



Collaboration in the mental health and addiction sector

Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui and Platform Trust have explored the meaning and application of collaborative capability in the mental health and addiction (MH&A) sector in New Zealand.

This reflects a vision for:

- a local system of support based on meaningful partnerships between people accessing services and the networks around them
- a whole of population health approach based on the notion of wellbeing
- engaged and healthy individuals, families/whānau and communities.

The report – *Collaborative capability in the mental health and addiction sector* – focuses on the future shape and nature of MH&A service delivery, workforce planning and development to establish a “collaborative practice-ready workforce”.¹ The report is intended as a resource to strengthen individual and organisational capacity for collaboration and to increase the focus on the rights of people accessing services. The report is available at www.tepou.co.nz.

The report considers:

- Expanded opportunities to work more closely with a broader range of stakeholders
- Values, behaviours and approaches of a collaborative workforce and collaborative organisations
- Resources to better understand collaboration and support more formal partnerships

Key findings:

1. The cycle of collaboration – the ‘WHY’, ‘HOW’ and ‘WHAT’ of collaboration
2. Features of individual and organisational collaboration
3. The collaboration/partnership continuum

¹ – World Health Organization. (2010). Framework for action on interprofessional education and collaborative practice. Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70185/1/WHO_HRH_HPN_10.3_eng.pdf.

The cycle of collaboration

The “**WHY**”, “**HOW**” and “**WHAT**” of collaboration is presented as a continuous cycle of improvement for the MH&A workforce, MH&A services, and other health and social sector organisations.



Why collaborate?

- Better outcomes
- Respect for people's rights
- Healthier, more resilient communities
- Effective and efficient services



How to achieve collaboration?

- Bring a values and human rights-based approach to all relationships
- Develop a collaborative culture:
 - Between service workers and people
 - With other clinicians/professionals and between professional groups, departments and organisations
- Engage with people in their social context: family, whānau, community, culture
- Integrate health and social sector responses with community development programmes
- Commit to developing collaborative knowledge and skills across the workforce
- Improve system flexibility across the health and social sectors



What does good collaboration look like?

- Intentional partnerships based on:
 - Valuing people's lived experience
 - Enhancing people's self-determination
 - More personalised support options
- Expanded scope, nature and flexibility of service delivery into community settings
- Improved development and utilisation of community resources and networks
- Broader utilisation of Whānau Ora principles and practice
- Networking and intentional participation with other health and social service agencies
- Resourcing of collaboration through allocation of time, opportunity, and funding
- Commitment to collaborative skills support, training and education
- Realignment of workforce roles to include collaborative practice
- Use of collaborative tools and resources

Individual and organisational capability

Collaborative capability is essential to be able to:

- ✓ Form mutual partnerships with people accessing services
- ✓ Integrate across existing boundaries
- ✓ Collaborate within communities.



The following charts outline the values, behaviours and approaches of collaborative workers and organisations. The features described are relevant across health and social sectors, sustainable development initiatives and community development programmes. To support more formal partnerships, emphasis is placed on:

- the values and behaviours of individual workers
- workforce development approaches
- organisational behaviour
- systems and processes.

What are the values and behaviours of collaborative workers?



Values

Collaborative workers are:

Humble, honest and kind

Committed to equity, openness, trust, respect and diversity

Committed to working with others for mutual benefit

Open to risk, innovation and change

Committed to enhancing people's rights

Behaviours

Collaborative workers are:

Able to connect with and work in partnership with people

Flexible and adaptable around:

- ▶ Making decisions
- ▶ Giving up autonomy
- ▶ Accommodating different points of view and ways of working
- ▶ Working in diverse community settings

Able to network and connect with colleagues within and across organisations

Able to communicate well

What are the values and approaches of a collaborative organisation?



Collaborative organisations have:

- Mutual respect for and understanding among partner organisations
- A commitment to innovation, divergent thinking, risk and change
- A reputation for honesty, trust and respect
- A culture of reflection and learning

Collaboration and formal partnerships are supported through:

Workforce development

Collaborative skills:

- ▶ Education and training
- ▶ Coaching and mentoring
- ▶ Opportunities to share what works
- ▶ Access to peer networks

Role development:

- ▶ Clear roles and responsibilities that include collaboration
- ▶ Identification and development of collaborative leaders
- ▶ Development of roles to broker collaboration

Role expansion:

- ▶ Job-swapping between partner organisations
- ▶ Flexibility around scope of practice to focus on collaborative outcomes
- ▶ Networking between teams, organisations and sectors

Organisational behaviour

Organisational culture aligned with collaborative values:

- ▶ Collective values, identity, purpose and vision
- ▶ Valuing and recognising collaborative practice
- ▶ Outcomes-based practice

Opportunities for collaboration through:

- ▶ Whole organisation commitment (particularly from leaders)
- ▶ Targeted workforce development
- ▶ Adequate resourcing (time, money and opportunity)
- ▶ Understanding collaborative best practice
- ▶ Fostering creativity and innovation
- ▶ Well developed networks
- ▶ Community engagement
- ▶ Valuing people through co-design processes
- ▶ Celebration of success

Clear systems and processes

More formal partnerships need:

- ▶ Mutually agreed strategic goals
- ▶ Well-developed communication strategies
- ▶ Effective governance and other accountability mechanisms
- ▶ Shared decision-making processes and conflict resolution strategies
- ▶ Effective use of partnership agreements
- ▶ Administrative support
- ▶ Ongoing review of partnership success



The collaboration continuum

As collaboration initiatives develop into more formal partnerships, relationships between organisations become more integrated and mutually accountable, and more dependent on structured mechanisms to support the relationship.

The table below is an amalgamation of slightly different approaches that can be found in the literature. It identifies commonly described collaborative relationships along a continuum and lists the characteristics of each type of relationship. The emphasis is on structural approaches between organisations rather than partnerships with people accessing services.

Relationships and structural characteristics along the collaboration continuum

Types of collaboration					
 Coexistence	 Networking & communication	 Cooperation & coordination	 Collaboration	 Partnership	 Merger
Nature of relationship					
Self-reliance	Shared information	Shared projects	Shared goals	Shared accountabilities	Amalgamation
Relationship features					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Autonomous · No formal communication · May have common concerns · Separate systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Developing relationships · Get together on common interests · Share information as needed · Maintain autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Alignment of interests · Regular working together on shared projects · May share resources · No ongoing/ formal commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Formal commitment to working together · Negotiated and agreed actions · Shared policies and/or practices · Trade-offs around loss of autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mutual obligations · Shared values, vision, resources, accountability, power, and decision-making · Integrated programmes · May involve more integrated planning or funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · New organisational form · Single system
<p>Increasing formality, complexity and risk, commitment and interaction, and integration of services and relationships.</p> <p>More likely to govern relationship through the use of agreements.</p>					

*Collaborative capability in the mental health and addiction sector
is available at www.tepou.co.nz*

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