" (W/SA1).

W/SA1 went further, considering the way in which she described the CSP with a sense of inclusion, using words such as "we" and "us". Yet the reflection also appeared to provoke a tension; a sense that these dynamics came at some cost to her own organisation's priorities. W/SA1 went on to describe viewing her contribution at Partnership Board meetings as an opportunity to add value to the partnership itself, rather than an investment of time and resources that would necessarily benefit her own organisation. She was asked directly whether

she primarily viewed the partnership as something to which she belonged or a vehicle to promote the intersectional nature of women's issues within broader articulations of complex needs.

"I hadn't realised it until just then. But yes I do very much. And it's my responsibility to make that work and well... it's almost like I shouldn't be bringing my own agenda. Maybe I should do a bit more thinking about how I feed our agenda into something like (the CSP). I need to amplify our voice".

This kind of sentiment, however, proved to be the exception rather than the rule. And it was certainly the case in relation to frontline workers who, as discussed within the next section of this chapter, were working within an environment where the CSP were operating as a service-user facing service.

These ambiguities of horizontal partnership working could be seen as the terrain upon which key individuals played out their distinctive role. As Chapter 2 suggests, these people are characterised within the literature as 'champions of change'.

The fragilities of 'champions of change'

One of the major findings of this research was the degree to which both collaboration and barriers to collaboration were held by many within the partnership and broader ecology as resting on the role of the individual. Despite constant references to structural issues, there was a dominant response that it was individuals and their commitment to make collaboration work. At the same time, there were reservations as to whether this would be sufficient.

"I'm sure they'd say this, as well at an operational level you're dependent on good people who have bought into it and want to take part. And part of the thing about system changes that you want organisations are tied into it, not just individuals which is why we keep going back to policy and commissioning structures and partnership governance and

the like. So yes it's important whether we can achieve whole organisational collaboration or not. But I think we have some good individual collaboration" (CN/SA2).

Ambiguous feelings about the role of individuals was reflected in the sense of fragility of a dependence on individual rather than organisational commitment.

"And even if massive progress has been made, it only takes a change of leadership in any organisation that hasn't been part of that process to knock things off kilter. And then it leads back to the drawing board" (LA/SA4).

It became clear that not all participants viewed the partnership in the same way, but also that some were more committed than their colleagues within their own organisation. This put the partnership's relationship with certain key organisations on decidedly weak footing. A notable example was a person representing an organisation working with offending behaviours. They were highly thought of across the partnership in terms of their commitment towards collaboration around this specific service user group. A regular attendee at partnership board meetings and someone who had built up a great deal of 'soft' linkages, she left her role halfway through the data collection period. W/SA1 reflected on the effects on participation in the CSP.

"And it was really reliant on one person. So you've got one person that attends the meetings but that post literally gets deleted. And then the whole organisation spirals out of the partnership, nobody knows why or understands anything. So now it's really not very solid or reliable at all".

The thin foundations of cultures of collaboration

Several strategic actors, most notably those operating within or heavily linked to the local authority, be they within commissioning or housing roles, stated that they believed that being asked to collaborate across organisational and sectoral boundaries had firmer footing due to a

longer-standing culture of collaboration that had been developed within the city. Several participants (e.g. CN/SA1, H/SA1, LA/SA4) suggested that work undertaken by the local authority prior to the CSP had helped make inter-organisational collaboration in relation to complex needs a less problematic set of dynamics than other areas, having established a 'culture' of multi-agency problem solving at the strategic tier. Interestingly, this culture of collaboration was not attributed to 'bottom-up' relationships, but through an element of vertical power exhibited by high-level officials forcing coordination to take place.

"An ex-chief exec upset a lot of people because he came from outside of the city, he forced partner agencies - he was a very dominant personality and he literally forced people to get into a room and said that you will work togetherit came down to the point where if this was a problem it was said 'you will come, you will be held to account'. By the time this (the CSP) came along the groundwork for partnership working had been made" (CN/SA1).

The foundations of a culture of collaboration, however, did not solely rest on the shoulders of forceful individuals. H/SA1 identified part of the reason for a pre-existing culture is that Housing had residual cultural knowledge around holistic working that had been developed through previous projects, notably the *Supporting People Programme* under New Labour. The expansion of housing support with multiple providers, mostly from the third sector, was understood to have ingrained a culture of multi-organisational working that was contrasted with other services that were described as 'more linear, where they might say *"this is what we do and we will contribute that, but not much else"* (H/SA1).

Nevertheless, the effect of this historical foundation was far from pervasive. When looking at the current landscape there was a perception of a *"lack of expertise"* (CN/SA4) around how to conduct collaborative work. CN/SA4, in trying to augment the knowledge around collaborative

strategies as part of her role in coordinating learning opportunities, expressed surprise and frustration at being unable to find appropriate materials and examples for the field:

“... we’ve asked where the examples of good multi-disciplinary working are and where we can get these people in, but we can’t find anywhere! You can’t see where this is happening”.

It would appear, therefore, that the ‘culture’ of collaboration was itself subject to contradictory forces. The impetus for the culture of collaboration appeared interestingly dependent on vertical influences - authoritative leader from the outside and collaborations established under a more directive New Labour Government. Yet these minor positive vertical influences were played out in a landscape where the incentives to collaborate were relatively thin on the ground.

Mutual learning as a collaborative practice – the limits of engagement

A key part of the CSP project, reflected within its evaluation strategies and its own ‘system change’ documentation, was the establishment of joint-learning initiatives. As part of this strategy the CSP had funded a *Practice Development* initiative that looked to organise and provide joint learning workshops. Across the strategic tier, the development of new knowledge around working with the service user group was deemed vital and was viewed as central to any legacy impact of the CSP. The opportunity to bring together both strategic and frontline actors within joint learning environments was reported as an important component of establishing new ways of working and building up collaborative capacity. The narrative around mutual learning offers an illustration of both the broader issues of institutional power and accountabilities in relation to location towards the governmental state, but also as to the reaction and adaptive behaviours of the CSP lead agency within this environment.

As the primary coordinator of this initiative, CN/SA4 provided a mixed picture as to its success at the time. By far the biggest challenge that she articulated was having the “*right people*” attend

the workshops. This was a direct referral to statutory actors, both strategic and frontline, who had been erratic in attendance. CN/SA4 identified this issue as bound up with the dominance of vertical accountabilities in the form of key performance indicators.

“So when I’ve spoken to workforce leads it’s been - ‘well we have our workforce plan, we’ve got our priorities and if what you are doing does not fit with that then we are not really interested’. That’s the blunt way of putting it” (CN/SA4).

CN/SA4 also noted that organisations appeared more likely to engage with learning opportunities when clearly embedded within individual workforce plans, though she suggested that the most likely route for this would be through the development of e-learning modules, which caused her some anxiety in terms of encouraging collaborative behaviours.

“If people are sat on their own in front of their computers then I don’t think you’ll get that (collaboration). It’s not collaborative is it and you’ll have people just focus on their own service”.

The issues of different service engagement with joint learning can be seen to have taken on some of the broader issues around statutory and third sector engagement, with it being widely reported that attendance at joint learning opportunities became dominated by Third Sector staff.

CN/SA4 described a high level of personal agency afforded to her to try and establish linkages across organisations through learning and evaluation, though this was heavily reliant on her own initiative and networking abilities. This included developing a reflexive understanding of each organisation’s core business and priorities. However, she felt that there had been significant difficulty in reaching the breadth of organisations horizontally.

Crucially, in relation to the orientations of this research, the joint learning initiatives developed by the CSP were in a state of evolution at the time of data collection. Originally planned as workshops and information sharing settings that looked to encourage all services, partly as a response to the uneven attendance, the CSP lead agency appeared to be taking on the role of coordinating and mediating between specific organisations around the influences of legislation.

“We’ve done some work organised by (the CSP) between adult social care workers and housing workers to look at the parallels between the Care Act and the Homelessness reduction Act and to make some recommendations for better working practices between the two, mainly around joint assessments” (H/SA1).

However, CN/SA4 had mixed feelings about the limits of these developments:

“They’ve been talking about how they can work together, how they can align their systems, trying to iron out who is going to deliver what. So they’ve said that they found that helpful, but it doesn’t involve anyone else in the system!” (CN/SA4).

This dynamic could be seen in different form in relation to the attempts to promote joint working in the field through the practice development initiative. The literature, most notably Cornes *et al.*, (2018) and Mason *et al.*, (2018), suggested that joint learning and boundary crossing work in the field of complex needs had been characterised by levels of tension and conflict, notably between complex needs ‘navigators’ employing strategies of ‘persistent advocacy’ and social workers whose roles include financial gatekeeping. However, in line with the reported beliefs evidenced from the frontline and discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter, no articulations of conflict were reported from the joint learning workshops. Instead, there were comments regarding perceptions of usefulness between participants from statutory services and the voluntary sector due to work and communication differences.

“I think the managers are much more willing to listen to the staff and the staff are much more willing to listen to other members of staff. Whereas in the statutory sector, there's just many more layers of management really. People make me feel that they are not going to be listened to as much. There was a report that came out from the frontline or something like that and we were going to do a workshop on that. And someone said actually I think in the NHS and the city council people won't feel that they have the power, but in the voluntary sector it seems different” (CN/SA4).

Intersections and multi-agency working

This section reports the ways that the intersection of vertical and horizontal forces was experienced by local actors and that produced dramatically different interpretations of collaboration. The first observation is that the effects of these influences did not produce explicit conflict but, instead, introduced other problems - of issue of the alignment of different organisations affecting the prospect of inter-agency working; the ‘absence’ of key participants and then two very separate accounts and understandings of ideas of disruption.

The way that these vertical and horizontal tensions played out in terms of models of collaboration was highlighted by a reflective comment as to the ways in which different agencies aligned, or did not align, their basic systems.

“My idea of partnership working and multi-agency working is that you end up aligning your systems, your procedures, your policies, your guidelines. But if you talk to people about examples of multi-agency working here, they will talk about individual case conferences where you have one person from each agency there to talk about one case. Now that might be a multi-disciplinary team but that's not, to me, multi-disciplinary working” (CN/SA4).

This actor was thus making the important distinction concerning the *scale* of collaboration. That is to say, the distinction between aligning systems and discussing a case.

Tensions and absences on the collaborative landscape

“I sometimes think ‘who will be the partner of an integrated care project if one of the partners falls over?’” (O/SA2).

This leads to one of the fundamental findings of the project. For all of the reported goodwill between strategic actors as representatives of their organisations, there was an apparent tension in the strategic tier, primarily between Health Services and the Local Authority.

(LA/SA1) admitted that he was ‘guessing’ at to the potential motivations for the breakdown in relationships between the local authority and health at the time.

“We used to have pretty good open conversations, and we knew that they had financial pressures looming. But actually they have not been very explicit about that. They have not said this is why we are not engaging with you. They’ve kind of just left us in the dark a little bit” (LA/SA1).

Crucially this was not reported to have been evidenced by overt disagreements, but by a downturn in engagement, lack of communication and subsequent impact on trust. As discussed within the previous chapter, this also impacted upon the research sampling strategy with severe difficulties in engaging with actors from Health Services that had a primary role in terms of commissioning roles.

In addition, W/SA1 had long-term misgivings about the ‘clashes’ between mental health services and substance misuse services in how they interacted with women with complex needs.

“So I suppose it was not looking at the woman as a whole, or realising that in accessing the service she might have other needs, but they're specialism was in one thing but then making them leave everything else at the door”.

However, as partnership meetings were characterised as ‘quite formalised’ and with a relatively rigid agenda, most of the work in relation to those tensions were reported as taking place outside of the CSP joint forums.

An interesting way in which tensions and absences played out were the ways in which the CSP *de facto* narrowed. The partnership was increasingly reported as becoming more ideologically and organisationally cohesive, represented by the reported dominance of TSOs in attendance, the strategies towards change undertaken and the discourse of partnership pervasive in the language of the CSP lead agency and associated TSO actors. Yet this apparent strength was coupled by two differing symptoms of fragility - through growing reliance on individuals - ‘champions of change’ - and the perceived absence of key services.

However, another view was also present. The absence of observable conflict was reinforced by a research participant who had experience in other types of partnerships. They remarked that, in comparison with other places that they had worked, the CSP was remarkably free of disagreements concerning underlying philosophies and understandings of the problem. Given the comparison made and the potentially identifiable features within it, this reflection was requested to remain unattributed. However, it served to illustrate that in their view the fundamental conceptualisation of the issues of complex needs were not perceived as a fundamental barrier towards collaboration, suggesting that those barriers could be found in different and often external locations.

Interpretations of disruption

O/SA1 (a representative of the criminal justice system) proved to be an outlier in terms of conceptualisation of the problem, observing a lack of political agency from the CSP. It became clear during the interview process that he did not consider himself a partner within the CSP, although was anxious that it be a success. He was keen to stress that he felt that the issue of complex needs had not been adequately politicised in that he articulated a need for the *disruption* of established systems. O/SA1 made repeated comparisons to the impact of social movements such as *Extinction Rebellion*.

“So take Extinction Rebellion - an element of rebellion to disrupt the system, the status quo. It is not ok just to gradually raise the eligibility criteria till we are dealing with clients with the most expensive care package in the world. That's not OK. Instead, you turn the system upside down. Where do we free the Third Sector to rebel and rethink the system and ask the hard questions? Or are they forever being nice saying please give us a bit more money? I'm not in that place so I don't know, but where is the Extinction Rebellion for multiple and complex needs?”.

CN/SA1, however, suggested a different form of ‘disruption’ was occurring as a result of the partnership and the establishment of a new frontline workforce.

“Disrupt is an interesting word. One thing that we disrupt I would say is the silo working where you get those traditional barriers where services don't speak to each other. So, for example, one of the coordinators today went to see a guy that is on remand in prison who was talking about how his mental health has been very poor. He had gone into prison and had not had any contact with mental health services and was acting very weird because he was feeling suicidal. Disruption in this case is that person being able to ring someone from mental health and saying I am telling you that this person is a high risk. Miraculously

the next day he was seen by a mental health professional. Disruption coordination, call it what you will, is trying to join up and trying to bring things together”.

The first interpretation of disruption can be seen to represent a politicised interpretation, while the second, from a member of the CSP lead agency, could be viewed as an adaptive and an apolitical response.

Institutional power and integration

“It tells you a lot really because I do think that integration is the right thing. But I found that when integration is happening it is because of a government agenda or guidance” (SC/SA1).

Recognitions of power and a desire for more strategic integration could be seen across the all locations in both the interviews and within local strategic documentation. The need for a city-wide plan and pooled budgets was a regular reference (e.g. SC/SA1, LA/SA1, H/SA1). The commitment towards co-production with service users within CSP plans was also reflected within the interviews. However, at the time of research many of the broader ambitions of institutional alignments were still in developmental stages or were reported as experiencing institutional barriers further up. Crucially, where most success had been found were in strategies of resource allocation and the use of funding from the CSP lead agency towards co-location centres or organisational hubs, together with relatively smaller (though important) attempts towards service-user visibility, such as the creation of a common ‘pledge’ developed with service users that was introduced to encourage professionals and organisations to recognise how complex needs could be manifested.

DA/SA2 rejected the statutory/non-statutory binary in terms of collaborative behaviours, pointing to the role that probation services played as statutory providers who, in his view, were

able to work between different systems and work collaboratively because it was essential to complete their statutory responsibilities – “They have to understand it” (DA/SA2). Instead, it was organisational size and complexity that DA/SA2 believed posed the biggest barrier or reluctance to collaborate.

“Larger organisations struggle to keep themselves together and people within those organisations struggle to understand their own organisation never mind the outside. The problem is for individuals to look externally and understand where they fit, you only really get to do that when you understand where you are within your own organisation”
(DA/SA2).

The virtues of top-down collaboration?

The comparison between the CSP and newly established Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) (NHS, 2019) featured in several of the interviews. Where the CSP was characterised by its ‘bottom-up’ credentials and commitment to co-production with service-users, ICPs were viewed by those who raised them in interview as offering the potential for collaboration between those actors with higher levels of institutional power; those that using the conceptual framework outlined in the early chapters could be defined as having closer proximity to the governmental state.

One particular quote from DA/SA2 that is worth including in its entirety is due to its ability to capture the dominant perception towards ICPs that, at least in theory, have higher levels of institutional power and closer connections to dominant verticalities.

“I mean the ICP is fascinating. It has the chief execs from all of the hospital trusts, all of the mental health trusts, every commissioner you could want. They are there and they are round the table and they have promised to look at the system, to not operate in their own silos and not be protective of their own money. To look at people's journeys across

their lifespan, because they know - and they do know and recognise - if the system joins together and let go some of the traditional things that belong to individual services then it will be more effective. So far it can't manage any of that in practice” (DA/SA2).

So why is a body comprising powerful people not able to get things done? He provided an answer with the example of a hospital.

“Everyone agrees that it (collaboration) is a great thing. But the hospital is drowning. It's on black alert so there are no beds. It can't cope. It can't get people out and it knows that it can't get people out and there is nothing really happening in primary care that stops people turning up. So it can't control its front door and it can't control its exit. When challenged by the ICP, where they might say ‘we need to take money off you so we can put more money in social care’. At that point the hospital block it all because actually what it wants is more beds and more wards because what it sees is its own little bit. So that is playing out in a broad system where everybody has promised to do a thing and has the power to do it” (DA/SA2).

O/SA1, however, raised even more fundamental concerns around shifts towards integration and broader political-economic relationships. For O/SA 1 the prospect of further integration could not be separated from concerns around the processes of marketisation and fragmentation.

“There is a new approach to integrated care partnerships. There is a cynical view that says this is about exporting jobs to large multinationals who will damage the wages and working conditions of those engaged in the health and social care system. There is a non-cynical view that says that their job is to bridge that gap between things that are treatable and not treatable, say take the dementia case and rethink the system. So structurally and strategically, what is the role of those partnerships?” (O/SA1).

He posed it as a fundamental question of change.

“Because we're balanced between those two views aren't we? Is it about exporting jobs to American multinationals on minimum wage or is it genuine change? I don't think they know themselves yet” (O/SA1).

The example beyond that of the CSP is illustrative of the fundamental tensions within the wider system where the recognition of collaboration is simply undermined by the vertical force of resource constraint and narrow boundaries of accountabilities. Closer to the ground, amidst the feelings of lack of power local actors sought to adjust by getting on with trying to make things work

“I know I don't feel like I've got the power. The more you speak the more you get roped into doing things” (W/SA1).

Perceptions of sustainability, system change and complexity

The relationship of ambitions of system change, and the ways in which actors and organisations within the locality worked together horizontally, was clearly of concern to those working within the CSP. There were significant levels of anxiety in relation to the looming end of the project as the CSP moved over the halfway point of external funding. There appeared to be significant and widespread appreciation of both the increase in visibility of the service-user group, the relationships that had been built up and, most apparent, the extra capacity brought into the broader system through the accessing of external resources. However, there also appeared to be common consensus that the prospect of that external funding no longer being in place would provoke challenging and critical debates with the background of potential disagreements and possible conflict.

“I am nervous now. I’m anxious now about the conclusion of that programme. Worried about what will happen. What happens when that goes away and we are again relying on our set budgets?” (LA/SA1).

“I’m trying to stay positive about the whole thing” (SC/SA2).

“I don’t want to be too despondent, but I must admit at the moment it looks like it’s going to be very, very challenging to take forward all of the good work they (the CSP) have done” (SC/SA1).

H/SA1, speaking as a lead coordinator of a similar partnership initiative to the CSP, though one with higher institutional power, had some concerns as to the potential legacy:

“I would say based on my experience of being involved in pilot services, running consortiums or working in partnerships, and even co-production. Once that core objective comes to an end, you will only have a small percentage of people that will still be driven to meet round that table. You’ll always have partners that were involved because they and I might be being a bit blunt... but some will say ‘you should really have us because we meet the criteria’, but actually when you get round the table they are not committed because all they just wanted was part of the money and to get on with what they were doing. I don’t mean that in a derogatory way, because actually that’s what they got involved for - it allowed them to do their role - but it’s not about true partnership”.

Again, the theme of economic leverage makes a return, based on the presumed strategy in the eyes of some more distanced from the CSP that it was continuing to trade on its ability to add capacity. A key question part way through the project was how this had affected the overall capabilities of the service ecology and whether it had resulted in sustainable system change.

“That’s not a bad strategy in terms of making people think ‘what are we going to do without (the CSP). How is it going to work because we’ve all receded, most of us have receded. And if anything, if they (the CSP) went tomorrow there is a bigger gap than there was before” (DA/SA2).

“It’s really hard to think about system change because I suppose I’m quite cynical about it. It’s really tough and I think, given all of the financial pressures, but also the strategic pressures in the departments for people with complex needs... I’d be surprised if there was any long-lasting system change. I know that sounds awful, but I would” (SC/SA1).

Part of the anxiety was the realisation as to the value that had actually been established locally. Extra capacity that had been brought into the broader system and locality, particularly in relation to increasing resources and the visibility complex needs as an issue. However, this was manifested more as the creation of a new frontline service, rather than other features of system change.

These ‘legacy’ dynamics led to mixed feelings among many participants over the consequences of which agency would be tasked with taking the issue on; a development that would increase their power to frame the problem of complex needs.

“Because the police value (the CSP) hugely they make referrals for those who are most challenging. And I think they are worried about what they are going to do. We’ve got other programs, but the numbers are absolutely limited” (SC/SA2).

“I’d like it to be both a health and council need as I think that puts it on a slightly more positive footing than if it was purely with criminal justice and drug services” (CN/SA2).

“Some organisations are just more used to that joint working so what then you are preaching to the converted, while I am not sure what it would take to unstick the others that are more stuck” (DA/SA2).

While as we have seen there were clear views about collaborative behaviours, the same could not be said about ‘system change’. Here interviewees from the strategic tier commented on dominant logics; the relative absence of a shared understanding of system change and the responses from agencies under differing pressures. One pointed up the continued domination of an economic logic:

“I think even if we were in better funded times, the strategy would still be to make an economic case, that's just the neoliberal world that we live in!” (SC/SA2).

Another suggested that the concept of system change remained largely symbolic, rather than a concrete strategy.

“I don't want this to come across as a deliberative and well-structured strategy that we had from the outset. I think that would be disingenuous. No one really knew what system change was. It was just jargon and I think really is just the latest term for transformation and sustained change that requires the number of agencies. I can take you back through any number of government initiatives and give you different names for that. I mean we didn't really have an explicit theory of change at the outset” (CN/SA2).

Interviews revealed a tension that lay between some of the prescriptive advice from advocacy groups and the hard realities of operating within a complex institutional environment.

“People are under real pressure. I've lost count of how many meetings where we've said health and social care really need to pool budgets. And it's a great idea on paper, but no one is going to stick their head up and make it happen” (CN/SA1).

“But it's been really hard. We had two national elections and two years of no domestic agenda to speak of. Why would you continue to waste your energy just to continue to make background noise when you can keep the agenda in the minds of people who are relatively sympathetic, but you just have to wait” (CN/SA2).

While there was a level of agreement as to the necessity of change in institutional response to adults with complex needs and the centrality to new forms of joint working to achieve that, there was some evidence of disillusionment with the constant requirement of innovation, bidding and accountability.

“In terms of a service it would be great to get a successor service, but that service needs to make sure their continues to collect evidence of impact or what it saves other services doing, because there will always be a next commissioning cycle, and in three or five years there will always be the opportunity for it to be cut. And that is very hard to do because the margins are so low that some kind of service evaluation will probably not be available then. I suspect it will come down to voluntary organisations to do that” (CN/SA2).

“It could go either way really. We could get an arrangement where the CSP essentially passes the caseloads back and statutory services are not in a position to adequately respond, absorbing some people but not doing an adequate job of meeting their needs” (LA/SA1).

System change or a fix?

The experiences of the CSP, and strategic actors within it, in relation to the intersections of vertical and horizontal coordination, is reflected clearly in these differing anxieties around

sustainability and system change. This was partly due to feelings that system change itself appeared to take on slightly nebulous characteristics, potentially due to decisions, described in the final chapter as processes of adaptive system management, where interventions at the operational level were prioritised over moves towards organisational alignment:

“... we are delivering quite a lot in terms of frontline services and system change is something that comes later on” (CN/SA3).

Interestingly, conversations around these dynamics tended to provoke a rearticulation of the potential limits of change in the field, processes that the next chapter will argue were bound to the decisions to pursue strategies of *adaptive system management*. This could be seen within potential disagreements as to the breadth of change required (or possible) in the immediate term. For example, LA/SA1 expressed disappointment in his perception that other key actors, particularly within organisations with statutory functions far broader than complex needs, had repeatedly shown reluctance to engage with ideas of fundamental change throughout systems of commissioning and service delivery due to the perceived *“fringe”* status of the service-user group.

“And there’s a reluctance to look at the wider system and how it responds to people with multiple and complex needs ... It’s like ‘why should we change the whole thing?’ That’s what I’ve seen”.

In this regard, CN/SA2 offered an insight that I regarded as a crucial intervention and pivotal moment within the research because it summarises the dilemmas facing many actors from the strategic tier. As such, it is quoted here in full.

“There is also something about complex systems. Where there is not an incentive to change the system because they (adults with complex needs) are a very small proportion

of lots and lots of systems where those systems work perfectly well for 98 per cent of people. How shifting it around for the two per cent, or whatever, would kind of unravel it for everybody else. So there is a body of thought that says system change can achieve some things, but if you want to do it without consequence for other groups - for quite niche, hard to help individuals - you don't try and rewire everything. Instead you put in a 'fix' - actually a sticking plaster is a really good word. And I'm increasingly coming to the view that the best thing that we could do would be to get this group recognised and have some kind of dedicated team that makes it work for these individuals. Take some of the heat off the other services, alongside those deeper more developmental things that we want to see such as equipping frontline staff to know what they're dealing with" (CN/SA2).

Part 2. The front line

Introduction

This section looks to distil the data from those participants that operate in frontline roles within the service ecology sampled. In line with the case-study strategy, the aim is to provide space for the voices of those interviewed to come through, to narrate the primary reported dynamics on the frontline at a certain point in the trajectory of the CSP. After initial plans to concentrate data collection towards the strategic tier, following an initial pilot study it was decided that frontline voices would be valuable exploring how those decisions of governance and strategy were being assembled and translated on the ground. This offers a more holistic view of the CSP at the time of investigation, while also providing a level of triangulation for views and behaviours reported from the strategic tier. As such, it looks to provide a snapshot over a period of time among frontline actors across five service domains. The sample sought to address the key components of complex needs the CSP partnership used as part of their referral process. As discussed within the research chapter, following a shift in sampling strategy, this was later amended to also include frontline voices from social care following the evolution of the partnership at the time. It should be noted that where frontline workers were not able to be interviewed, managers with

operational duties were able to be engaged, with a primary sampling strategy of identifying 'client-facing' (Lupton *et al.*, 2001) actors.

The interview schedule employed in relation to those whose primary engagement in client-facing roles was different from that used with explicitly strategic actors (see Appendices 3 and 4). This change was made following the pilot stage when it became clear that questions primarily related to governance and strategic decisions were not producing particularly insightful material should the participating actor be more service user facing in their professional role. While the interview schedule was organised with influence from Benson's (1975) operational framework, data was distilled following an inductive process of thematic coding so as to contribute to the commitment to transparency identified within the previous chapter and a decision to pursue actor voice as a primary characteristic.

CSP identity and the role of keyworkers

One thing worth acknowledging at the start of this section is the sense in which the frontline actors interviewed primarily viewed the CSP as a frontline service in itself. While the CSP itself purposely took on a dual strategic role, characterised by the partnership agreements and partnership board, this section primarily explores the narratives and stories in relation to the frontline where inter-organisational collaboration around the service user group was actually taking place. It is, therefore, understood that when participants made reference to the CSP lead agency this was done in relation to what they clearly experienced as an identifiable frontline service. As such, there is a dominant tendency within the data towards the actions and behaviours of the keyworkers, who constituted the core of this client-facing group, including interviews with those workers not employed by the CSP lead agency.

Austerity

Identified as the key organising theme at the strategic tier, the impact of austerity was experienced more of a background issue within discussions on the frontline. It retained its

pervasive characteristics, often referred to in passing as part of the service ecology landscape or retaining its disciplinary qualities.

“If we don't maintain our budgets then what's going to happen? Cuts!” (SC/OA2).

However, this economic climate did not have the same immediate and organising effect as with the strategic tier. This suggests that the following reported themes could be interpreted as predominantly operational in comparison with the strategic tier where the themes of Part 1 are more closely associated with acts of mediation with vertical/state factors.

