Participatory evaluation: navigating the emotions of partnerships

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Abstract

This paper describes the processes involved in evaluating a Sure Start programme in one inner city area. The evaluation was set up in the spirit of participatory action research in which the researchers aimed to work in partnership with key stakeholders to both enable and sustain supportive evaluative processes. The evaluation supported the aspirations espoused by the national Sure Start agenda to improve the lives of children under 4, their parents and communities through an expressed commitment to partnership working. The paper draws on ethnographic reflections to describe and analyse the processes involved in setting up the evaluation over two years.

Issues of trust, ambiguity and conflict associated with partnership working are explored. In particular the emotional components of relationships required to work in partnership are described as a means of managing ambiguity and conflict and promoting trust. Emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) is taken as a conceptual starting point to analyse the relationships and the organisational conditions required to sustain partnerships. Further psychoanalytic and sociological studies are drawn upon to aid the analysis and in particular to understand the emotional components of partnerships in the relatively uncharted waters of inner city regeneration work.

Introduction

This paper describes the experience of participatory evaluation of a Sure Start programme for the under-fours and their parents in a socially diverse and deprived inner city area. An overview is given of the origins and aspirations of Sure Start and the influences these have had on subsequent service development, innovation, implementation and evaluation. A university team with experience of clinical research and participatory action research methodologies undertook the evaluation.

The central focus of the paper is on ethnographic reflections inspired by the extended case as a method to understand the macro (e.g. national Sure Start policy which emphasises collaboration and partnerships) through a micro level account of its local implementation and evaluation (Burawoy 1991). The meaning of partnerships in relation to participatory evaluation is explored against a background of local and national politics, social deprivation and rapid change. For the purposes of this paper the "case" and associated data are defined as the partnership between the local Sure Start and external evaluation teams and the processes involved in setting up an evaluation over a two-year period (2002-2004).

Sure Start outcomes are geared to improving the provision of quality childcare, improving the learning, social and emotional development of the under-fours and strengthening families and communities. Processes required to achieve these outcomes involve multi-professional and multi-agency collaboration and partnership, parent participation and mainstreaming. Since this paper was first conceived changes have been announced suggesting that national Sure Start programmes are likely to be abolished in their current form (Glass 2005).

Analysis of process data revealed that as a consequence of partnerships a number of issues were identified at the level of individual and group relationships which in turn required to be emotionally managed and navigated by the teams. Issues of trust, ambiguity and conflict within relationships and partnerships (Lorentz 1989, Mackintosh 1992) were identified from the literature as having particular relevance to the discussion.

The analysis of individual and group relationships and the navigation of emotions by the teams in negotiating partnerships drew inspiration from a number of key texts. For example Hochschild (1983) developed the notion of emotional labour as a conceptual device to explore the feeling rules within organisations required to sustain relationships in situations that were often demanding and difficult. More recent examples include Pescosolido's (2002) account of the emergence of leaders to manage group emotions particularly in times of ambiguity; the recognition and use of emotions as integral to emotional intelligence at an individual and organisational level to solve problems, facilitate learning and manage change (Goleman 1995, Huy 1999); and the identification of "emotions as the central tenet in the future of organisations" (Raffaeli and Worline 2001:112).

Further studies have explored the emotional component of public sector "care workers" including nurses (Smith 1992, James 1993, Bolton 2000), the complex relationships between individual

practitioners and organisations associated with the development of new nursing roles (Franks and Smith, 2002)) social workers (Aldridge 1994) and midwives (Hunter 2004). Few studies have described the emotional labour associated with inner city regeneration work and the conditions required to sustain it (see for example Froggett and Chamberlayne 2004).

The current paper offers tentative connections between the emotional labour and emotional intelligence required for health and social workers in new management roles to develop complex partnerships in the field of inner city regeneration as glimpsed through an evaluator's lens.

Background

Sure Start is part of a wider government agenda to promote social inclusion by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support in innovative and participatory ways. Like many of New Labour's initiatives Sure Start had its origins in the USA where programmes such as Head Start were implemented to close the gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (Garces et al 2000). The first Sure Start programmes, known as "Trailblazers" were introduced in 1998. The focus of the programmes was on the development of positive parent-child relationships supported by an integrated approach to health, education and social services to promote healthy living and quality education so that children would flourish at home and later when they went to school. Over 500 programmes were established and a variety of arrangements were made to implement and manage the services.

