

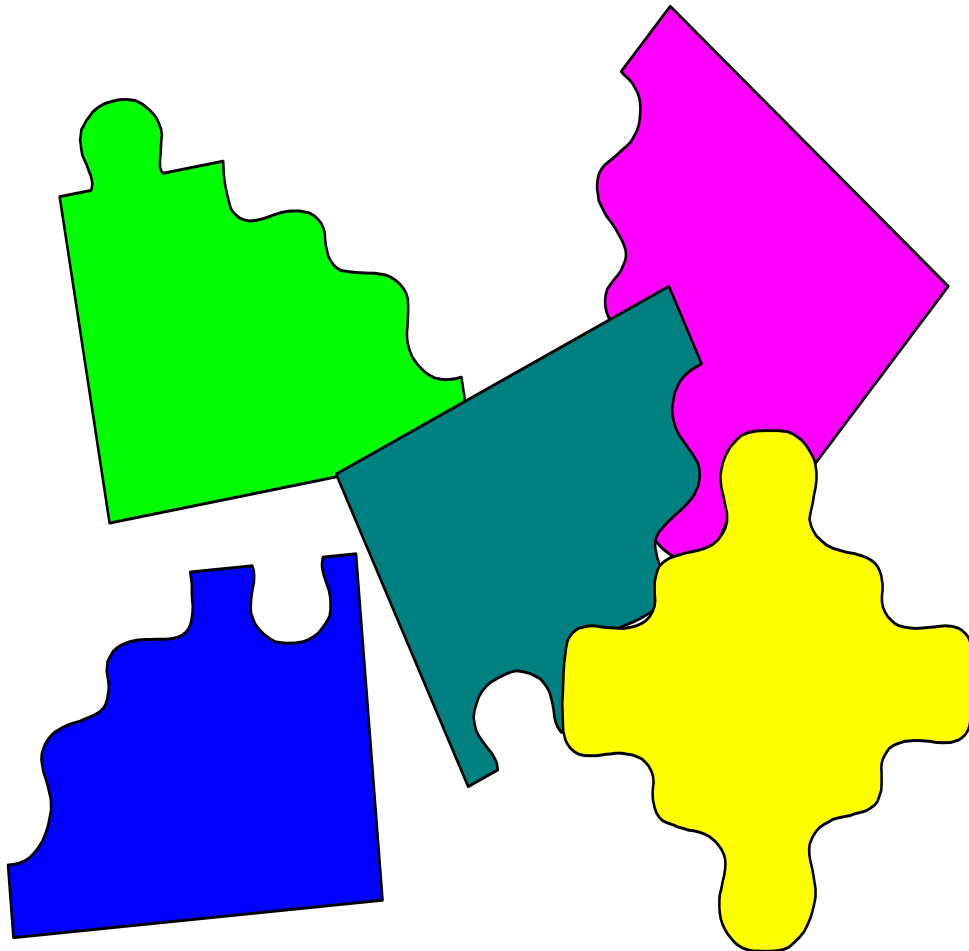


I.R.I.S.
INVOLVING RESIDENTS IN SOLUTIONS

NICE PUZZLE, SHAME IT'S IN PIECES

'Fragmentation of Support Services for Pupils'

REPORT OCTOBER 2001



Barrier to Educational Success

**“FAILURE OF SOCIAL SERVICES, LEA’S AND
SCHOOLS TO GATHER AND SHARE
INFORMATION WHICH WOULD HELP THEM
PLAN AND SUPPORT CHILDREN
EFFECTIVELY”**

*“Education Protects” Summary for Foster Carers
DOH/Dfee Booklet February 2001*

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SECTION 1

The Research and the Results

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Bristol Education Action Zone (Br.E.A.Z.) was set up in September 2000 with a major emphasis on raising educational attainment for all. The Br.E.A.Z. identified the

'Need for more knowledge about the effects to pupils caused by fragmented support from agencies when in need.'

and

*'Anecdotes about harm to pupils done by fragmented support are not backed up by evidence gathered across the zone.'*¹

Anecdotes suggest that there is a lack of integration in the work carried out by a range of key services designed to support young people in the zone area. This creates a fragmented service and is viewed as a barrier to those young people gaining their full entitlement to education. For instance the report produced by Bristol City Council 'Protecting Children' stressed the *'importance of inter agency communication at all levels'* and emphasised *'clear co-operation between agencies involved'*, yet

¹ Bristol Education Action Zone action plan 2000-2001, Project 48: Parent Research Group - results of fragmented support for pupils.

'Inquiries into child deaths, following severe abuse have continually shown that information regarding risk to the child concerned was not known to have been communicated effectively between various agencies – such as Social Services, police, health and education'.

It is an area of concern at the highest level of Government policy:

'The guidance recognises that many agencies have a part to play in supporting schools to ensure that all pupils can learn efficiently in the class room'.²

'Working in partnership with parents is also part of the equation: The emphasis of this guidance is very much an early intervention and prevention through multi-agency working and through partnership with parents'.³

Other anecdotal evidence informing the hypothesis was from the I.R.I.S. (Involving Residents In Solutions) Education project⁴, managed by parents who were examining how communication takes place within the Education system. This work had been devised following work done with parents through Community Education's Lifelong Learning programme. This Community Education research had raised communication between parents and schools as an issue. I.R.I.S. then set about asking teachers and Headteachers if they also saw communication as an issue. It was found that there was a wide range of use and knowledge regarding all parties involved in school, including agencies, but very few links between them.

² Social Inclusion: Pupil Support. The Secretary of State's guidance on pupil attendance, behaviour, exclusion and re-integration July 1999.

³ Covering letter to Chairs of Governors and Headteacher of Maintained Schools.

⁴ 'Do we talk to each other, or what?' Community and Communication in Education I.R.I.S. 2000.

The report 'Better Behaviour in Bristol Schools' also found

'Too much of the work is fragmented, lacking coherence between different agencies and not communicated effectively enough to those who have identified a need for support in behaviour management but are not clear about where to find it'.⁵

Implications could be drawn from responses to questions about children being affected by fragmentation in support services. Potentially individuals could experience isolation and loss of self esteem caused by exclusion with increasing family stress levels as a result. This would adversely add to the emotional pressures on an individual child.

'Broken schooling, unmet emotional needs and being seriously behind with schoolwork may all manifest themselves in behaviour at school'.⁶

If delays in a given case are prevalent the individual child's situation could degenerate and negative experiences would diminish trust and belief in 'the authorities' ability to help a family. Ultimately, the child needing support could be caught in a triangle between parents/carers and the professionals. All of which would cause a loss in educational opportunity for a child thus affected.

Although there were these 'anecdotes about harm to pupils by fragmented support' it was 'not backed up by evidence gathered from across the zone.'⁷

⁵ 'Better Behaviour in Bristol Schools' Bristol City Council 1998.

⁶ Children Looked After Service, Summary for Foster Carers.

⁷ Bristol Education Action Zone action plan 2000–2001, Project 48: Parent Research Group – results of fragmented support for pupils.

The Br.E.A.Z. had decided that this project could develop local parents' skills, by empowering them to do the research and consultation needed. This development was written into the E.A.Z. action plan. The Br.E.A.Z. commissioned I.R.I.S. in December 2000 and in January 2001 the part-time Project Co-ordinator was appointed. I.R.I.S. was set up by the Bristol Regeneration Partnership with the remit of engaging more residents in the decision-making processes which spend public money, with a particular focus on regeneration areas.

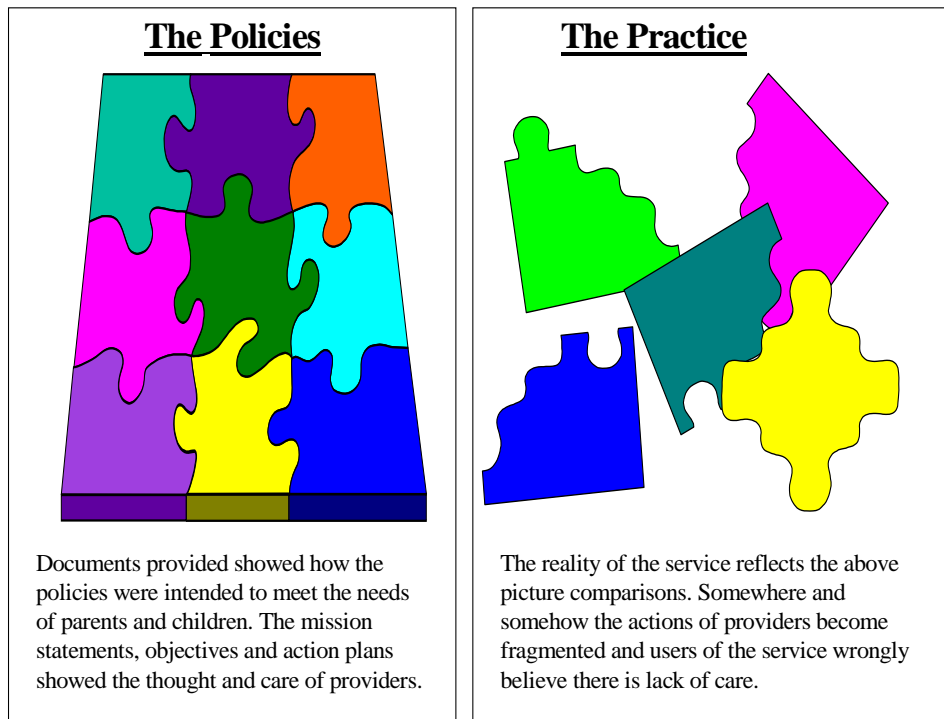
I.R.I.S. is a unique organisation that can provide a full range of support, to both organisations and residents, from consultation and analysis through to providing a neutral co-ordinating role that can ensure the priorities raised by residents and local organisations actually result in improvements being made.

