Complexity: a Framework for Policy and Decision Support

Challenges faced by Local Authorities

• **Incentives to break down Professional Boundaries.** We see this in the combination of Social Care and Education professionals in Children’s Trusts, but are aware that we are not meeting the needs of vulnerable children. Children and adults with disabilities are also subject to many assessments in order to access services because of the different models used by professionals to understand needs.

• **Integration within and across organisations, to support more organic collaboration and learning and development.** This would need to address the current systems of rewarding and motivating people, and supporting a workforce that could take managed risks.

• **How to engage people in decision making where there are no obvious representative stakeholders, and yet the perception is that we need a macro policy response rather than a very locally based response (which could be designed by communities).**

Our discussion focussed on the ‘relationship’ issues behind the above: how to build trust and legitimacy, how to remove power struggles. Our thinking turned to the need for groups of people to ‘co-evolve’, and the time and effort involved in this progression: that this is not rational or predictable. We picked up on some of what came out of the session on collaboration: that we’re in zone 2 now - feels like things could get a lot worse in the public sector unless we make major strides in working across organisational boundaries.

We talked about some things to try to resolve these issues:

• Bringing honesty into our perceptions of personal issues that are blocking collaboration: facilitating partners describing their issues, but taking them anonymously so people aren’t afraid to raise them.
• Having the content to engage people in, so not only focussing on the sensitive relationship issues.
• Needing to start where the energy is, and start small before thinking about scaling up.

**Interested participants**

Peter Kelby  
Sharon Varney  
Janice Evans  
Eve Mittleton-Kelly  
Anam Parand  
Esmee Wilcox (prepared to lead)