From 2002, there was a shift in emphasis away from relationships between children and parents to the provision of parent training and childcare to improve parents' employability and reduce child poverty. The National Sure Start Unit subsequently moved its base to the Departments for Education and Skills, Works and Pensions. The rationale for the shift was supported by research which showed the importance of increasing parental income by appropriate support (Benjamin and Inman 2003) and the findings of a government review suggesting early childcare is best delivered through an integrated approach to health, education and family support (DfSE 2002). The review resulted in plans to fund additional services including the development of Children's Centres with the recommendation Sure Start expand its remit to lead these initiatives. Recent announcements however, throw doubts on such proposals.

The aspirations of Sure Start are commendable: getting children and their parents out of poverty. However, the work required to do this is complex, challenging and at times chaotic as workers navigate and negotiate new ways of working across multi-professional and multi-agency boundaries. Since its 1998 inception Sure Start has undergone frequent changes in national policy which have impacted on local programmes to create a climate of uncertainty, which in turn militates against implementation, integration and consolidation of new ideas.

Evaluation is integral to Sure Start and a government funded national evaluation unit (NESS) was established to document progress and advise local programmes on how to show "what works best " to support delivery of services and achieve locally determined outcomes (Henderson et al, 2002). In addition each area is required to put a local evaluation framework in place.

The primary aim of Sure Start local programmes is to address extremes of inner city deprivation and the borough where the evaluation took place was no exception. It was described as one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country where over 190 different languages were spoken. There was also a high incidence of refugees and asylum seekers among the population and extreme poverty. Some of the most disadvantaged families were identified as those with young children who could directly benefit from Sure Start Services. The borough had a history of high crime rates, street violence and child protection issues. In accordance with research governance, the evaluation plan and associated projects were subject to scrutiny by the local research ethics committee.

Ethnographic reflections: The illustrative "case"

The illustrative "case" which forms the central focus of this paper is derived from an empirical study based on a two-year evaluation (2002-2004) undertaken by a university team in collaboration with a local authority Sure Start programme. The evaluation was set up in the spirit of participatory action research in which the researchers aimed to work closely with key stakeholders to both enable and sustain supportive evaluative processes and partnerships to generate findings through a reflective and iterative cycle of "learning by doing" (Bate 2000). The overall purpose of the evaluation was to capture the influence of the Sure Start local programmes on multi-professional and multi-agency partnerships, mainstreaming initiatives into statutory health, education and social services, promoting social inclusion and increasing parent participation.

The team's view of evaluation differed from the objective world of statistics and measurement and there was an expectation for a high level of participation between the service providers and evaluators more akin to ethnography. By way of illustration, there were resonances with Fox's (1991) ethnographic study of an HIV/AIDS outreach service in which she described her engagement with the frontline providers to document processes, develop empowering relationships and build up trust at different levels of the organisation. There was an expectation from the outset that the evaluators would work with the Sure Start staff to set up evaluation processes to enable them to be self-sufficient in this area after the university team left.

Negotiating partnerships

The current paper focuses on process data to illustrate the development of participatory evaluation through action research and the navigation of emotions required to negotiate partnerships to take the work forward. The evaluation took place against a backdrop of change and rapid expansion. First of all there was an increase from two to six local Sure Start programmes accompanied by a change in overall leadership and the appointment of area managers for each of the new programmes. Second there was the shift in the national Sure Start agenda away from an emphasis on child development and parent-child relationships to one that focused on getting parents into the workforce and alleviating poverty. Finally the internal governance of Sure Start changed from a top down management structure and borough wide steering group to a system of partnership boards for each programme comprising equal numbers of voluntary and statutory sector members, local councilors and parents.

The evaluation encompassed a series of phases reflecting these changes and developments. First of all the original partnership was negotiated in late 2001 when just two integrated programmes existed.

The university lead researchers negotiated a mutually acceptable evaluation plan based on a shared understanding and commitment to inner city regeneration work with their Sure Start colleagues. In the first instance a decision was taken to undertake a rapid appraisal and a researcher was especially appointed to undertake this work. On the basis of the rapid appraisal a scope of work was then formulated to take account of the increase in the number of programmes and the change in governance. Two more researchers were appointed in late 2002 and worked with managers to identify priorities and map the structures and processes required to meet national Sure Start goals and targets. During the first half of 2003 there was a need to document the processes required to embrace change and ensure that the difficulties and large efforts of personnel to respond to them were acknowledged. At the end of this period one researcher left but was immediately replaced. In the final evaluation phase which concluded in May 2004, a number of projects were identified for intensive work involving the researchers, the programme managers, other staff and parents.

Rapid appraisal

At the outset of the evaluation a rapid appraisal of the two programmes operating since 1999 and early 2001 was undertaken. When the first "Trailblazer" programme began, there had been minimal national guidance on how to set up a Sure Start programme and evaluation. One of the Sure Start health visitors with a research background and who played a key role in negotiating the evaluation partnership had set up a participatory appraisal (PA) training exercise with members of the local community, health and social care professionals. The subsequent PA revealed a range of issues including the need for more interpreters, benefit advisers and safe space for victims of domestic violence (James 2000). The rapid appraisal highlighted the PA's success as a new way of working, indicative of how Sure Start could bring together different sectors of the lay and professional communities. The rapid appraisal also identified the diversity and invisibility of the local population, the emergence of new manager/practitioner roles and the need for sufficient time and resources to deal successfully with change management issues.

The rapid appraisal report went through much iteration before it was finally agreed. Although the evaluators felt frustrated at times they recognised the role of the negotiations in developing a relationship of trust with the programme manager. However, the investment in personal relationships can be threatened if there is a change of post holder. In this case, when the manager moved on, a new set of relationships had to be negotiated with the new post holder who was appointed to take on a slightly different role.

Scope of work

The rapid appraisal was used as a basis to develop a Scope of Work for ongoing evaluation at the point at which Sure Start increased from two to six programmes each with a new area manager. Initially recruitment to these posts was slow and a number of short-term community development workers and temporary programme managers were appointed in the interim. New researchers also joined the evaluation team at this time. Thus each member of the Sure Start and evaluation teams needed to get to know each other, negotiate or re-negotiate their roles and develop working relationships not only between but also within teams to take account of their diverse professional backgrounds and aspirations. As structures, locations and personnel were re-organised and realigned it was important not to lose the focus of the evaluation. This was achieved by consultation with the

Sure Start managers. The Scope of Work (like the rapid appraisal) went through much iteration during individual and group discussions. It became clear during this process that the varied experiences and expectations of the managers and the diverse needs of each of their programmes had to be acknowledged to agree local priorities. New questions also emerged as to whether the evaluation should be organised around a series of programme based projects or across programme issues.

The Process report: loss and re-negotiation of trust

The constant change of structures and stakeholders resulted in delays to the evaluation particularly in terms of outcomes. It was clear however that there was much to say about process. The researchers had been accumulating field notes based on observations and interviews and it was suggested by the lead researchers that these could be written up into a report to document the changes taking place in the infrastructure of Sure Start. The process data were subject to thematic analysis and four key themes were identified i.e. management and organisation; mainstreaming activities, level of parent participation and evaluation strategy. These themes closely corresponded with the national guidance on evaluating Sure Start, which highlighted the importance of routinely monitoring and reviewing processes and working practices to meet targets in relation to partnership, inter agency and inter professional working, parental involvement, the setting up of appropriate management structures and innovative services.

The decision to undertake and record a process evaluation was not universally popular as became evident during an evaluation group meeting in April 2003 when the report was presented. Three of the original managers, who had worked closely with the evaluators from the outset, were unable to attend and the majority of managers present were new to Sure Start, with the result that they could neither identify with nor own the report findings.

These managers felt under pressure to get their services up and running and to demonstrate that Sure Start was meeting national targets by presenting facts and figures rather than through descriptions and explanations of processes derived from participatory action research with a relatively unknown evaluation team. The evaluation team was also concerned that the introduction of separate partnership boards for each programme would increase the demand on their time without extra resources.

Perhaps the most powerful message to emerge from the process report was the need to re-establish a "shared vision" as an essential tool to ensure effective programme management and reduce the tensions experienced during partnership development, interagency working and mainstreaming activities. This message could have been equally applied to the management of the evaluation team as well as the Sure Start programmes.

Although the process report was not universally popular in the first instance, it provided a necessary focus to the evaluation and a catalyst for agreement in three ways. First, regular meetings were set up as a matter of urgency between the senior Sure Start manager and one of the lead researchers to provide direction and leadership for the evaluation. Second, the frontline researchers were more closely aligned with the programme teams and third the evaluation group was re-established in order to give some overarching steer to and ownership of the evaluation. For the Sure Start senior manager

and the lead researcher the purpose of their meetings was to manage and contain the anxieties of and promote a climate of trust between their respective teams when the future direction of both programmes and the evaluation looked uncertain. They first met on a one to one basis to clarify assumptions and goals and then together with each of their respective teams.