The research aims were therefore to:

- gather evidence of the effect of support for young people being provided by a multiplicity of agencies.
- produce a report that is clear and accessible.
- make recommendations based on the research.
- develop skills and awareness in a group of parents whose children attend Bristol's inner city schools.

CHAPTER 2. SUMMARY OF REPORT FORMAT

This research looked at fragmentation in the delivery of support services to young people in education.



The report has been divided into three parts.

Section 1: The Research and the Results

The parent research team sought the views, experience, expertise and knowledge of parents, teachers and agencies who are the major players in the delivery or receipt of services connected to the education of young people.

The report identifies the reasons for fragmentation and has been divided into the 3 research areas: parents, teachers and agencies.

Each section has been written by the team of parents who did the research and therefore the style and voice of each section varies, reflecting the individuals who have participated in the research.

Each section contains information and analysis about the issues raised by the participants as well as drawing on some secondary sources of information.

Section 2: Next Steps

In 'Next Steps' the possible solutions suggested by parents, teachers and agencies are summarised and recommendations put forward, which are not all about financial resources, but also about 'joined-up thinking and linking' amongst agencies, parents and schools.

Section 3: Training and Development within the Research Programme

The project was carried out in an innovative way with all the researchers being invited to participate, from start to finish, in all areas of the project's development. Their participation was supported by training modules.

Section 3 of the report summarises the training and development of the parent researchers: their initial planning, getting ready to start work, designing the research methods and materials, and their experience of delivering the project.

CHAPTER 3. PARENTS' RESEARCH

3.1 FINDINGS: WHAT HAVE WE FOUND OUT?

Of the 23 parents who were interviewed 91% had experience of support agencies. 70% of the parents said that they knew where to get help if their child had a problem related to education.

In addition a further 13 parents attended two focus groups. The focus group's experiences echoed to a large degree the experiences and conclusions gathered through the questionnaires. This provided parents with the opportunity to look at the findings and develop further their solutions.

As the parents had experience of needing additional help for their child, they described not only their experience of fragmentation, but also their high levels of anxiety and stress which they themselves had gone through and which we were unable to measure.

3.1.1 Do your children enjoy school?

Half of the parents said that their children enjoyed school, giving such reasons as:

- friendships
- liking their teacher
- and enjoying learning.

Approximately 40% of the parents said that their children had problems at school, citing such reasons as:

- not getting appropriate help from Special Educational needs
- not accessing the curriculum

- able children becoming bored
- change of teacher or school.

14% of parents said their children did not like school because of:

- too many children in their class
- a lack of confidence
- the pressure of SATS.

3.1.2 Were you satisfied with your child's overall school experience?

Many parents felt their child enjoyed school but that did not mean they, as parents, were satisfied. 65% of parents were satisfied with their children's overall school experience 'at this moment' – this was significant as in the past many had been frustrated and dissatisfied. However, 35% of parents were dissatisfied and they gave their reasons as:

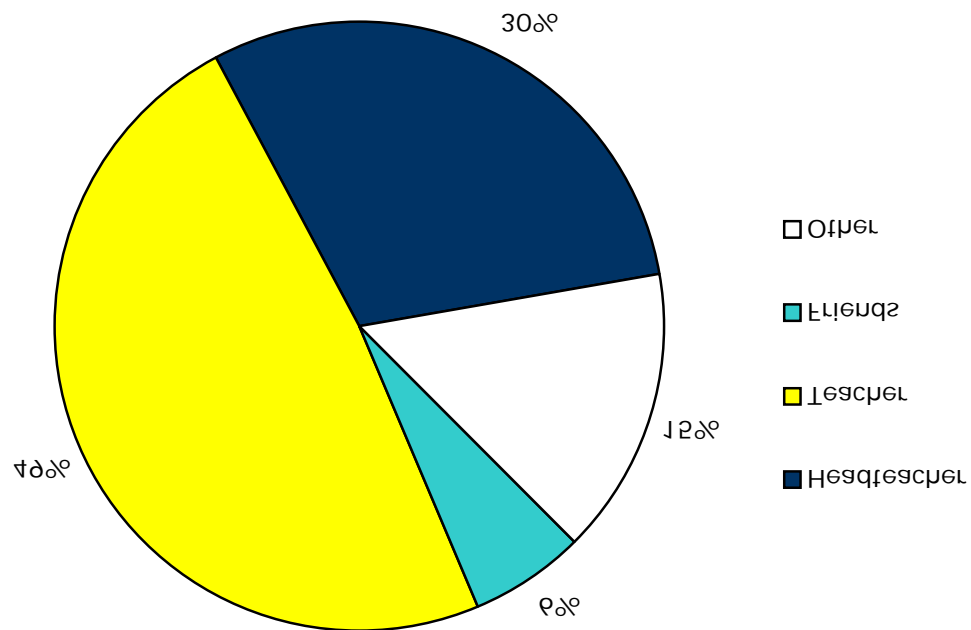
- the school not complying with the special educational needs process
- lack of support
- trouble at lunch times
- the school system being too academic
- not enough play.

Here it is important to note that the child's enjoyment of school and the parent/carer satisfaction with the school depended on what stage they felt their problem or issue had reached. For example, both enjoyment and satisfaction scored high when it was felt that appropriate help had been identified.

3.1.3 Where do you go if your child has a problem to do with school?

79% had gone to a teacher or the school's Headteacher when they had a problem. The rest had taken routes to other professionals such as a Doctor or Health Visitor.

Many parents felt that approaching someone outside of the school system would have been more appropriate. Parents suggested: Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), Dyslexic Centre, Speech Therapist, Social Worker and a neutral person in school with a knowledge of support agencies and information on parent's rights.



Where do you go if your child has a problem?

Both focus groups agreed that the route of Headteacher or teacher as the initial contact had rarely been the most fruitful.

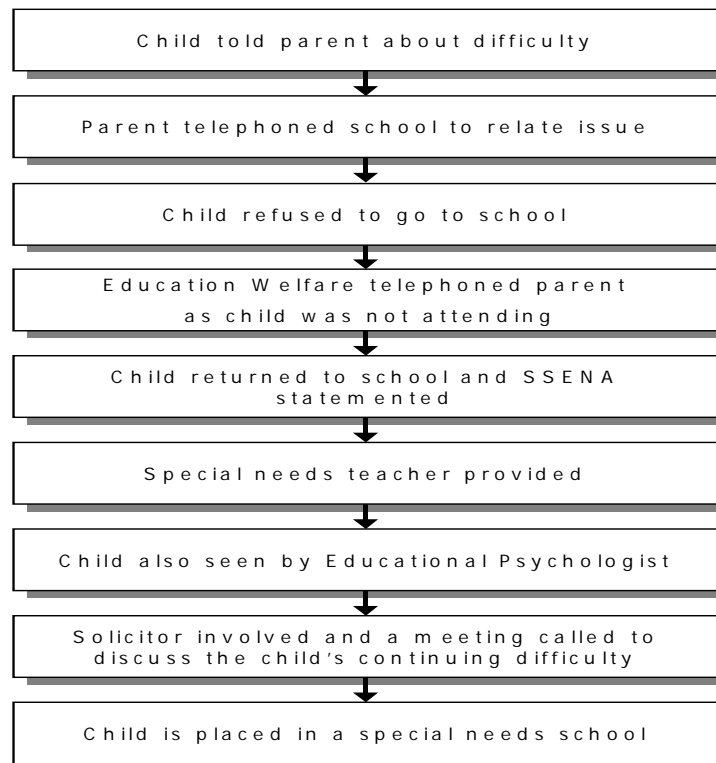
This had left parents feeling 'ignored' that 'school policy is not kept to' and that they needed to 'hassle to get things done' and feel up-to-date.

3.1.4 How was the problem identified? Who made contact?

50% of the parents interviewed had had to contact the school after having first identified a problem. Whereas just 17% of parents had been contacted by the school regarding problems with their child.

Some parents saw the schools' attitude as another issue. They did not even want to approach the school for help believing they would not be 'listened to'.

One Parent's Route in Trying to Help Their Child



Parents expressed concern that they had little or no knowledge of what agencies existed and what help was available. Parents also found that the schools did not appear to have 'up-to-date' information about the availability of support agencies.

