

<b>Institution:</b> University of Sheffield
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 22 - Social Work and Social Policy
<b>Title of case study:</b> Developing and sustaining effective multi-agency systems to safeguard children from harm
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Senior managers in agencies in contact with children are frequently criticised, particularly in reports following child deaths, for failing to facilitate collaborative working to safeguard children. Yet, developing and sustaining collaborative systems is not easy. To assist managers, Horwath and Morrison developed a conceptual framework and, in collaboration with policy-makers and managers in Wales, added standards and indicators. These combine to form the building blocks likely to create a safe, multidisciplinary, child protection system. Their research has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacted on the development of multidisciplinary safeguarding partnerships in a number of countries.</li> <li>• Enabled policy makers and senior managers to measure system improvements.</li> <li>• Informed statutory guidance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p><b>Context</b></p> <p>In the last ten years policy-makers in many countries have emphasised that chief executive officers of organisations in contact with children and families should develop a secure and effective multidisciplinary approach towards safeguarding children from harm (R2). For example, since 2006 a statutory duty has been placed on senior managers in England and Wales to work collaboratively to improve co-operation between staff in the various agencies in contact with children and families. This is achieved by bringing together senior managers of these statutory and non-governmental organisations in Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). Yet in 2006, there was limited understanding as to how these multidisciplinary strategic partnerships could operate successfully. Seeking to assist LSCBs in executing their duties, Horwath and Morrison developed an innovative framework enabling members of the board to gain a theoretical appreciation of what was required of them in order to improve collaborative working. The framework consists of four 'components' or building blocks that appear to be crucial for effective partnership working leading to improved outcomes for children (R1, R2, R3). These components are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying the board's strategic direction</li> <li>2. Establishing effective governance</li> <li>3. Building systems and capacity</li> <li>4. Delivering quality outputs/services</li> </ol> <p>The framework drew on an analysis of international evidence, legislative requirements and the positive and negative experiences of members of LSCBs past experiences of collaboration (R1, R3).</p> <p>This work led directly to a knowledge exchange project commissioned by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales who were aware of the research (R3). The researchers, together with LSCBs and policy-makers, developed the framework further by dividing the components into 21 'standards'. Each standard has three 'indicators' describing basic to sophisticated levels of co-operative activities. For example, with regard to component 1 the first standard is:</p>

*The Board has a clear and shared understanding about which elements of safeguarding it is accountable for and for which it is holding others to account.*

An indicator enabling the Board to demonstrate that they are doing this at an advanced level is:

*The LSCB has an active plan about progressing safeguarding work with different populations of children/young people*

The framework, standards and indicators are known as SAIT (Self-Assessment and Improvement Tool).

### **The researchers**

Professor Jan Horwath and the late Dr Tony Morrison (an independent consultant and visiting research fellow at the University of Huddersfield) shared a long-standing interest in the management of child welfare systems. Their partnership brought together theory, research and practice experience drawing equally on Horwath's research and Morrison's developmental work. The original research was completed between 2004-9.

### **Originality and distinctiveness**

SAIT is unique as it draws on research and practice experience in both child protection and partnership working to inform the development of safe, multidisciplinary, child protection systems. This combination enables members of boards to take account of both the national context in which partnerships operate and the powerful influences of organisational regulation and risk management on partnership direction. SAIT is distinctive in as much as it has been tested for relevance by both policy-makers and senior managers. Moreover, it is useful irrespective of nation state, demonstrated by Horwath's work in New South Wales, Portugal and Cape Province South Africa, and Morrison's in Canada, New Zealand and Western Australia.

### **3. References to the research**

- R1. Horwath, J. and Morrison, T. (2007) 'Collaboration, integration and change in children's services: Critical issues and key ingredients' *Child Abuse and Neglect*. 31 (1) 55-69. doi: [10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.01.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.01.007)
- R2. Horwath, J (2010) 'Rearing a toothless tiger? From area child protection committee to local safeguarding children board' commissioned for special issue of *Journal of Children's Services*. 5 (3) 37-47. doi: [10.5042/jcs.2010.0549](https://doi.org/10.5042/jcs.2010.0549)
- R3. Horwath, J., and Morrison, T. (2011) Effective inter-agency collaboration to safeguard children: Rising to the challenge through collective development, *Children and Youth Services Review* 33(2) pp 368-375 doi: [10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.10.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.10.002)

### **4. Details of the impact**

#### ***Impact on identifying and supporting improvements in collaborative partnership working.***

The Welsh Assembly Joint Inspectorate, having commissioned the development of the framework into SAIT, formally launched it in May 2009 and since then all Welsh LSCBs have been expected to complete an annual evaluation using SAIT. The Joint Inspectorate uses SAIT to assess LSCB progress against the five components, 21 standards and indicators (S1). The most recent inspectorate report draws on findings from the individual inspections to highlight key lessons learned in terms of good practice and improvement (S1).