Evaluation group membership was reviewed to ensure the key people involved in service delivery and evaluation met regularly in order to engage in discussion and take joint decisions that were then endorsed by the group. The group met every two months and included all the Sure Start area managers, the evaluation team and a parent representative. Because of their heavy workload and competing priorities not all the same area managers were able to attend every meeting. To overcome this issue, minutes and notes were kept to carefully document processes, priorities, decisions and subsequent actions taken and progress made to ensure every one was kept updated and was given the opportunity to provide feedback.

As a result of these actions, projects were negotiated to meet the priorities identified by the area programme managers in discussion with and endorsed by the partnership boards in June 2003. The projects included: the development of a family health needs assessment tool, active inclusion strategies for refugees and asylum seekers, facilitating parental participation through drop-ins and forums; understanding the process of effective partnership working and user satisfaction surveys. Work began in September 2003 to April 2004. The researchers reported their findings at an away day and a portfolio report was prepared at the end of the contract.

Reflections on Partnerships and Emotions

As highlighted above, loss of shared vision was perceived to be at the core of many challenges highlighted in the process report, and in particular the tensions experienced during partnership development and the evolution of interagency working and mainstreaming activities. These tensions were reflected in the ongoing challenges in achieving consensus and partnership negotiation between the Sure Start managers and evaluators. The challenge to achieving a shared vision could largely be seen as a consequence of constant change associated with structural re-organisation and a highly mobile workforce. As Connell and Kubisch (1998) comment change should be regarded as the rule rather than the exception in comprehensive community initiatives such as Sure Start. Participatory action research as an evaluation approach had been specifically chosen to take this into account. However, the programme managers were concerned that the need to engage in reflective discussions would be too time consuming, create extra work and possibly over-emphasise failure. The recognition by the senior Sure Start manager and the lead researcher that the principal negotiators who had set up the original evaluation framework, had changed and therefore there was a need to move the process on, assisted in recognising and managing these anxieties. So when the sixth and final programme came on stream a successful partnership was rapidly negotiated between the key stakeholders because it had benefited from the lessons learned from earlier programmes.

The meaning of partnerships

Partnership has become something of a 'buzzword' over the past decade and its association with the delivery and evaluation of the Sure Start programmes was no exception. The development literature

provides useful insights on the meanings of partnerships as described by Lorentz (1989) as: "long-term commitment; mutual dependency and a set of normative rules". Lorentz asks a set of questions as to what behaviour is permissible; what constitutes a violation of trust and suggests that the purpose of the rules is to facilitate equal exchange between partners. Mackintosh (1992) has a more skeptical view and describes the concept of partnerships as "a partial euphemism and token of political negotiation" resulting in "a very high level of ambiguity". This ambiguity is derived from conflicting views of the benefits and disadvantages of collaboration required of the partnership. She identifies a range of descriptors from one of "synergy" in the sense that partners share aims, assets and skills to one of "imbalance" meaning that the costs of collaboration far outweigh the benefits. Mackintosh develops three alternative partnership models empirically based on three public-private sector case studies. It is the spirit rather than the detail of the models that is relevant here. All the models involved financial exchange and negotiation between local authority and commercial organisations with differing and mutually compatible motivations, cultures, social and economic goals.

There were also tensions between internal and external goals resulting in some organisations being "ingrown" and "self-serving" rather than publicly orientated. Although this was not the case in the current study the constant requirements of the Sure Start local programmes to respond to external drivers such as changes in governance and underlying philosophy could have resulted in the area managers focusing on the requirements of government rather than the internal needs of their clientele. Mackintosh's "synergy model" was particularly interesting for the current analysis in that the social benefit of the partnership was rated highly. The area managers who had come from a variety of health, social work and community development backgrounds recognised the importance of working in "synergy" with a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies. It also appeared that once the evaluators were more closely aligned with their programmes it permitted a greater "synergy" between their service activities and the need to evaluate them.