When agencies were identified, schools were often reluctant to act on agency suggested solutions. Other parents found they were sent to the GP or Health Visitor for referral before the school could or would take any action.

Several parents who had had help from individual agencies revealed that they had only known of that particular agency through personal contact from friends or relatives. A proportion had found out that the agency support existed through discussions with friends linked to the education system, which had then given them confidence to ask at school.

3.1.5 Which agencies, organisations or support services have you come into contact with on behalf of your child?

Our sample had had contact with 53 agencies, organisations or support services. Of these 9 were particularly well used:

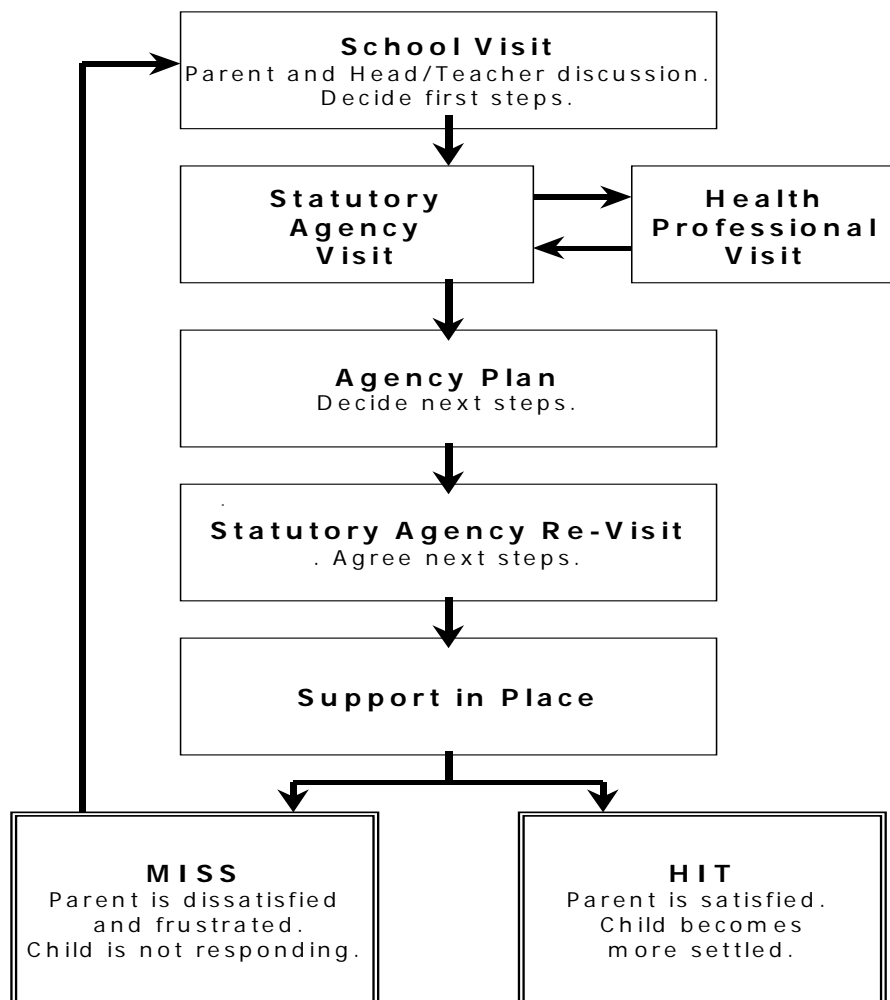
- Dyslexia Centre
- Educational Welfare Service
- SSENA
- Educational Psychologist
- Health Visitor
- Doctor
- Special Needs Support Service
- Social Services
- Speech Therapist

3.1.6 Was the contact a positive experience?

21% of parents found the support offered to their child was good. They appreciated the time and effort devoted to their child's special needs.

The time-scale for referrals and help with an issue varied enormously from days to years. 40% of parents thought that their problem had been resolved eventually; 55% of parents saw their issues as ongoing.

An Example of a Route to Agency Assistance



63% of parents interviewed were disappointed with the system that referred their child to an agency. They thought that:

- the schools and other professionals, such as doctors and Health Visitors, were not supportive of their issue. The parents did not feel that their child was getting the appropriate help and support
- assumptions were made about their capability of being in a partnership with the school or agency
- some Headteachers were reluctant to encourage the involvement of some outside agencies in education issues, e.g. Dyslexia Centre. Parents wondered if the school had to find the resources to bring in additional support and therefore made Headteachers reluctant to engage with the problems due to lack of funds
- even if the schools and staff were supportive of their problems, they still faced a dead end as far as gaining extra support or funding
- they felt pressured into getting private assessments, e.g. for dyslexia. Many parents felt trapped if the school was not supportive
- although they were offered help it did not materialise due to staff shortages within agencies, e.g. where the Speech Therapist was out because of long-term illness

- when there was multi-agency involvement there was a lack of co-ordination. If the school was involved the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) often became the co-ordinator, which helped to provide what appeared to be a joined-up service for parents. However, parents were aware the role of a SENCO was limited because in most schools a full-time teacher or Headteacher, who had insufficient time and resources to spend on the co-ordinating role, holds this responsibility.

Once the agencies were involved the majority of parents experiences were very positive.

There was a minority of parents who had had very negative experiences of specific agencies. This however, was balanced by positive feedback from other parents.

Overall many parents found the whole process of gaining help very time-consuming and frustrating.

3.2 CONCLUSIONS: WHAT DO WE SUMMARISE FROM THESE FINDINGS?

The research has led to a conclusion that fragmentation does exist between support agencies.

The main problems flagged by parents were the lack of communication between schools, agencies and themselves and also the time taken to solve a problem or find funding.

The following points were apparent:

- where children are experiencing problems, half are not enjoying school. It can therefore be concluded that their educational attainment will be reduced. Central and Local Government have identified that achievement in inner city schools needs to be raised
- early identification of support is a priority. Both enjoyment in school by the child and satisfaction of the parent scored high when appropriate help had been identified. This indicated that even if the problem had not been resolved the early identification and support provided immediate benefits
- of our sample 79% of all parents spoke to the teachers and/or Headteacher in the first instance. However many felt approaching an independent person outside of the school system would have been more appropriate for a variety of reasons:
 - the provision of extra help within the school system is a funding issue
 - if the resources had to be found by the school to bring in additional support they may be reluctant to engage with the problems due to a lack of funds
 - where there did appear to be a joined-up service for parents it was largely because the school SENCO took on the co-ordinating role, but the time of a SENCO is limited

- schools are not always supportive of advice or guidance offered by agencies. An example given was the perceived reluctance of a Headteacher to encourage the involvement of an outside agency. Parents felt that if the school did not share their concerns they were left to their own devices
- funding is required to meet the special needs of some of our children in school today. It is recognised this is not always available and is a barrier identified by parents
- parents identified a lack of information and communication. There are numerous agencies 'out there' but there is no definitive list. Neither the parents nor the schools had all the information on what support existed for young people. This lack of information can make finding the right support difficult
- 71% of the parents thought they had found the right agency for their child's needs but they described a frustrating, lengthy and difficult process
- it was perceived that the lack of communication led to duplication in paperwork and of other resources when more than one person was involved.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT SOLUTIONS DOES THE PARENT RESEARCH SUGGEST?

Funding for existing service

1. If the funding for the SENCO role in schools was increased there would be more time available for SEN children.

In this time-consuming role of co-ordinating multi-agency approaches to specific problems this would allow more children access to help. Often a Headteacher or full-time teacher is only funded for as little as half a day a week.

2. Funding for key services must be improved to broaden access to specialists and to reduce waiting times, e.g. Speech Therapists.
3. The time taken to solve a problem needs to be shortened so as to increase attainment levels in school. Closer monitoring and reviewing of agency capacity to deliver its service may go some way to addressing this.

New system

4. Some parents suggested appointing a 'middle person' to work in schools but not a member of the teaching staff. This person would be able to give impartial advice and support and would have access to a variety information sources about all agencies, organisations, support groups and the rights of parents and children.
5. A new drop-in Education Centre that provided all of the above but for all the schools in the Br.E.A.Z., or even the whole of Bristol with independent access to funding. This provision would need to be carefully designed so that the services were easily accessible to local communities but were still able to maintain confidentiality. This centre could be used to take the pressure off the Headteacher and schools with increased parental involvement, provision of information and a reduction in duplication.

Existing service with additional provision

6. Access for all parties to information, e.g. a regularly updated database or directory of all the available agencies, organisations and support groups. This should help reduce the time taken to identify a problem and find appropriate help and support.

7. Other areas that parents felt needed addressing (which could help solve the problems children were experiencing in school without the need for outside agency support) were:
 - reduce class sizes
 - provide teachers with more social skills training and a remit to teach social skills as well as the three R's
 - to deal more openly with racism and bullying
 - less pressure from the National Curriculum
 - increase the emphasis on Life-long Learning.

3.3.1 What are the barriers to these solutions?

- the lack of a forum or network to decide how to and who will respond and act on information, including reports such as this one

- resources - more time and money needs to be devoted to the services supporting young people and their families to enable them to gain their full entitlement to education.

