

The One Stop Shop: More than the sum of its parts?

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This briefing summarises findings from a two year Joseph Rowntree Foundation study of a 'one stop shop' for children and family services in Kings Cross, London.



One stop shopping is the general theory that services can be made more accessible and service delivery can be more efficient by co-ordinating and co-locating services that are normally provided by more than one agency (Yates, 1998).

The Coram Community Campus is an innovative 'one stop shop' that serves children and families in the Kings Cross Area of London. The campus houses two nurseries, a parents' centre, a charity for children with special needs, two homeless projects, and a school for children with autism or related communication

disorders.

The Campus is a unique partnership between voluntary and statutory agencies, led by child care charity, Coram Family. Statutory services represented in the campus include Education, Social Services and the local community health trust. Coram's vision was to establish a 'one stop shop' for families and young children, with multi-agency services offering high quality, open access, mainstream provision.

The Campus was evaluated during its first two years in a qualitative study conducted by Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The study assessed the Campus as a whole, focusing on the degree to which, in bringing services together, the Campus has become 'more than the sum of its parts'. The main findings from the study were:

- Campus organisations had learned how to work together more effectively and were starting to obtain mutual benefits such as easier referrals, joint training and shared resources. Some agencies appealed to common client groups, such as the two homeless projects. Overlaps such as these enabled a greater degree of collaboration between services in terms of referrals and joint working.
- Although the Campus was founded on a partnership approach, the partners were not equal and did not share common accountability. Individual services were responsible to their own boards of management and had attempted to draw a balance between preserving their autonomy and creating a common identity.

- Coram Family had created the vision for the Campus and had worked with senior managers of Campus services to establish a shared ethos. But this did not appear to have produced changes in individual practice. Among project workers, there was less awareness of an overall Campus vision.



- Managers had effectively collaborated on Campus services but at lower levels opportunities for joined up working were more limited. At all levels it was difficult to find time or space to work collaboratively.
- Partnerships with local authority services had different outcomes. The most successful was the assimilation of a child psychology service into the Campus network. This provided a non-stigmatising service and reached families who might not otherwise have accessed this kind of support. Other specialist health services as well as social services had yet to utilise the full potential offered by the multi-agency network. Joint working requires flexibility and an often, different working approach. Some agencies were still learning how to adapt to this new arrangement.
- Although the Campus was potentially able to operate as a 'one stop shop' across services, the majority of families had used only one service provider. Many had accessed several services within one provider. There was evidence that, over time, the movement between services was increasing as staff gained confidence in making referrals and families themselves became more aware of what was on offer.
- The researchers concluded that the development of a multi-agency setting is in itself an important achievement. However the network had still to realise its full potential in becoming 'more than the sum of its parts'. Individual services were beginning to learn from each other, and to share skills and ideas, but the process required time to develop further. However, the general concept of services working collaboratively with a common value base, with some kind of overall co-ordination is one which might be re-worked more widely to fit different circumstances.

References:

Yates, J. (1998) *Delivering Human Services Through 'Co-location' and 'One Stop Shopping'* (www.financeproject.org/Publications/onestopresource.htm)

Wigfall, V. & Moss, P. (2001) *More than the sum of its parts? A study of a multi-agency childcare network* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation)