

# Trust in collaborative working: The importance of trust for leaders of school based partnerships

Findings from original research undertaken into  
the importance of trust as a driver of school based  
collaborations

HEADTEACHERS

Report

# Trust in collaborative working: The importance of trust for leaders of school based partnerships

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Introduction and overview	1
Rationale	2
Collaboration: success factors	3
Understanding collaborative leadership	4
Understanding perceptions of trust in collaborations	13
Trustworthiness of leaders	23
Implications for leadership practice	26
Conclusions	27
References	29

‘Every kind of peaceful cooperation among men is primarily based on mutual trust and only secondarily on institutions.’

**Albert Einstein**

## Introduction and overview

This report describes the findings from original research undertaken into the importance of trust as a driver of school-based collaborations. It aims to address the following questions:

- Why is collaborative working important to schools?
- What factors influence the effectiveness of collaborations?
- What role does trust play in supporting collaborative working?
- What generative mechanisms underpin trust in this context?
- What does this mean for leaders?

Data was collected through two separate stages of fieldwork.

**Stage 1** involved the completion of semi-structured interviews with 49 professionals involved in collaborative working. These individuals were drawn from a range of professional backgrounds and employed at a variety of locations. Interviews were completed between June 2004 and November 2006.

**Stage 2** concentrated more specifically on the issue of trust within the context of collaboration, and involved the collection of data from six field sites. These comprised two secondary schools, two primary schools, a special school and a children's centre. Schools were selected on the basis of evidence of partnership working to promote the well-being of children (sourced via each institution's most recent Ofsted inspection report).

Stage 2 fieldwork was completed between March and September 2007. Interviews were completed with 32 individuals connected with the six field sites. This included the headteacher/centre leader at each site, and a range of other identified individuals from within the organisation itself or partner agencies. Interviewees were primarily identified through discussion with the headteacher/centre leader on the basis of their involvement in the collaboration, although a small number of additional individuals were subsequently identified during the course of the fieldwork itself. Interviewees were therefore selected via a purposive sample and supplemented by a small number identified through snowball sampling techniques.

In addition to the original data collected, a review of relevant published literature on collaboration was also undertaken. The findings from this literature review are interspersed with the fieldwork data, in an effort to offer a more coherent picture of the issue of trust.

## Rationale

The rationale for this work was based on the following factors:

- In recent years, collaboration has increasingly become the modus operandi for the delivery of public services.
- This is driven by the belief that effective collaboration creates added value and that working together improves efficiency and achieves more than can be achieved separately (this principle is the basis for systems leadership theory).
- Similarly, there is some belief that collaborative working is essential to address 'wicked problems' such as social inclusion, school improvement and achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.
- However, equally, ineffective collaborations impede service delivery and reduce efficiency.
- More broadly this focus on collaboration has been in contrast with increased measures of accountability and competition in schools. Therefore schools have in recent years been relatively isolated and discouraged from collaborating.
- Thus for some schools cross-agency collaboration is a marked cultural change.

## Collaboration: success factors

Studies of effective collaborations have highlighted a relatively consistent range of factors that have been significant in their success. These are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1 summarises the key factors which influence the overall success of school-based collaborations. It identifies seven success factors, each of which relates to and is informed by leadership.

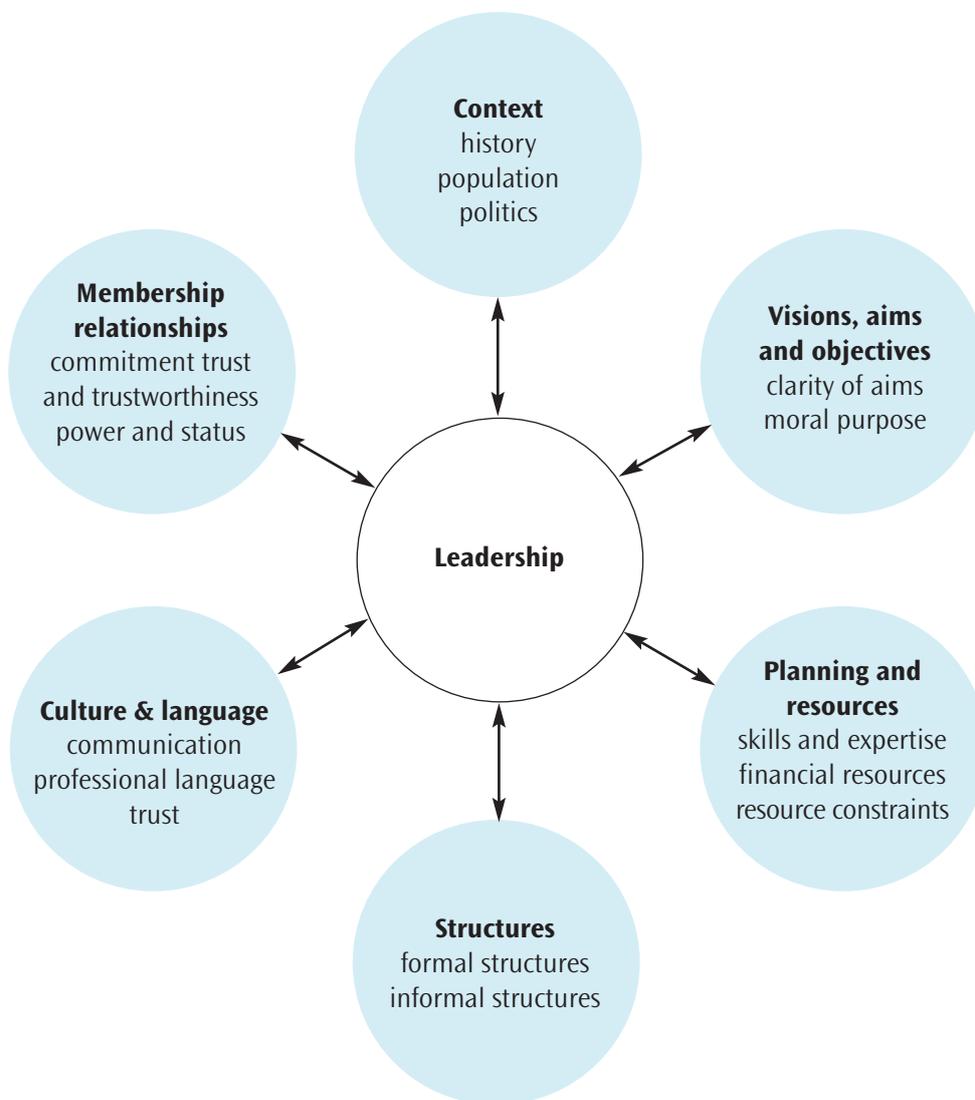


Figure 1: The seven success factors for collaboration  
[source: author]

## Understanding collaborative leadership

While collaboration is arguably a fundamental and non-negotiable aspect of all leadership activity, the term ‘collaborative leadership’ itself is relatively new. The earliest writers on this issue included Finch (1977) and St John (1980), with Pink and Leibert (1986) among the first to apply this notion to the context of schools. It was not until the 1990s that the term became more widely used and more recently this notion of collaborative leadership has been developed by writers such as Huxham and Vangen (for example, 2005; and also Vangen & Huxham 2003b), Chrislip and Larson (1994) and Avery (1999).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, collaborative leadership remains relatively ill defined, and is possibly as easily understood by recourse to what it is not as to what it is. In this respect then, collaborative leadership can be sharply contrasted with notions of the hero leader and leadership focused solely on the goals of economic advantage, with a reliance on power and sanctions as a basis for authority. Instead, then, it is possible to conceive collaborative leadership in three main ways:

- leadership as values, principals and philosophies
- leadership as characteristics and behaviours
- leadership as process

### Leadership as values, principals and philosophies

The notion of collaborative leadership as values, principals and philosophies connects strongly with the more contemporary models of leadership. These models have increased in popularity since the late 1970s, since when a range of alternative theories and approaches have developed. However, within the context of this work, two conceptualisations are most relevant. These are:

- transformational leadership
- ethical leadership (including servant leadership and moral leadership)

### Transformational leadership

The idea of transformational leadership was originally developed by Burns (1978). Burns distinguished *transformational* from *transactional leadership*, conceptualising the latter as largely concerned with the management of organisations and relationships and based broadly on economic principles. While not ineffective, the scope of such leadership is ostensibly limited to its ‘contractual’ boundaries and reinforced through recourse to sanctions and rewards (Bryman 1996). In contrast, *transformational leadership* is concerned with a fundamental reconceptualisation of attitudes, behaviours or organisations. The motivation for this change is often a deep-seated belief, which is morally, ethically and even spiritually derived. In any case, the leader seeks to raise the aspirations of followers such that their goals and aims are shared in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose (Bryman 1996). This often involves personal sacrifices from followers in direct contrast to transactional leadership which is based on a desire to maximise the potential economic benefit (Burns 1978). Transformational leadership therefore seeks to move followers to accomplish considerably more than would normally be expected of them (Northouse 2000).

Transformational leadership theory is helpful in this context as it forces our attention away from transactional conceptualisations of leadership, based on an appeal to personal reward and officially sanctioned power. Instead it highlights the potential of morality as a motivating factor for leaders and followers alike, as a desire to realise benefits for others (potentially at one’s own expense) becomes the collective shared goal. A key aspect within this, of course, is the fact that such an approach is often only feasible beyond organisational boundaries. In this context then the development and communication of the shared mission becomes of paramount importance. In terms of the moral purpose itself, a focus on the well-being of children invariably emerges as the single most powerful factor for schools.

Bass (1998) developed Burns' ideas in his 'full range of leadership model', which saw transformational leaders as the most effective mechanism for addressing change and promoting adaptive organisational cultures. His work on the 'four Is' provides valuable insight into the ways that transformational leadership is operationalised. In effect it provides the foci for day-to-day leadership practice and offers indicators for considering the degree to which transformational leadership takes place. They comprise:

- idealised influence (the presence of charismatic leadership and the modelling of desired 'citizenship' behaviours)
- inspirational motivation (the communication of high expectations and development of a shared vision achieved through the alignment of personal and organisational values)
- intellectual stimulation (challenging followers to review their motivation and beliefs)
- individualised consideration (supporting and developing followers according to their specific needs)

These foci are reoccurring themes for writers on collaboration.

### Ethical leadership (including moral and servant leadership)

Arguably the first modern text entirely dedicated to leadership ethics was published as recently as 1998 (Ciulla 1998). However, since this point interest in this field has 'grown exponentially' (Northouse 2000: 302).

Ethical leadership is concerned with what leaders do and who they 'are'. It connects strongly with transformational leadership, and also embraces theories on moral, servant and authentic leadership, which will be touched on subsequently. Studies of ethical leadership have tended to focus on either leaders' conduct or aspects of the leaders' character. Heifetz (2003) sees the ethical focus for leadership as an ongoing process of challenge and education, as leaders

help followers to confront conflict and find productive ways to deal with it. Heifetz also states that this process will involve a degree of self-sacrifice and challenge but that longer-term rewards will offset short-term discomforts. As we will see, trustworthiness is both a key feature in ethical leadership and a major factor in providing informal authority to act to meet implicit expectations.

### Servant leadership and moral leadership

As noted above, the notion of servant leadership forms part of this wider consideration of ethics. Initially developed by Greenleaf (2002), this philosophy sees the leader's primary responsibility as meeting the needs of their followers. More specifically this involves helping them to become healthier, wiser and more responsible. A sense of broader social responsibility and moral purpose is key within this.

Sergiovanni (1992) and Fullan (2001) are arguably the most well known writers to have explored the notion of *moral leadership* within the context of schools. Sergiovanni has noted that excessive attention on leadership practice has been at the expense of considerations of the beliefs and ideals that shape it. He also describes how moral leadership draws its influence from *sacred authority*, based on a faith in the authority of community, professional norms and ideals, rather than on traditional notions of hierarchy and power. As such morality is viewed as a greater source for action and promotes *followership* rather than subordination.

At the same time though, Fullan states that morality on its own is an insufficient basis for leadership, and is only effective when followers are persuaded of its importance and thereby encouraged to reconcile diverse interests that may exist. In this respect, then, he connects ethics with the idea of the leader as 'meaning maker' (described elsewhere in this chapter) by highlighting the important role the leader plays in helping to construct the context within which followers operate.

The key factor in all of these models of ethical leadership is the focus on the leader's actions as both a source of activity and as a means of creating meaning. The leader's behaviours are in effect the medium through which their values become understood. Their ability to consistently demonstrate a commitment to collaboration is therefore fundamental in promoting the partnership. In this sense, the process of collaboration is as important as the outcomes it produces. It is through their behaviour that leaders demonstrate what 'ethical' means in their practice and their expectations of others.

### Other work on values and principles in collaboration

A range of other leadership work is relevant in considerations of values that underpin collaborative endeavour. Examples of these would include studies on distributed leadership that emphasise a belief in inclusion as a basis for shared leadership rather than the worth of this approach as a response to increased levels of activity. Similarly, work by Day (2004) on the passions of leadership emphasises the importance of values to effective school leadership and school improvement.

Leadership to promote social inclusion is implicitly values-based and connects with collaborative leadership on several levels. Social capital is concerned with building connections and ties across organisations and communities. Its significance in promoting co-working and community development is well documented (for example, Coleman 1988; Gambetta 1988c; Putnam 2000).

Collectively these studies and viewpoints promote a vision of collaborative leadership that is heavily values-based and concerned with the pursuit of a morally based mission – in this instance, promoting the learning and well-being of children and their families. More generically, it is underpinned and motivated by a belief in the values of:

- fairness
- personal responsibility
- inclusion and empowerment
- openness and honesty

- personal integrity
- trust

Finally, its strong ethical dimension emphasises the importance of leaders demonstrating their commitment to these beliefs through their day-to-day actions.

### Leadership as characteristics and behaviours

In very broad terms, perspectives that describe collaborative leadership in relation to its behaviours emphasise the day-to-day activities leaders undertake, rather than any overarching philosophy or values system that underpins it.

Collectively, studies on collaboration identify five broad domains of leadership activity as important. Each domain in turn comprises a number of specific activities (see Table 1).

While many of these are relevant to leadership in all contexts, the relative emphasis on others is markedly greater for leadership across collaborations than that centred on a single organisation. In particular, three cross-cutting themes may be identified which are of particular significance to the leadership of collaborations.

These are:

- political leadership
- building relationships
- trust and moral purpose

### Political leadership

Political leadership centres on understanding and seeking to inform ongoing debate related to the collaboration. There are several dimensions to this. Firstly political leadership involves maintaining a clear view of factors that influence the development of the partnership. This occurs at three levels:

- micro, that is, the minutiae of day-to-day working at an interpersonal level

**Table 1: Summary of collaborative leadership domains and the main characteristics and behaviours associated with them**

<b>Leadership 'domain'</b>	<b>Leadership characteristics and behaviours</b>
Managing meaning	Modelling Informing and lobbying Developing the vision
Making decisions	Creative problem solving Planning Negotiating Delegation and distributed leadership
Influencing people	Leading through authority, not power Motivating and inspiring Building and maintaining credibility Recognising and rewarding Modelling
Building relationships	Supporting individuals Developing the collaboration Engaging additional partners Building social capital
Delivering results	Political leadership Securing accountability Managing complexity Entrepreneurship

- meso, that is, operational and strategic relationships between local partners
- macro, that is, the broader national policy agenda

Awareness of these elements is a critical part of maintaining the well-being of the partnership, but also fundamental to identifying potential openings and areas for development. Furthermore it provides a basis for more proactive efforts to inform such debates, thereby helping to promote a climate more supportive of the

partnership. Examples of this include:

- producing local newsletters for parents and the community
- developing links with the local media
- presenting work to local partners
- participating in and presenting to national conferences
- participation in working and advisory groups.

As part of this, political leadership involves working with and through potential intermediaries to inform this debate to the partnership's advantage. At one level this may involve working to develop relationships with key influencers in the local community, to promote take-up of services on offer or to inform attitudes towards the school more broadly. At another, it may include targeting potentially influential parents and governors to promote the school's and partnership's work through their professional networks. In either instance, these strategies may be part of longer-term approaches to changing attitudes and building capacity to support the school's work and each emphasises the need for strong communication and meaning-making skills (Vangen & Huxham 2003a).

### Building relationships

While each domain is important, the area of building relationships is fundamental to collaborative working. Gobillot's notion of connected leadership is particularly relevant in this regard. Gobillot sees this as an essential part of the organisational change required for service providers to meaningfully engage with the customers. In essence Gobillot sees connected leadership as concerned with the collective pursuit of moral aims, posited on the active engagement of all relevant partners (Gobillot 2006).

Gobillot offers three dimensions to connected leadership behaviour. The first of these, **the leader as risk taker**, connects with entrepreneurship, which is an important factor in maximising the potential of collaborations in general. The second, **the leader as influencer**, builds on the discussion above, and notes that discretionary effort, secured by engaging followers in a genuine shared meaningful endeavour, can account for an increase of up to 30 per cent in organisational performance. The third dimension relates to the **leader as supporter**.

The premise behind this notion is that the leader's role is to create the necessary impact to encourage people to release their discretionary effort. This is achieved by simultaneously developing the relationship and exerting influence. Several elements of leadership behaviour are important in this:

- integrity
- utility (a functional and worthwhile relationship)
- warmth
- reciprocity (they serve to help each other fulfil their respective goals)
- maintenance (routine connections to enable the leader to remain abreast of what is actually going on)

Collectively these are seen to ensure the leader's credibility, a factor which is critical in convincing others that the leader possesses the abilities required to secure their good intentions and as we shall see, an important dimension in trust.

### Trust and moral purpose

More will be written later in this report as to the importance of trust to collaboration. Central to this is the argument that trust represents a form of capital, the presence of which is essential to streamlining and promoting effective partnership working. Covey (2006) describes the notion of the trust dividend, where organisations and partnerships enjoy a range of benefits which stem directly from the presence of higher levels of trust. These include:

- high work focus
- improved communication
- positive, transparent relationships
- fully aligned systems and structures
- stronger innovation, engagement, confidence and loyalty

In contrast, Covey (2006) states the absence of trust incurs a punitive trust tax. This involves:

- dysfunctional environment and toxic culture
- militant stakeholders
- intense micromanagement
- redundant hierarchy
- punishing systems and structures

Work by writers such as Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2005) further reinforces the importance of trust in collaborative working.

Two leadership aspects cut across trust, each of which can be seen as fundamental to the overall effectiveness of the leadership of collaborations. These concern the nature of the leader's character and their competency to lead. These elements are explored further later in this report.

## **Leadership as process**

Many writers have highlighted the fundamental dynamism of leadership and how its focus on goal achievement often involves the need to secure some form of change.

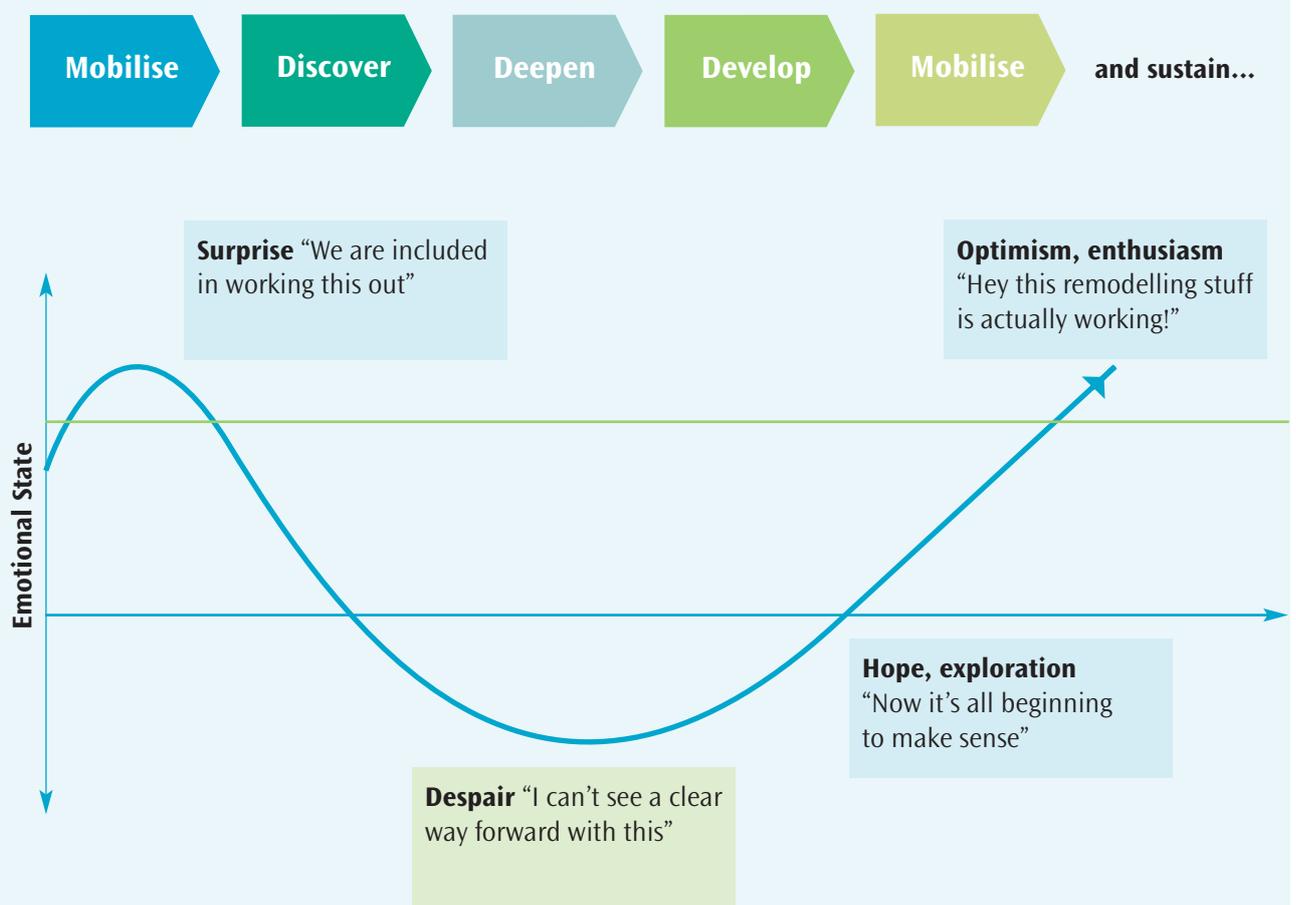
A wide range of change models exists, each with their relative strengths and weaknesses. However, many of these share a number of common features as to the nature of leadership required. These centre on:

- creating the climate for change
- enabling and empowering the constituent parties on whom the change is dependent
- implementing and sustaining the change

To support this, change leadership models consistently highlight the range of skills and behaviours described in the leadership domains outlined in Figure 3. For instance, *creating the climate* for change draws strongly on the domains of managing meaning, influencing *people and building relationships*. Similarly *enabling and empowering the constituent parties on whom the change is dependent* also relies heavily on skills related with managing meaning, influencing people and delivering results. Finally *implementing and sustaining change* draws on those associated with all domains, but especially delivering results and making decisions.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools' (TDA) (2008) workforce re-modelling approach to change (see Figure 2) is particularly helpful in highlighting the fluctuating emotions which individuals experience during the change process.

Figure 2: TDA workforce re-modelling change process



Source: © TDA

The model identifies five stages of change, centring on:

- Mobilise: the school becomes aware of the need for change and is introduced to the re-modelling process and re-modelling tools.
- Discover: the school focuses on uncovering issues around workload and other school priorities.
- Deepen: the school acquires a greater understanding of the scale and scope of the changes that it needs to make and the challenges involved.
- Develop: the school analyses the root causes or 'drivers' of issues and prioritises those to be resolved.
- Deliver: plans formed in the 'develop' stage are confirmed and implemented.

Perhaps the main benefit of the model, however, is that it draws attention to the way in which individuals often experience an emotional dip when the true scale and significance of the change required becomes evident. Thus an emotional decline is seen to occur when one becomes more fully aware of one's limitations and the genuine scale of the task to be undertaken. In this respect, both highlight the need to demonstrate high levels of personalised support for individuals, which itself is seen as paramount in this aspect of collaborative leadership.

### An integrated model of collaborative leadership

Figure 3 integrates the various dimensions of collaborative leadership described above. It highlights how far from being contradictory, these various elements offer considerable synergy and coalesce around a number of key themes. These centre on the:

- need for leaders to effectively communicate with colleagues in general
- specific role leaders play in creating meaning and promoting understanding of the organisation's context (constitutive leadership)
- importance of promoting a collective moral purpose, centred round the needs of children and families
- significant part leaders' ethical behaviours play in helping to create meaning and demonstrating to others the collaborative approaches required and expected (ethical leadership)

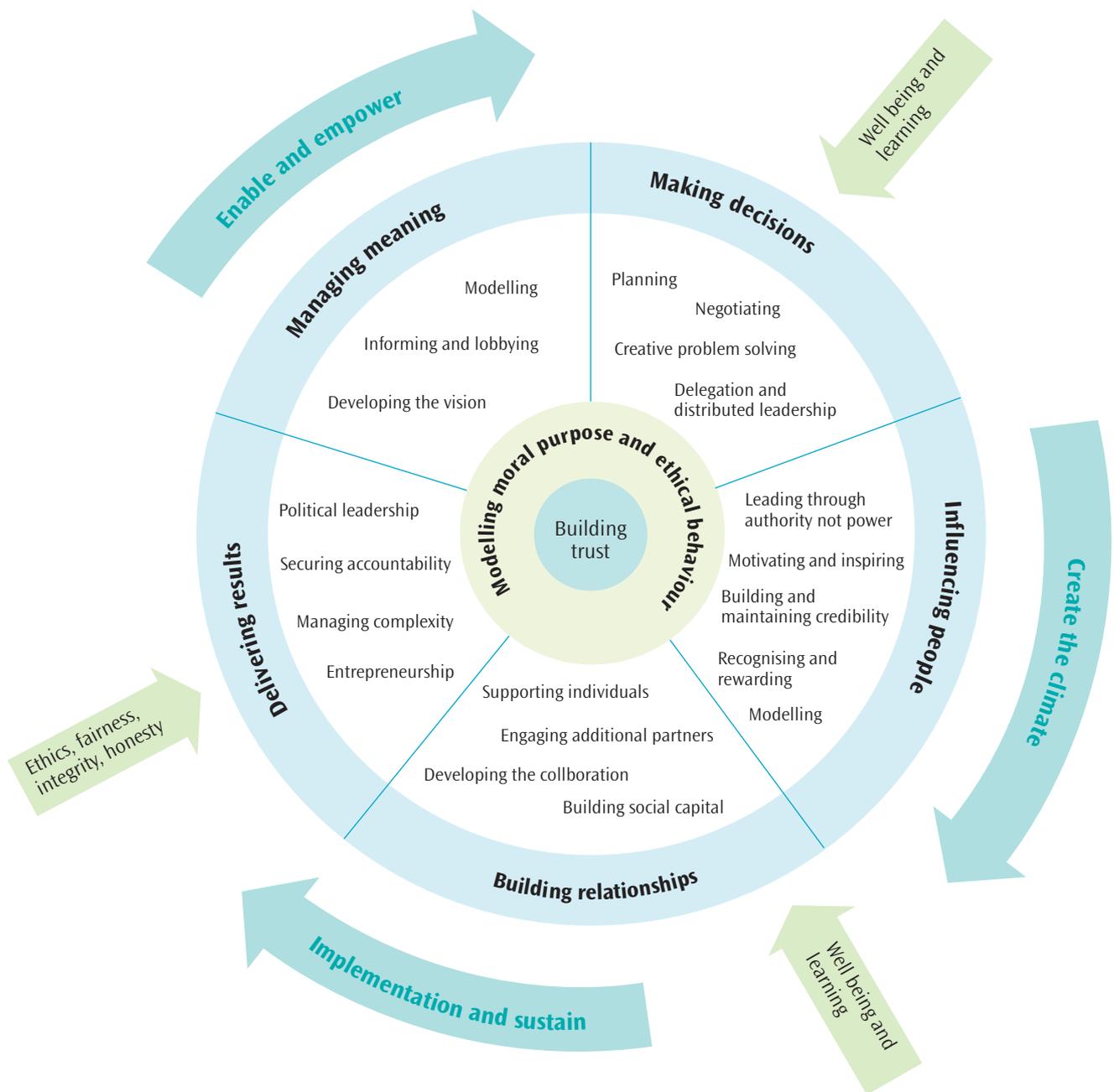


Figure 3: A trust-centred model of collaborative leadership [source: author]

The model demonstrates how the five leadership domains described above can be utilised to lead the collaboration, driven by a strong moral purpose centred on promoting the well-being and learning of children, achieved with high regard for ethics, fairness, integrity and honesty. Furthermore the model highlights how this will invariably involve an ongoing process of change, as the nature and focus of the collaboration evolves over time in response to the changing context it seeks to address.

At the heart of the model is a focus on building trust, the sine qua non of collaboration. As the next section of this report shows, a key element to this is the consistent modelling of moral purpose and ethical behaviour by leaders of the collaboration.

## Understanding perceptions of trust in collaborations

Trust is a concept which cuts across a number of disciplinary areas and partly for this reason, has no single universal definition (Creed & Miles 1996; Coulson 1998; Connell et al 2003). In broad terms, trust can be seen to have economic, psychological and sociological dimensions (Lewicki & Bunker 1996).

Nevertheless a number of elements appear frequently in the literature on trust and were recurrent themes in this study. These are:

- relationships and reciprocity
- reliability, competency and professionalism
- managing risk and vulnerability
- intuition
- integrity, benevolence, openness and honesty

More simply, Covey (2006) conceptualises trust as confidence in the integrity and abilities of others, and a relative lack of suspicion. In this way, trust can be viewed as combining aspects of both character and personal competence.

### Why is trust significant to school-based collaborations?

A considerable amount has been written on the importance of trust, both in general terms and within the specific context of collaboration. At its broadest level, trust can be viewed as fundamental to the very functioning of society (for example, Zucker 1986; Meyerson et al 1996; Bryk & Schneider 2002; Seashore Louis 2003). As Meyerson et al note:

There is no shortage of claims that trust is indispensable to social life: without the general trust that people have in each other, society itself would disintegrate, for very few relationships are based entirely upon what is known with certainty about another person and very few relationships would endure if trust were not as strong as, or stronger than, rational proof or personal observation. (Meyerson et al 1996: 180)

Recent interest in trust has also been driven by an increased focus on collaboration as a means of improving efficiency (for example, Findlater & Kelly 1999; Hudson et al 1999; Covey 2006) and addressing some of the broader issues which organisations are unable to tackle on their own (for example, van Eyk & Baum 2002; Connolly & James 2006). In the public sector, the latter of these factors is often underpinned by a strong sense of moral purpose (for example, Himmelman 1996; Huxham 1996), which coincidentally, is also seen to play a role in the promotion of trust (for example, Humphrey 1998; Lane 1998; Bryk & Schneider 2002).

The importance of trust to collaboration is summed up by Child (1998), who notes that:

Although research has identified many determinants of cooperation, virtually all scholars have agreed that one especially immediate antecedent is trust. (Child 1998: 242)

Similarly Hudson et al note that:

Trust is often identified as a sine qua non of successful collaboration and conversely mistrust as a primary barrier. (Hudson et al 1999: 709)

Figure 1 highlighted the various factors that influence the overall levels of success within collaborations. Trust was included as an aspect of membership relations but also cuts across several other areas more broadly.

Respondents in this study were universal in their view that trust was essential to collaboration for several reasons:

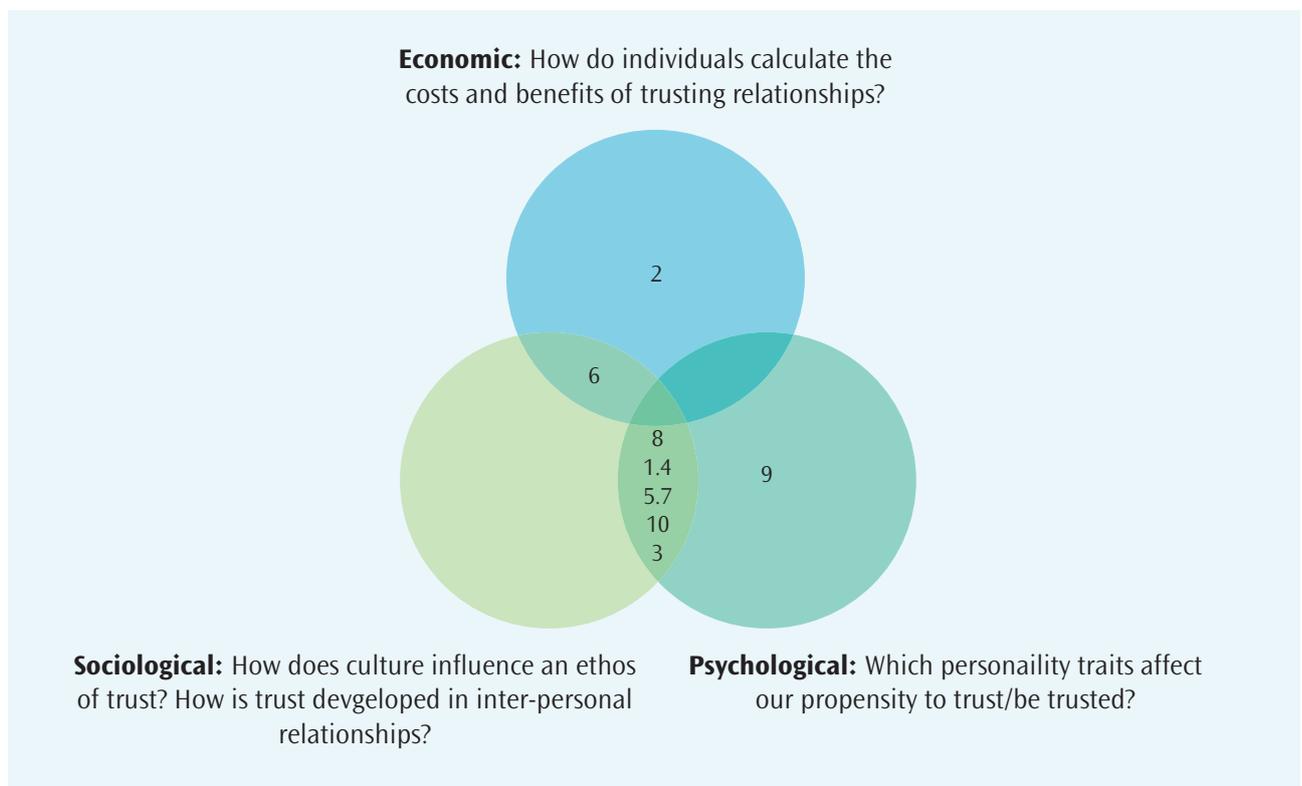
- trust was seen to improve performance including improved levels of functionality and increased competence
- trust also acted as a means of reducing mistakes by increasing confidence and reducing fear of errors, encouraging individuals to see them as learning opportunities

- trust supported the development of relationships and helped to overcome competition and suspicion, especially where this stemmed from a lack of familiarity
- trust directly benefited collaboration by supporting communication
- the presence of trust made it easier to discuss sensitive issues openly

### What factors promote trustworthiness in collaborations?

Trustworthiness represents the operationalisation of trust, that is, it is the ways in which the concept of trust relates to us at a personal level. In this respect, trust relates to the extent to which our behaviours, attitudes and approaches encourage others to place their trust in us. In this study, the main sources of trustworthiness centred on a number of key factors, shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Factors influencing trustworthiness [source: author]



#### Key:

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Openness and honesty                   | 6. Experience and testing             |
| 2. Competency, reliability and efficiency | 7. Shared values                      |
| 3. Confidentiality and discretion         | 8. Trusting others                    |
| 4. Personality, sociability and humour    | 9. Intuition and disposition to trust |
| 5. Supportiveness                         | 10. Listening                         |

Figure 4 summarises the various factors that inform perceptions of trustworthiness. As already noted, trust is a phenomenon of interest from economic, sociological and psychological perspectives, and this figure outlines the different interests from each of these viewpoints. It then attempts to map the various factors that influence levels of trustworthiness in relation to each of these dimensions. For instance, competency, reliability and efficiency can be viewed primarily as a driver of trust from an economic viewpoint, that is, its importance is most marked in relation to decisions to trust which are based on the relative benefits and costs of doing so. In contrast intuition and disposition to trust can be viewed as largely psychological in nature. The remaining factors are all viewed as being informed by a combination of perspectives, but most notably, sociological factors concerned with issues such as how an ethos of trust is developed and how trust develops within inter-personal relationships. Examples of these include openness and honesty, supportiveness and shared values.