3.4 SAMPLE AND METHOD: WHO WAS ASKED? HOW DID WE FIND IT OUT?

The project was set up by I.R.I.S. and local parents were appointed to assist with the research. It was decided that in order to understand if there was fragmentation in delivery of support services it would be necessary to target parents whose children had had some agency involvement during their school years.

The parent researchers also decided to focus on nursery and primary school, although not exclusively, because fragmentation at secondary school level had been researched extensively by the 'Connexions Service', with support from I.R.I.S., when developing their business plan. The Connexion's service solution of allocating each secondary school pupil an adult Personal Advisor, who can provide sign-posting and support communication with agencies, has tried to address some of the issues of fragmentation.

3.4.1 How was the sample group invited to take part?

- posters and flyers in schools, health centres, community centres, local businesses and organisations
- invitation in school newsletters to take part in research
- word of mouth
- through contacts parent researchers had with other parents
- through Headteachers.

3.4.2 Who made up the sample group?

23 parents were interviewed individually. Of these 91% had had experience of support agencies.

70% of the parents said that they knew where to get help if their child had problem related to education.

In addition, a further 13 parents attended two focus groups. The experiences of the focus group attendees echoed to a large degree the experiences and conclusions gathered through the questionnaires.

In total 36 parents from across the zone came forward, all of whom had children that attended schools within the zone:

- the children attended 15 out of the 22 schools in the zone
- 89% of the parents who took part in the research were women, 11% were men
- 31% lived in Ashley ward, 44% in Barton Hill, 22% in Easton, (3% other)
- 11% out of the 36 people interviewed were from an ethnic minority
- they had a total of 78 children between them:
 - 47% were female, 53% male
 - 63% were white European, 5% white other, 5% black Caribbean, 5% black other, 5% Asian, 18% dual heritage.

3.4.3 How representative was the sample group?

Although just 36 parents who had experience were interviewed, the problems and solutions raised by each individual did form a repetitive pattern and their experiences were similar. This suggests the size of the sample for the purpose of this research was adequate.

Most of the interviewees were women (89%). This was expected as mothers are still largely responsible for issues to do with their children. They are also still the main group that take children to and from school and so have more consistent contact with schools.

Although 22% of the parents interviewed lived in Easton, parents sending their children to schools in Easton were under-represented.

As the parents targeted were those who had experience of agency support a lot of groundwork was needed to find and then engage them in the research. The sample was therefore limited by the time and resources allocated.

Chapter 3 was compiled by: Ruth Ellams, Vanessa Redmond and Fee Eyles

Supported by: Lyn Sharry, Tracie Roberts and Stella Man

CHAPTER 4. TEACHERS RESEARCH

4.1 FINDINGS: WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

A total of 18 teachers from 6 nursery schools, 8 primary and the two secondary schools were interviewed. 11 were Headteachers and 7 were teachers with SENCO responsibilities.

It was clear from the teachers interviewed that they saw fragmentation in the provision of support services in schools with 100% agreeing with the hypothesis. 67% saw a disconnection of services between the schools, parents and pupils. 33% saw fragmentation between statutory provision and the systems and policies in practice. Teachers felt that if fragmentation was addressed it would provide improvement for both schools and families.

4.1.1 Agencies in school

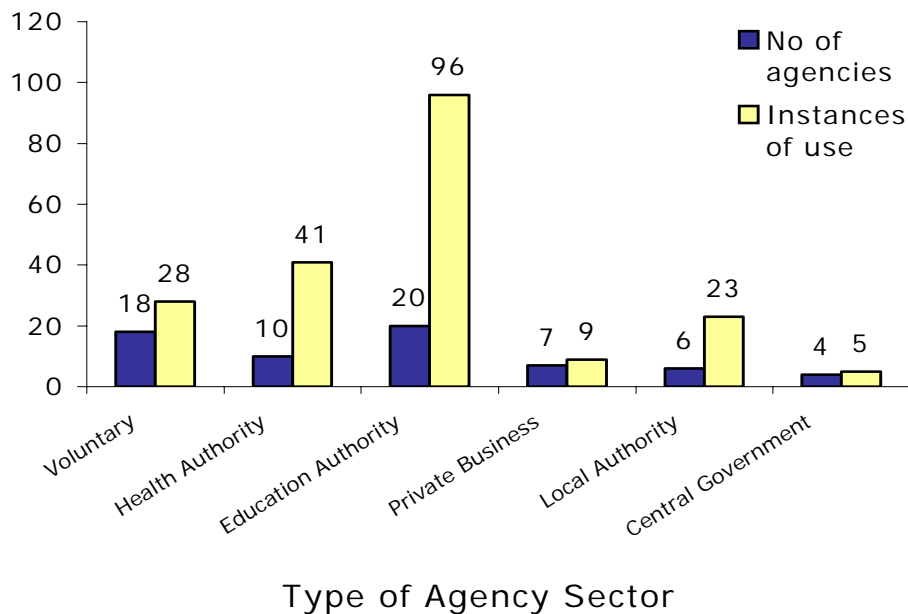
Our research showed that schools were visited by a wide range of agencies who spent considerable amounts of time in schools. Our sample of teachers identified over 65 agencies coming into schools. Many of them made more frequent visits than others.

Each agency was organised, received their funding and operated their services differently. Their independence from each other was highlighted. Their interdependence, especially with schools, was less obvious.

Just looking at the differences in funding arrangements shows the potential for fragmentation, misunderstanding and a lack of clarity.

For instance, some are managed through voluntary management committees, which gain their funding through a number of means; others are funded through large organisations such as the Health Authority, while others are part of the LEA.

There are many different agencies being used by schools.



The chart above illustrates the following:

- 20 (31%) of all agencies identified as being used in schools were Local Education Authority and when compared to other sectors 96 (48%) of all support given to pupils through schools were via LEA supported agencies. This is not surprising given the number of services provided and encouraged by the Local Education Authority

- the next biggest category of agencies were run within the voluntary sector – 18 (28%), delivering 14% of the services used by schools
- 10 (15%) of all agencies were part of the Health Authority, delivering 20% of the services. There is obviously an understandable but perhaps under- emphasised requirement on the Health Authority agencies, when linking with schools to support young people
- 7 (11%) were private sector businesses, brought in for 5% of services used
- 6 (9%) were other local authority departments, delivering 11% of services used by schools
- 4 (6%) were from Central Government, 2% of services used.

It is also important to note that although many of the agencies rest within the LEA they have, in more recent times, had to start to sell their services to schools.

40% saw more resources and money as a solution to fragmentation.

The process of involving agencies, whether LEA based or not, was stated as lengthy and only fruitful when something was 'radically wrong'. Teachers saw it as often relying on continuous contact, which was difficult to maintain. Most teachers mentioned their frustration with this whilst some had to create an internal solution, using the teachers in school, after failing to get the help needed from external sources.

The agency support that teachers said benefited them:

- specialist subject advice from 'subject advisors'
- improved communication regarding pupils in the transition between primary and secondary school
- significant appreciation was shown for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) which began in 1999, with 13 out of the 18 teachers interviewed mentioning it. The service is offered through the Local Education Authority, but schools buy it in using individual budgets.

4.1.2 Information and communication links between school and agencies

87% of the sample identified sharing of information and networking as a solution to the fragmentation. 33% suggested a directory, and 33% would like further training of staff in order to provide an improved service and access to the information.

'Communication, more knowledge about how organisations work, more liaison, parent and social skills classes, research led education.'

The communication a school has with agencies was felt to be frustrating and unsatisfactory. This was surprising as one might assume that due to the long-standing practice of agencies and other organisations playing a role in school life that there would be structured lines of good communication.

'Information is not shared, no strong checklist or framework to know when to alert these organisations.'

One problem identified was that in most cases the Headteacher or SENCO provided the links to agencies for children and parents needing support. In theory this is logical but in practice the task is tacked onto their main teaching/management role. It is therefore not resourced in line with demand. Neither Headteacher nor SENCO felt they had sufficient time, training or information to respond to the potential need within an inner city school.

'It feels like the school is in the middle, doing the contacting and networking, constantly reporting to people, such as Social Services, but nobody rings the school back to say what is happening.'

Teachers commented how little time there was for: standing back and assessing if their teaching methods were effective; planning internal development; identifying training needs and looking at bigger issues of community partnership, parental involvement, etc. The lack of emphasis on this area was demonstrated by the casual comments made about this research, such as 'it's unusual to be asked about my ideas'.

The responses to the use of agencies varied at nursery, primary and secondary school stages of education.

In addition, the role of agencies in schools was viewed very differently from one school to the next. We found a wide range of opinions: some teachers saw them as 'great opportunities' whereas others saw them as 'another thing to administrate'.

33% felt they lacked knowledge about agencies and expressed the need to receive more relevant information that would enable useful liaison with agencies, comments made regarding this were:

- 'it's hard to make contact'
- 'we cannot use because of the contact times' which are during teaching hours
- 'we never get enough direct information about the service offered'.

