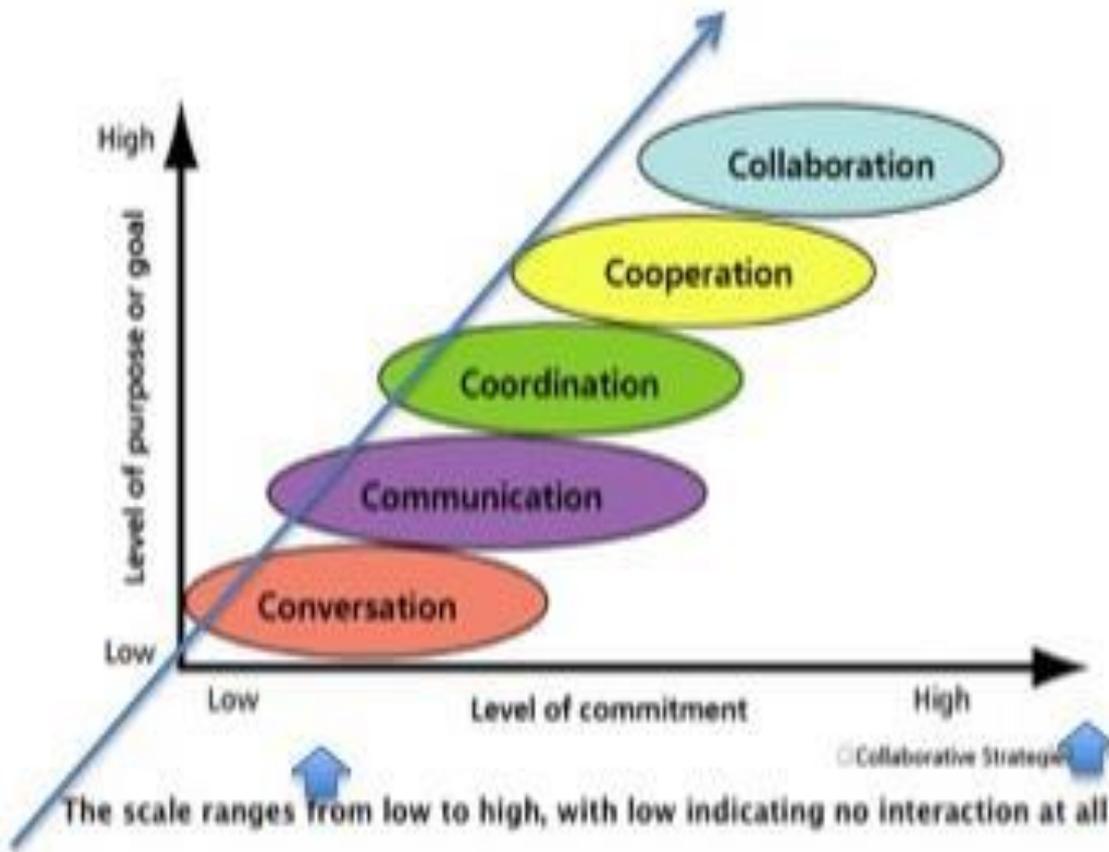


Well established processes, enablers
and (many) barriers to inter-agency
working in the early years

Professor Jacqueline Barnes
Birkbeck, University of London
Early Childhood Workforce Initiative
Webinar, October 26th 2017



The scale ranges from low to high, with low indicating no interaction at all and high indicating the collaboration level.

Source: level of collaboration scale

<https://www.teamsciencetoolkit.cancer.gov/public/TSResourceMeasure.aspx?tid=2&rid=467>

