

Delta 6 with Chichester Nursery School and Children's Centre

Head Teacher Candy Daffern's Perspective

In November 2006, Chichester Children's Centre ran a Delta 6 workshop, facilitated by Jan McKenley. I had been involved in a workshop informing the development of Delta 6 at the Next Practice in System Leadership project's event in Nottingham, and found it inspirational. Exploring challenges from an international, national and local perspective helped me to take my own ideas and turn them into a vision. It made me visionary!

Aims:

At Chichester, we were already working with a wide range of partners to deliver services to local families, but we did not have a cohesive vision for collaborative working. Our aim was to use the Delta 6 tool to:

- Create a common vision for the Children's Centre, around local needs and possible solutions.
- Generate commitment and buy-in from local partners.

Attendees:

We invited all the different bodies that we hoped would become part of our community. Some we already had strong relationships with, others were new partners that we wanted to involve. A group of 35 people took part in the workshop, including representatives from the centre staff and Governors, as well as Health, the Police, Social Services, local primary schools and the Local Authority, amongst others.

Process:

Delta 6 encourages the community to consider challenges from a global, national and local perspective. It provides stimuli for the group to consider and discuss, leading into prioritisation exercises, followed by an exploration of potential solutions.

We adapted the Delta 6 tool to more closely reflect our local context, adding issues that were specific to the Chichester area. For example, as part of our exploration of local issues, a health visitor shared the story of one family that was facing multiple challenges, including health, parenting and housing, and we examined the barriers to change for that particular family.

We also adapted some of the language to make it more accessible to our partners from outside education.

After prioritising our local challenges, we considered how we as a group might be able to provide services and solutions that would address some of these issues.

The results:

The day resulted in a clear vision of our potential effectiveness when we work in an integrated way based on local needs. With such a large group at the workshop, we broke people up into mixed groups for the exercises. We found a remarkable amount of agreement between groups about the key issues, and how we could best collaborate to resolve them.

One of the key recommendations of the day was that we should provide an initial point of contact for people with complex issues, to help them to 'see the wood for the trees' and to guide them through the services that are available to them.

The key points of the vision:

- To ensure effective collaboration of services in response to local need to improve outcomes of children and families in the Chichester Area;
- To provide services in an integrated way that are easily accessible to families, especially families with complex needs who may benefit from support from more than one service;
- To build on the current strengths of the community encouraging greater participation and communication and involvement with colleagues from key agencies to shape and design services.

What really worked:

The discussions between the participants led to the establishment of a vision that everyone shared.

Bringing people from such diverse backgrounds together was really valuable. Each partner shared their side of the story, which enabled everyone to understand other roles and agendas, and see how the collaboration could be mutually beneficial.

What's happening now:

The Delta 6 day enabled us to understand our vision. From there, I went on to consider all the relevant guidance and legislation, to work out how our Alliance could work in practice. In retrospect I would have liked to do some of the forward planning on the day with all of our partners.

We've now agreed to set up a formal organisation, which launches on 23rd January: the Chichester Community Alliance. This brings together all the partners, has formal decision making powers and delegated funds. Sub-committees will decide the local priorities from the newly published Children's Centre Practice Guidance; how to organise, monitor and deliver particular pieces of work including protocols on quality assurance, line management and accountability; and develop a marketing strategy to ensure that local people are aware and participate in the services offered by the Alliance.

It's clear that Children's Centres have a very broad remit, and will not be able to fully implement all of the services to the level suggested in the Practice Guidance. However, we will have an improvement plan in place. I hope that in a year we'll be able to look back at what we've achieved together, and look forward to how we can continue to improve and expand the services that we offer.