The remaining part of this section discusses these various elements in more depth.

### **The ‘vision thing’ and communication**

A key factor in trustworthiness within the contexts explored in this work was the existence of a clear vision, shared by partners and which recognised the various interests of different groups. Listening to others and raising understanding and awareness of the overall goals across groups were also important. Effective communication is a key aspect of relational trust and many writers have identified several main drivers behind it. Foremost among these is the need to promote a common understanding between parties. Good (1988), for instance, notes that communication promotes collaboration, while Zucker (1986) has highlighted the importance of communication in establishing a shared base of knowledge, critical to the promotion of trust. Zucker also notes the importance of communication in bringing organisations together, by highlighting what they have in common rather than what divides them.

Conversely Covey (2006) has highlighted the benefits of actively seeking to establish individuals’ concerns and worries as a basis for overcoming doubt and resistance to change.

Kinship and professional groups can play an important role in promoting trust, based on personal connection and a degree of shared identity. For instance, Powell (1996) highlights how common membership of a professional community often provides an initial basis for engagement, and how trust can be based in ties of place and kinship. Hart (1988) has also noted the significance of kinship ties in the promotion of trust in economic exchanges. Kinship networks clearly have limitations, particularly when they are based on personal relationships. Furthermore in some cases kinship can effectively act as a barrier to the development of trust more broadly, for instance in relation to counter-cultures or organised crime (Gambetta 1988b). Nevertheless they can form a vital part of larger trust systems, particularly at the earlier stages of their development, through their offer of personal guarantee and in combination with other drivers of trust.

In instances where personal relationships are not present, individuals who act as a bridge between organisations can play a vital role in promoting trust. Sydow (1998) and Burt (2004) have both described the importance of such ‘boundary spanners’ in promoting trust in support of collaboration. Similarly Putnam’s work on social capital highlights the role boundary spanners play in promoting values, perspectives and networks which cross organisational divides in the longer-term interests of collaboration (Putnam 2000, 2003; see also Clark et al, 2001; Farrar & Bond, 2005; Johnson et al, 2005).

The psycho-dynamic element of communication has been explored by writers such as April (1999), Gambetta (1988a) and Pauleen (2003), each of whom has described the ways in which communication promotes an emotional bond between individuals, by increasing understanding of individuals’ motivations.

This work is helpful in connecting psychological and sociological perspectives, by highlighting one of the means through which personal and professional relationships blur. Openness and honesty are significant factors, as is demonstrating a willingness to listen and to show respect for confidentiality and discretion.

### Professionalism

Reliability, competency and efficiency are part of a broader sub-set of behaviours associated with professionalism. Clearly each of these aspects is heavily informed by an individual's conceptions of another's role, and expectations of how this role is manifest on a day-to-day basis. These expectations can be considered in terms of our perceptions of an other's competency, openness, relevant concern and reliability (Lane 1998). In this respect then, clear role expectations support trusting relationships and gaining sufficient understanding of the context individuals operate in will promote conditions conducive for trust (Daines & Chapman 2007). For leaders, one manifestation of this was having a clear vision and the strength of character to stick with this when times got tough.

Reputation connects closely with expectations and is critical in decisions as to whether or not to trust others (Good 1988). Clearly, then, building a strong reputation for being a trustworthy leader is critically important. Reputation is built through our actions over time and is based on our background, culture, class, family line, perceived motivations and predispositions (Dasgupta 1988). It is informed by our perceived level of competence (Tyler & Kramer 1996; Snaveley & Tracy 2002) but may not always be positive. Indeed the issue of perception is critical and we are not always able to control the development of our reputation.

### Testing trust

As noted earlier, a major theme emerging from this study relates to the importance of testing trust and displaying competence over time.

Building trust slowly over time was viewed as especially important in gaining the confidence of deprived communities, which have often been let down in the past. Consistently demonstrating reliability and the ability to deliver is critical in gaining the confidence of others and builds on points already made around the need for professionalism. Communities' suspicion of service providers demonstrates well the effect of transference in the development of trusting relationships. Transference focuses on how subconscious decisions to trust are informed by the degree of perceived similarity between current context and previous experiences (Maccoby 2004).

### Time

A number of writers highlight how trust develops and strengthens over time, as its basis changes. In essence such models are helpful in describing how trust changes from being based on calculations of potential risks and benefits, to being based on a stronger, deeper and more meaningful respect and understanding of the individual and organisation involved.

For instance, Figure 5 summarises Bottery's (2005) model of trust. In this, Bottery describes how trust between newly or barely acquainted individuals will often start life based on a calculation of the potential costs and benefits of the engagement, essentially acting as a means for managing risk (calculative). Role-based trust extends and deepens this, by drawing on the values, education, attitudes and culture associated with different roles to inform the calculative process. In essence role-based trust utilises the notion that specific personal or professional roles come with a set of assurances, for instance that police officers, social workers or teachers are within their professional sphere, almost by definition, trustworthy. Thus it provides additional information that we can use to judge the relative wisdom of decisions to trust.

Role-based trust is helpful in promoting the importance of values in trustworthiness and provides a useful link into the notion of practice-based trust.

This relates to how, over time and through repeated exposure, levels of trust may rise and become increasingly based on the recognition of shared values, beliefs and attitudes. At the same time, the degree of emotional investment may increase as a result of greater interpersonal understanding and positive outcomes from situations in which it is tested (practice). For instance, practice trust may develop between professionals who work together and provides one means of differentiating between those we rate highly and those we are less impressed by. So it represents a deeper and more particular form of trust to the general perspective offered by role-based trust. Thus I may trust all police officers in general, but through my close working relationships with a specific officer, I am more willing to trust them in relation to more sensitive matters. In this respect, then, practice trust represents a form of discretionary trust.

The final notion of identificatory trust is the deepest, highest form of trust and may be developed over a more considerable period of time and through meaningful collaborative working. It is based on a high degree of understanding and empathy for others' values, beliefs and goals and is exemplified by an almost intuitive knowledge of how others may respond to different situations. So in schools where multi-agency working has been the norm for a considerable time, staff may demonstrate a truly extensive understanding of the nuances and practicalities of other professional roles. Furthermore co-located staff may articulate the subtleties of the mission and goals in similar ways, using similar language. Thus the overarching purpose of their respective professional groups may be contextualised in a specific and shared way. In this respect, there will be a high degree of consistency in their views of the issues relating to specific students and the support needed to address these.

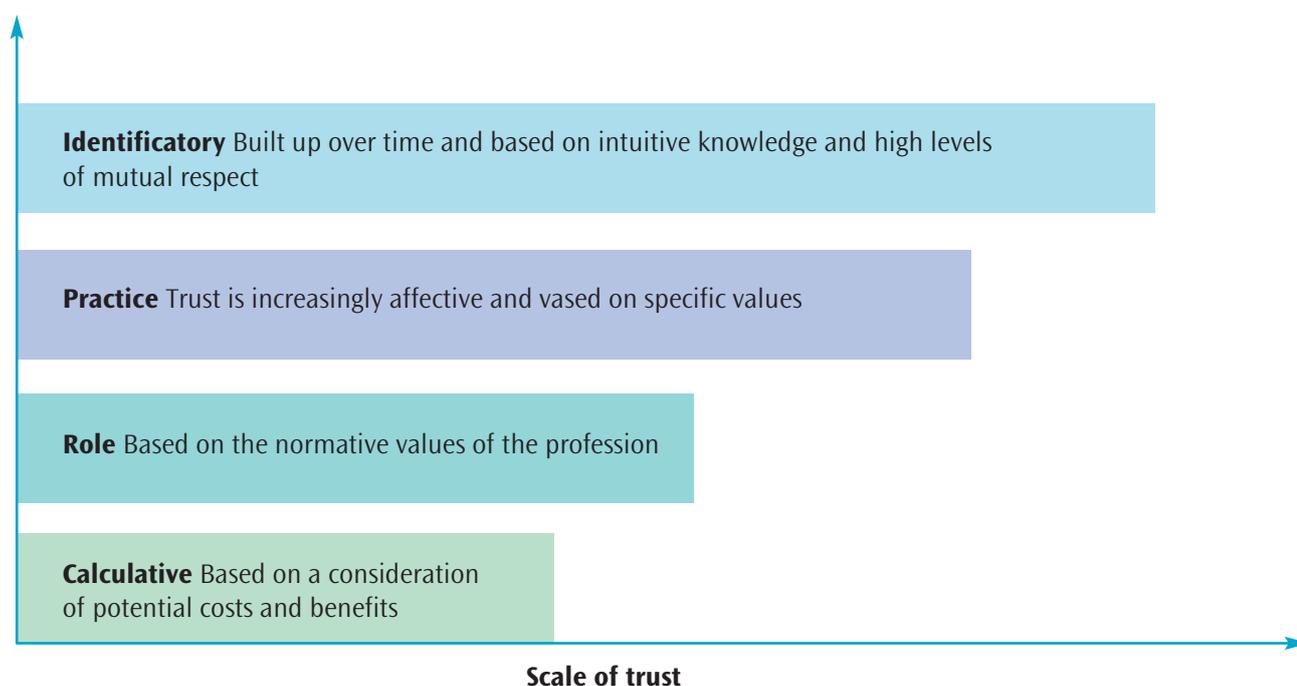


Figure 5: Bottery's stages of trust development [source: Bottery 2005]

A key feature of evolutionary models of trust is that they do not presuppose that trust must pass through all through stages over time in order to reach some sense of actualisation. Equally, models such as Bottery's are not value-loaded insofar as they are not intended to imply that it is necessary in all relationships to strive for identificatory trust. Indeed many working relationships will not pass beyond practice or even role-based trust and function perfectly well. In the context of this work, additional factors that supported increased familiarity included the presence of a consistent single designated contact point, shared training and awareness-building sessions and opportunities to mix informally.