In describing the complexity of partnerships, both Lorentz (1989) and Mackintosh (1992) highlight the emotional dimension of the interaction. For Lorentz the partnerships involve commitment, dependency, normative rules interpreted as rules of engagement based on mutual trust. For Mackintosh the partnership may generate ambiguity and conflict arising from differing objectives and interests even though there may be a genuine desire between the partners to understand and resolve these differences at the same time as experiencing pressure to reach mutual consensus. Finally the partners struggle to extract mutual gains from the collaboration. Mackintosh identifies one very important point for the current analysis. She states that the complexity and competing demands of the partnerships makes it "hard" to *evaluate* them "while nevertheless helping to make them *work*" (note emphasis in the original, Mackintosh 1992: 221). This was certainly an issue in the current case and was manifest in the following way. Firstly Sure Start colleagues frequently asked the researchers whether there was an optimum time to begin an evaluation. This question arose from a feeling that if the evaluation commenced while systems were being developed it would only be possible to show incomplete processes rather than concrete outcomes. Secondly as noted above, reflection was perceived as taking valuable time away from the actual delivery of Sure Start services. However it has already been suggested that the process report acted as a catalyst to re-negotiate an evaluation framework that helped create a vital reflective space and a strategic view of the partnerships being developed.

Navigating emotions to negotiate partnerships

The current paper sheds light on the navigation of emotions involved in negotiating partnerships at a number of different levels. The partnerships were complex and many layered between the Sure Start teams, statutory and voluntary sectors; the development and formation of the local partnership boards; the partnership between the Sure Start managers and the evaluation team and between the members of the evaluation team themselves.

The need to manage multiple relationships and tasks was engendered from the institutional demands to set up a new way of working required by the national Sure Start agenda that emphasised the importance of partnerships. New work systems had to be put in place and since the teams came from a variety of professions and disciplines, there was a need to model and negotiate new roles and professional boundaries, involving an element of risk and a highly charged emotional component to the work.

The research-based literature on the emotional demands of the actual delivery of Sure Start is relatively scanty. However, there is a growing literature on the role of emotions within the caring professions, especially in nursing. This literature is relevant given that nursing, midwifery, social work and other caring occupations, such as nursery nurses and teachers are closely associated with the Sure Start programmes.

Hochschild's (1983) study of flight attendants and debt collectors conceptualised emotional labour as an under-reported, invisible component of service sector "people" work largely undertaken by women. Emotional labour is defined as:

" The induction or suppression of feeling in order to sustain an outward appearance that produces in others a sense of being cared for in a convivial, safe place"(Hochschild, 1983:7). Emotional labour can also be used as a conceptual device to explore the feeling rules within an organisation required to sustain relationships in situations that are often demanding and difficult. James described emotional labour within the context of cancer care, identifying it as a complex skill that "requires flexibility and adjustment. It involves anticipation, planning, pacing, time-tabling and trouble-shooting .. at its most skilled emotional labour includes managing negative feelings that results in a neutral or positive outcome (James 1993:95-96)".

Smith (1992) defined emotional labour as a way of looking at the relationship work undertaken by student nurses as they learnt to care but also in terms of the leadership style of the ward manager to create the emotional tone. When students and staff nurses felt appreciated and supported emotionally by their ward leaders, they not only had a role model for emotionally explicit patient care but they also felt able to care for patients in this way. There are parallels to be drawn between the Sure Start teams and the development of new nursing roles described by Franks and Smith (2002). The following reflection from a specialist nurse for older people could be equally applicable to an area programme manager who has to work across a variety of health and social care organisations and agencies:

"Central to this job is trying to forge links between health and social care. I work with entire ward teams, nurses, domestic staff as well as strategically on the PCT (Primary Care Trust). I have told

people about my role –teams, other professionals, trust boards, voluntary organisations ……………. and I'm still doing it two years later. People get confused about my role and a lot of my work is bringing people together ….. "

The specialist nurse describes how she has to undertake emotional labour to navigate the uncharted territories of new ways of working between individual practitioners, the client and other professional groups. She is required to manage confusion about the purpose of her role and to work with a variety of people with different goals and aspirations to facilitate working in partnership. As an advanced practitioner she uses her core professional role as a nurse to promote the health and wellbeing of older people and to negotiate partnerships with other organisations to reduce ambiguity and conflict and foster trust.

The professional focus for Sure Start managers involved in inner city regeneration work could be described as more akin to that of social workers rather than nurses. Aldridge's (1994) analysis is helpful here. She suggests that while nurses and social workers have much in common in terms of the relationship work they do nurses have the advantage because they can ground themselves in the techniques and routines that are germane to their professional role. Social workers have no such recourse: emotion work is the work and makes them vulnerable to their own and others' scrutiny in terms of the effectiveness of what they do. As Aldridge (1994: 727) explains "in social work, not only is the impact of professional work very hard to demonstrate, but the tools themselves are contested within the profession and largely unrecognised outside". Similar conclusions could be drawn for the Sure Start managers in two respects. One was that inner city regeneration work like social work does not have clearly defined nor recognisable "technical and procedural routines" to allow them to anchor their emotional work to manage complex stakeholder relationships and partnerships as described by the specialist nurse. Second the impact of inner city regeneration work like social work is very hard to demonstrate and raised a number of doubts and uncertainties for the managers in relation to the evaluation strategy being negotiated.