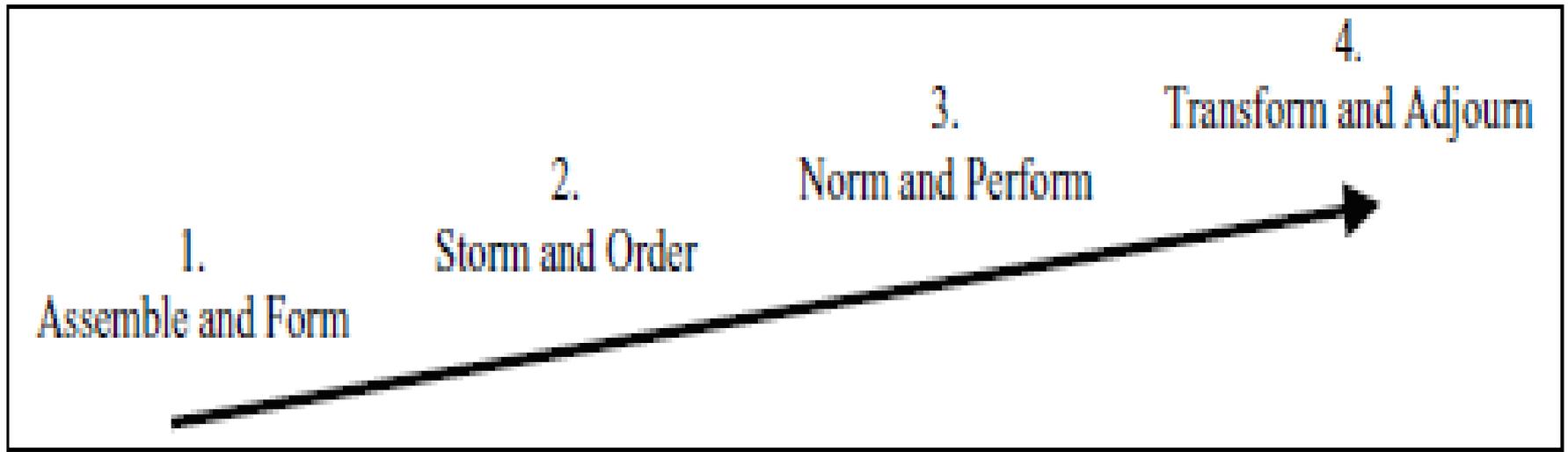


Figure 2. Stages of collaboration development.

Source: Gadja, R., 2004, American Journal of Evaluation, 25, 65-77

Enablers

- **Clarity of purpose/clear recognition of need for partnership working**
- **Commitment to joint working at all levels, from senior managers to front-line practitioners**
- **Strong leadership/management**
- **Strong personal relationships/trust between partners**
- **Understanding/clarity of roles and responsibilities**
- **Good communication**
- **Opportunities for joint/inter-professional training**
- **Assessment of children's needs**
- **Clear procedures for information sharing, including databases**
- **Secondments between services, or services co-located in one building.**
- **Sensitivity to the local context and culture**

Barriers

Contextual barriers/political climate

- Changes in political direction.
- Financial uncertainty.
- Agency reorganisation.
- A climate of constant organisational change.
- Local needs at odds with national priorities.
- Agency boundaries not co-terminous.
- Costs of networking in rural areas.

Organisational challenges

- Different agency policies, procedures and systems.
- Agencies have different remits and do not collect the same data.
- Professional, technical and ethical obstacles to information sharing.

Cultural/professional obstacles

- Different professional beliefs.
- Professional stereotyping.
- Differing levels of qualification and experience, leading to conflicting views.

Commitment obstacles

- Lack of explicit commitment to interagency working.
- Differing levels of 'buy-in'; some agencies reluctant to engage.
- Where managers do not experience interagency working as part of core work, it is vulnerable to changes in work priorities.

From: Statham, J. (2011) A review of international evidence on interagency working, to inform the development of Children's Services Committees in Ireland. Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs, Dublin

MORE Commonly recognised barriers to interagency work

- Previous 'history' of conflict between individuals and organizations.
- Competitive relationships between services.
- Bureaucratic need to follow agency procedures may lead to stifled creative planning.
- Accountability issues — lack of clarity about who takes responsibility in each agency dysfunction at both operational and strategic levels for multi-agency working to be effective.
- Professionals and disciplines insisting on undertaking particular parts of assessments and therapeutic work.
- Interdisciplinary power struggles.
- Lack of a 'common language'.

Source: Worrall-Davies & Cottrell (2009). Outcome Research and Interagency Work with Children. *Children & Society*, 23, 336–346

An encouraging story, it can work

London Borough of Newham

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<http://www.st-stephens-nurserychildrenscentre.org.uk/videohires.wmv>