27% of teachers thought access to information was a problem. They thought that parents, as well as teachers should be able to access appropriate information to get support or advice. Teachers said: 'it is hard to the find right information particularly when they (the parents) are in a vulnerable position' and 'we are at the mercy of their (the agencies) diaries'.

A solution identified by 80% of the teachers was to improve communications between agencies, schools and parents.

4.1.3 All roads lead to the Headteacher.

Most schools seemed to lack internal support and all the responsibilities ended squarely with the Headteacher.

Headteachers obviously have a huge workload and were identified 'as an awkward position to be in'. The present 'management' type role was mentioned many times: 'you need management capacity to deal with projects and agencies' and 'all areas have separate identities and need a lot of management'.

In several schools Headteachers commented on the good support and involvement of their school governors although this largely represented the internal support system within schools.

Apart from parent governors on a school governing body, the sample indicated that other parents' groups existed in school. However, they were seen as support for parents, having a specific fund-raising function and not being part of the school system.

The internal support was not seen as sufficient when it came to supporting parents whose children had specific educational problems. It was felt by teachers to be an impossible role as it was 'very tiring', 'exhausting', and involved 'spreading one person too thin'.

Teachers felt pressure on their time and energy. Sometimes the fear of additional responsibilities prevented the use of agencies.

Just 20% agreed that crisis management played a part in the fragmentation of services.

4.1.4 Networking amongst agencies is fragmented

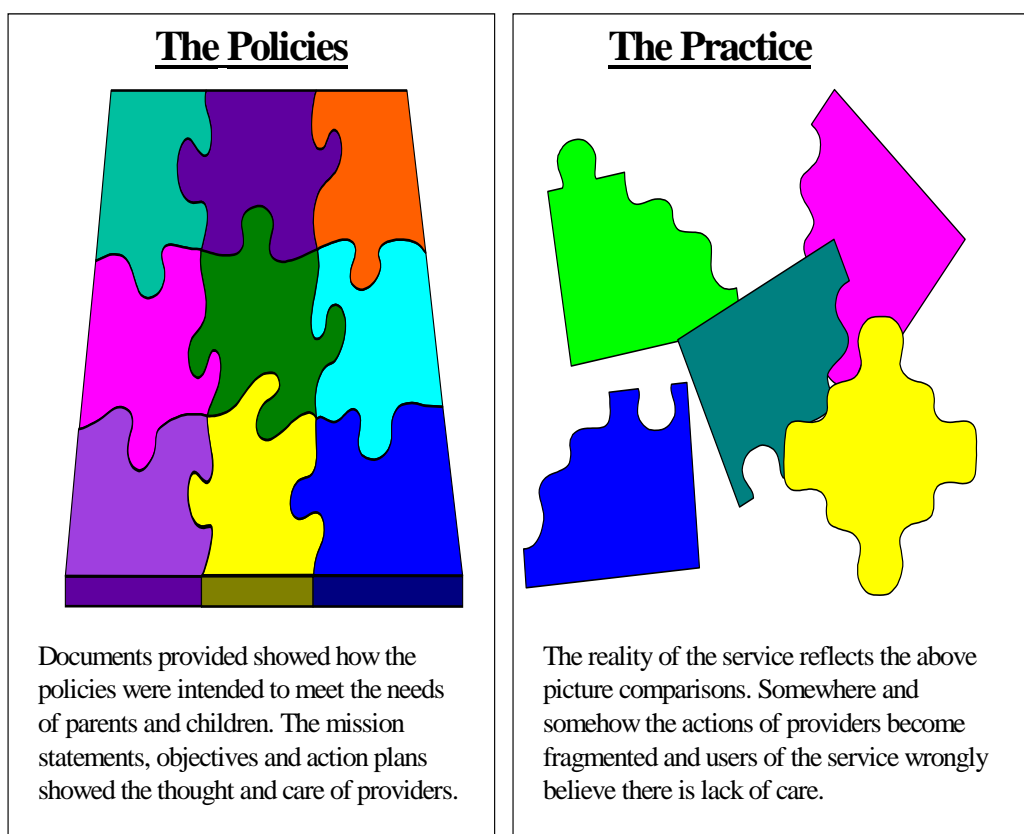
The framework which agencies worked within caused teachers some concern. Teachers were under the impression that there was not enough networking amongst agencies: there was a feeling that there was 'no joined-up thinking'. Teachers expressed the 'need for agencies to communicate with each other' as 'this would benefit the children' and to 'get all the agencies together to look at the child holistically'.

4.1.5 Duplication of agency support.

'There are many more agencies now. I'm still finding out what they do. There must be a danger that they duplicate.'

There was acknowledgement that within large organisations, e.g. Health Authority and Social Services, there was also internal fragmentation in terms of:

- policy: 'much fragmentation within educational policies'
- practice: 'areas of assistance exist in pockets and leads to duplication'.



This type of fragmentation was seen to be a major contributing factor to the ineffective use of agencies by teachers.

Parental involvement

In schools teachers commonly described the engagement and participation of parents as 'difficult'. Teachers were often frustrated by lack of parental involvement educationally. They felt they did not always have the time to take on board a pupil's needs, particularly if the parent was identifying needs that were not seen as educational.

Teachers did recognise that parents needed to be engaged in a variety of ways to encourage them to become involved with their child's education at school. The teachers we interviewed said they used the following methods to communicate with parents:

- 17% forms and letters sent home
- 16% newsletter, leaflets and posters in school
- 15% booked appointments and parents' evenings
- 15% events
- 14% prospectus
- 10% initial interviews
- 8% telephone contact
- 5% school reports.

Although schools offered the above options for parents to communicate with them, parents themselves largely chose to contact the schools by the following:

- 30% letters written and contact books
- 30% regular appointments and oral formal contact
- 40% day-to-day contact, phone and informal oral contact.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS: WHAT DO WE SUMMARISE FROM THE FINDINGS?

Finding out how positive teachers were about both teaching and children was a nice surprise. We discovered that teachers had an understanding of the need for change in the school system to accommodate all the relevant parties. This was often supported by the parent's own experiences.

The experience of interviewing teachers was an interesting one as it gave the parent interviewers the view from the other side of the education fence.

A solution identified by 80% of the teachers was to improve communications between agencies, schools and parents. 87% of the sample identified sharing of information and networking as a solution to the fragmentation. 33% suggested a directory, and 33% would like further training of staff in order to provide an improved service and access to information.

The perception was that agency response and availability was not in relation to need. As a consequence the need was made to fit the support or service offered.

The provision of agency funding is more complicated than it appears, in that even what is seen as statutory sector has to be 'bought' with a school budget.

40% saw more resources and money as a solution to fragmentation.

In addition, the types of agencies involved were not always chosen freely – rather, whatever was known or available to access at that particular time was used. So, generally, there was no strategic plan to involve agencies.

There was some concern about duplication of services.

The breadth of the sectors the agencies originated from was big, although the most used were clustered around certain umbrella providers such as the Local Authority or the Health Authority. However, although the provider is ‘statutory’, this does not mean that services operating within them are part of statutory provision for pupils, which further complicates the ability of teachers and parents to tap into the services.

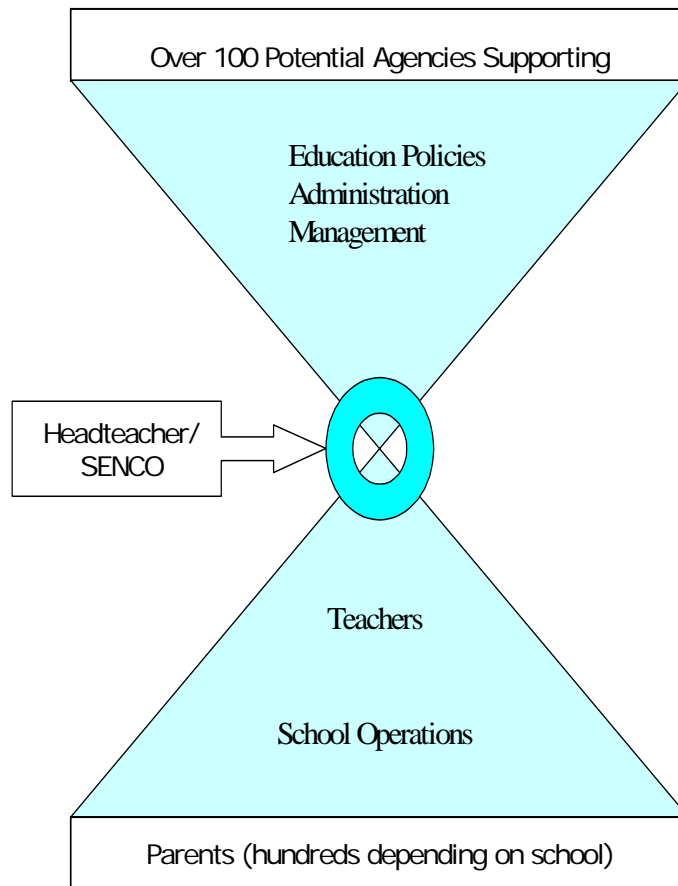
Overall, teachers still wanted agency involvement but in a different form than the present with:

- changed communications and more sharing of information
- teachers themselves not having to take all the responsibilities of making the connections and servicing the communication between parent and services.

