

**Multi Cultural Family Base (MCFB)
A Unique Tapestry: Looking Ahead
2006**



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Executive Summary

This report presents a mapping exercise conducted with the staff of Multi Cultural Family Base (MCFB). MCFB is a unique, multi-stranded organisation, which engages in varied innovative and creative provisions that are dynamic and evolving at a fairly rapid pace.

The aim of this exercise was to try and document the varied roles and responsibilities of individual staff members, such that all individuals within the organisation could develop an empathic grasp of the dynamic roles played by their colleagues.

Another aim, at the individual level, was to give a voice to staff members, at a time of imminent changes within the organisation, which could lead to a more collective voice by affording them a forum for examining their individual and collective determination for looking ahead.

The exercise used a qualitative illuminative approach, which was designed to elicit subjective information about the varied roles, strengths and visions of colleagues within the organisation. Using these three domains of roles, strengths and vision colleagues thoughtfully engaged in pulling together various strands, "weaving" the threads of their role within the organisation, their strengths and contributions, and structuring a narrative about a vision for the future as though they were creating a tapestry. For the majority this tapestry was woven with 'creative chaos'— some focused on the continually creative process, while few others on the chaos.

The data collected included interviews with twenty two individuals working with MCFB: a cameo of each of these individuals is presented in the report.

The exercise revealed the diverse, rich and varied expertise of colleagues; and evinces the fact that MCFB has gone from strength to strength and grown in to a multi-stranded, unique organisation, that has "an employee-centred approach". It highlights the eagerness and receptiveness of colleagues, who are committed to the growth and development of the organisation and points to a special interest in honing robust communication structures. Finally, what describes this unique-innovative project is the expression of a powerful concept of a dynamic, evolving, rich and colourful tapestry-in-progress.

It reiterates the fact that MCFB excels in generating a caring environment, which enables service-users to work toward life changes in their present, such that they can achieve and maintain a future. And, that as a centre of learning it maintains high standards and creates an environment of learning that enables

students to confidently strive in their professions. A reality that was acknowledged when MCFB became a finalist at the 2006 Care Accolades—applauded for the development of creative and diverse practice learning opportunities, and for spearheading innovative ways of working with the University of Edinburgh and the 'North Edinburgh Working Together' project as well as colleges across Scotland.

It concludes with a section on 'Looking Ahead' that indicates areas which colleagues would like to deliberate and develop further; and some closing remarks.

Prelude

The title chosen by Dina to introduce the work in which you have all shared, is beautifully illustrated by the visual images which Sue has so skilfully developed. Together the words and images remind us of the richness of MCFB as an organisation.

This is a very significant moment in the evolution of MCFB and the contributions you have made collectively—valuing, questioning, taking stock and planning is captured in Dina's work with you in a special way.

As we start to look forward and to give more expression to the hopes and shape for MCFB's future we have a real testament to you as a group and to Nita and Jo who have helped the organisation to reach this point in such significant ways.

Thank you Dina for your care, skill and commitment, as well as time, to make it possible. Thank you too, to you all in the staff group, who have shown characteristic trust in and loyalty to each other and to the future of the organisation, as we welcome Cathy Macnaughton in the role of Manager—a unique tapestry indeed.

Wendy Paterson
Vice-Chair, Director

Introduction

This report presents a mapping exercise conducted with the staff of Multi Cultural Family Base (MCFB). MCFB is a unique, multi-stranded organisation, which engages in varied innovative and creative provisions that are dynamic and evolving at a fairly rapid pace.

The aim of this exercise was to try and document the varied roles and responsibilities of individual staff members, such that all individuals within the organisation could develop an empathic grasp of the dynamic, creative roles played by their colleagues.

Another aim was to give a voice to individual staff members, at a time of imminent changes within the organisation, which could lead to a more collective voice by affording them a forum for examining their individual and collective determination for looking ahead.

And finally, the exercise aimed to 'recognise, acknowledge and celebrate'¹ the individual and collective 'strengths and good practice'² within the organisation.

The exercise used a qualitative illuminative approach, which was designed to elicit subjective information about the varied roles, strengths and visions of colleagues within the organisation. Using these three domains of roles, strengths and vision colleagues thoughtfully engaged in pulling together various strands, "weaving" the threads of their role within the organisation, their strengths and contributions, and structuring a narrative about a vision for the future as though they were creating a tapestry. For the majority this tapestry was woven with 'creative chaos'— some focused on the continually creative process, while few others on the chaos.