### Working together

As indicated above, trust is often seen to develop through the process of collaborative working. In this respect, it is actually by co-operating on specific areas of work that familiarity, understanding and respect may emerge, thus providing the stimuli for trust to develop.

Huxham and Vangen (2005) estimate that it typically takes 2.5 years for relationships to become sufficiently well established and trusting to support effective collaborative working, unless there is an existing history of collaboration. They describe a trust-building loop (Figure 6) through which trust is initially established and subsequently developed. Central to this process is a strategy of building trust incrementally by managing risk and achieving small wins. This work is especially helpful in providing insight into how managers can raise the odds and the scale of the chance they take. By carefully managing their stake they can display greater trust in others while retaining a core reserve of 'stock', thereby avoiding the threat of overall 'bankruptcy'. This provides some explanation and further evidence for stage-based theories, offering a process by which both the depth of relationship and level of dependency can be increased.

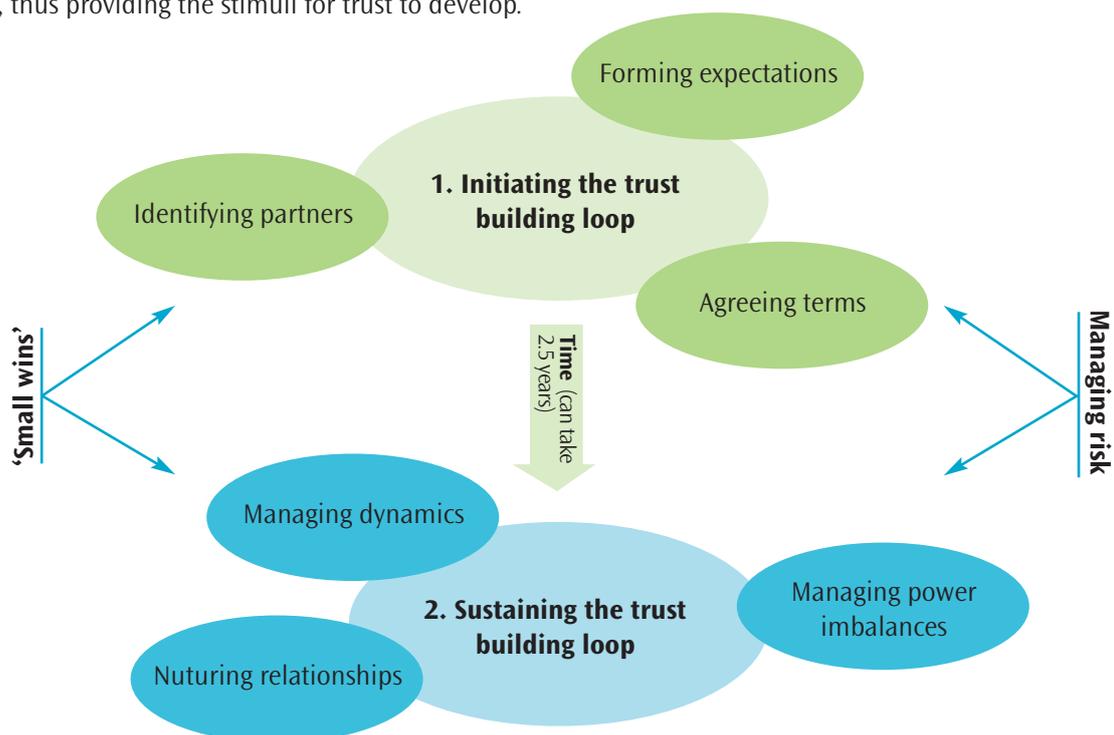


Figure 6: Vangen and Huxham's 'Trust-building loop' [source: Vangen and Huxham 2005]

## Other individual factors: personality, traits and behaviours

A wide range of personal factors influences the development of trust. Aspects of many of these have already been explored in relation to professionalism. However, the following are worthy of further consideration.

### Morality and ethics

Perhaps foremost among these are the notions of morality and ethics. The extent to which an individual's actions are seen to be ethical and informed by a broader moral purpose is a major factor in trustworthiness.

As Gandhi notes:

... the moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted.  
(Mahatma Gandhi, quoted in Covey 2006: 8)

Gambetta (1988c) notes that our treatment of others, ethical values and religious outlook can all be major factors in the degree to which we are seen as trustworthy. Seashore Louis (2003) and Tyler and Kramer (1996) have also noted how morality can be significant in promoting trustworthiness, while Tyler and Degoe (1996) have described how a belief in a moral basis for action makes individuals more likely to accept the decisions, judgements and actions of authority figures. A major challenge relates to the definition of ethical behaviour and the degree to which 'common' values genuinely exist. However, evidence from this study indicates that it is easy to overstate the degree of variation that may exist between professional groups. Instead the focus on valuing children, promoting learning and protecting the welfare of families is a common bond that runs across all groups involved in the study.

### Personability and 'mundane' leadership

Personability, sociability and humour are all major elements in the development of interpersonal relationships. Being genuinely interested in the well-being of others is a strong theme in this.

Caring for others is indicative of a broader supportiveness, which is important in establishing both personal and professional trust. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003), in particular, have highlighted the importance for leaders of paying particular attention to seemingly 'small' and less significant aspects of their work, such as enjoying informal conversations with subordinates and demonstrating the time and willingness to listen to the views of others. Alvesson and Sveningsson found this to be particularly important in contexts where task complexity is such that leaders may have difficulties in understanding and intervening in the work processes themselves, for instance in relation to managing professionals from different disciplines. On a related theme, they also highlight the importance of 'management by walking around' in the promotion of trust and a broader positive working atmosphere:

Managers walking around informally, listening and talking to their subordinates, and cheering them up may have a positive influence on the work environment and may even facilitate creativity.  
(Alvesson & Sveningsson 2003: 1451)

Several respondents highlighted how leaders had demonstrated this in the past and that this had positively impacted on their perceived trustworthiness. A common aspect of this identified in this study relates to coaching others, helping individuals to work through their problems and not simply offering ready-made solutions.

### Other personal traits, characteristics and behaviours

A range of other traits, characteristics and behaviours consistently emerge as important in this work.

A number of other characteristics were identified by participants and included having a sufficiently tough skin to overcome obstacles to the collaboration, and more generally working to provide the resources needed for it to flourish. Wisdom, honesty, commitment and modesty were also all highlighted.

A small number of respondents used the term ‘gentleman’ [sic] as a means of combining these characteristics, which were more broadly seen as being the antithesis of stereotypical notions of ‘the great leader’.

The *intuitive* nature of trustworthiness was highlighted by a significant number of respondents who indicated that ‘you instinctively know whether you can trust someone or not’. This type of judgement seems quite superficial and based on a subconscious interpretation of subtle keys and signs.

Disposition to trust varies between individuals and several writers have highlighted how this is influenced by cognitive and affective states, which in turn are based on more general beliefs about the treatment we expect to receive from others (Mayer et al 1995; Costa 2003). These beliefs are not static but are influenced by our life experiences, cultural background, education and several other socio-economic factors (Costa 2003). As a result, our propensity to trust can change over time and vary between context, providing further evidence of the socially constructed nature of trust. As already noted, the degree of power and control we retain can also be an important factor in this (Sydow 1998). There is a strong connection between our disposition to trust and the behaviours we demonstrate to others, which in turn affects the treatment we receive (Meyerson et al 1996). Möllering notes how this can lead to the development of a virtuous circle, where trusting behaviour is reciprocated by the other (2005).

While recognising the significance of disposition in decisions to trust, it is important not to overstate its importance. Indeed to do so runs the risk of portraying an overly deterministic view of trust development. Instead, it is safer to view the development of trust as a more iterative process involving both personality and reflection on experience. Thus while intuition and first impression count for a lot, having a supportive nature, trusting others and being reliable and professional appear to be equally as important in promoting trustworthiness.

## Behaviours

As already noted, modelling trusting and trustworthy behaviour is a fundamentally important driver of trust (for example, Gambetta 1988a; Mayer et al 1995). Demonstrating efficiency and professionalism is also critical. Similarly, acting with integrity and out of regard for others and not personal gain helps to promote trust, especially when a commitment to organisational fairness is also evidenced (for example, Tyler & Degoey 1996; Seashore Louis 2003). Communication-related issues have been explored already, for instance in relation to openness and honesty.

## Other factors

As noted at the start of this chapter, the wider societal and organisational culture can play a major role in informing the development of trust. The importance of context is also a major theme within sociological considerations of the issue. Implicit within this is the belief that trust is socially constructed (Kramer et al 1996; Child 1998; Doney et al 1998), that is, created by groups of individuals in ways which are sensitive to the specific situation they exist in. As Creed and Miles note:

... trust is embedded in the broader social fabric of a society and varies across communities and states, and from time to time within communities and states. (Creed & Miles 1996: 18–19)

The focus on context is helpful in promoting understanding of the myriad of subtle sensitivities that promote and inhibit trust at the micro level.