The fact that Headteachers seem to have a pivotal role in relation to imparting information to and sharing knowledge with parents, pupils and agencies from all sectors, meant their role was increasingly a ‘systems’ manager. This meant the Headteacher was quite distinct from the rest of the teaching team and led to one ‘feeling isolated’ and several others saying how ‘lack of time and focus’ undermined the way their role could be done.

Moreover, they were often the only link by which agencies and parents gained access to one another - this meant a lot of people going through one individual.

The Bottleneck



Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator roles were often unable to do their job properly because they are always a teacher. Not enough hours were seen to be devoted to their SENCO role. They were identified as the appropriate person to deal with and respond to particular needs and to co-ordinate the resulting agency contact.

One school provided extra hours for their SENCO out of their own budget and had improved the provision and communication from agencies to children in need.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT SOLUTIONS DO TEACHERS SUGGEST?

1. Solutions that address the lack of information and how it flows:
 - producing a directory across sectors that gives details of agencies, what they offer, when they offer it, how to contact them and when, funding options and what links there are with other agencies
 - key people within the education service who can help with accessing services - not just another layer of communication but an integration of existing contacts for maximum use
 - the use of the SENCO as an essential person at school, giving them less teaching responsibility
 - access to relevant information regarding pupils and agency support through reliable data. It was suggested this could be via computer link at the transitions of pupils between years and between schools. One school cited this 'improved data flow' as making a huge difference
 - increased knowledge of the geographical boundaries which agencies and other organisations work within.

How the police and social services divide their 'patches' and where are the EMAS (Ethnic minority Achievement Service) target zones. This would enable more effective co-ordination when service provision is being decided upon.

2. Solutions that deal with communications and networking:
 - schools to have a forum to get together and share - good practice, problems, ideas and resources.
Some schools said that these links have started with the Br.E.A.Z
 - standardisation of language, within education and other fields, so that there is a shared interpretation of what is being communicated
 - using existing agencies as a communication channel to others. So, for example, the Social Services could access the services identified by the school as needed such as Speech Therapy and Counselling. Also, to develop a system of accountability or responsibility for a particular individual, so they don't get lost in the systems
 - more agency presence in schools to not only work with pupils but also to communicate with teachers and parents
 - using systems of networking that have been used effectively elsewhere

- finding ways for all to be involved in strategic planning
 - improve the public profile of the good work and achievement of schools and agencies
 - workshops and more involvement for parents that are relevant to them: parenting, social skills and drama were some suggestions.
3. Solutions that are about educational development within schools:
- increase the non-teaching time for planning and staff development to enable forward thinking
 - more creative input into teacher training so staff can team build and confidently use other skills
 - learn about local communities and what may affect the pupils learning needs
 - additional training for Headteachers and teachers after initial teacher training was identified as a priority.
 - necessary multi-pronged approach to education that would recognise and address social, educational, community, creative and influences
 - more resources available that can be designated as needs are identified.

4.3.1 What are the possible barriers to implementing these solutions?

- The time and resources (people and funding)
- the present systems
- diverse expectations of schools and agencies who are often concerned with different elements of education, learning and social care
- different priorities within organisations. As an example, teachers expressed concern at what was expected of them, e.g. one teacher saying 'what is the community, how do I engage with it?' and another feeling 'the school is part of the community and should be more community led'.

4.4 SAMPLE AND METHOD: WHO WAS ASKED? HOW DID WE FIND IT OUT?

A questionnaire was used that was devised by all the project workers. This was filled in by the interviewers and was designed to ask direct questions but also to promote discussion.

Appointments were made and the teachers interviewed at school, usually in school time, by two parent researchers. Some of these interviews were tape recorded with a Digital Audio Tape machine.

4.4.1 How was the sample group invited to take part?

All 22 of the schools in the Education Action Zone were sent details of the research taking place and asked if they would have time to participate.

Letters were followed up by telephone calls and some parents made personal visits to the schools.

Teachers with a SENCO role and the Headteachers were specifically targeted as it was found they had the most contact with agencies.

4.4.2 Who made up the sample group?

A total of 18 teachers were interviewed:

- 11 were Headteacher
- 7 were teachers with SENCO responsibilities.

The schools covered in the Br.E.A.Z were:

- of the 7 nursery schools in the zone, 6 were interviewed
- of the 13 primary schools in the zone, 8 were interviewed
- both of the secondary schools in the zone were interviewed.

4.4.3 How representative was the sample?

The sample represented all the schools well, covering a good geographic area, age range and experience.

4.4.4 Limitations of the research.

The limitation of the research was that the subject area was potentially so huge and the time a teacher could give limited to one hour.

The questionnaire was designed to ask direct questions and promote discussion and so statistical comparison was not always available.

Chapter 4 was compiled by: Lyn Sharry, Fee Eyles and Caroline Ferguson.
Supported by: Stella Man and Tracie Roberts.

CHAPTER 5. AGENCY RESEARCH

5.1 FINDINGS: WHAT HAVE WE FOUND OUT?

When designing the research programme the researchers saw a need to look at the issue of fragmentation from the perspective of the agencies involved. The team who had worked on gathering secondary research data, undertook this part of the research. Over 90 agencies had been identified through the secondary research.

The team interviewed 12 agencies and held a focus group to look at the early research results. Of those interviewed and the 9 who came to the focus group they listed a staggering 44 agencies with which they were already working at different levels of consultation, referral and partnership.

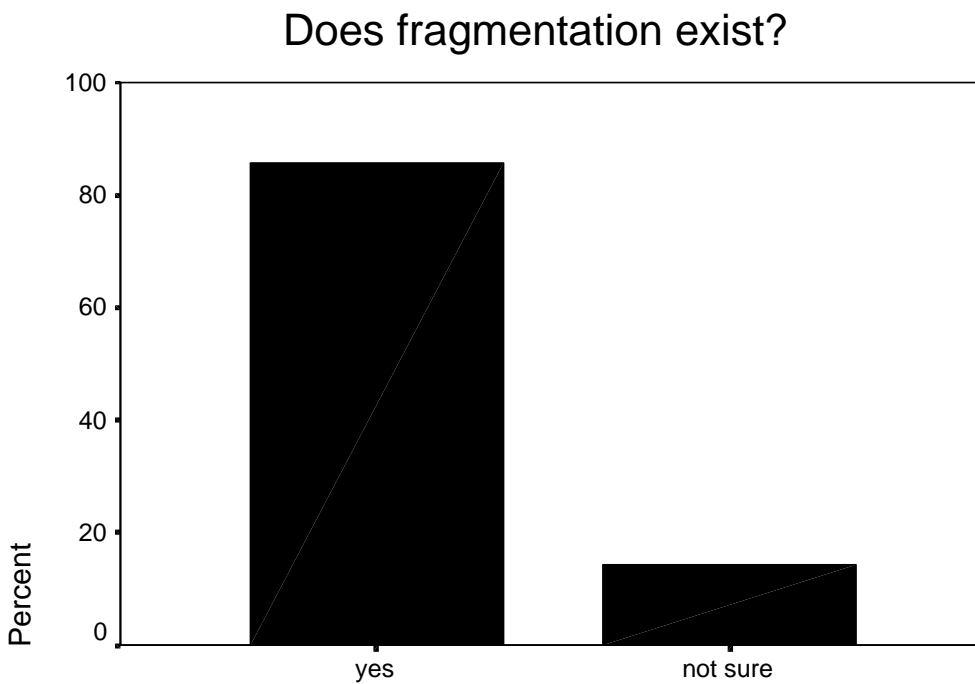
Agencies clearly stated there was fragmentation.

5.1.1 Agency thoughts about fragmentation

They revealed that the fragmentation was not just visible from a child/parent and teacher perspective. It was also visible between agencies. Agencies said they were often unfamiliar with the expertise available within other agencies. Many agencies may be involved in solving an issue but it can be unclear which agency is the most appropriate. Indeed due to a lack of resourcing it can be unclear whether a service can be provided at all.

This was picked up in the agency focus group. When asked what had made them attend, one of their main reasons was an interest in meeting each other, to see who else was out there.

At present there is no forum for agencies to meet or any other formal communication networks. This did not mean they did not talk to each other about specific clients they may have in common, but more that they were unaware of the diversity of services available and who delivered them. Fragmentation existed not just at the service delivery end in providing services to the school, parent or child, but between the agencies themselves.



Does fragmentation exist within the support services

5.1.2 The agencies' perceived role

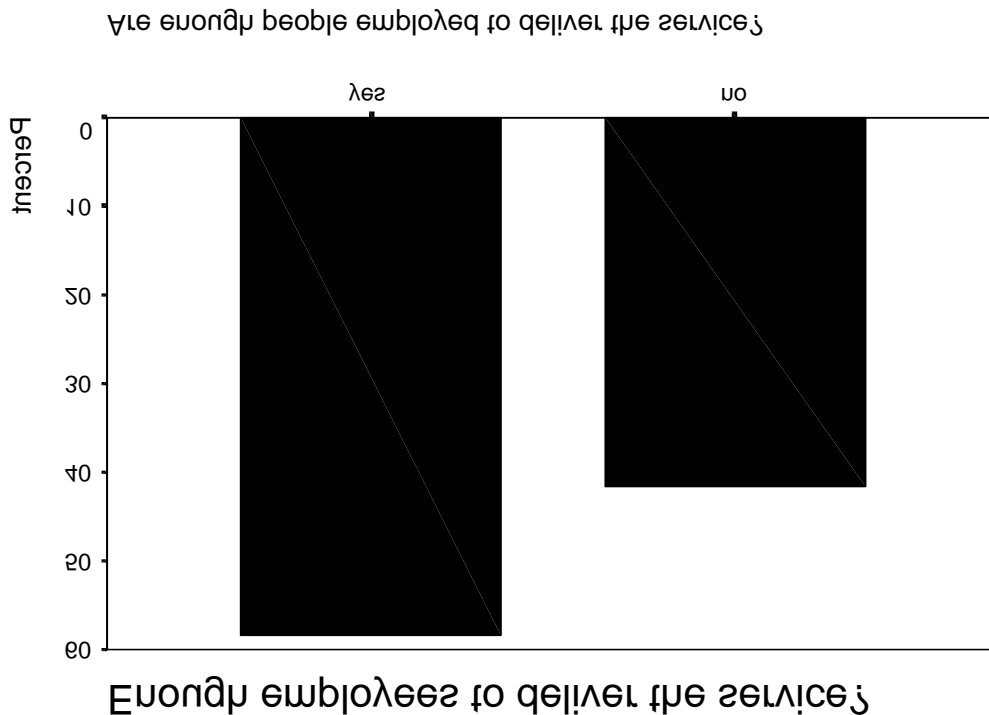
The agencies collectively saw their role as preventative and supportive in ensuring children would be included, i.e. not be excluded, from mainstream education. All the individuals interviewed had positive opinions and endorsed the official view of their role. Moreover they revealed in personal comments that there were additional aspects to their role which were not encompassed by the statutory requirements.

Each agency worked within set parameters and was ultimately very conscious of not doing the work of another organisation. However, some mentioned the duplication of work and effort when an individual child is assessed by several different agencies.

5.1.3 Staffing and resourcing

Surprisingly, when asked about staffing and resourcing it was not the universal response of 'we need more'. There were other answers to the problems, as demonstrated by the quotes:

'Resourcing is not the only issue' and 'How long is a piece of string.'

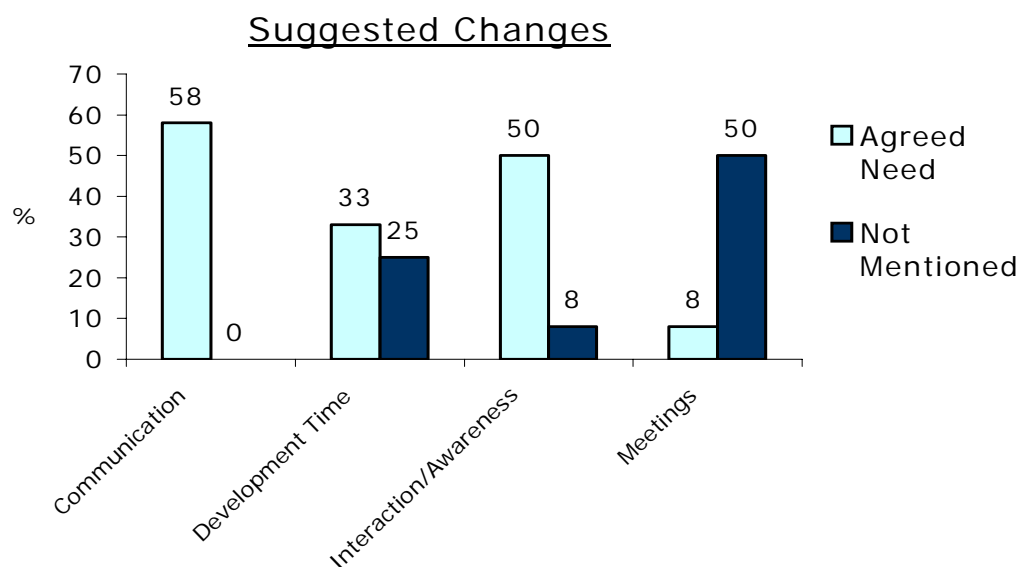


Although many agencies felt there was adequate staffing, they were well aware of the public perception that everything took such a long time, e.g. the 'waiting game'.

5.1.5 Communication and planning

There was a sense that belief and trust had been lost between parents of children needing support and 'The Authorities' (schools and agencies). The lack of trust was felt to undermine the work being carried out.

The agencies interviewed identified the need for further development in co-ordination, communication and planning. They were already working at different levels of consultation, referral and partnership. The agencies recognised the diverse culture existing in service delivery how it was managed, funded, monitored, evaluated, use of data etc..



Everyone wanted to be able to provide an effective service that enabled and empowered children who are disadvantaged in some way to attain their 'best' achievement.

It was perceived that better or right approaches to many issues were already being used by some for certain projects and pilots and that this information somehow needed to be conveyed. E.g. multi-agency involvement at the start of each case, targeting specific individuals and schools for work, e.g. early intervention.

It was felt that the boundaries between schools, parents and professional bodies were too defined and prevented sharing of information and easy communication with a resulting lack of flexibility in resolving problems. This was not a request for more paper information and communication as there were comments made 'there's too much paper' and 'it never gets read'.

Some agencies felt that because some schools and organisations held different views and cultures, it was not always easy to provide the appropriate service to the child. For instance:

- not all teachers are working to inclusion role. There is a need to persuade and support these individuals
- there is a need to establish clarity about where the responsibility lies for supporting children with special needs
- there is a need to change the culture of education and other services, including Social Services, to enable better education.

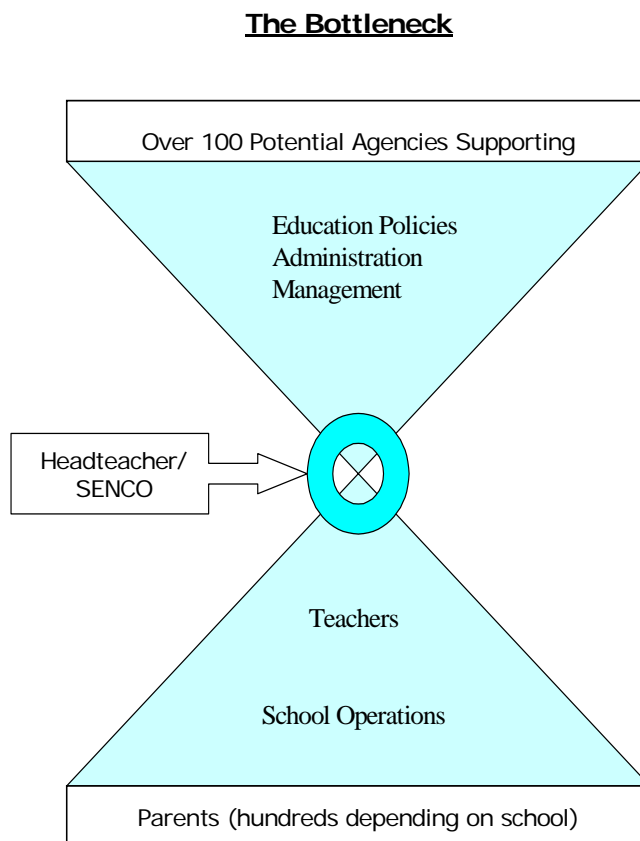
It was also felt that current perceptions in teaching need to be changed, including the perceived reluctance to reconsider working practices. The present school culture needed an overhaul, moving away from a blame culture and breaking down some of the more outdated dynamics.

Assumptions are made about who 'knows best' and the attitude of education being only about teaching specific subjects. For some pupils an introduction of different methods, e.g. tutor allocations to students, advocacy for children and specialisation in more creative subjects may prevent some of the emotional and behavioural problems occurring.

5.1.6 The Headteacher role

Agencies, as well as parents and teachers, identified the Headteacher as holding a pivotal role.

The Headteacher were seen as needing to manage resources expertly and it was recognised that as key players, they were being potentially overloaded. They are becoming a kind of bottleneck.



The Headteacher was observed by agencies to have a vitally important role in recommending action and bringing agencies in to help. Their role was perceived to become increasingly central with the introduction of budget devolution to the individual schools.

5.1.7 More changes?

All of the agencies commented about how the work of statutory organisations would change in the autumn of 2001 with the devolution of budgets.

In many cases there was some ambiguity about how this would affect them. There was a general feeling given out that rather too many changes had been ongoing for a while and this was just the 'latest one'. There was a need for more 'stickability' in the use of procedures. This was tempered by a more proactive determination to ensure the changes worked in a positive way to benefit both the service and service users.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS: WHAT DO WE SUMMARISE FROM THE FINDINGS?

