

# knowledge about learning organisations

## **Organisational structure (c)**

Learning organisations have managerial hierarchies that enhance opportunities for employee, carer and user involvement in the organisation. All are empowered to make relevant decisions. Structures support teamwork and strong lateral relations (not just vertical). Networking is enabled across organisational and hierarchical boundaries both internally and externally.

## **Cross organisational and collaborative working – questions**

- Are there any partnership arrangements in place that are working well? What is contributing to the success?
- Are there other opportunities for collaborative working that could be exploited for the benefit of practitioners and service users and carers?
- Are there joint training initiatives?
- What are the barriers and could they be overcome?
- Are there some interfaces that are working collaboratively? Why is this?
- Has the organisation developed protocols for joint working, or is it moving towards doing so?

## Illustrative examples

- Guidance on Sure Start, the Children's Fund and the new Children's Centres emphasises the importance of working across organisational boundaries to improve outcomes for children.
- The pace of change, numbers of part-time workers and pressure on time are practical factors that have been identified as barriers to working across organisational and hierarchical boundaries. In this context teams have to work harder to prioritise and find a solution to the problem.
- One service user forum reported concern about the poor communication, internally and externally, between workers from different teams or disciplines and felt this worked to their disadvantage. They would like more transparent communication, working within an appropriate confidentiality framework. This would improve partnership working between service users and social care organisations.
- One organisation wanted to emphasise that multi-disciplinary work does pose specific challenges, especially in terms of accountability, but at the same time it provides great opportunities for learning, and better services for families.

## Useful references

- Falkov, A. (1998) 'Crossing bridges: Training resources for working with mentally ill parents and their children', London: Department of Health.
- Department of Health and Home Office (1988) 'Working together to safeguard children', London: Home Office.

Use the information and questions on the cards to think about a place of work as a learning organisation.