A key contextual driver of trust is one’s individual, organisational and national experience of trust. For instance Bijlsma and Koopman (2003) have highlighted the general significance of one’s own past experiences, while Galford and Seibold Drapeau (2003) have described the importance of ‘long memories’ of organisations and stated that ‘If people think the organisation acted in bad faith, they’ll rarely forgive and they’ll never forget’ (Galford & Seibold Drapeau 2003: 89–90).

In this study, a history of collaborative working at the local level, stemming from a collective recognition of the need to respond to local issues, was a major advantage. Where schools invited partners to support such efforts, it demonstrated a valuing of their contribution and a degree of good will.

The connection between social capital and trust has been touched on elsewhere in this report in relation to organisation culture. At the national level, writers such as Coleman (1988), Putnam (2003) and Snavely and Tracy (2002) have described the importance of collective norms and values in establishing a sense of community and promoting an inclusive culture.

### Organisational culture

Writers such as Sitkin and George (2005) have described how a real or imagined threat has historically been used at both organisation and national level to promote trust in authority. For instance, the prospect of hostile takeover or attack by a foreign power can be used to encourage the ‘closing of ranks’ and the emergence of a siege mentality, based on mutual reliance and common interest. In this study, necessity was connected with the need to address current political and national priorities, not least around Every Child Matters. For instance, one headteacher highlighted how policies on inclusive education had proved a catalyst for change locally, and provided a mandate for him to develop services which he intrinsically felt were important and he would have sought to develop in any case:

‘Since 1997 when the new government came into power, it had been clear that special schools had to change if they were going to survive. They had to serve a wider client group, help the community as a whole. This was clear in the inclusive education Green Paper on special needs, published in 1997. This message had really hit home to staff and they understood why we were doing what we were doing. They were happy to go along with what we were doing.’ (headteacher)

The prevailing organisational culture is also a significant factor in the development of trust. As noted, elements within this that are important include the presence of a perceived threat and necessity. Other factors, however, include:

- a general sense of benevolence
- a clear moral purpose and customer focus
- clear common goals and objectives
- transparency, openness and effective communication
- inclusiveness and sharing leadership
- respect and valuing of staff and students
- efficiency and reliability

In this study, sharing and distributing leadership was highlighted as an important mechanism for promoting the desired ethos within which trust might flourish. Strategies for *recruiting staff* were also important. Core to this was selecting individuals who are sympathetic to the overall aims of the organisation. In broader terms the focus on empowering staff shows a willingness to trust others, which in turn is consistent with modelling trustworthiness.

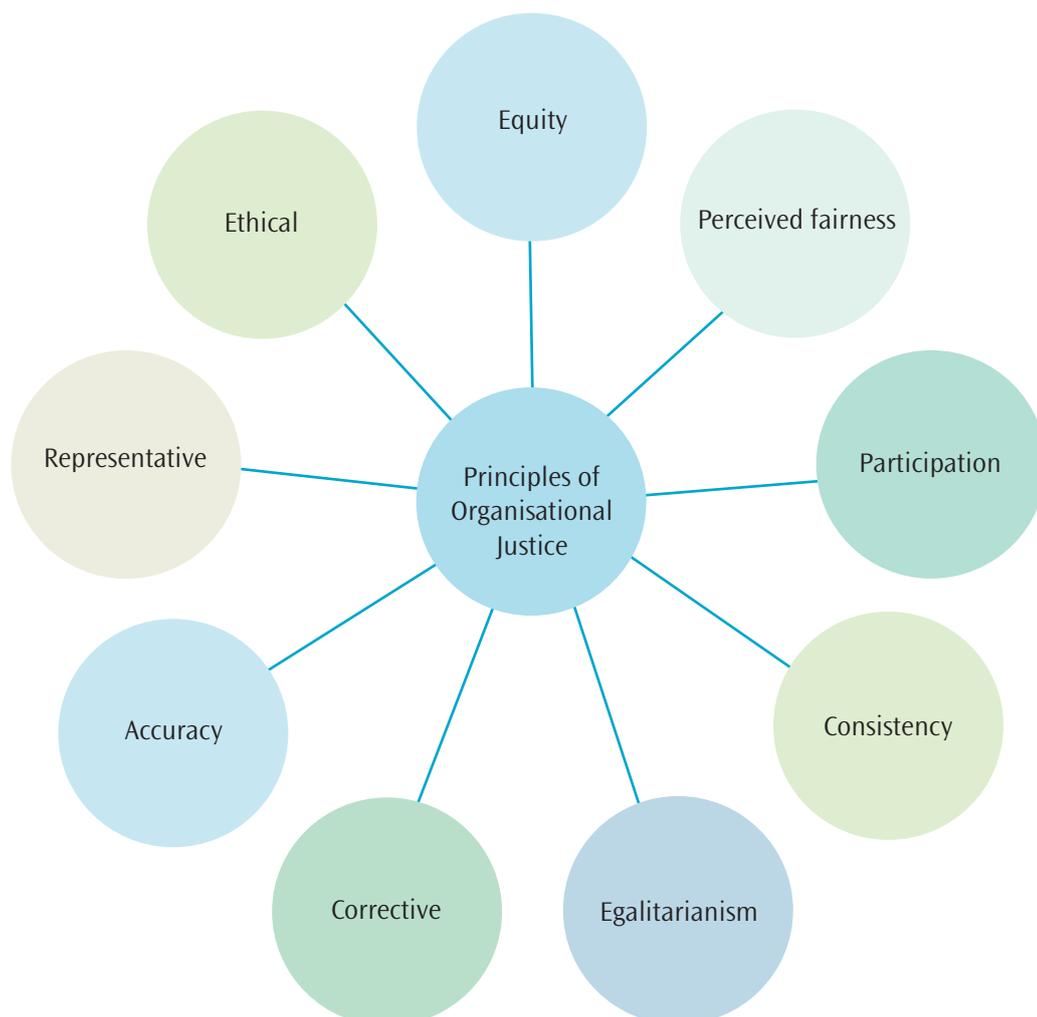
### Structural factors

A range of structural factors also promotes trust in organisations. For instance, Sitkin and George (2005) have highlighted how reliance on either cultural or structural factors can be informed by the perceived level of threat, while Connell et al (2003) have drawn attention to the importance of perceived levels of both formal and informal support as important predictors of trust. In this study, service level agreements and working protocols were seen to provide a helpful structure to support ‘softer’ more informal elements of working practice which were trust-based, for instance in relation to running meetings.

*Organisational justice* is a concept that covers both structural and cultural aspects of organisation life. At the heart of this is the extent to which an institution is seen to act in a fair and ethical way.

Hoy and Tarter (2004) see trust and organisational justice as inextricably linked, and identify 10 principles which underpin this concept (see Figure 7). These centre round the extent to which the organisation is perceived by its employees to be fair, ethical, inclusive and morally driven. Again, the notions of fairness and ethical behaviour are crucial factors in the development of trust.

*Figure 7: Principles of organisational justice [source: Hoy and Tarter 2004]*



## Trustworthiness of leaders

Tschannen-Moran (2004) identifies five facets of trust, which underpin the trustworthiness of all:

- benevolence
- honesty
- openness
- reliability
- competence

For school leaders, these in turn drive a number of important principles as to how leaders should behave on a day-to-day basis. These centre on:

- developing and modelling the vision
- developing the context within which others can help to realise the vision

- mediating in instances where trust breaks down
- putting the culture of trust ahead of their own needs by leading quietly
- fostering trust by promoting flexibility, problem solving and including others in decisions
- offering an appropriate degree of challenge to staff

Reina and Reina's (1999) work connects with several of these themes. They identify three different types of trust (see Table 2), which are underpinned by the consistent display of competence and benevolence. The strongly moral dimension of several of these elements is immediately apparent, as they centre on honesty, integrity and mutual support.

**Table 2: Aspects of relational/transactional trust in ethical leadership**

Competence trust	Respect people's knowledge, skills and abilities Respect people's judgement Involve others and seek their input Help people learn skills
Contractual trust	Manage expectations Establish boundaries Delegate appropriately Encourage mutually serving intentions Honour agreements Be consistent
Communication trust	Share information Tell the truth Admit mistakes Give and receive constructive feedback Maintain confidentiality Speak with good purpose

The findings from this study are consistent with Tschannen-Moran's (2004) and Reina and Reina's (1999) findings. It found that in general, each of the general factors in trustworthiness also applies to leaders.

Of foremost importance is the greater emphasis placed on the leader to promote and display *moral purpose* which has already been touched on earlier in this discussion. In this study, the moral basis for teaching, social work, healthcare etc was highlighted by many respondents, with a frequent reflection being that they certainly were not in it just for the money. As may be expected, the focus for this moral purpose centred on improving the lives of children.

In this context, moral purpose centres on meeting the needs of children in the first instance, although for social workers there was also a commitment to supporting families in need more broadly:

'Position and standing is a factor, but not the biggest factor. What encourages me to trust someone is around whether they have similar beliefs and values to me, is there a common understanding between us around that. And that can be based on the words people use which you can immediately associate with. So for instance, where I sit in social care it may involve people having sympathy with families in difficult positions. If you hear an educational profession talk sympathetically and with understanding about the difficulties a parent faces and how this prevents them understanding and meeting the child's needs from education, I would warm to that person more quickly than someone who was quite dismissive of their situation.' (social worker)

**Respectfulness** is important for several different reasons. Perhaps foremost among these is the need for mutual respect, based on valuing and confidence in each other's abilities to fulfil the demands of their role. Consistently demonstrating respect for clients and children is also critical. This clearly links with

authenticity, highlighting again the need to model and demonstrate behaviours that are commensurate with leaders' espoused moral vision. In instances where this was not present, followers' trust could be compromised.