The data for the report was collected from interviews with twenty-three MCFB staff and a cameo of each individual staff member is presented in the next section on "Vignettes". This section is followed by a section on their 'Vision' for the organisation. The report concludes with a section on 'Looking Ahead' that indicates areas which colleagues would like to deliberate and develop further; followed by some 'Closing Remarks'.

The exercise revealed the diverse, rich and varied expertise of colleagues; and evinces the fact that MCFB has gone from strength to strength and grown in to a multi-stranded, unique organisation, that has a consultative and participative

¹ Scottish Executive (2006) Findings, Summary Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review: Changing Lives, Edinburgh, p. 8

² Ibid.

employee-centred approach. It highlights the eagerness and receptiveness of colleagues, who are committed to the growth and development of the organisation and points to a special interest in honing robust communication structures. Finally, what describes this unique-innovative project is the expression of a powerful concept of a dynamic, evolving, rich and colourful tapestry-in-progress.

It reiterates the fact that MCFB excels in generating a caring environment, which enables service-users to work toward life changes in their present, such that they can achieve and maintain a future. And, that as a centre of learning it maintains high standards and creates an environment of learning that enables students to confidently strive in their professions. A reality that was acknowledged when MCFB became a finalist at the 2006 Care Accolades—applauded for the development of creative and diverse practice learning opportunities, and for spearheading innovative ways of working with the University of Edinburgh and the 'North Edinburgh Working Together' project as well as colleges across Scotland.

The report often refers to the Scottish Executive's (2006) Changing Lives review—thus reflecting the recognition that we as an organisation place on enhancing, developing and being contemporary in the context of the 21st Century Social Work review.

Vignettes

The mapping exercise was designed to enable me to develop a cameo of the twenty-three individuals who collectively make up the workforce in MCFB. Each vignette throws light on the roles and responsibilities of individual staff members and the strengths and experience they bring to their job.

Juanita Brown, Manager, is a very "special and unique individual" and MCFB owes her a debt of honour and gratitude for her vision, commitment and hard work in developing the organisation as it has grown and developed today. A multi-cultural service that has endeavoured to enhance the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and their families through direct service provision and through the education and training of students in varied caring professions; which fosters partnership, cross-cultural work with BME families, an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice and widening access.

Her vision has helped to generate a caring environment, which enables service-users to work toward life changes in their present, such that they can achieve

and maintain a future. As a centre of learning she has inculcated high standards and developed an environment of learning that enables students to confidently strive in their professions. A reality that was acknowledged when MCFB became a finalist at the 2006 Care Accolades—applauded for the development of creative and diverse practice learning opportunities, and for spearheading innovative ways of working with the University of Edinburgh and the 'North Edinburgh Working Together' project as well as colleges across Scotland.

She has helped develop and consolidate and has been instrumental in MCFB's services meeting high professional standards that operate in an environment that recognize human dignity and worth, respecting and investing equally in their service users, students and their staff, such that they feel supported and empowered.

When I asked her what strengths she brought to her post, she responded in her characteristic slow, humble yet direct manner "Commitment, experience, a reasonable memory, mathematical bent of mind, a vision and an ability to look ahead—understanding the trends, analysing the micro and macro and my ability to hold things together."

Nita has meant different things to different people within MCFB and to persons out with the organisation that she has helped to support and develop over the years. Her contribution and vision have been outstanding and her "calm, grounded reassurance, her analytical mind, the richness of her thinking processes, and ability to challenge difficult situations" provides a strong edifice on which we will be able to build, grow and develop, and continue to look ahead, weaving even stronger and more colourful strands into this amazing tapestry that is Nita's gift: Multi-Cultural Family Base.

Anna Portaro is sessional practice teacher with MCFB since 2005, and is involved with the 'Learning for Practice' with the University of Edinburgh. Anna is a qualified social worker and practice teacher and brings to her role her enthusiasm, commitment and skills of social work and therapeutic work, honed across different cultural contexts. She feels "privileged to be involved in student's learning and growth—both at the personal and professional level". Her vision for MCFB is that it is able to continue to undertake the work that is currently being done; in particular she feels that the therapeutic element of art therapy should be developed and looks forward to more opportunities for communication with other practice teachers in the organisation. Additionally she believes that within MCFB we should focus on the aspect of what makes for effective relationships in social work education because she has "a fundamental belief that most of the effective social work practice happens in the context of relationships".