A national safeguarding seminar was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013, funded by the Welsh Local Government Association and Directors for Social Services Cymru, for 35 senior managers currently sitting on LSCBs. At this seminar there was consensus that SAIT has played a crucial part in enabling the boards to evaluate both their current strengths and areas that need further development in order to secure safer safeguarding systems. They concluded that the annual self-appraisal enables the boards to identify and work with persistent as well as transitory promoters and inhibitors to effective practice:

*“The Board has used SAIT each year to identify priorities, key issues and any gaps in order to develop its business plan for the following year.... This has improved multi agency working relationships, increased understanding of roles and responsibilities across agencies and this has been translated into improved practice whilst also enabling the Board to be connected to the daily practice of practitioners”* (Welsh LSCB business manager S2).

Learning about the positive Welsh experiences of SAIT, together with verbal recommendations by members of LSCBs, a number of LSCBs in England, including Manchester, Liverpool, Lancashire, Cumbria, Coventry, Bath and North-East Somerset, Redcar and Cleveland, Wirral, Blackburn with Darwin, Bristol, Birmingham, Haringey have used SAIT to identify strengths and areas for development and, in turn, develop strategies for improving partnership working and multidisciplinary practice:

*“Of the assessment tools available, the best, by some margin, is the Self Assessment and Improvement Tool developed by Jan Horwath and Tony Morrison... This view is widely shared by the majority of other board chairs who I have discussed this with.... Overall, the SAIT is the model of choice for strategic partnerships wishing to set a realistic baseline of their performance from which they can improve.”* (LSCB chair with experience of chairing three large, metropolitan boards in England S3)

### **Impact on shaping new strategic partnerships**

Policy-makers, such as the Northern Ireland Assembly Select Committee for Health and Public Safety on Government, hearing about the positive Welsh and English experiences of SAIT, invited Horwath to describe her work using SAIT to the Assembly’s Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee (S4). They drew on the conceptual framework to inform the development of statutory multidisciplinary strategic partnerships to safeguard children. For example, in 2012 the Northern Ireland Safeguarding Children Board commissioned Horwath, who, using SAIT, assisted them in developing their strategic vision and governance arrangements. This, in turn, informed ways in which the members of the board collaborate with other partnerships ensuring duplication is avoided.

The Framework has been particularly beneficial to policymakers and senior managers in Cape Province, South Africa and New South Wales, Australia as it has provided them with the scaffolding to build effective structures and systems to promote inter-agency practice. A Chief Executive Officer of state services in New South Wales described how SAIT informed the major programme of reform to the state’s child protection system:

*“assisting with the practicalities of translating the strategic vision for shared responsibility for child wellbeing into shared goals.... as well as promoting dialogue about challenges and strategies that would assist senior managers and the executive to implement cultural change across the child protection sector”.* (S5)

SAIT has also been used with members of the equivalent of local LSCBs in Portugal as well as policymakers sitting on a national LSCB to identify ways in which they can use the framework to improve their multidisciplinary arrangements (S6).

### ***Impact on the development of government guidance***

The Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services, with support from the Welsh Assembly, have commissioned Horwath to work with existing members of LSCBs, using the conceptual framework and SAIT, to identify the regulations and guidance required from Government for new, regional safeguarding children boards (S7).

SAIT informed the content of the chapter on multidisciplinary training and development in the English *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (HM Government 2006, 2010) (S8). For example, members of LSCBs who used SAIT indicated that the collective multidisciplinary analysis of issues is more likely to lead to both a shared understanding and group ownership of the solution. This can be achieved through an annual LSCB development day, which was specified in the guidance and is now routinised practice in most boards.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- S1. Corroboration on p11 27 and 28 of this Government Inspection Report, that SAIT was used as a baseline for multi-agency inspections of Joint Inspectorate report 2011 <http://cssiw.org.uk/docs/cssiw/publications/091019overviewen.pdf>
- S2. An email from the LSCB business manager which corroborates that the Board used SAIT each year and that this led to the described benefits.
- S3. An email from the Chair of Manchester LSCB summarising the benefits that he and other Chairs and members of LSCBs have derived from the use of SAIT
- S4. This exert from evidence given by Professor Horwath to the Assembly's Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee demonstrates how she drew on the conceptual framework and LSCBs experiences of SAIT to highlight good practice Report in Hansard [http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/record/committees2010/HSSPS/100930\\_SBNlb.pdf](http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/record/committees2010/HSSPS/100930_SBNlb.pdf)
- S5. An email from the Acting Executive Director State-wide Services, Community Services, NSW Department of Human Services, Australia providing evidence of the way in which the use of the conceptual framework underpinning SAIT informed the development of strategic partnerships in New South Wales.
- S6. An email from the President of National Child Protection Board for Portugal corroborating ways in which the conceptual framework has informed the development of safeguarding strategic arrangements.
- S7. A letter from the Welsh LGA Policy Lead Health and Social Services confirming that Professor Horwath has been commissioned to draw on SAIT and the conceptual framework to inform revisions to Welsh Assembly Government regulations and guidance on safeguarding children boards.
- S8. This is evidence that the lessons learnt regarding training from the implementation of SAIT informed English Government Guidance <http://tinyurl.com/kdudg9v> p.115-117