Professional Identity: ‘Jack of all trades, master of none’

The key finding from the frontline and the dominant theme within the interviews was the extent to which questions of collaboration with other professionals and organisations working with complexity provoked clear anxieties and reflections around professional identity. Where the interview schedule looked to establish how participants experienced and acted upon collaborative activities around the service user group, it was startling as to the extent to which the response was to refer to an apparent dilemma of specialisation that was occurring within the field.

Working with complex needs, that were clearly recognised as interdependent and requiring of some type of collaborative action, appeared nevertheless to trigger some discomfort around role definitions. While all practitioners and operational managers to some extent viewed their job as involving multiple and flexible modes of working, the introduction of the CSP keyworkers into the established service-delivery ecology could be seen to lead to questions of professional specialism and boundary crossing (Williams, 2011). This could be seen in three clear patterns of response that aligned with the relationship to the completion of statutory functions.

Working in drug and alcohol services, DA/OA1 recognised the necessity of taking on multiple roles as the result of an intersection between the lack of resources within the broader system and the persistent difficulties in multi-actor coordination. He talked about feeling that he was constantly being expected to cross boundaries into other professional domains and described feeling *“like I’m often a counsellor, I’m often a mental health nurse”*. He felt that the system adults with complex needs were expected to negotiate was one that relied on services operating in a *“linear fashion. But it just does not work like that”*. In response, he characterised the situation of carrying out multiple roles.

“That’s the case isn’t it? Jack of all trades master of none. But I think the more specialised you are the more that you can actually offer” (DA/OA1).

DA/OA1 went on to describe a key tension of working with complexity that left him feeling conscious of the potential to augment harm through giving incorrect information and advice. Yet he also felt that there was no other choice if he was to provide support at the time.

“In an ideal world it would be great if you could just say ‘I’m just going to talk about your drug and alcohol today’. I’ve had a lot of people say ‘well you have to say I’m not trained in that’, that you don’t want to open up a can of worms because you are not a specialist and you could cause more damage. But then again am I being hypocritical because I’m doing it, it’s fascinating really” (DA/OA1).

His colleague DA/OA2, however, expressed more unease about some of the approaches he felt required to take, stating that he sometimes felt: *“under trained or under equipped to deal with some of the higher end of mental health. There are a lot of risky people”*, but that *“you just do what you need to do”* (DA/OA2).

This obvious discomfort with feeling expected to take on multiple roles was not one shared by the CSP keyworkers. From their perspective there was an embracing of flexible models of working that was identified as necessary to work effectively with the service-user group. Again the 'jack of all trades' reference was made, but this time positively:

"I've said we're kind of 'jack of all trades, master of none', and I don't mean we don't know a lot about one subject, I just mean we've got our feet in so many different parts. We know a little bit about all sorts of things, whereas the more specialist workers will focus on one" (CN/OA4).

It had been suggested within the strategic responses (e.g. DA/SA2) that those whose primary functions depended on a level of inter-organisational collaboration were more attuned to collaborative ways of working and this was supported within the fieldwork from the frontline. O/OA1, speaking from a more senior position within an offending behaviour service, felt that there was somewhat of an overlap between the styles of working and problem framing between her service and the CSP keyworkers, leading to the potential of work duplication.

"I think we would see complexity broader than (CSP), but the themes that (CSP) are trying to tackle are actually broader than the group that they work with. So that's our bread and butter really".

Speaking about the workers under her management:

"They are 'everything workers' and they will work with both managing and helping someone develop their skills to reduce their offending. So there's a whole broad range of skills that they work with, but they're not substance use professionals they are not mental health professionals, they don't have houses" (O/OA1).

However, frontline actors whose primary interaction with service users was through the enactment of financial gatekeeping appeared notably less receptive to the ideas of boundary crossing or integration, raising questions of specialism, required knowledge and skills. MH/OA1 spoke forcefully around the tendency for mental health issues to be either assumed or in some circumstances effectively diagnosed by professionals without the necessary knowledge or qualifications. He suggested that there is a *“huge issue”* with regards to professionals feeling the need to put a label on certain difficult to manage behaviours, even without formal diagnosis.

“You end up seeing them and they don't have a diagnosis, they don't have a psychotic illness, there's no medication, they're not entitled to benefits because they are well enough to work” (MH/OA1).

This was not simply an example of professional defence of specialisation, but for MH/OA1 it caused rippling issues through a fragmented system. Describing a recent interaction with a frontline housing worker in which they had wanted him to make a direct referral for treatment without going through the formalised pathways to care, MH/OA1 felt that the housing worker had taken offence at his unwillingness to act, suggesting that this displayed a lack of understanding of the role of mental health services.

“They weren't understanding of secondary care and the severity of secondary care, and two, actually if you don't protect that secondary care, if you water it down to the point where secondary care becomes huge with massive waiting lists, there's no flow in the system” (MH/OA1).

Speaking from a social care point of view, SC/OA1 suggested that rather than workers being able to take on multiple roles, it was clarity within the complex service landscape that was a more pressing need. Similar to MH/OA1, she felt that there was a lack of knowledge as to what the role, powers and capacities of social care services, provoking a response of *“just being very clear*

about what our remit and boundaries are". SC/OA2 supported this dynamic, saying that he sometimes felt it was necessary to emphasise that around assessments it was he who was the primary assessor.

Thus, three identifiable patterns of response to this dilemma of professional identity in relation to complexity were present. The first was one of anxiety and contradiction as the perceived lack of collaborative solutions led to a feeling that specialisation was qualified by a need to operate as a 'jack of all trades'. This is contrasted to the dominant response expressed by those who characterised their roles primarily around the completion of statutory functions where the concern was predominantly expressed in relation to a feeling of the need to establish authority over those processes alongside a call for *clarity* within the system. Thirdly, those actors who recognised collaboration as a key component to the completion of their primary interactions with the service user group, most clearly in relation to the CSP keyworkers, was the perception that the multiple roles and broader knowledge of the whole system was an intrinsic part of their own professional identities. These patterns were pervasive within the fieldwork and as we will see, wove their way through further reflections on the role of frontline collaboration within the locality.

Keyworker identity

At the point of data collection, the CSP keyworker role had been established for approximately four years. As such the role had clearly undergone substantial shifts in emphasis and practice. An important reflection within the research is around those strategic decisions and the ways in which those decisions were impacting how actors in that role were interacting with other professionals in the field. The primary change that had been undertaken was a conscious decision to prioritise the development of relationships and trust with service-users over the initial articulation of the role as primarily that of coordination of services:

*“What we found was that the people we were working with were, having had years of not receiving, or receiving negative, service from these agencies, were difficult to engage. They didn’t trust services, they didn’t even trust our staff. So we’ve had to spend a lot of time building trust with people. Which can be a very gradual process, so then you can begin to coordinate things, you can’t just start doing that. So certainly the first two years, the big thing that came out of the learning was about that **building trust**” (CN/SA3)*

CN/OA3, having worked in the new keyworker role for the most amount of time of those interviewed explained the shift from ‘office-based coordination’ to a more proactive, assertive role in which deeper relationships were sought between keyworker and service-user.

“Our job wasn't to attend appointments with people, it was to get all of the agencies involved to do things with them. But we sort of worked out that because we can work with people long-term and we follow them through the different agencies that they work with or the different hostels that they’re living at, that they do tend to come to us more than they do the support workers of where they are living or support workers that are in place for them, whether it be drugs, alcohol, mental health. And we quickly worked that out because it is consistent - they do get to see us, they do get to trust us more so than a lot of workers that they also work with”.

She did, however, acknowledge that this shift had not been without problems.

“Even now ... Well it’s not so much agencies as different people within the agencies, but they still believe that we are treading on their toes, trying to do their job, which isn’t the case you know” (CN/OA3).

However, it became increasingly apparent, most notably during the focus group conducted with four CSP keyworkers (CN/OA3, CN/OA4, CN/OA5, CN/OA6), that while discussing collaboration

with other services and professionals that the CSP keyworkers were actively constructing and emphasising a professional identity and a distinct conceptualisation of specialism within the field for themselves; one that was contrasted to other workers in the field. The keyworkers' descriptions of their role suggested that they saw themselves in the mould of what Durose (2011) refers to as 'civic entrepreneurs', emphasising the way in which they looked to reconcile differing organisational agendas, build relationships and increased capacity. This dynamic had not been anticipated following the literature reviews, but the sheer emphasis by the CSP keyworkers as to the attributes, skills and values necessary to operate in the role was worth reflecting upon.

"This might be a bit of a dodgy thing to say, but I think that the management who have chosen us - I think they put a lot of thought when employing people into the type of people we are" (CN/OA4).

CN/OA2 suggested that in the development of this professional identity that there had been few attempts to link existing services together, instead implementing a new service:

"I think what we've done is add another service and the risk is that we slowly dry up and fade away, and people just go back to doing what they were before".

Another keyworker interviewee stressed their client-facing role and its particular consequences:

"And that's what services need to understand you can do big assessments, it doesn't always work very well. Meeting the needs of the agency where we meet the needs of the person. And if we tread on toes in the process who cares" (CN/OA4).

A third remarked on the ways in which the keyworkers thought differently about the different skills in their role.

“It's not about ticking a box, I think it's about thinking outside the box. It's about looking at assessments and looking how you can make it more holistic. It's also about looking at how you ask a question as well. So how do you phrase a question about risk? It's how you interpret information” (CN/OA6).

As suggested previously, these attributes were often contrasted with other professionals' attitudes towards complex needs.

“I think sometimes when some people have been working with people who are very very chaotic for such a long time it becomes very hard. People run out of steam and ideas” (CN/OA6).

“If somebody's been in this type of job for years and years they seem to have a different attitude. Old-fashioned. They're not open to change” (CN/OA3).

The interaction of these dynamics can be seen within CN/OA5's description of a previous engagement with a professional in a hospital setting where her approach with someone who was routinely intoxicated was contrasted with the mental health professional.

“She said you can't be in this meeting. And I said that person needs to be here because it's their meeting. And she said well we can't be in here and left. I was so annoyed. At the end of the day it wasn't her meeting, it wasn't about her, it was just about getting there and showing the (service user) that they had all these people around them to support them. And she totally messed that up. And I think that was to do with authority on her side” (CN/OA5).

What can be seen taking place with the keyworkers is the development of a distinct professional identity and the emergence of a new and additional service identity, both of which they were

keen to protect. This distinctive mediating role with its location in relation to the service user has obviously has implications for ambitions of system change and sustainability when considered in relation to the theme of 'increased capacity' discussed below and further reflected upon in the next chapter.

Advocacy and coordination

Advocacy was also used as a means of building trust with the service-user, suggesting a similar dynamic to Cornes *et al.*, (2018) observation from a similar project wherein strategies of 'assertive' or 'persistent advocacy' (6) were employed as part of attempts to develop relational capital with hard to engage clients. Where Cornes *et al.*, identified the interaction between the local authority 'street level bureaucrat' and the voluntary sector 'advocate-activist' as one initially defined by "*high ambiguity-high conflict*" (2018: 4), the evidence from the CSP, notably in relation to the relationships between keyworkers and social care workers, was one that showed little evidence of those characteristics. This may be due to the point in the lifecycle of the pilot project and some strategic actors remained aware of the potential for conflict. However, the reported relationships between keyworkers and other participants painted a more mixed picture, in which conflict was avoided. As such, the picture reported by the CSP keyworkers, and other professionals in their interactions with them, was not of strategies of persistent advocacy that could be presented as oppositional to processes of coordination, but of a complex set of mediating actions.

The identification that the primary deficiency in relation to providing a holistic service response towards those with complex needs was that of *trust* between the service user and those institutional responses appeared to have quite profound impacts on the ways that the CSP keyworkers conceptualised their role and the impacts on their subsequent strategies. Rather than coordinating the multiple services often involved within adults with complex needs, the CSP keyworkers described how the assertive, trust-based approach to working led to complicated

interactions with other services which cannot be fit neatly into the binaries of advocacy and coordination.

Care, control and mediating behaviours

As noted in Chapter 2, there is evidence of common disjuncture in cultural emphasis across organisations in relation to care and control. According to Williams (2009) this often manifested as impacting on the willingness of actors and organisations to share information with concerns at the level of the frontline as to how that information could be used. However, the reported views and experiences of the frontline actors interviewed, again displayed a level of complexity that binaries do not quite capture, with evidence presented as to processes of mediation, particularly on the part of the keyworkers, and those organisations with potentially coercive functions. While the literatures would classify these behaviours in relation to the distinction between care and coercion what emerged in this case was the complex mediation processes by the keyworker, in which they took on the composite character of both the coercer and advocate in order to smooth the relationships between the service user and the state agency.

The most prominent example of these mediating behaviours of the keyworkers was reported as between themselves and probation services. Keyworkers interviewed separately offered the same example of approaching collaboration with different services in a flexible manner. Both used the example of probation services as ones where they found the most difficulty primarily due to the coercive potential in which failure to engage with the service could mean that their service-user could breach their probation conditions and be returned to prison. Here, CN/OA1 and CN/OA2 described their role as that of mediator between probation and the service user with the intention of encouraging the service user to engage with the terms of their license. CN/OA1 used the example of someone she had worked with who had missed several probation appointments, putting him at severe risk of being returned to prison. CN/OA1 saw this potential breakdown as the worst possible outcome and viewed her role as crucial in trying to prevent that occurring. Crucially, she saw success in this approach. Explaining how she had spoken to her

service-users' probation officer and managed to explain the work that she was doing with him accessing education.

"I was able to say to probation that this was his priority and this was what was keeping him focused. Through this relationship I was able to arrange for probation to do a home visit which they don't usually do but they did as a one off" (CN/OA1).

She then pointed to the positive outcome.

"He would have just gone to prison or he would have seen services as just being negative. But as a mediator I was able to say this is important to him and this is how it can work for you" (CN/OA1).

She also reflected on the dynamics of mediating role with the service-user and her role as a 'collaborator'.

"I can take the information from probation and talk to the person and say 'this is what we need to do and I'm going to do it with you', rather than probation saying 'we need you to do this and off you go'. It's much more collaborative. So I can take on the information and I can take on the negative news and I can not only tell you this but we can make a plan together to get through it. Whereas when probation make a plan... but they haven't got much choice around that" (CN/OA1).

However, the only dissenting voice from this view was from that of O/OA1, who had previously described her own workers as 'everything workers'. Here is a short account of the interactions in the interview with JS as interviewer.