The wide variety of agencies working with schools to support children and their parents were delivering a fragmented service that fell short of what was required for the learning and development of some children.

Communication issues were highlighted as being a key factor needing to be resolved, both between agencies and between the children, parents and schools needing their help.

Because agencies had diverse cultures and were designed to fit specific needs, the method of delivery relies on a child having a single problem. Where a child has multiple needs fragmentation is likely to occur. More joint working and better links needed to be established.

The prime minister (Mr Blair) argued at the launch of the social exclusion unit in 1997:

*'All too often governments in the past have tried to slice up problems into separate packages...in many areas dozens of agencies and professions are working in parallel, often doing good things, but sometimes working at cross purposes with far too little co-ordination...joined-up problems demand joined-up solutions.'*⁸

Lack of overlap in statutory agency zones creates confusion. For example the Education Welfare Office has 3 zones, including East/Central Bristol; EMAS covers the old Avon unitary body, this includes South Gloucestershire and Bath; Trinity Road police station covers the Br.E.A.Z. except Sefton Park School; Looked After Children is Bristol wide, as is the Primary Inclusion Unit.

Fragmentation existed not only when providing services to the school, parent or child, but between the agencies themselves. A more formal communications strategy is required, drawing together all agencies involved in supporting education, whether they are funded through the Local Education Authority or through other means. This would also include other Government departments, the voluntary sector and private sector agencies.

⁸ Education, Social Justice and Inter Agency Working: Joined or Fractured Policy? Edited by Sheila Riddell and Lynn Tett, Routledge 2001.

In order to re-introduce belief and trust between parents of children needing support and 'The Authorities' (schools and agencies), an awareness-raising exercise was needed to promote good messages. With positive messages in the media and an exchange of good news between agencies, schools and parents.

The Headteacher in effect was the gate-keeper of the development of agency involvement: a key player for the potential links and communication between the agencies and the parents on either side of the door.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT SOLUTIONS CAME FROM THE AGENCIES?

1. Create a forum to bring agencies together to provide services and to share good practice.

An example is when a Bristol school decided to tackle the issue of bullying Headteacher on and arranged a multi-agency seminar about the subject. Approximately 200 students were involved with agency staff from the School Police Liaison, Social Services, Health Service, Probation, Community Development, Youth Service, The Muller Foundation, Education Welfare and school staff.

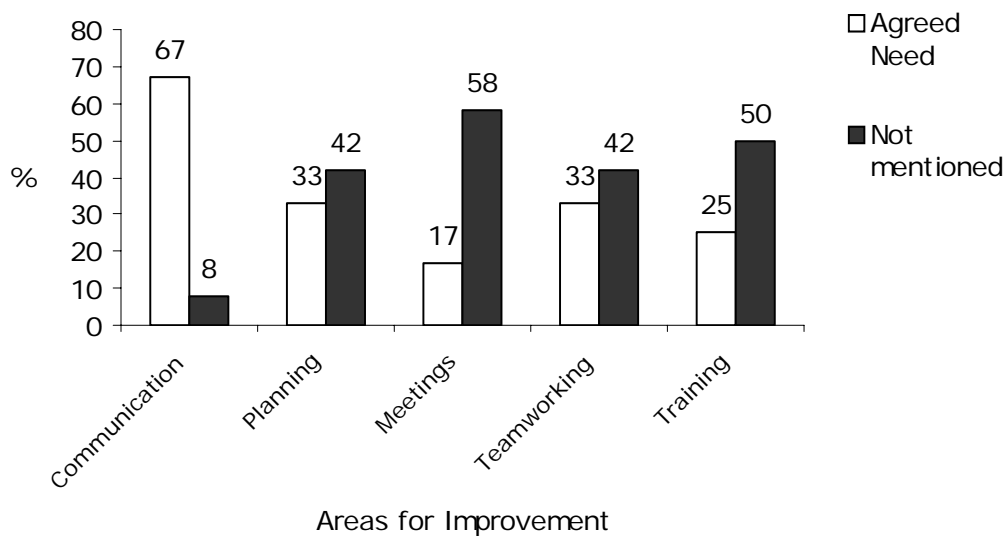
2. Build on well-received projects and extend initiatives citywide.

An example is the Pippa project in Hartcliffe. Here, good partnership is shown with parents supporting other parents to prevent exclusion from school.

- Organise schools in clusters to work together and provide the opportunity for agencies to link on multi-disciplinary projects. These are already being piloted in some areas to provide joined-up action.

Here an example would be Hillfield School. The Educational Psychologists are working with the teachers and health specialists to run an EBD group (emotional and behavioural difficulties) in the school. Using early intervention they work with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties to maintain inclusion. Alongside the pupil group a parent group operates where the parents talk about the problems at home.

Solutions and Ideas



- Market agency work and achievements locally with the help of the LEA and Br.E.A.Z. to develop a campaign to raise the public perception of both statutory and voluntary agencies involved with education.

Promote good messages using highly visible tools, local TV, radio, billboards, print media and encourage public feedback. E-mail bulletins and an annual booklet for parents of schoolchildren starting in a new school would give key information and contacts. An annual conference for schools and professionals could be funded by the LEA.

5. A new drop-in centre or 'One Stop Shop' (potentially funded by the Br.E.A.Z. and sponsored by local business) could be opened where parents and children can obtain information and advice. The centre could be used as a training forum for both staff in agencies and schools and as a tool to breakdown unwanted barriers, re-build the belief and trust between parents and professionals.
6. Establish better accountability and reporting structures. There is a need for central co-ordination on 'who is doing what', reporting to whom and for joined-up thinking.
7. Additional training for Headteachers and teachers (over and above traditional teacher training provision) to enable the co-ordinator role to be fully managed. Introduce a standard approach in the use of link teachers and possibly teacher swaps between schools. The latter could be expanded as a tool for personal development and achievement. Expose all teachers to working on administrative duties with agencies and parents to gain a better understanding of multi-disciplinary working e.g. the SENCO role.
8. A middle person or link teacher to provide a pivot for attitude changes, linking clusters of schools, linking professionals, enabling a training allocation as part of the induction.

The effect would be to create a known contact for agencies and parents and as an advisory and mentoring role within the school system. This person would need to be identified and funded in addition to current teaching staff.

5.4 SAMPLE AND METHOD: WHO WAS ASKED? HOW DID WE FIND IT OUT?

5.4.1 How was the sample group invited to take part?

Staff were contacted who work for agencies covering the schools in the Br.E.A.Z. and invited to answer questionnaires and attend a focus group.

5.4.2 Who made up the sample group?

Twelve agencies were interviewed using a designed questionnaire:

- Barnardos 114 Project
- Bristol Special Needs Support
- Primary Inclusion Team
- BS5 Project
- Children Looked After Service
- Education Policy and Planning
- Education Welfare Service
- Education Psychology Service
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant
- Community Health Officer
- School Governors
- Police (Schools Liaison Officer)

Of these, 84% were statutory agencies and 16% voluntary agencies.

Other agencies in both sectors were contacted and they provided information about their organisations in the form of leaflets, booklets and website addresses from which secondary research material was obtained.

We also facilitated a focus group to gather information for our research. The focus group comprised a more even split between voluntary and statutory agencies, roughly 50/50. Some of the attendees had provided written material; some had representatives who had already been interviewed, but others came to the meeting with no expectations and therefore fresh to the I.R.I.S. project remit. They were:

- National Pyramid Trust
- NSPCC Schools Team
- Connexions West of England
- Bristol Special Needs Support
(Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties)
- Bristol Mediation
- Education Welfare Service
- Avon and Somerset Police
(Schools Liaison Officers)
- Primary Inclusion Team
- Barnardos 114 Inclusion Project

The focus group attendees were provided with some early evaluation material from discussions about both the problems and potential solutions from parents, teachers and agencies interviewed. From this material the focus group expanded and reviewed the comments. A discussion was held looking at solutions in more depth.

5.4.3 What were the limitations of the research process?

We were always going to be limited by the 'tip of the iceberg' effect; i.e. there was only a small amount that we were going to discover with the resources available.

The amount of time made available for interview by the agencies was by necessity brief as they tried to fit parent researchers into already busy schedules and many agencies whilst not adverse to being interviewed, were unable to fit in another meeting.

In the short period of time allocated for the project our skills as parent researchers quickly became evident. We could be flexible to explore the experiences of the interviewees. However gaining appropriate information backed up by statistical evidence was harder. Although effective, analysis across a spectrum of issues relies on discussion as well as quantifiable data.

When using the questionnaires not all of the questions were answered each time. Sometimes responses to particular questions were of such interest and value more time was devoted to those answers during the interview. These discussions were by nature more anecdotal. It was then harder to use the data for analysis - exploratory research does not always have quantifiable objectives but tries more to explore the issues and then use this to extend the research further.

On the plus side, agency staff were always amenable and co-operative, giving us honest answers to our questions.

Chapter 5 was compiled by: Philip Morgan and Christine Arnold.