Bina Chaudhry, North Edinburgh Working Together (NEWT) Project worker is a qualified social worker and has worked in MCFB for a year. The thrust of her work is to provide support to children and young people experiencing social, emotional and behavioural problems in schools. She works both at an individual level with children, young people and parents and at the group level with children and young people. Bina believes in the value of the service MCFB offers and is keen to "help children to see the value of education". She enjoys the "challenges and pressures of getting things done"; and brings to her post her "skills and passion for group work, ADP and empowering children, young people and parents who are multi-oppressed on account of factors such as their gender, ethnicity or experience of discrimination". Her vision for MCFB is that it continues to expand, while retaining its ethos, in its quest to best support its service users and to meet the learning needs of its students.

Boon Drysdale began working with MCFB, three and a half years ago as the first full-time family worker. Currently she divides her time between the EAL (English as an Additional Language) project and family work. Boon has a qualification in Community Education and this year gained an additional qualification in Social Work. She brings to her post the rich and multiple professional perspectives, knowledge and skills, strong networking experience and group work skills that she has honed over the years: "I think I add life to the organisation because I am an approachable and person-centred individual who enjoys supporting colleagues and students". Boon's vision for the organisation focuses on job security, permanence and stability; and the creation of developmental groups for young adults. She believes that the organisation needs to continue to focus on the empowerment of service users.

Clare Hannah is a qualified social worker and practice teacher. She started working with MCFB in the beginning of 2006. She brings her experiences of working within Children and Families teams and Drug Alcoholic Services, along with her skills in counselling to her role as practice teaching: "I think I bring my experiences of working with a diverse range of students in challenging situations". She is particularly keen that the practice teachers within the organisation have more opportunities to interact and share their experiences and expertise, because she avers: "it's great to work together; it's a real loss when people work in isolation."

Danny Ferguson is a Service and Practice Learning Manager and has been with MCFB since 2004. His role involves working with service users in MCFB, NEWT and with students in Edinburgh University. Danny is a qualified social worker and practice teacher, and is presently working on a further qualification in Child Protection. He brings to his role the strengths, enthusiasm and creativity that

he has honed in working within children and families statutory settings. His empathic grasp of the Children's Hearing System and experience of working with 'looked after and accommodated children' has been particularly useful while working with NEWT and Leith Social Work Centre. He believes that as a practice teacher he is "committed to continually seeking to develop my own understanding of varied issues such as self-harm for example through reading and training, which enable me to more effectively facilitate the growth and development of students". He reiterates his commitment to the promotion of a multicultural society and suggests that "MCFB provides a great opportunity to be in a working environment where we can realise this". His vision for the organisation is that it is able to stabilise itself financially and procedurally in terms of allocation of work and students; and that it can expand direct work with children and their families, "building on the therapeutic dimension while focusing on multicultural issues, such that we create a more understanding and harmonious relationship between different cultural groups". Additionally he believes that MCFB should "explore and celebrate the richness of the international dimension its staff and student groups".

Dina Sidhva, Service and Practice Learning Manager, I have been with the organisation since September 2005. I am a qualified social worker and practice teacher. In my short time at MCFB, I have had the opportunity to be involved in varied tasks: practice teaching, developing and working on the contract with VAF (Voluntary Action Fund), being a representative from the voluntary sector on the CYPSP (Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership), facilitating a 'Learning for Practice' group with the University of Edinburgh and supporting them in interviewing and screening of potential students, mentoring students on access courses in the OU and supporting the upcoming work with the Polish community. I bring to my post the core values, knowledge and skills that I have honed over several years of working as a social work academic, researcher and practitioner both in India and Scotland: working and learning together, trust, transparency, and solidarity. I strongly believe that the people we deal with in social work, our service users, our respondents, our students are in fact the experts on their lives and my practice is shaped by the theoretical ideas of feminism and critical social work. I have felt enriched by my association with my colleagues and in particular have been struck by the emphasis given to further learning opportunities and continuous professional development. In the past twelve months, I have been supported and encouraged to complete practice-teacher training, an access course with the OU and have now embarked on a course in "Listening to Children: Research and Consultation". I am inspired by the ethos of partnership and empowerment within the organisation, and my vision for MCFB is that it continues to thrive and support and inspire its staff group. I believe that this will happen and in doing so will be

a major testament of the care, work, vision, dedication and service that Nita and Jo have so significantly rendered.