O/OA1 – *“It's really tricky. I mean I've had this conversation somewhere else. I mean to what extent is their (the CSP keyworkers) role a brokering type of role? Or is it more kind of....?”*

JS – *“Advocacy?”*

O/OA1: *“Yeah is it more an advocacy role? So where do you draw that line?”*

O/OA1 had concerns around the clarity of the keyworker's role and the risk of duplication with her own staff.

“You'll have conversations with any worker involved with your client, just to find who's doing what. It's not that we will do everything, but there has to be definition as to what they are doing. Not just taking over”.

O/OA1's concerns appeared to suggest a continuation of the dynamics where actors with overlapping roles with hints of defensive or competitive responses from those who reported similar horizontal characteristics to the CSP keyworkers. The issue appeared to be one of duplication rather than role conflict. Those who perceived that their collaborative approach was mandated; that they felt that it was their responsibility to initiate horizontal relations, could nevertheless take exception to perceived encroachments from the 'jack of all trades' keyworkers for stepping on their toes.

This dynamic was also noticed from the opposite side by the CSP keyworkers. CN/OA1 suggested that the potential for *“friction”* was higher with *“any service where there are quite strict goals”*. While CN/OA6 acknowledged this point, he felt that this pointed to one of the most immediate roles of the keyworkers, adapting practice and approach so as to align different organisations' priorities within a system where they are often working to differing ends on differing timescales.

Asymmetric power relations

Where those with clearer statutory functions, notably those from social care, mental health services and housing, were earlier identified as appearing to want clarity within the system around organisational roles in positions of horizontal interaction, what was also apparent was the expressions of power relations around those statutory functions.

An example of these apparent tensions being played out in the field was captured in an exchange with H/OA1 who both described the increased collaboration prescribed within the Homelessness Reduction Act, yet also how power relations within those collaborative settings could be potentially identified.

“And with the Homelessness Reduction Act it’s much more about the initial triage now - looking at developing a personalised housing plan, so taking into account each individual’s needs. And then it’s about having actions for that individual to prevent or relieve their homelessness. And some of that will include working with other agencies to make sure that that happens as well. So in terms of the legislation as it is now there is a lot more emphasis on that collaborative approach” (H/OA1).

However, she went on to describe how she felt this tended to work in practice, with a clear emphasis on the use of power, provided by more coercive elements within the Homelessness Reduction Act (see Dobson 2019b):

“You often get a lot of professionals who will say ‘it’s not suitable’, but you have to ask ‘have you been’? Often they’re going on the back of their own clients who are saying it’s not suitable ... So it is about having that conversation with them. And it’s really easy really. If they have a support worker you find them straight away to make sure that they really understand the situation and the consequences” (H/OA1).

“So what happens is we're sat there saying ‘that is the homelessness legislation and we can provide you with this’. They might refuse it because they're getting contradictory advice (from another service). They might say that it's not appropriate, but from a housing point of view it actually is. It can be with the right level of support and then we discharge the duty. So the risk is they end up with nothing. That's the reality of it really” (H/OA1)

Interestingly H/OA1, in emphasising this use of power, was working for a TSO with a contract with the local authority to carry out the housing functions. While she made reference to the need to listen to housing providers and other actors involved in supporting those with complex needs, she consistently suggested that the housing TSO's priority was the application of the legislation as per their contractual obligations.

“I mean it's difficult - we are representing the council and the council are the ones commissioning the services. So that's the stance that we will always take in a meeting, saying that we have commissioned the services and we have this person and it needs to work”.

A similar dynamic was expressed from the perspective of social care and the conducting of needs assessments under the Care Act 2014 by SC/OA1. In responding to a question around interaction with other professionals in the completion of statutory duties she reflected:

“So it's up to us as social workers to be open and explain, making sure that they understand the remit of our role and the frameworks that we work under. And I have found that if other professionals are challenging in any way, if it's something that is based around a lack of understanding, but if I have an open conversation with them as to exactly how things work and why I'm doing what I'm doing, give them the exact rationale and outcomes that I am trying to achieve, then generally speaking things tend to work better” (SC/OA1).

Tensions around dual diagnosis

Long-standing issues, acknowledged within the literature around 'dual diagnosis' and the difficulties of establishing adequate support for those who combine substance misuse and mental health issues (Hamilton, 2017), was raised by both drug and alcohol and mental health frontline actors as a point of contention.

"Our main goal is to get people to engage, to be able to access the service they need, to promote independence. Whereas a hostel worker, their goal will probably be to get them out (of the hostel) and that's their job, that's fine. A drugs worker they have their own outcomes. And they do overlap in general I guess, but sometimes they don't" (CN/OA5).

One of the primary issues that frontline actors across all organisations were working with was the fact that for some services the impact of the service user group was far smaller than others. For example, H/FA1 noted that out of approximately 1000 open cases for the Housing TSO there were around 20 names that were repeatedly coming up in relation to complex needs. SC/OA1 had two cases out of a caseload of 21 that had involvement from the CSP lead agency, *"It's definitely always present, but it's not a major thing"* (SC/OA1).

Nevertheless, MH/FA1 was enthusiastic about the role that the CSP keyworkers could play, noting that with over 4,500 open cases and four separate teams there was simply no way that the personalised approach to working with service users could be replicated without a specific team – *"You would be in meetings all day long"* (MH/OA1).

Risk and trust

An unexpected emerging theme was that of risk and its relationship to trust. Whereas at the strategic level, trust was articulated in its relationship towards collaborative governance and networking, implying a level of vulnerability; on the front line it was the trust relationship with the service user.

Organisational attitude towards risk is considered important in relation to working with adults with complex needs and a clear emphasis was made towards those dynamics by the CSP keyworkers. This corresponds with previous research completed by Cattell *et al.*, (2009) in their evaluation of Adults facing Chronic Exclusion pilots and Miller and Appleton (2015) where it was appreciated that those working in services designed to work with complex needs displayed an increased ability to tolerate a higher level of risk than other services, proposing the question as to “*whether one can appropriately engage with this group without being prepared to take on risk*” (Cattell *et al.*, 2009: 36).

Suggesting similar dynamics, the willingness and ability to work with those considered high risk was emphasised by the keyworkers as a central component to their developing identity and was contrasted negatively with other services. Risk therefore took on a defining role within the shift towards specialisation observed from the reported data.

“Because I’ve worked with someone before and he used to be intoxicated but we still had the meetings and it worked out in the end. These are the people we work with and you have to fit around how they act” (CN/OA5).

DA/OA1 felt that the keyworkers were able to have the time to develop the relationships and to face difficult situations on the ground.

“You have to have that level of hand-holding with some people, you have to be able to build up trust and get people to appointments. We have to deal with whatever is coming through the door” (DA/OA1).

At the same time, this form of mediation with the service user left keyworkers feeling exposed to the powers of the governmental state that lay beyond them.

“You're scared about probation, you're scared about the court system, but we're not part of that system” (CN/OA1).

Nevertheless, the keyworkers acknowledged their particular status with the service user.

“We cut across a lot of those lines because we don't have to breach people or work with them as intensely on a daily basis. We can be seen as the good guys. And part of the way that we can build relationships with people quickly is we can say we're neutral and new and we won't kick you out and we'll be here for you and we've got a few quid” (CN/OA4).

But this form of working, the specialist identity and being seen as a new service was to draw both recognition and cause tensions.

“I mean some people were resentful - why did we need this new service when we could just spend the money. But we don't really have that anymore - people appreciate our value, what we do and how we help people. And it's mainly the fact that we support the people that caused the other services the most headaches” (CN/OA4).

One final observation, linked to the theme of increased capacity, was the propensity for participants to make reference to traditional models of social work in their discussions around complex needs. This was not only pronounced within interviews with social care actors but could be observed at different horizontal locations. While there is always a danger of nostalgia, there did appear to be a perception at the level of the frontline that something has been lost that was particularly suitable for working with complexity.

Barriers to collaboration

In a similar dynamic to what was evidenced at the strategic level, the dominant perception from the frontline was that it was individuals, in their attitudes and subsequent behaviours, that were identified as the primary barrier to collaboration rather than structural constraints.

The most commonly cited barrier with regards to collaborative working was that of communication, perhaps again supporting the idea that it was clarity of structures and roles that practitioners most valued in working horizontally. This perception was also linked to the second most popular response which was centred around people's individual attitudes and expressions of values towards other services and the service user group.

"You can't just say 'this agency is brilliant, that agency is brilliant, that agency is brilliant, but that one's not', because it's about the individual workers within them" (CN/OA6).

Keyworkers expressed mixed feelings as to whether they felt valued by other organisations and professionals, again locating the reaction to their work at the level of the individual rather than broadly associating it with an organisational reaction.

"It varies from service to service. I think it varies from worker to worker as well. So some people I'll liaise with quite a lot, they'll talk to you quite a lot and that's brilliant. Some people have difficulties getting your contact with. And I'll leave messages and email but nothing. They'll only getting contact when something happens in the beneficiaries' life that impacts them" (CN/OA2).

Service thresholds remained a central concern for the keyworkers, despite the broad recognition within the CSP strategic tier and within national advocacy that service thresholds have a particular impact on those with complex needs. Again, what is interesting is that this frontline service was not able to establish new access to established specialist services or funding but took on roles that were predominantly centred around established entry-points and engagement

practices. The emphasis in practice, as reported by frontline staff across the organisations interviewed, was of smoothing the processes and providing additional support with challenging behaviours, rather than being able to provide a new way for the whole system to work.

Multi-disciplinary Teams (MDTs)

“Oh my god yes. It's really difficult to get people around the table” (SC/OA2).

MH/OA1 appreciated the impact that MDTs could have, should the right people be sat around the table, but suggested that lower resources available for all services had made it harder to meet in joint forums as individual service pressures escalated. He used the example of the relationships between mental health services and Accident and Emergency, who together had developed a joint care pathway – *“It was working very well, but with service demands you lose that over time”* (MH/OA1).

While within the CSP operational literature and the literature review (e.g. the role of MDT's) were promoted as ways of enabling inter-organisational collaboration, experiences at the frontline as to their use and practicality were very mixed. On the whole, the idea of collaborative forums was viewed as a component of an ideal state of collaboration. However, across the services there appeared to be a sense that finding the right balance in order to incentivise each organisational involvement was most often subject to severe difficulties. These challenges were recognised by the CSP keyworkers, who described altering their attitude towards MDTs over time.

“It's OK for me to have an MDT because I have 10 people on my caseload. It sounds like a great idea to me, but the probation officer I work with has 50 people on their caseload! She has targets that she has to work through, the support worker at the hostel is needed on shift” (CN/OA2).

CN/OA1 said that she found the balance difficult to negotiate, often left out of meetings held by other agencies or finding it difficult to negotiate. She noted a perverse effect in which those with the least engagement with a service or a service user it was the harder it was to arrange and have full attendance at a MDT, while those professionals that were highly motivated or had strong engagement from the service user were more likely to attend. At the same time, the MDT would be less necessary as the communication, coordination and collaboration were more effective. MDTs were therefore often used as a last resort.

“We’re pushing really hard and my beneficiaries are pushing really hard and then the services also push pretty hard, and then we don’t need an MDT because the staff are being quite proactive” (CN/OA1).

Given its relatively marginal role, in the end, the success of the MTD could be down to the pressures of administration.

“And if you are being invited to meetings but you get the letter on the 16th or the 17th it’s not going to work for us” (SC/SA2).

Summary – implications for collaboration

One of the clearest fault-lines between the tiers was the ways in which collaboration was both looked at and interpreted as necessary, perhaps best illuminated in relation to the Crawford and Jones (1996) distinction between multi-agency and inter-agency working. On this continuum multi-agency working referred to those collaborative actions that did not impact core business, while inter-agency refers to actions that essentially encourage ‘boundary crossing’. While at the strategic tier, there was a mixed reception to these ideal types, with a crude distinction between actors with high levels of interaction with strong verticalities showing a tendency towards multi-agency working (or absence) and more civil society actors who were keen to report inter-agency behaviours and joint ownership.

On the frontline these distinctions could be viewed as similar but refracted in different ways. The dominant reported set of behaviours from mental health, social care and housing client-facing actors was for greater role clarity rather than expressing any noted desire for increased inter-agency responses. The narratives presented did not indicate significant desire for further input from other professionals, but for greater capacity for those working within the system for those with challenging needs and behaviours. For the keyworkers, on the other hand, the call was for greater recognition of their mediating roles and the status as an emergent new client-facing service. It would appear that, in terms of inter-agency collaboration, these members of the frontline were a distinct service that saw themselves smoothing relationships between the service-user group and the different services rather than fundamentally altering the terms of trade between the agencies in the complex needs local ecology.

Part 3. Summary – vertical and horizontal themes

This final part of the chapter attempts to bring together perspectives offered by both groups of interviewees. This synthesis and sense-making comprises two analytical exercises - vertical and horizontal. Firstly, to relate the perceptions of both groups in order to summarise commonalities or differences experienced by their vertical location. Secondly, to look horizontally across the different service and organisational types to comment on the specificities of their responses.

The shadow of austerity loomed large for both groups. However, for the strategic tier these economic pressures were highly foregrounded and could be seen to impact on all aspects of their work whereas, for the frontline, they could be regarded as pervasive but in the background.

As we have seen, members of the strategic tier were very much concerned with the governance of partnership within the climate of austerity, witnessed through the themes of defensive behaviours, economic leverage, partnership ambiguity and anxieties around sustainability and system change. Those with more client-facing roles, however, were primarily concerned about the nature of their work. Questions of collaboration in relation to complexity and the ways in

which it was being conceived provoked an interesting and significant set of responses around the threat to specialisations, their professional identities and relationships towards dominant verticalities. However, this distinctive response of the frontline had something in common with those from the strategic tier in so far that both groups, amidst the climate of austerity and in relation to the aspirations to collaborate more horizontally, made recourse to their core missions and functions. This 'retreat' appeared to work out in different ways. On the one hand, those with statutory responsibilities could exercise power over other actors, because they felt that ultimately they had to take responsibility to carry out those mandated functions. On the other hand, the CSP keyworkers developed a distinctive sense of mission that served to separate them from the other local or social actors. These were yet another set of factors that were to complicate the terrain of local collaboration.

Overall, and perhaps predictably, it was the statutory responsibilities that appeared to exercise the greatest influence. Another apparent difference between the two groups was the immediacy or otherwise of the concept of partnership. While the strategic tier actors were heavily involved in its operations, for the frontline the partnership did not figure directly in their day-to-day work. At one level this is unsurprising, but at another it did represent something of a challenge for system change. It would appear that for one group collaboration is the focus, but for the other it is the provision of a new service.

