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## Children's Integrated Services: Looking at old problems in a new way

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### Keywords

Integrated services; mergers and acquisitions, continual professional development; children's services, training

### Abstract

**Purpose:** To communicate the findings of an empirical research project based on a real world problem that involved the development of a CPD framework for a British children's integrated service workforce, consisting of a range of professions ranging from social work, teaching, youth work, early years practitioners and educational psychologists. In addition, to give attention to the fact that over a decade later these organisations have not effectively fulfilled their purpose of joined up and seamless services because of organisational, cultural, professional and contextual problems. An argument is made for looking beyond the known body of literature in integrated working and towards literature that focuses on mergers and acquisitions (M&A).

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A case study approach involving a mixed methodology consisting of semi-structured interviews for senior managers and service leads; a quantitative survey for frontline practitioners and focus groups for service users, carers and children.

**Findings:** Rather than the service being fully integrated, services were aligned, and this was reflected in the conflict between professional cultures, reinforcing an 'us and them' culture. This culture had seemingly permeated all aspects of the organisation including the senior management team. It was also noted that certain systems and processes, as well as bureaucracy, within the service were seen as hindering integrated working.

**Originality/Value:** The value of examining the phenomenon of children's integrated services through the lens of M&A literature is that it not only looks at the problems of integration from another perspective, it also allows for exposure to a range of possible solutions that have not yet been employed within the field of British children's integrated services.

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