Jackie Graham, Project Worker-MCFB Early Years Service has been with Sure Start since 2004. Jackie is a qualified nursery nurse and an SVQ assessor for nursery nurses. She brings to her post her skills of communication, her knowledge and experience of working with children from different social backgrounds and varying needs; and her empathic grasp and deep understanding of issues related to parents and children. She is a signatory for disclosures in MCFB and her role as a project worker involves supporting parents and toddlers. She is currently involved with 'Birth to 3 matters' and working with the 'crèche provision'. Jackie is "enthusiastic to encourage and promote parents to have a positive relationship with their children," and her vision for MCFB is "an organisation where there is effective communication, organised systems, flexibility and adaptability".

Jane Laidlaw is qualified social worker and practice teacher. She works as a sessional Practice teacher with MCFB, since February 2006. She brings her experience of working within both the statutory and voluntary sector, and believes that her strength lies in the understanding and experience she has gained from being able to "see it from both sides, which is really important when working with students". She is also brings her strengths of "flexibility and willingness to learn and motivation to keep learning". She considers that a forum for Practice teachers within the organisation would be a vital source of support and sharing of ideas, thus "enabling us to give a better service to students and service users".

Jiayun Zhang is a full-time Administrator and has been with MCFB since 2002. Her role covers the varied financial and accounting various strands of organisation, and includes varied administrative tasks, such as telephone duty, receptionist, toy box management etc. that help the organisation function smoothly. She believes her strengths lie in her capacity to "like all my work and enjoy everything". She suggests that advanced software would help her to function more effectively. She is equal-minded about the imminent changes in the organisation. Jiayun's vision for the organisation is that it continues to function smoothly and she hopes to continue to contribute effectively to its future.

Jo Thorne, Service and Practice Learning Manager has been involved with the organisation since its inception in 1995; and is a qualified social worker who has additional qualifications in Child Protection, Practice teaching and Art. She is also a practice assessor and is currently providing support to a student in MCFB. Jo has travelled with the organisation through its long and exciting

journey, as traveller, navigator, driver, well-wisher and friend, and has been involved in all the varied aspects of change, consolidation and development within the organisation. She has also been instrumental in the progress made by the voluntary sector to have its voice heard in the strategic planning process for the Integrated Service Children's Plan. Jo brings to her post her skills of working with students, particularly those with complex needs. She also brings organisational skills, report-writing and funding application skills along with her interpersonal skills. Her strengths lie in her commitment to her work, ADP, creativity and determination: "I think I am a good negotiator and I usually get something when I set my mind on it". Moreover, having an analytical mind helps her to creatively work around the complexities of changing society and social work education. Jo is ecstatic about the joint post with Leith Social Work Centre and believes it is a key part of the work related to the Student Unit "because through this work we are going to be able to promote practice learning opportunities in the new world and meet the agenda of Integrated Services—fitting well with the way services are delivered. Her vision for the organisation is that links with statutory services and the BME provision (which is an essential part of the CEC provision) moves from strength to strength; and that new migrant populations with multiple vulnerabilities are reached out to. In trying to describe her contribution and impact on the organisation I would like to use the words she used to describe her colleagues at MCFB "they make MCFB a unique organisation with the depth, breadth, richness and diversity of experiences they bring". Jo's perceptiveness, ability to positively reframe and to meet challenges with fortitude and creativity are the qualities that many in the organisation will continue to aspire to.

John Boughey is MCFB's Finance and Administration Manager since 2002. John's role encompasses 'everything else that no one does!' His remit also encompasses being a company secretary: a statutory role for the board, preparing budgets and quarterly financial reports, liaising with external auditors, involvement in funding applications, finances, payrolls, support to administrative staff and overall building management and student induction. He brings to the job his strengths of "leadership, resourcefulness, background in finance, managerial skills, experience and sense of humour". His vision for the organisation is to upgrade IT and to reconcile from an administrative point of view the separate strands of MCFB, the student project and Sure Start and hopes that the "ethos of the organisation remains the same" and that in the immediate future the organisation "consolidates rather than expands".