What can be seen as a 'trust/risk nexus' manifested itself in differing ways. For the strategic tier, the issue of trust was played out around the role of individuals and relationships and the consequent strengths and limitations of informality. The concept of risk, on the other hand, was more prominent with people working on the frontline. Here the apparent increased capacity represented by the CSP keyworkers was recognised by others as reducing levels of risk and anxieties towards the service-user group.

What could also be interpreted to be taking place within the ambiguities and tensions that were being experienced at both the strategic tier and frontline, was the emerging desire to create new roles and services that appeared to help or mediate with the service-user group. What was happening here was that representatives of the lead agency, both at frontline and strategic tiers, appeared to increasingly see themselves operating as a form of brokerage. For the strategic tier, it was smoothing existing relationships between different services. For the frontline, it was mediating between the system and service-user. In both cases, what was happening was trying to make existing relationships more workable rather than creating a new type of collaborative system in which each of the parts became more interdependent and thus mutually changed. These arrays of perceptions, stories and reported behaviours could thus be viewed as *adaptive*. The question is how far these emerging forms of mediation were actually changing the collaborative landscape. The precise meaning of 'adaptiveness' and its implications for potential versions of system change are now discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 6. Analysis and conclusions – reflections on governance, policy and the dynamics of system change

Introduction

This final chapter is structured around the three key research questions concerned with, firstly, the wider governance dynamics that influence collaboration in relation to those with complex needs; secondly, the mediating role of local actors involved in these collaborative activities and, finally, the consequences of these for system change in relation collaboration. Question 1 is addressed by a review of the key concepts of Chapter 1, notably in relation to the concept of the extended and integral state and the dynamics between verticalities and horizontalities that played out locally. Question 2 is addressed by a proposition based on the application of the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3 that posits that the types of collaboration arising from the multiple intersections of strong verticalities and relatively weaker horizontalities as experienced by the CSP gave rise to a series of mediating adaptive behaviours and strategic decisions that I characterise as *adaptive system management*. Question 3 is approached by prospective analysis of a series of scenarios including one that speculates that the intersections of much stronger horizontalities and more facilitating verticalities - different mixes of forms of governance would enhance the potentialities for different forms and visions of system change.

Part 1. The effects of national/local relations on local forms of collaboration in the field – generating key concepts for the research

Governance reflections

Q1. What are the essential governance dynamics influencing the development of local collaboration in relation to adult complex needs?

In addressing Question One in relation to the evidence outlined in Chapter 5, this part of the thesis is structured around two reflections - firstly as to modes of governance that impacted on the local level and, secondly, towards policy that impacted from the wider political climate.

The first part of Chapter 1 was primarily concerned with an exploration of the key debates in the field of governance with reference to public services, local government and cross-cutting issues. Here, the beginning of this thesis was concerned with trying to understand why literatures on collaboration from multiple disciplines have been so concerned with the potential of networks. In this discussion I raised a number of distinctions, notably between network governance and the governance of networks. The significant point arising from this particular part of the literature review was to elaborate the concept of what I have referred to as 'network idealism'; a tendency to over-emphasise the role of loose internal governance relationships to assist improved collaboration and coordination of public services at the local level. The concepts of the 'governance of collaboration' and the 'governance of networks' that I use synonymously, on the other hand, are seen as less prescriptive and more analytical, referring to the various assemblages of the modern state that affect the ways that networks and collaborative entities operate. These two related concepts that refer to the external governance factors affecting networks and collaborations permitted a second exploration, that of the powers as what was then referred to as the 'governmental state'. Through an extensive discussion of these aspects of the governmental state, concepts of political society, governmentality and meta-governance, the chapter arrived at an important organising concept for the rest of the thesis - that of the Integral State.

This was particularly inspired by J. Davies' (2011, 2012, 2013) use of the Integral State as a means of conceptualising the dynamics of the extended nature of the state (political society + civil society) and the continuing and under-emphasised presence of coercion. Crucially in relation to this research, J. Davies' understanding of the powers of state coercion extend to non-state actors through hierarchical modalities that exist on a continuum from administrative domination to a monopoly with regards to violence. The concept of the Integral State, while comprising the dynamics of governmental state and civil society recognises, nevertheless, in the current era of political and economic life their unequal relationship. The concept of the Integral State does not just manifest itself at the national level but also can be seen in different forms at the local level

thus supporting the recognition of the 'shadow of hierarchy' (Sharpf, 1994: Whitehead, 2003). As such, while network governance theories emphasise the fragmentation of organisational service delivery and the expansion of the 'welfare mix' to incorporate market and civil society actors (e.g. Bode, 2006), J. Davies' analysis brings the state back in not just as one of many within a pluri-centric analysis, but in a dominant position. Within the dialectic of coercion and consent, coercion can be considered not simply as a mode of last resort, but routine within governance strategies and the nexus of local state, market and civil society (J. Davies, 2013). As Penny (2017) remarks:

"Recourse to forms of soft power alone cannot adequately explain contemporary modes of governing generally, and neo-liberalisation and austerity more particularly" (1356).

This extended and dialectic concept of state and modes of governance found reflections in what has been referred to as 'austerity behaviours', experienced as the disciplining effects of central policy. Despite the fact that austerity was supposedly devolved to the local level, through the processes of 'austerity-localism' (Featherstone *et al.*, 2012), it retained, nevertheless, coercive functions.

The coercive potential of austerity was most broadly recognised as a form of constraint, emerging as multiple forms of pressure, affecting in particular the reported behaviours of statutory services who were compelled to retreat into core functions, something for which the additional funding offered through the CSP could not compensate. This form of analysis is not implying that local actors would be bereft of agency, but rather that there was a substantial risk that their horizons for action would be bounded. Most of what was evidenced from the participants of this research were active and committed attempts to mediate and look to ameliorate many of these coercive functions. Similar to Scullion *et al.*'s findings within a similar environment, there were multitudes of examples of narratives and observations from the participants that suggested deep commitments to co-production and receptivity to the "other" (2014: 424). However, the issues of collaboration between themselves and the wider service delivery systems were compromised by strong verticalities and linkages to the governmental state that meant that these

commitments were sometimes in tension with coercive behaviours produced by competing logics. A clear example was provided in which H/OA1 described dominant patterns of working when conducting assessments under the legislation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. While recognising that the Act specified an expanded role for collaboration, with H/OA1 identifying the intended role of other agencies within initial triage, collaboration in this setting was described as heavily circumscribed by vertical accountabilities and resource dependencies. The “reality” of this collaboration was suggested to be one where Housing would offer accommodation from a position of power; *“They (other services) might say that it’s not appropriate, but from a housing point of view it is... So the risk is they end up with nothing. That’s the reality of it really”* (H/OA1 221). This example is illustrative of the articulations of power through contract and relationship to the state that amounted to descriptions of power of enforcement within a context of scarce housing resources.

This ‘boundedness’ could be seen to feed the micropolitics of local action within the Integral State and what can be seen as a mode of ‘anti-politics’ (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). Dynamics of depoliticisation within local collaborative structures through policies of the centre can be manifested within the creation of partnerships that cultivate a *“consensual ethos, rendering adversarialism taboo and establishing a de-politicised problem-solving discourse as the norm”* (J. Davies, 2011: 118). In this case, while the partnership had some level of distance from the state and no formal mandation, dynamics of restraint, ‘limited horizons’ and a prioritisation of local consensus could be seen within the stories of every-day experiences at the local level. The concept of ‘absence’ discussed below is potentially illustrative of a relationship to these dynamics, where the absence of conflict was potentially reflective of an absence of power, leaving horizontal relations unable to resolve antagonisms within the system.

The research in relation to Question 1 thus sought to establish a number of conceptual tools – verticalities, horizontalities, intersections of the extended and integral state – wider governance forces that could be applied to understand the possibilities and limitations of collaboration and partnership working in relation to complex needs. These would give rise to particular local settlements or patterns of equilibrium/disequilibrium that will be described and analysed in

further detail in relation to Question 2. Viewed through the lens of the Integral State, the combined effects of the domination of vertical forces and the apparent freedoms of horizontal relationships, are seen as bound together as a moment of hegemony - in this case, the struggle to find space to form collaborative relationships to help the service-user group, but having to reluctantly accept the parameters in which this would take place. As SC/SA1 put it, *“No one cares if I go out and meet people, if I agree to collaborate, as long as it doesn’t negatively impact on our spend”*.

Policy reflections

Chapter 1 also considered the impact of policy over the last two decades covering New Labour, Coalition and Conservative Administrations that contained important reflections that ultimately influenced my view of system change possibilities.

New Labour

The concept of hybridity has featured in several parts of this thesis to help understand the contradictions and pressures under which key local actors had to function. However, the concept is useful in historical policy analysis. By way of theoretical reflection, it is useful to invoke Stuart Hall’s characterisation of New Labour as a *“hybrid regime”* (Hall, 2005: 329) comprising two strands in a series of unequal relationships within ‘a project’ of transforming social democracy into a *“particular variant of neoliberalism”* (Hall, 2005: 321) which replaced *“professional judgement, ethics, and control by swallowing wholesale the micromanagement practices of audit, inspection, monitoring, efficiency, and value-for-money”* (2005: 326).

New Labour was thus presented as complex and confusing; *“it constantly speaks with a forked tongue. It combines economic neo-liberalism with a commitment to ‘active government’”* (Hall, 2005: 328). Crucially, within Hall’s ‘Double Shuffle’ analysis, these combinations were presented in dynamic interaction, wherein the dominant neoliberal strands of the hybrid regime combined with the subaltern social democratic strands in uneven processes that sees that transformation

of one thing into another, thus utilising the Gramscian conceptualisation of 'transformism' in which the *"latter social democratic part always remains subordinate to and dependent on the former dominant one and is constantly being **transformed' into it**"* (Hall, 2005: 329, original emphasis).

The ways in which New Labour's Double Shuffle manifested itself in the field of collaboration was through what might be seen as 'state-led realist collaboration'. The New Labour Governments under Blair and Brown appeared to understand that if they wanted to bring about change on the ground that they had to be concerned with structure, to the extent that they were willing to be more prescriptive as to the types of partnerships that they would incentivise. Chapter 1 looked to identify a number of key features of the New Labour approach, noting that partnership and collaborative working were absolutely central to their view of the political world, being alternatives to the traditional welfare state and the free market. However, closer analysis of their policies revealed that they took a direct interest in the nature of structures on the ground to the point of being directive, known in popular parlance as 'control-freakery'.

At the same time, New Labour also genuflected to the market through support for the introduction of new providers and making the Third Sector a governable terrain (Carmen and Harlock, 2008). The combinations of these interventionist approaches, while 'realistic', were also prone to difficulties as relationships at the local level came into contact with top-down policy approaches, not least making partnership working particularly resource dependent. New Labour's devolution agenda, on the other hand, was muted with a reluctance to let go of central control. This partial type of reform was to prove particularly vulnerable to a change of government in which the Coalition Government could portray itself as offering new levels of freedom at the local level. Nevertheless, the effects of New Labour collaboration strategies were felt several years later as some CSP participants could point to a tradition of collaborative working in the city that despite the lack of resourcing had somehow endured.

Reflections on the years since 2010 – the Coalition and Conservative Governments

By way of contrast, the Conservative Party in reaction to New Labour's controlling approach promised freedoms for those working at the local level and offered its own version of collaboration to the point that Eric Pickles, who would become Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government under the Coalition Government, remarked:

“Reorganisation by structure is rather old-fashioned, we will change local government from within by way of function and powers. We will encourage local authorities to share power and finance on common problems” (Eric Pickles in interview with Conservative Home, 2008).

“I am not at all interested in the structure of local government” - Eric Pickles (same interview).

In contrast to New Labour's directive realism, what the Coalition and subsequently the Conservative Governments have relied on have been the powers of austerity and devolution of risk towards the conditioning of economic restraint at the local level.

Featherstone *et al.*, noted the tendency for central government, then in the form of the Coalition government, to conceive of the local in unified terms as *“discrete and unitary entities that are somehow awaiting governance”* (2012: 178). A similar dynamic can be seen more recently, as illustrated within the Civil Society Strategy 2018. While civil society is recognised as referring *“to all individuals and organisations, when undertaking activities with the primary purpose of delivering social value, independent of state control”* (HM Government, 2018: 26), acknowledging the contested definitions of civil society, there is an elision of local tensions, power relations or inequalities.

This rhetoric of independence, however, did not mean that the centralised or governmental state was absent in governments since 2010. Those interviewed talked about austerity in a far more

pervasive and insidious form not experienced as policy diktat, but as an overwhelming climate of constraint in which local actors were afforded levels of agency while operating within the parameters of economic logics. The 'double shuffles' of the Coalition and Conservative governments have been of a different quality to that of New Labour. Views about collaboration do not appear to possess the same directiveness from above, but rather come through the power of framing. Moreover, the rhetoric of local freedoms could be seen to be feeding into ideas of agency at the local level that elsewhere I have described as a form of network idealism. It was not the case, however, that local actors in this research were entirely naive to these processes, but rather that within the subtleties of a new 'double shuffle', they could interpret the additionality and increased capacity that the CSP brought as the opportunity to do something different. The exchanges with both LA/SA3 and LA/SA4 were both highlighted in the previous chapter within the theme of 'leverage' provide an example of these dynamics. Where LA/SA4 felt that austerity had "*forced collaboration onto the agenda*", indicating an economic logic as to collaborative efficiency, the dominant themes remained those of *defensive positioning* and *competitive attitudes*. Where LA/SA3 saw opportunity for increased horizontalism as a response to austerity, LA/SA4 underlined the fact that the extra finances afforded to the CSP had allowed them to "*put the hard-fast cash on the table*".

Furthermore, alongside the disciplines of austerity were also important pieces of legislation that have brought this particular service user group into sharp focus (e.g. Care Act, 2014; Homelessness Reduction Act, 2017). It is thus suggested that the dominant governance forces in the period of research 2016-2020 impacting on local articulation of collaborative endeavours were and are *combinational*, in constant states of unequal interaction with each other.

It is within this form of combinational politics that we can begin to understand the adaptiveness not only of local actors, but also the contemporary approach to the field of the governance of collaboration. The ways in which this played out locally through the mediating activities of local actors is now reflected in more detail in response to Question 2.