**Integrity** also connects strongly with core beliefs and morality. Headteachers in particular were clear that demonstrating integrity meant retaining a focus on what was important to the children, regardless of the distractions and demands placed on schools by others.

**Communication** involved displaying an openness to the views of others. This formed part of a broader valuing of colleagues, which in turn was viewed as reflecting integrity and trust. It also centred on leaders regularly and clearly relaying their expectations to staff. In this study, one of the most commonly noted aspects of leaders' communication related to consulting and engaging others. This builds on responses in other areas, which stressed the importance of valuing and listening to others. Other elements involved raising understanding of the collaboration and the role of other professionals, and encouraging connections and communication between different groups.

As indicated already, communication connects with many areas of leadership and trust theory. The need to establish a clear morally based vision is especially resonant of transformation leadership, however, which is fundamentally predicated on the presence of a shared deep-seated belief and goal. It relates strongly to the second and third of Bass's 'four Is', these being inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation.

In the empirical study, the notion of supportiveness was less frequently highlighted as important to the trustworthiness of leaders than it was for colleagues as a whole. However, it remained significant in relation to initiating and brokering the partnership, and promoting its common purpose. Similarly the head plays a key role in promoting buy-in to the collaboration within their own organisation and 'unblocking obstacles' to its work.

## Stimulating trust

One of the ongoing debates among writers on trust is whether trust can be proactively created, or can only grow organically. This debate is clearly relevant to the context of school-based collaborations that essentially have to hit the ground running in terms of their ability to deliver.

The notion of *swift trust* has been developed by writers such as Tyler and Kramer (1996) and Meyerson et al (1996) to describe contexts within which trust is seen to develop particularly quickly.

Pauleen (2003) describes this as the means through which specific tasks may be completed, based on a calculated view of potential gain and loss, rather than the presence of a trusting relationship. Swift trust can be seen as a pragmatic strategy for managing uncertainty within complex systems, where relative strangers must co-operate to complete complicated, interdependent tasks, but where the organisation itself lacks some of the institutional structures which offer safeguards in this respect. Clearly this description applies to the delivery of extended services and school-based collaboration more broadly.

Meyerson et al (1996) view swift trust as developed by a highly active, enthusiastic, generative style of action, rather than a more calculated and measured approach consistent with calculative trust. In essence then swift trust is dependent on the competent completion of tasks and consistent demonstration of behaviour commensurate with an individual's occupational role. Swift trust is therefore more strongly associated with professional rather than personal qualities. Thus while its depth and longevity may be limited, its immediate utility is high.

Covey's (2006) notion of *smart trust* takes an alternative perspective, by highlighting the role of the leader in promoting trust, by demonstrating a willingness to trust others, where circumstances allow.

Covey notes that creating trust in organisations is effectively the *raison d'être* of leaders, stating that:

*The number one job of any leader is to inspire trust. It's to release the creativity and capacity of individuals to give their best and to create a high-trust environment in which they can effectively work with others.*  
(Covey 2006: 298)

For Covey, smart trust combines a leader's essential willingness to extend trust in principle, with their effective judgement of the risks and opportunity involved in any given situation. The issue of judgement is critical of course: misreading the situation can result in blind trust which leaves the leader and others concerned in a potentially vulnerable position.

Both swift trust and smart trust are helpful in explaining how some collaborations can quickly reach the level of understanding and trust needed to effectively deliver results. However, views are mixed on this and some writers are sceptical as to whether it is in fact possible to effectively stimulate trust. For instance, writers such as Good (1988), Gambetta (1988c) and Humphrey (1998) have expressed the view that trust is only built incrementally, through repeated exposure and a willingness to avoid opportunistic and defensive patterns of behaviour.

## Implications for leadership practice

This section attempts to highlight the implications for leaders that have emerged from this work, by offering a series of questions for reflection, on the following:

- moral purpose
- communication
- demonstrating personal commitment
- promoting connections

### Moral purpose

Establishing a genuinely collective moral purpose is important in promoting a shared mission, which takes precedence over personal interest and provides a basis for collective action:

- To what extent is your school's vision based on a clearly articulated moral purpose?
- How far does that purpose focus on the needs of children?
- Who developed this vision?
- Did all staff have the chance to contribute their thoughts?
- Is the vision broadly owned across the school/collaboration?

### Communication

Trust is supported by ongoing discussion and, wherever possible, the open sharing of information:

- Do processes exist to promote communication and protect confidentiality?
- Are sufficient opportunities provided for individuals to debate both the strategic and operational factors that affect them?
- Do you demonstrate a willingness to listen to the views of others?
- Are staff kept informed and aware of relevant developments at all time?

### Demonstrating personal commitment

Consistently demonstrating your personal commitment to the collaboration is critical in encouraging others to value it too.

- As a leader, do you consistently communicate your commitment to this moral purpose through word and deed?
- Do you demonstrate ethical behaviour at all times for its own sake, not just as a means of achieving the overarching goal?
- Do you clearly value the contributions of all staff?
- Do you demonstrate patience and understanding with staff and others at all times?

### Promoting connections

- Do you encourage staff in your organisation and beyond to connect both formally and informally to develop understanding and personal connections? Do you actively demonstrate your support for this?
- Do you proactively broker new relationships, acting as a guarantor?
- Are you, in general, sufficiently visible on the 'shop floor' of your school?

## Conclusions

This report has considered the views of participants from the study and the main findings from literature published on trust. It has identified the different elements of collaborative leadership, and in doing so, drawn particular attention to the significance of 'softer', values-based leadership skills, strategies and approaches.

The discussion has demonstrated how leadership of collaborations depends less on hierarchical sources of power and instead draws more on moral purpose and professional authority. In the context of schools, this sees leadership place particular emphasis on promoting the well-being of children and families.

Evidence in this report has shown how trust is fundamentally critical in the leadership of collaborations. It has highlighted how the notion of added value and collaborative advantage can only be secured through the development of a culture of mutual reliance and collective buy-in. Furthermore it has demonstrated how the dynamic and fluid nature of collaborations reduces the potential scope for developing formal processes and structures to legislate for all activities. In this respect, trust is critical at the 'margins' of partnership work, for it is here that collaborations become most dependent on the interpersonal aspect.

We have seen the multifaceted nature of trust, and identified its sociological, psychological and economic influences. Furthermore, trust is informed by a combination of personal, inter-personal, organisational and societal factors. Unsurprisingly, any individual's disposition to trusting is therefore unique. Furthermore there is considerable evidence to indicate that the nature and depth of trust changes as familiarity and understanding increases.

Given this sensitivity to context, no single approach can be guaranteed to secure an individual's trust. However, a range of factors consistently emerges as important in this. Two aspects are foremost among these.

Firstly, given the almost voluntary nature of trust, securing the hearts and minds of followers is paramount. Thus effective communication in all its forms becomes imperative. At the heart of this is the need for leaders to help followers make sense of their context, most notably the imperative behind the partnership and their role within it. For schools and other public sector partners, highlighting the moral purpose behind collaborative working is essential.

A second and closely related point concerns the need for the leader to demonstrate their own personal commitment to partnership working and the cause of the collaboration. Here then, merely espousing the moral purpose is insufficient. Instead the leader must demonstrate the behaviours, values and beliefs required on a day-to-day basis. They must in essence embody the spirit of partnership working, striving to achieve the moral purpose through ethical means. Thus the medium becomes the message.

In terms of specific actions for leaders, several areas for focus are highlighted in this report. These are as follows.

Promoting effective communication and confidentiality are critical to ensuring that the maximum leverage from this is secured. Particular attention needs to be given to 'low-level' exchanges that are critical to the ongoing development of trust in leaders among subordinates.

Managing meaning is fundamental to promoting trust. Aspects of this relate to promoting and protecting individuals' reputations and demonstrating a commitment to the principles and practices of ethical leadership. Promoting common understanding of the moral purpose of the partnership and a consistent view of the core aims and objectives is key.

While some aspects of professional culture differ between key groups in schools, these are, in truth relatively small. Instead then leaders of collaborations need to focus on those elements of values and professionalism that bring people together.

Having an awareness of the factors that promote trust is important for leaders. On a practical level this involves managing areas of complexity and addressing competing tensions. Furthermore it involves recognising that trust is not always based on 'logical', 'reasonable' or 'rational' sources. Thus leaders must display patience and understanding of others, utilising a range of approaches to persuade and encourage their active support. It is in terms of the specific approaches and strategies that leaders adopt to address these factors that future research should be directed.

Finally it is arguably impossible to differentiate between notions of professional and personal trust – indeed this differentiation is hardly (if at all) used in this report. Thus providing opportunities for informal interaction and promoting proximity are critical to ensuring its development. While 'what' we are may play a significant part in the early development of trust, it is ultimately an understanding of 'who' we are which forms the foundations for our most durable and enduring relationships, and which, in turn may provide the basis for sustainable partnership working which can make the most difference to the lives of the children we serve.

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