Kasia Raszewska completed her fieldwork practicum with MCFB earlier this summer, and is currently supporting the organisation on a sessional basis (6 hours per week) in a pilot project that aims to identify the needs of the Polish community in Edinburgh. Her work with the Polish community builds on her

previous experience as well as her vocation for working with vulnerable people and therapeutic communities. She brings to this role her "positive energy, creativity, enthusiasm and her skills in enabling and empowering others, while drawing on all available opportunities". Her vision for the organisation consists of establishing support for the Polish community through MCFB.

Marise Gowenlock, Service and Practice Learning Manager-Early Years Service, is a qualified social worker and practice teacher. She brings to her post a deep understanding, knowledge and skills that have been honed over the past 20 years of working in both the statutory and voluntary sectors across varied settings: residential schools, therapeutic communities and hospitals and with different client groups: children, young people with learning difficulties and adults with chronic mental illnesses: "I think I have a variety and richness of experience and lots of transferable skills across the lifecycle". Marise also brings to her role her "well developed qualities of leadership, enthusiasm for learning, love for practice teaching, commitment to working alongside with people, valuing the potential of individuals". She is deeply committed "professionally and emotionally to the opportunities that MCFB can offer to families, students and workers". Her visions for the organisation encompass "an integrated staff group, with effective systems of duty, referral and communication—both interpersonal and IT, such that MCFB continues to be proud and rigorous in relation to what we give our students and that we as staff feel that coming in to work is worthwhile".

Nasra Bibi is a Service and Practice Learning Manager (Trainee) since 2005. The thrust of her remit is putting racial equality into action for MCFB: "facilitating access for education with the aim of empowering service users from the BME communities". Nasra brings a wealth of expertise, strengths and organisational skills that she has honed over many years of "working in the field of race equality, community development and strategic work around policies in relation to BME communities". She is presently working towards obtaining a practice teaching award. Nasra's vision for the organisation includes building on and developing further its approach to ARP and ADP which are at the core of all the work that MCFB does. She believes that ARP/ADP are the responsibility of everyone in the organisation and that a "concerted commitment and a systematic approach to look at the overall strategies in relation to ADP and ARP are needed".

Patti Porch, Administrative Assistant has been with MCFB since 1998, and has "seen the organisation change a lot" and her role within the organisation has modified and grown with it. She is involved in varied administrative roles that help the organisation to function effectively: answering phone calls, day-to-day

admin and typing, maintaining the library and handling petty cash accounts. Patti believes her strength lies in her "commitment to the organisation and my understanding because I have been here for so long". Her vision for the organisation is that it continues to retain its "personal touch where everybody knows each other".

Rebecca Chan, Resource Worker, has been with the organisation since 2004. Her role includes managing the toy and children's libraries, the allocation system and data bases for community services and for the MCFB staff. She points out that her role has many parts which can at times be complicated. Rebecca brings her strengths of "organisation and commitment, and her enjoyment of "the challenges because they keep me going". Her vision for the organisation is that it continues to work multi-culturally with "different people from different cultures", and that in the future, she is able to "get time to complete all the things I am involved with and have my own computer and desk space" which will help her to continue working efficiently.

Ruth Stroud is a Senior Supervisor in MCFB and has been involved with the organisation from its very inception, and in the steps and years leading to its inception. She serves as a member of the 'Personnel sub-committee' of the Board; and convenes the 'Service and Learning sub-committee'. She is a practice teacher and qualified social worker and her roles and remit within the organisation have been varied and have changed over the years as the organisation has grown. However, the thrust of her contribution has been a steadfast "commitment and support to colleagues and students, particularly those with additional needs and a belief in the work that MCFB does". Ruth has a "lifelong commitment to working with people from different communities", because she "values diversity and feels excited by it". Her vision for the MCFB is that "the organisation continues to be, and goes from strength to strength". Ruth's dedication, commitment and support are greatly valued by her colleagues and students and she is a source of inspiration to many.

Sarah Malone, Financial Administrator for MCFB Early Years Service has been with Sure Start since 2004. Her role encompasses varied financial, administrative, IT and monitoring responsibilities. Her strengths lie in her capacity and willingness "to learn and to be flexible and enthusiastic". Her vision for the organisation is that it continues to remain flexible because "flexibility helps people to be well rounded". Sarah hopes that the organisation continues to provide a cohesive service that responds to local needs while continuing to give a high standard placement for students. She feels that it is important for MCFB to continue to foster a good training ethic and looks forward to "working meaningfully with the organisation".