Part 2. The mediation role of local actors and adaptive behaviours – reflecting on the patterns of local collaboration

Introduction

Q2. How do stakeholders and local actors 'mediate' central forces and local conditions to collaborate in relation to working with those with complex needs?

Chapter 2 focused on debates around collaboration that could be seen to be taking place within this governance environment. One of the key concepts that emerged from this particular literature review was the concept of hybridity, that has had two basic manifestations locally. Firstly, the hybridisation of services that encompassed both governmental state and civil society that emerged as 'welfare mixes'. As a consequence, the CSP could be seen to be embracing, in its membership and concerns, social actors ranging from the key statutory services, local authority actors and those located deep in the Third Sector. This form of organisational partnership, as we will see, was to prove difficult to hold together in its original form. Interestingly, however, the hybridity of the collaborative formation did not result in overt conflict. Rather it produced what I have termed 'absences' – the appearance of both disengagement of some key members from the CSP at key points and the absence of conflict. It was within this particular uneven environment that we can begin to understand the mediating roles of the key workers and the frontline.

Applying the four superstructural dimensions of the Benson system model

Addressing Question 2 involves understanding the dynamic or dialectic between the power of vertical factors, notably austerity and vertical accountability regimes, and the specific local environment with some established traditions of local coordination, additional resourcing and a desire to collaborate were to play out in practice. Here I bring back in the framework provided by Benson (1975) and the components of his model (see Figure 4) together with the work of more contemporary analysts such as Lupton *et al.*, (2001) and Hudson (2004) who also have appreciated and used his dialectical model.

The central question in this part of the chapter is addressed by the application of Benson's dual analysis comprising two fundamental interactive concepts of superstructure and substructure. The superstructure comprises four observable dynamic dimensions (domain consensus, ideological consensus, positive evaluation and work coordination), the details of which were discussed in Chapter 3. Here, the key findings from the interviews are interpreted through these four dimensions as observable relations. At the same time, the analysis will also illustrate the relationship between the observable and reported surface features and substructural influences. The substructural part of Benson's model is represented by the power of state vertical dynamics such as accountability regimes and resource dependencies. An abstract representation of these dynamics is found in the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 5. The following section looks to populate that Figure.

Domain consensus

Domain consensus is central to understanding perceptions of "*legitimate involvement*" (Hudson, 2004: 83), with the possession of a domain allowing an organisation to work in a certain sphere, access material support and define the dominant processes and ethos within that sphere. Broadly speaking, the literature suggests that agreements between participating organisations on the role and scope of network actors are more likely to occur where organisations have similar *goals*, whereas organisations with similar *functions* are more prone to competition (Hudson, 2004).

This definition of domain consensus proved to be a particular challenge for the CSP, notably in relation to the development of hybridisation. This can be understood at two levels - at the strategic tier through the efforts to bring together multiple partners from very different parts of governmental state and civil society and at the frontline through the development of the hybridised worker – the keyworker.

Using this definition, there could be seen a significant level of agreement at the strategic level. This was witnessed in the formation of the CSP partnership board, the agreement of certain protocols and a relatively 'rigid' agenda setting. However, how far these agreements were to endure would be complicated by both the complexity of different organisations that impact the service user, for example the enormity of the NHS, and the economic and logistical pressures that all partners found themselves exposed to during a period of austerity. The issue of domain consensus, however, was far more challenged on the frontline. As we have seen, the prospect of greater collaboration and integrationist ideas found within conceptualisations of system change were seen as challenging specialist functions and professional identities. The supposed increased collaboration between partner agencies and the introduction of the CSP keyworkers to the frontline had not led to a resolution of the necessity for individuals to take on multiple roles when working with complex needs, for example DA/OA1 feeling like *"I'm often a counsellor, I'm often a mental health nurse"*, but contributed to the dominant call for *clarity* of roles, notably from those with statutory responsibilities. This could be seen in both MH/OA1's clear frustration at the lack of *"understanding"* from professionals as to the processes of secondary mental health care, contributing to a lack of *"flow in the system"* and in SC/OA1's contention that the resolution of friction with other professionals was primarily sought through *"making sure that they understand the remit of our role and the frameworks we work under"*.

Still in the realm of domain consensus was a finding around the place of mediation in relation to the established literatures. There is an argument in the literature that initially posits a binary between those actors representing the accountabilities and regimes of the governmental state and those Third Sector actors prioritising advocacy on behalf of the service user group. However, the evidence from the research suggested not a binary but hybridisation. While several members of the strategic tier called for role clarity, the position of the keyworkers in relation to domain consensus was somewhat different. Here, their role as 'jack of all trades' was seen as a positive not a negative, something special and distinctive within the local service ecology. Yet on closer examination, the main focus of their collaborative behaviours was between service-user and

services rather than the forging of collaborative activities between organisations. The hybridised role of the keyworker thus manifested itself largely as a 'smoothing' operation. This was illustrated, in particular, by CN/OA1 in her narration of mediating relations between the potential coercive elements of probation and a service user where she had looked to develop levels of trust.

"I can take the information from probation and talk to the person and say 'this is what we need to do and I'm going to do it with you', rather than probation saying 'we need you to do this and off you go'. It's much more collaborative" (CN/OA1).

Her narrative was of a subtle combination of advocacy and containment, simultaneously looking to ameliorate the coercive functions of the state while still upholding its underlying logic. At the same time, in terms of domain consensus, this very flexible mode of working of the keyworker threatened to step on other people's toes. Moreover, the keyworkers became an obvious addition to the local system in which they sought increasingly to defend their own presence within the local service ecology.

In terms of domain consensus we are, therefore, presented with a dynamic where different levels of equilibrium could be seen within the dual strategy of the CSP. Higher levels of equilibrium can be found around domain consensus within the evidence from the strategic tier, with lower levels at the frontline. This disequilibrium was not being primarily driven by traditional models of working with complex needs (e.g. social vs medical) but, instead, was being driven by factors such as resources and communication. Crucially, whatever levels of disequilibrium were pre-established before arrival of the new service, for example the apparent tensions between social care and housing indicated by SC/OA1 - *"You can't get them on the phone, they don't respond to emails"* - the insertion of the CSP frontline service and its new ways of working did not appear to provide resolution, but instead added new dynamics of collaboration, together with new problems to the local landscape. For example, CN/OA3 remarking that some professionals were

“not open to change” or CN/OA5 describing the different approaches to risk and practice between professionals, resulting in a mental health worker refusing to conduct a meeting with an intoxicated service user - a decision that was protested by CN/OA5 but resolved in favour of the mental health worker - “And I think that was to do with authority on her side” (CN/OA5).

Ideological consensus

Heavily linked to this perceived imbalance in domain consensus is the impact of ideology within the superstructure of operational relations. Where partners have different articulations as to the causes and strategies needed in working with adults with complex needs there will inherently be stresses on the ability to reach stages of equilibrium within the network. Conversely, should joint articulations of best practice and understanding be reached, it can be inferred that network effectiveness should increase. Hudson (2004) links the concept of ideological consensus to two additional concepts of network functioning; *macro-culture* and *structural embeddedness*. Macro-culture refers to the guiding shared assumptions and values impacting on typical behaviour of those independent actors operating within the network, for example the ability to facilitate efficient exchange based on dominant cultural ground rules. Structural embeddedness is defined as the extent to which common partners are shared within the network, with partners developing relationships not only with other network participants but also with the same third parties, increasing the potential to embed values and common understandings.

The need to develop and build ideological consensus around strategies for working with people with complex needs was keenly recognised by research participants. Services created through processes of co-production with service-users, the promotion of innovative practice such as psychologically informed environments (Haigh *et al.*, 2012) and recovery models of practice were all commonly referred to as guiding principles across all participant levels. Key to this process was the sense of establishing commonalities in outlook. This appeared to be a key success of the CSP, establishing a level of visibility for new ways of working with the service user group. The use

of horizontal technologies such as common 'pledge' co-produced with service users directing professionals as to how they wish to be treated, as well as the development of joint-learning opportunities, can be seen to evidence this process.

This did not mean, however, that all parties had the same motivations within collaborative activities. Located at differing parts of the integral state (from both statutory and civil society organisations) and with differing relationships towards the governmental state, it is unsurprising that the partnership and the prospects of collaboration were viewed differently. However, what was of great significance is the ways in which these ideas manifested themselves. The differences of priorities carried into the partnership resulted not in conflict, as speculated within much of the literature and within Benson's own model, but of the theme developed within Chapter 5 around 'absence'. Absence in this case was recognised as an inability or unwillingness of key statutory agencies to at times engage consistently with the partnership and its agreed priorities. Certain key actors were reported to go through stages of not attending meetings or were difficult to engage. It should be noted that this apparent downturn in relationships between key sections of the partnership coincided with the period of data collection, thus this research was not able to consider how this was resolved.

At one level the questioning of engagement from certain parts of the partnership might be viewed as displaced conflict. However, on closer analysis far more subtle processes appeared to be taking place that might be associated with the rationing of time. For example, representatives from some statutory organisations could attend meetings, but appeared to be there in an individual capacity and conscious of the fact that their participation in the partnership constituted a very small proportion of the work of particular state agencies.

The role of conflict within the network was brought up with each interviewee, with a common theme being that of consensus building within the partnership as a rejection of conflict. While all recognised that each partner agency has differing objectives and accountability structures,

they were generally not viewed by participants as a barrier to collaboration, potentially lending weight to the literature that suggests that relatively small-scale, locally-based partnerships with equilibrium around domain consensus are less prone to structural conflict than those with high levels of top-down co-ordination from the state (Hudson *et al.*, 1999).

The second problem was the impact of resource dependencies on what has been termed 'defensive behaviours'. A stark example of this was the reported breakdown in communication and difficulties that arose between health services and the local authority. From a resource dependency perspective, the focus on the service user group appeared to be creating extra demand on a health service already under enormous financial pressure. The difficulties of sustained health service involvement were also reported to be exacerbated by fragmentation within the health services themselves, dynamics described by DA/SA2 when using the example of a hospital that *"knows it can't get people out and there is nothing really happening in primary care that stops people turning up"*. Therefore, pre-existing and much larger tensions between health care and social care highlighted within Figure 4 in Chapter 2 were not resolved within the partnership, with those tensions being displaced to other arenas. Reflecting on this dimension of ideological consensus, the level of agreement would appear therefore to be somewhat superficial.

The consequences of absence, individualised or tokenistic engagement was to create an imbalance within the partnership, a gap in which the third sector actors could be seen to fill. Benson's model appears to be of particular use here in highlighting the fact that ideological consensus was generated, but on a far narrower foundation than perhaps desired. I bring back an important quote from Chapter 5.

"There is no doubt in my mind that some of the original partners thought that when that pot of money was won that that money would be shared in some way and things could go on as they were ... And some of those people left the partnership in the first year. And that

was fine because we were left with people with a genuine commitment to doing things differently” (CN/SA1).

The development of this particular form of ideological consensus was to have both potential strengths and weaknesses. The strength was to be found in the increased level of consensus. However, the narrowing of the CSP that was based increasingly on enthusiastic individuals presented a risk that the ‘right people’ were not around the table and that the CSP itself could display signs of ‘network closure’. We will see later how these apparent tensions or dislocations fed into the overall dynamics of system change.

Positive evaluation

Positive evaluation can be viewed as inherently related to issues of domain and ideological consensus. However, it also refers to those person-centred issues such as trust and a sense of fairness. Jones and George provide a perspective on trust informed by psychology, together with the *“feelings, beliefs and meanings that underlie it”* (1998: 531). They suggest that trust between individuals can lead to the development of *“synergistic team relationships”* (1998: 540) augmenting network effectiveness. These include broad role definitions, communal relationships, high confidence in others, help-seeking behaviour and free exchange of knowledge and information. One of the key emerging themes from the data collection process was the emphasis from all participants as to the importance of individual relationships and commitment to joint working. At the strategic tier, increased informality was evidenced with a high degree of importance placed on the social relationships encouraged by the joint forums of the CSP, with emphasis and optimism as to individual’s abilities to negotiate horizontally across organisational boundaries. As noted within the last chapter, the extent to which actors located both vertically and horizontally centred the roles and abilities of individuals, rather than organisations or structures, is a key finding of this research.

The dimension of positive evaluation is further explored through what might be termed the 'trust/risk nexus'. The concept of trust was evidenced through the role of informality and the role of key individuals, identified within the literature as 'champions of change' (Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992). Throughout the data collection there were repeated remarks concerning the ability of people as individuals rather than the abilities of key organisations. Quite clearly people count, but a collaboration dependent on key individuals has obvious benefits and weaknesses - they could augment the effectiveness of the network through commitment and openness to innovation, while simultaneously increasing risk of network closure or breakdown should they leave.

This paradox was clearly evident within the research. The fragilities of *champions of change* was captured in the case of a key local actor, O/OA1, from offending behaviour services. A number of interviewees had referred to her commitment and effectiveness as a partner. However, as we have seen, when she moved jobs and was no longer involved with the CSP the relationship between the CSP and the relationship with that service immediately suffered, with W/SA1 remarking as to the reliance on "one person" leading to the "whole organisation spiral(ling)out of the partnership" when the individual leaves.

If a fundamental feature of deep trust is the toleration of levels of institutional vulnerabilities, then there was very little evidence of these dynamics in the narratives of the participants. What was found instead were continuing perceptions of defensive behaviours and retreat towards core functions that was not overcome by the creation of a partnership. Most recognised this was happening, yet they still persisted. This points to the power of circumstance and organisational logics over the power of recognition. Overall the level of trust was thus heavily circumscribed. While individuals present in the partnership clearly wanted to trust each other and reported high levels of personal evaluation, this did not appear to be translating into organisational trust. They were not always mandated by their organisation to compromise core functions or their own resource dependencies.

The concept of risk, on the other hand, was reflected in particular in the role of the keyworkers. As we have seen in Chapter 5, there were instances where certain local actors did recognise that the role of the keyworkers was offering increased capacity in client facing services and, therefore, reducing feelings of risk in relation to the service user. For example, SC/OA1's descriptions of feeling more comfortable in challenging situations affecting service users knowing that the CSP keyworker was involved.

Overall, what is seen is that while there was greater levels of equilibrium at the strategic level around agreements, there was a tendency for the level of trust to be articulated towards individuals rather than organisations. On the other hand, while many research participants valued the contribution of the keyworkers, notably around risk and capacity - the keyworkers in relation to the service user group - the keyworkers themselves reported feeling undervalued and not well understood. In the event, the dynamics of the trust/risk nexus suggested that levels of equilibrium in this particular element were sufficient to help existing relationships operate more smoothly, but not to the extent that it would result in a significant change of institutional relationships.