Sheila Cooper, Service and Practice Learning Manager, has been with the organisation since 2002. Sheila is a qualified social worker, practice teacher and aroma therapist, and is presently working on a further qualification in Child Protection. Her role encompasses working with students, families, facilitating student groups, co-marking and attendance on Edinburgh University panels and practice assessing for social work students and practice teachers. Sheila brings many strengths to her job: rich experience of social work practice, a sound professional value base, commitment to developing her 'Continuous Professional Development', and a deep commitment to maintaining social work standards in all her work. "My job is to give students, confidence, empower them and to bring out the best in them—particularly to empathically support students with additional learning needs, because I believe that this inevitably brings out the best in them". Her vision for the organisation is to support the "learning and teaching culture within the organisation by enhancing communication with colleagues and developing skills sharing groups; while retaining the culture and the ethos of the organisation".

Steve Gowenlock, Service and Practice Learning Manager, has been with the organisation since March 1998. Steve is a qualified social worker and practice teacher, and has an additional qualification in Child Protection. His role in MCFB encompasses a wide range of roles: organisation of learning opportunities, organisation and management of social work students in both MCFB and Harmeny and all that it entails, responsibilities for children's groups, management of the contract with EAL, development of a practice curriculum for workers at the SVQ 3 level, allocation and systems around MCFB's service provision and work with the University of Edinburgh on its Practice Assessment Board and supporting them in interviewing and screening of potential students, and practice assessing for practice -teachers. He brings to his post rich experience that he has developed through his work with children, families and adults with learning difficulties over the years; and his understanding of the history of the agency, its aims and vision. He also brings the skills and knowledge of psychodynamic approaches, group work, supervision and organisation that he has honed through further study and practice and his "ability to be reflective and think through issues in depth and to contain things ... and am committed to ADP and ARP". His vision for MCFB centres on consolidating, securing and mainstreaming its funding, on developing more robust systems for referrals, allocations, evaluating outcomes and MCFB's database. He believes that it is essential to consolidate and develop group work (particularly with parents) and therapeutic work and to develop the aspect of social enterprise, so that the organisation can "create a stronger, securer base ... enabling it to continue to be fluid and flexible in its approach".

Sue du Porto, is MCFB's Art Therapist since 2005. Besides being a qualified art therapist, Sue is also a qualified social worker and practice teacher and supervises art students on placement in MCFB. Sue brings to her role her multi-faceted expertise, knowledge and skills and her strengths of enabling persons to "build their confidence and self esteem in a non-directive way...creating a therapeutic space for children, adults or groups where they can start exploring their identity, their home situations and situations in schools without any pressure". Her vision for the organisation includes "developing and enhancing its therapeutic role; retaining the ethos of the organisation and promoting communication within the organisation".

Tisha Shaw has been involved in an informal partnership between 'Telford CLAN Partnership' and MCFB since 2004. She presently provides literacy classes to three service users from the organisation. Additionally she provides language support on the Open University's 'Openings Pilot Project'. Tisha is an educator by profession and brings to her role, the skills and knowledge she has honed over 15 years of doing developmental work with BME communities: "I combine my real interest in education, with my capacity to communicate with hard to reach people". She is keen to continue to contribute to the organisation by supporting "those who speak no English at all, but also by plugging the literacy gap—that's my remit and the people I am trying to touch".

Vision

The mapping exercise provides an opportunity to glimpse at the vision that colleagues hold for the organisation. Some of the ideas discussed were commonly envisaged, others were more specific to individuals. The following discussion attempts to develop a picture of the visions of my colleagues in all their complexity.

Almost universally colleagues spoke about "enjoying and valuing the diversity and richness of working with people from different cultures". One colleague highlighted that part of MCFB's success was "having ADP and ARP at its core", and stressed the importance of attracting more resources for this key aspect of work.

Equally a large number of colleagues spoke about the need for developing "long-term sustainable resources"; and the need for "consolidating the agency and trying to get the funding more mainstream—on a more structured, permanent basis". Thus, "creating a stronger, securer base—that would enable the agency to continue to be fluid and flexible in its approach".