Work co-ordination

The fourth dimension in Benson's model - work co-ordination – is conceived as being shaped by the previous three other dimensions of the organisational superstructure, culminating in alignment of culture and working patterns to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the network operations.

Barriers to coordination can be considerable, both logistically difficult and prone to states of flux. However, according to the model, it is severe states of disequilibrium within the other dimensions of the superstructure that pose the greatest threat to effective partnership or network effectiveness, leaving some members of the organisational network reluctant to be accountable to the network. The ability to find balance, and what dynamics shape that balance,

around work coordination can be viewed as one of the central components of ambitions towards 'system change'. The broad hypothesis at the level of superstructure is based on the idea that of dynamic relationships between each dimension, bringing relative improvement (or decline) should one be increased or decrease in levels of equilibrium. Should levels of low equilibrium or imbalances remain, this invites the question as to what substructural dynamics are maintaining both the level of coordination that exists and the imbalance. For example, Lupton *et al.*, (2001) used Benson's theoretical framework in their exploration as to the collaborative dynamics between NHS and Child Protection Networks found that while collaborative processes were carried out in line with government prescription "*administrative fiat alone is clearly not sufficient to bring about reciprocal, mutually supportive actions on the part of groups with diverse interests and approaches*" (2001: 168).

Work coordination in this particular research was related to the degree to which collaborative activities and system change, how far it changed or improved. Here the evidence was mixed. The research gathered evidence of many acts of collaborative activity, including partnership board meetings, MDTs, joint assessments, mediating roles of keyworkers and some attempts at mutual learning activities. In bringing to the field of complex needs within this particular locality additional resources, new types of mediating forces (keyworkers) and a form of partnership, its contribution was clearly appreciated. In fact, so much so that there were distinct anxieties at this particular point in the lifecycle of the CSP as to how all of this could be sustained.

However, as we have seen from evidence in relation to the previous three dimensions, the commitment to working together in a profound and integrative way was in some ways limited - dependence on 'champions of change'; multi-disciplinary team meetings that did not take place and joint learning initiatives heavily populated by the third sector.

What we see through this synthesising dimension, therefore, is what I have referred to as *adaptive system management* and the tendency, most pronounced on the frontline, towards

multi-agency collaboration rather than more integrated inter-agency working. This particular settlement will be discussed in the final part of the chapter on versions of system change and collaboration.

In attempting to address Question 2 directly, that is the way that local actors sought to mediate the vertical influences of the governmental state, they appeared to do so through a series of adaptive activities across the two tiers of analysis. In the strategic tier, the formation of the partnership itself brought an additionality to the local service ecology by levels of informal relations between key individuals and foregrounding the issue of adult complex needs locally. On the frontline, the adaptive behaviours were found in the form of hybridisation, both in terms of the range of functions undertaken by the CSP and by the hybridised worker. In both cases these mediating behaviours were attempting to make existing sets of relationships work somewhat more smoothly. Adaptive behaviours, however, are not simply defined by what they are, but by what they are not. The theme of absence and the apparent misgivings from statutory actors as to the perceived threat to specialist functions could place distinct limits on the transformative impact on collaborative patterns of working. These types of behaviours, nevertheless, could be seen as strategic decisions to address the deficiencies within the local care systems, primarily in relation to trust between service users and the broader service environment and, at the same time, to promote extra capacity that a new service and the additional resources gained from external funding could bring. It is at this point that we can see conscious decisions being reported that focused on meeting those human needs over trying to align the organisations and change the whole system around the issue of complex needs - *“if anything, if they (the CSP) went tomorrow there is a bigger gap than there was before”* (DA/SA2). The thinking behind this particular set of adaptive dynamics was reflected in the comment cited in its entirety in Chapter 5 in which CN/SA2 reflected on the consequences and near impossibility of trying to reorganise and realign the local arms of national institutions around a relatively small service user group, despite their importance in policy terms.

Interactions between superstructure and substructure in the Benson model

The full value of a Benson's model in capturing the operational relations of the CSP at this particular point in time and in the lifecycle of the partnership is also dependent on an understanding of the interactive relationships between those superstructural dynamics and the substructural imperatives that influence each of the partnering organisations (see Figure 4).

It became apparent that the CSP, while successful in some activities, operated in an environment where important factors were outside its control, most clearly in relation to the substructural forces informing each of the partnering organisations. This paradox is supported by three specific reflections. Firstly, those horizontalist modes of coordination, while having clear benefits, were, at the time of research, not able to radically transform the ways in which services were operating at the site of delivery in relation to collaboration. Secondly, voluntarism and individual trust-based relationships when coming into contact with strong verticalities produced a series of adaptive behaviours primarily from the CSP lead agency. Third, that in relation to these adaptations key statutory actors were reported as having periods of disengagement or reliance on committed individuals who may not have been representative of broader organisational commitments, further encouraging the development of more homophilous practices and attendances dominated by committed third sector organisations. Those practices of homophily and a narrowing of the network as trust-based, horizontalist relationships led to higher ideological coherence, but with constrained institutional power. These tensions were to lead to symptoms of 'partnership ambiguity' in which the CSP, that was originally conceived of as an alliance of organisations and agencies, was also becoming a distinct entity underpinned with its own resources. This was to feed into legacy anxieties as to what would happen to this particular local collaboration at the end of funding.

What Benson developed by relating all four superstructural dimensions is the idea of balances/imbances in collaborative working. However, it is also important to relate the rebalancing of superstructural relations through what has been termed 'adaptive system

management' to deeper substructural influences that was to affect superstructural relations. Two particular sub-structural factors were apparent in the research. The first was narratives of austerity and the necessity of working in relation to profound financial constraint. This economic environment clearly accentuated the role of the CSP lead agency and its economic leverage at the local level, yet that in itself was adaptive because not everyone shared in the additional resources. Conversely, actors from other parts of the complex needs ecology continued to be deeply influenced by their accountability regime, state attachments and resource dependencies.

The second influence was that of hybridisation and how in this particular economic climate organisations there was the accretion of roles, both organisationally and at the level of the individual. These accretions triggered reactions, for example, calls from actors in statutory services for greater role clarity and clear divisions of labour with attendant concerns around the erosion of specialist functions. This also extended to the frontline comments where new actors in the form of the key workers were also keen to have their new functions recognised as a form of specialisation. The substructural factors of austerity realism and hybridisation fuelled what has been described in Chapter 5 as 'defensive behaviours' and a continuing retreat into core functions.

At the same time, these substructural logics were not always shared by all the individuals deeply involved within the partnership and its collaborative commitments, to the point that one actor (W/SA1) talked about the necessity of becoming less altruistic and more conscious of her organisation's core needs. Yet what these superstructural/substructural relationships gave rise to were questions as to whether key actors on the strategic tier and frontline exhibited features of network/collaborative idealism by ignoring or downplaying the challenges of wider substructural influences. If network idealism can be defined as the tendency to overestimate the potentialities of network behaviour, there was little reflection of this in the evidence. Instead, through adaptive behaviours and activities, perhaps what was seen was an element of network realism that sought to work within the strong influences of the integral state and existing

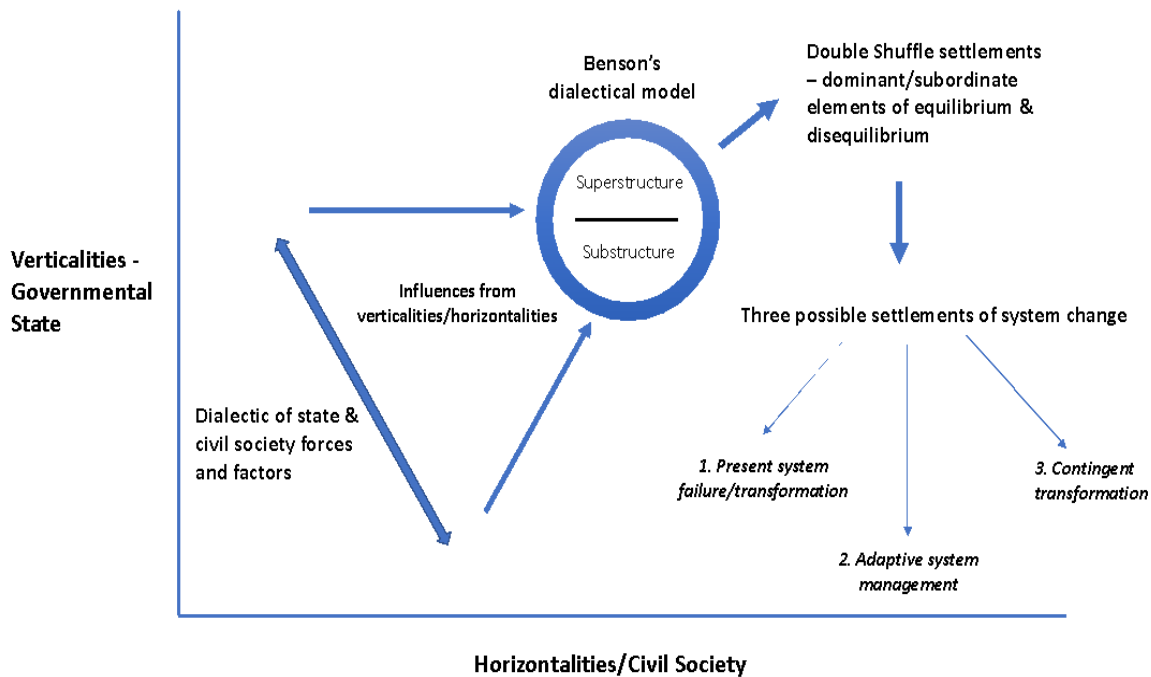
hierarchies. This could be interpreted through the conceptual framework used as a 'combinational moment' in which collaborative activity remained subordinate to the wider influences of the governmental state through the framing of possibilities.

Looking back over the application of Benson's model we find a series of equilibrium/disequilibrium settlements in which adaptive activities, behaviours and even new institutions become present in the local landscape. If Benson's typologies of operational imbalance (see Chapter 3) are applied to this evidence, the voluntaristic character of the CSP could be seen to lead to possible *consensual inefficiency*, that is relatively high levels of domain and ideological consensus and positive evaluation, but lower levels of work co-ordination (e.g. the lack of institutional alignment of working patterns and cultures). While these imbalances led to a series of adaptive behaviours that assisted the service user group, a question remains over how far the organisational collaborative landscape itself had fundamentally changed.

Applying the double dialectic of the conceptual framework

How far can the double dialectic analysis illustrated earlier in Figure 5 help explain the power of the governance context in which the CSP found itself operating – the domination/subordinate relationship of verticalities and coercion, horizontalities and collaboration? Here I bring back in the conceptual framework with some additional features as Figure 7.

Figure 7. The double dialectic and versions of collaborative system change



The analysis derived from the double dialectic comprising the wider verticalities/horizontalities and Benson's superstructure/substructure model suggests that, within the current socio-economic context, these lead to the formation of unstable settlements or couplets consisting of unequal relationships between dominant and subordinate elements. These settlements were represented by degrees of collaborative activity (subordinate) that proved to be heavily bounded by the framing of austerity and other vertical forces (dominant) that would provide the terrains on which different possibilities for system change might evolve.

These dialectical relationships help us understand three things. Firstly, why certain ideas about system change, as the transformation of all local relationships in relation to the service user group, looked to become unrealisable. Secondly, why a certain version of system change appeared to be emerging instead - adaptive system management - and its particular features.

And finally, how wider system change, if indeed desirable, could be realised and on what contingencies, or combinations of governance, this version would depend.

It also says something about the ways in which actors seemed to interpret these dynamics, emphasised within the theme of 'limited horizons' in Chapter 5. There is a family of phenomena identified within the literature that suggests certain relationships at the local level with nationally driven austerity measures and more broadly neoliberal forms of governance. For Davies and Thompson this is articulated as 'austerity realism', where discourses of austerity are interpreted on the ground as forms of 'agency denial' (2016: 156), for Gilbert it is 'disaffected consent' where actors display "*profound dissatisfaction with both the consequences and ideological premises of the neoliberal project*" (2015: 29), while simultaneously a level of acquiescence and acceptance of its perceived legitimacy. This research identifies what is perhaps best described as a sub-factor of these broader phenomena; the ways in which ambitions of *change* and the strategies to implement it are in constant states of negotiation with competing logics. The limited horizons of change are, therefore, posited as central to how collaboration can be imagined in the future.

Part 3. Implications for local system change in relation to collaboration in the field of adult complex needs

Introduction

Q3. What possibilities of system change arise from the analysis of settlements/equilibrium in relation organisational collaboration and complex needs?

This third question is addressed through the exploration of three speculative settlements in relation to models of system change and their relationship to local collaboration.

Settlement 1 - Collaborative system failure/collaborative system transformation

In Chapter 2 there was a discussion of the role that failures of collaboration play within broader articulations of system failure with regards to complex needs, with the notable features being the dominance of organisational self-interest, ideological disagreements and distractive effects of differing vertical accountability structures. If this particular syndrome is applied to the CSP and its collaborative ecology the evidence does not point to collaborative system failure in this stark sense. What we have seen reported and evidenced are committed people trying to form new ways of working together, looking to bring additional resources to a city and attempts to develop new initiatives in relation to a highly vulnerable group.

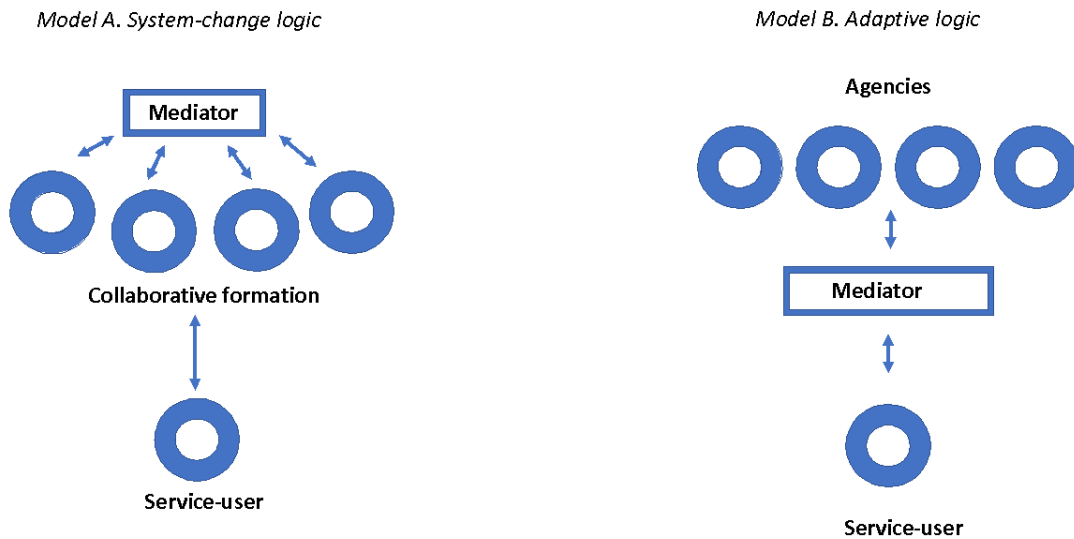
Yet evidence of collaborative system transformation was limited. As previously noted, the levels of collaboration in terms of the alignment of systems of different organisations was very much limited. In effect, the evidence suggests an alignment of *people* rather than an alignment of *institutions*. In terms of Settlement 1, the CSP and its collaborative ecology could be characterised as a hybrid of failure/transformation in relation to collaboration that is best described though Scenario 2 - adaptive system management.

Settlement 2 - Adaptive system management

In the course of addressing Question 2 around the key mediating roles of local actors at both strategic and frontline tiers, the research identified an array of adaptive behaviours. Overall, these could be conceptualised as a particular *modus operandi* that looked to adapt the CSP and its collaborative ecology in response to all the pressures that could have conceivably led to collaborative system failure. Adaptive system management, therefore, found institutional forms in, for example - the partnership board, new resources in terms of time-bound additional funding and personal forms particularly through the emergent role of the keyworker. What the evidence suggests is that the CSP and the keyworkers, in particular, in its 'smoothing functions', ended up largely mediating between the respective agencies and the service user rather than co-ordinating

a collaborative formation. This adaptive dynamic is illustrated in a comparison of Models A and B in Figure 8.

Figure 8. System change or system adaptation?



Nevertheless, adaptive system management as a more personalised and hybridised solution had its limits. These were to be found in the fact that the CSP could be regarded essentially as a project rather than a permanent institution. This led to a series of legacy anxieties from strategic actors and the fact that the CSP did not have sufficient power to take on the role of the site of conflict and tension resolution. Instead those tensions, that were manifested in the form of absence, were simply displaced elsewhere. Adaptiveness, for all its virtues, was a reflection of the lack of power within hybridised civil society organisations that remained heavily influenced by the powers of the vertical governmental state acting in a local integral way. However, this hybridised terrain of change and non-change can lead to a third speculation. What are the governance conditions under which collaboration in its integrated sense could be secured?

Settlement 3 – Contingent transformation

This settlement could be termed contingent in that it would depend on a series of wider shifts within the political and economic system in which the government becomes committed to providing a favourable terrain on which institutional collaboration can be secured in its deeper sense. Not only would this require considerable resourcing, the rejection of austerity and the idea of common resource dependencies between all the local actors; it would also require a level of commitment and devolution of powers that the historical section in Chapter 1 suggests has thus far not taken place. Moreover, it would mean a recognition that collaboration and all its costs could be justified by the benefits that it would bring to public services serving all sections of society and not a very small, but vulnerable group, within it. The contingent scenario in Bensonian terms would thus take substructural imperatives far more seriously. The contingent nature of Settlement 3 leads to a final set of reflections.

Part 4. Contribution to knowledge and concluding reflections

Contribution to knowledge

The contributions to knowledge found in this research rests on the relationship between a spatial-temporally unique data set and the conceptual framework established in Chapter 3. It is suggested that the use and relevance of this conceptual framework has been demonstrated in its ability to identify and explain the key findings of this research, most notably the complex set of relationships between vertical and horizontal dynamics as experienced at the local level and how these led to a series of behaviours described broadly as *adaptive system management*.

This emphasises the proposition that the actions and behaviours of local organisations, and individuals working within them, cannot be understood as directly related to the governmental state, nor can they be understood as autonomous in themselves. Instead, the conceptual framework built from Benson's (1975) network model is able to illustrate how and why these

behaviours and actions could be a consequence of unequal, interactive dynamics between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of the integral state lead to various states of equilibrium/disequilibrium for organisations caught in this dynamic. It allows an understanding as to why adaptive behaviours could be identified as the dominant response to ongoing vertical pressures, while understanding the limitations as to network responses faced with highly individualised transactions and ongoing resource dependencies. The ability to conceptualise these interactions as unequal in character also allows us to consider how strategies of change are subject to states of negotiation with competing logics.

As such, the research challenges accounts of change that over-emphasise the potential for collaboration at the local level to initiate substantive transformation that lie in tension with ongoing bureaucratic and state demands. Instead, what was found was that ongoing relationships with the governmental state often remain in the dominant position when in dynamic, unequal interaction with new horizontalities. This research is, therefore, able to speak and contribute to several emerging literatures, notably in the field of between collaboration and hybridisation (e.g. Skelcher *et al*, 2015; Pill and Guarneros-Meza 2018) and recent attempts towards more theory-influenced accounts of organisational responses to complex needs (e.g. Dobson 2019a).

Future research in this area could build on both the potentialities established within this research for system change, but also to the limitations. The original themes in this research could be further strengthened by returning to the same field by enabling a more explicitly longitudinal approach to further establish the trajectory of change as appropriate for governance research. At the same time, the ability to add fieldwork from other geographic locations would also offer the potential to consider how the fundamental dynamics identified in this study are played out in alternative localities.

Final reflections

By way of a final set of reflections I want to go back to the quotation from CN/SA2 on page 102, in response to the identification of complex systems often leading to situations where *“there is not an incentive to change the system because they (adults with complex needs) are a very small proportion of lots and lots of systems where those systems work perfectly well for 98 per cent of people. How shifting it around for the two per cent, or whatever, would kind of unravel it for everyone else”*. Instead she called for a ‘fix’ that would involve a refocusing of attention and visibility for this particular group and the resourcing of dedicated service delivery groups to do this. In terms of the focus of the research, what she could be interpreted as saying is that collaboration as a form of institutional alignment could be seen almost as a ‘red-herring’; that meeting the needs of this service user group could perhaps be found in other ways. This does not, however, mean that we simply turn our backs on collaboration, but to understand that some people and organisations will be more interested in it than others. And until there is a collaborative logic throughout political and civic life, it might be better to invest in those whose greatest interests are to secure the best forms of cooperation and mutual understanding of those who constitute the service-user ecology. This could leave us with an apparent unity of opposites. On the one hand, the exercise of relatively modest aims regarding institutional alignment and change and a more expansive understanding as to the changes that are required in the wider state to secure these modest gains.

These particular strategic understandings could be considered ‘politicised’; that in Bensonian terms would involve an appreciation of the dynamics and consequences of the dialect between superstructural and substructural factors. Prevailing realities, existing and foreseeable conditions facing collaborative activity to better meet the needs of adults with complex needs, beg the question as to what these three speculative settlements can tell us. It could be argued that the promise and limitations of Settlement 2 - adaptive system management - could become a focus of further study. What perhaps is needed is to strengthen the direction of travel of the CSP and its local collaborative arrangements that focus on those relationships that appeared within the research to make the most difference. In the landscape of complexity and inherent

tensions, perhaps what is needed is not more organisational complexity, but what was referred to as a 'strong fix'. This might involve a commitment to modest multi-agency collaboration rather than more integrationist ambitions and this collaborative formation being mediated by a sustainably resourced CSP with its dedicated services.

Yet the question remains regarding the powers of the Integral State. Without changes in the nature of vertical relations, even this pragmatic strengthening of horizontal relations on the ground may not be able to withstand pressures from above. In the context of complex needs, this type of whole system analysis suggests that change has to be both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'. The balance sought appears to be that of strengthening existing local collaborative formations and the role of the governmental state facilitating local developments through adequate resourcing – a new type of governance mix. While we are still a long way from this, ambitions of system change involving a wider political economy should remain a critical factor of strategic consideration.

Having focused on the role of collaboration in relation to this service user group the absolute final reflections are informed by recent remarks of a former minister in relation to the COVID crisis.

“My worry is that we’ve shown it’s possible to get everyone off the streets during the Covid crisis so if homelessness goes up now people will know it’s as a consequence of the government’s actions” (Anonymous Former Cabinet Minister quoted in Sylvester 2020).

These candid words, interpreted through the lens of this research, suggest that policies in relation to this service user group are not simply bound up with improving local collaboration, but also decisive national state action.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Letter of research participation

Dear

Before agreeing to continue with this process, please take time to read this information sheet. This will explain the aims of this research and what your participation will involve.

Project details and aims

Title: *Appraising local strategies of collaboration for achieving 'system change' in services for adults with multiple needs.*

The primary aim of this research is to explore how professionals and teams collaborate when working with adults with multiple/complex needs, together with how this collaboration is governed. It will then look to understand how this collaboration impacts on the possibilities of 'system change'. In doing so, I am looking to interview members of the Opportunity Nottingham partnership from different service perspectives. It is hoped that this research will assist in promoting collaborative practice in the field and identifying issues that make collaboration difficult.

Who will be conducting the interview?

My name is Joe Spours and I am a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University.

Contact details: joseph.spours2016@my.ntu.ac.uk

Address: Joe Spours, School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Phone: 07853036765

My supervisor in the project is Graham Bowpitt who can be contacted at graham.bowpitt@ntu.ac.uk

Graham Bowpitt, School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Phone: +44(0)115 8485610

What does participation involve?

At this stage of the research project I would like for you to take part in one semi-structured interview around the themes mentioned above. This will take no more than 45 minutes and can take place at a time and place of your choosing. With your permission, the interviews will be taped and transcribed by myself. No one will have access to un-anonymised data apart from me and my Director of Studies (Graham Bowpitt). All audio data on the recording device used will be carried in a locked bag and stored in a locked cupboard at Nottingham Trent University when not in use. Following transcription onto a password-protected computer, the transcribed data will be anonymised and the audio data will be deleted. As per GDPR guidelines, this dataset will be kept for the minimum time necessary for the research to be completed and written up, including any additional academic articles on the subject. The necessity of keeping the data will be reviewed yearly with a maximum limit of ten years before all data not in written up form will be deleted. It is not anticipated that the data will be needed for longer than three years.

Should you wish, a copy of the transcripts will be provided to you to review. This would allow you to consider whether your contributions maintain your anonymity.

Confidentiality and anonymity

As the project is following a case-study strategy it is acknowledged that there is an increased risk of the partnership being potentially identifiable due to the distinctive multi-organisational

structure and funding model. However, care and effort will be made to maximise confidentiality and anonymity for all participants. Any writing up of the data from these interviews will not make reference to your job role or the locality in which this project is taking place. Positionality in terms of both service and individual responsibilities within the partnership and broader service ecology will be referred to in generic terms so as to minimise any risk of individual participants being able to be identified. While the primary funding of the partnership will be recognised as primarily coming from a national charity, the source will not be named.

Following any interviews, should you wish to withdraw your data then this request will be granted. No reason for withdrawal of data is requested. However, in order to try and minimise issues with the research once the writing up has begun, it is requested that any wishes to withdraw data are communicated within four weeks of the interview taking place. If you wish to withdraw your data please email me at joseph.spours2016@my.ntu.ac.uk and this request will be respected.

The results of the research

The information gathered in this stage of the research form part of the data sources for my PhD project into the questions discussed above and potential academic articles on the subject. The anonymised data will be analysed and written up in relation to other academic literature before being published.

If you have any concerns about the research or wish to request any further information please contact me at joseph.spours2016@my.ntu.ac.uk or my Director of Studies Graham Bowpitt (graham.bowpitt@ntu.ac.uk)

Appendix 2. Consent Form

Project: Local strategies for collaboration and models of 'system change' in services for adults with multiple needs

Researcher: Joe Spours (PhD student at Nottingham Trent University)

- I confirm that the purpose of the project has been explained to me, that I have been given information about it in writing, and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw data for up to two weeks from signing this form.
- I give permission for the interview to be audio recorded on the understanding that all research outputs will be anonymised and the recording will be erased once the contents have been analysed.
- I understand that everything I say will be confidential.
- I agree to take part in this research

Name.....

Date.....

Signature.....

Appendix 3. Interview Schedule - Strategic/Commissioning

Introduction - Role and relationship to case study partnership

Questions

Inter-organisational collaboration question

1. What have been the traditional challenges to inter-organisational collaboration between your service and other services working with adults with complex needs?

Possible prompts

2. How do you think that the case study partnership is addressing these challenges?

Vertical questions

3. What challenges do you/have you experienced in incentivising change (positive collaboration)?
4. What accountabilities/pressures from above or organisational priorities do you have to manage with in trying to change the way that collaboration works?

Possible prompts

5. Are the barriers structural or individual?
6. What are your priorities in thinking about how services work together with this service user group?

Horizontal questions

7. What does 'positive collaboration' look like?
8. How is horizontal collaboration sustained?

Prompts

9. Are there elements of the partnership that are harder to engage in positive collaboration than others? If so, why do you think this is?

System change questions

10. What do you anticipate inter organisational collaboration to look like at the end of the project?
11. What conditions or dynamics could impact on this?
12. Is there a relationship between how collaboration occurs and the possibilities of 'system change'?

Prompts

13. Do you think there are different possibilities of 'system change'?
14. Has the way you collaborate with others changed following the beginning of the partnership?

Appendix 4. Interview Schedule - Frontline

Introduction - Role and relationship to case study partnership

Questions

Role of each agency

1. Can you describe what your role is when working with adults with complex needs?
2. What are the main acts of collaboration with other services when working with this service user group?
3. Are there different organisational priorities or ways of working with this service user group?

Ideology

4. What are you looking to achieve through collaboration with other organisations when working with adults with complex needs?
5. Are there certain organisations that you find it easier to collaborate with than other? If so, why?

Evaluation

6. How do you feel that you work with other services working with adults with complex needs?
7. What does 'positive collaboration' look like?
8. What are the barriers to positive collaboration? Would you characterise them as structural/individual/both?

Work-coordination

9. How do you coordinate collaborative action when working with this service-user group?

10. What impact has the introduction of Personal Development Coordinators had on your work and ability to collaborate?