Many expressed a deep wish that the valuable work being done by the organisation is sustained. As one colleague put it "I have a lifelong commitment to the organisation and am really, really keen that the agency continues". Nita spoke about 2008 being a crucial year for funding and her belief that "potentially things would work out if they are steered through with energy". She laid emphasis on her vision for the organisation "I would still hope that it remains chaotically creative around the edges; with a more structured core: the organisation will always need a bit of both, but the tension itself should be both creative and chaotic". She considers that the structure should continue to include the integral parts of service delivery and opportunities for students "because it has been and will continue to be valuable for social work students".

Additionally, Nita pondered that if she were "dreaming the dream" she would envisage MCFB having ties with students from multi-disciplines, such as, community education, art therapy, police and health; and forge links with other voluntary and statutory secondary agencies. In particular she reiterated that the links between the statutory sector and MCFB were crucial in the training of students, and that a lot of learning is gained from these vital links "it would be a terrible waste if this connection was not strengthened". Furthermore, she spoke about her vision of MCFB continuing to develop "a wide range of" different and exciting strands to the learning networks, such as the Openings Courses with the Open University, and work with the Polish community that would facilitate MCFB in its aim of "supporting and empowering" our service users.

Commonly colleagues expressed anxiety about the way in which the organisation may change with Nita and Jo leaving. Some were more resistant to the changes this would bring, while others looked upon the change more positively, as an opportunity for development. Several others spoke about maintaining the ethos of the organisation, while riding ahead with change. The quotes below underline these differences. One colleague said: "I know its wishful thinking, but I do not want anything to change: I am very happy with the way the organisation is at the moment, it's a place I like to come in to." While another said: "I think we need to embrace the new changes and look ahead, we have worked hard to get this organisation to where it is, so that's the only way forward". Another colleague said "I hope that the ethos of the organisation remains the same ... I believe change is inevitable." While another reiterated "I don't mind change as long as it is a nice place to come in to".

Some colleagues, referring to the recent merger with Sure Start spoke about the value of the merger and the importance of "harmonising cultures"; another colleague said, "I feel a lot can be developed here ... I feel a new motivation and enthusiasm and I want to be part of things".

There was a collective voice about wanting to "support each other through change".

Several colleagues spoke about the need for effective communication structures. As one colleague put it "communication remains a challenge in such a big organisation". Another colleague echoed this sentiment "MCFB is a unique agency in the way that it works; inevitably communication is a challenge".

A few colleagues envisioned that a better building with more space, which would enable more therapeutic intervention to take place, would be ideal.

It was felt that a forum for Practice Teachers and Project Workers would help all concerned "to support each other, share ideas and eventually this would enable us to give our students and service users a better service". Additional meetings to discuss and support each other were suggested as a way forward "there is richness as a team, and we need time to meet as a team and share what we have learnt."

In the light of the recent expansion of the organisation, a few colleagues highlighted the urgent need for reassessing the effectiveness of the referral and allocation systems, and policies related to these: "establishing systems without losing the fluidity and the ethos of the organisation".

Finally, particular anxiety was expressed in relation to "taking in as much information about these from Nita before she leaves." But equally, there were several colleagues who pointed out how this process was "very much in motion". As one staff member observed "It's definitely to the credit of Nita and Jo that this transition is going through so smoothly, I admire the way in which, their ability to look and plan ahead have made our passage relatively smooth."

Looking Ahead

A variety of suggestions emerged from my discussions with colleagues in relation to what they felt were important issues that would help in continuing an effective service, and would ensure the long-term viability and success of MCFB. The suggestions need to be looked at more fully. This could be done collectively (during a staff meeting or a special Away Day kind of forum) or by individual members of staff who would like to take responsibility for taking the proposals forward. The following developmental areas were suggested to serve the future of the agency more effectively:

1. Promoting and enhancing the profile of the organisation by developing a range of ways to promote its work. This is of particular relevance for the times we are seeking a stable funding resource. Moreover, within the promotion of the agency profile to continue and extend the development of ADP and ARP work.
2. Developing further links with our Board, in their continued efforts to endorse and make possible the multiple strands of the organisation and enhance the sense of joint endeavour.
3. Continue to promote and develop our links with statutory agencies as part of a wider strategy, and the critical path to securing the agency's future in a changing world. Changing Lives³, advocates "a mixed market of services across public, private and voluntary sectors" and a "commitment to develop joint services and recognition by partners of the contribution of social work".
4. Working towards sustaining MCFB's continued needs analysis that leads to the setting of clear aims and objectives while maintaining its focus; with the goal of maximising service-users utilisation of the project.
5. Redesign and Integrate ongoing systems of monitoring and evaluation of the project with the aim of providing information for existing as well as further developments, publicity and funding opportunities. Keeping in the fore the Changing Lives guideline in relation to Building capacity for sustainable change: "services must be monitored and evaluated on the delivery of improved outcomes for people who use services."⁴
6. Enhancing communication within the organisation, by developing communication strategies and skills sharing groups for individuals in similar roles to meet more often.
7. Effective utilisation and enhancement of IT and Computer Technology
8. Expand resources and direct work with children, young people, and BME young people.
9. Use of family therapy and other therapeutic intervention in work with individuals and families. Changing Lives⁵ suggests that "social workers will need to make effective use of therapeutic relationships" to make best use of their skills.
10. Build on the International Dimensions of the organisation.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Scottish Executive (2006) Building capacity for sustainable change, Summary Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review: Changing Lives, Edinburgh, p. 26

⁵ Scottish Executive (2006) Introduction, Summary Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review: Changing Lives, Edinburgh, p. 6

Closing Remarks

I am pleased to present a report of the mapping exercise conducted along with colleagues at MCFB. It has been a great privilege for me to spend time with each of you and share your experiences about the journey you have made with the organisation. It has been particularly special because, like me, you are at different points in your journey and have your own unique strands to offer, which woven together form the tapestry that is MCFB.

The organisation offers a unique, high quality service for children and their families which is combined with an innovative provision of practice learning opportunities for students from Universities and Colleges across and from out with Scotland.

MCFB's services meet high professional standards that operate in an environment that recognize human dignity and worth, respecting and investing equally in their service users, students and their staff, such that they feel supported and empowered. Moreover, it aims to build the capacity of the workforce, in accordance with Changing Lives: "Building the capacity of the Workforce"⁶. In particular, by ensuring that staff are "enabled and supported to practise accountably and exercise their professional authority."

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of all my colleagues and Wendy Paterson for making this report possible. I thank you all for sharing your experiences and insights, for your support and direction, and for your candour and sincerity which have transformed a research exercise in to a meaningful experience.

I would like also to especially thank Sue du Porto for the beautiful visual images that she has helped create so adeptly—these images enabled the development of the 'tapestry metaphor' that helped describe so aptly and powerfully the richness and dynamic progress of MCFB.

Listening to your diverse voices has enabled an inclusive, open dialogue about the strengths and expertise that we bring to this organisation; about the developmental areas that we believe will help us to work even more effectively in the future and our vision for MCFB.

At the heart of this mapping exercise is a desire to provide an opportunity to celebrate and honour the efforts made by all those involved in MCFB. In

⁶ Scottish Executive (2006) Building the capacity of the Workforce, Summary Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review: Changing Lives, Edinburgh, p. 21

particular it is to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Juanita Brown and Jo Thorne. The words of a colleague, who has been with the organisation through its earliest stages of inception meaningfully do this: "MCFB grew from a need that Nita identified and the organisation that it has now become, owes so much to Nita and Jo's hard work, commitment and vision which has been such an inspiration to those of us who have travelled with them". Along with this comes a desire to illuminate the "rich, diverse, distinctive" contribution of each individual colleague in creating a "unique organisation that has achieved a lot in the lives of the people we work for—making it something worth fighting for" (Quote from a colleague).

It is hoped that this mapping exercise provides us with a useful tool in our continued efforts to render valuable services, in our approach to effective performance management, in our desire to communicate more effectively, in our capacity to plan effectively for the future and in our aspiration to continue weaving colourful and strong strands that go to make up the rich, meaningful and unique tapestry that MCFB symbolises.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the key success of MCFB is its ability to combine valuable, high quality services for vulnerable children and their families along with the provision of creative practice learning opportunities to students. MCFB has excelled in creating a dynamic, evolving environment that (in the words of a colleague) "I see surviving beyond 2008, on the basis that it has something unique to offer, and has innovatively and creatively responded to the challenge of change."

If you would like to comment on any aspect of this report, or would like to add something to it, please email me at: dina.sidhva@mcfb.org.uk



Images: Art-Therapy Group, MCFB, 2006