An additional consideration in the current case study was the rapid change taking place within the Sure Start programmes at both a local and national level. Change has been shown to generate a range of emotions and profoundly affects whole organisations particularly during transition (Slater 1998, Welch 2002). However the emotional effects of change are often overlooked even though judicious attention to emotions has been shown to facilitate organisational learning as part of the change process (Huy 1999). Leaders need to be aware of these processes and to be able to exercise the authority to create the systems that can then be employed to manage the consequences of change. Leaders in the role of change agents (in this case the Sure Start managers and the researchers as "critical friend") needed to consider how emotions were affecting the whole organisation. As noted above, the meetings initiated by the senior manager and the lead researcher were set up to manage the pressures and tensions associated with uncertainty and change.

Discussion

This paper has drawn on process data from an evaluation of Sure Start local programmes to demonstrate how the emotions associated with participatory evaluation can be seen to reflect at a micro level the navigation of emotions required to work in partnership as part of inner city regeneration work. A review of the respective literatures on partnership and emotions has sought to

elicit insights from the data in order to contribute to an understanding of the emotional labour required to undertake this work.

Raffaeli and Worline (2001:108) note that "There are positive effects when emotional labor facilitates task performance and heightens identification with an organisational role, but there are negative effects when emotional dissonance and unrealistic expectations about service interactions exacerbate stress and performance failures" (Raffaeli and Worline 2001: 108). This was very much the case with the Sure Start initiative where there were constant changes and demands. As noted above there was a need throughout the evaluation to explicitly negotiate and re-negotiate a clear vision between the stakeholders as personnel and agendas changed. The insights that Raffaeli and Worline bring to this scenario is that "Emotions need tending to and not only the emotions within the organisation, but also the emotions of the multiple stakeholders"" (Raffaeli and Worline 2001: 109).

For Huy, emotional labour is required to recognise and develop the capacity to manage complex emotions as a means to acquiring emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995). Emotions are thus an integral part of adaptation and change requiring individuals with emotional intelligence to recognise and use their own and others' emotional states to solve problems. In turn "emotional intelligence clearly places emotions as the central tenet in the future of organisations" (Raffaeli and Worline 2001:112).

The researchers as "critical friends" wished to reflect back changes to the managers but they needed to renegotiate this role with each new manager and programme as they came on stream. Once it was recognised within the teams that each Sure Start programme needed to create its own internal strategy involving the partnership boards in general and the parents in particular, the evaluation began to move forward. The regular meetings between the strategic service manager and the lead researcher at a time of uncertainty aimed to give direction to their teams, contain anxiety and promote a climate of trust.

For George (2000:1042) moods and emotions play a central role in the leadership process. Leadership entails hectic work pace with multiple and changing demands, high levels of stress and the need to resolve conflict and generate a sense of cooperation and trust. Components of emotional intelligence include enthusiasm, excitement, optimism (George 2000) and hope (Huy 1999). Indeed Huy writes that hope as an attribute of emotional intelligence "implies a belief that one has both the will and the means to accomplish one's goals. It buffers people against apathy and depression and strengthens their capacity to withstand defeat and persist in adversity". The Sure Start managers and in turn the evaluators needed all of their very considerable emotional reserves to respond to constant change and take their programmes forward underpinned by a mission that in itself conveyed hope to improve the lives of the under fours, their families and communities.

Emotional intelligence contributes to constructive thinking, reduces stress and facilitates problem solving. It also reportedly assists leaders to build high levels of cooperation and trust through the development of high quality interpersonal relationships (George 2000). Periods of reflection away from the frontline support these processes and as described above reflective meetings and away days were set up between the Sure Start teams and evaluators to allow this to happen.
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Pescosolido talks about the emergence of leaders to manage group emotions particularly at times of ambiguity proposing that one role of a group leader is to interpret ambiguous situations and then to model an appropriate response" (Pescosolido 2002:586). This is an important insight given that ambiguity is one of the byproducts of partnership working identified by Mackintosh (1992) and one that the senior manager and lead researcher aimed to manage by providing clear leadership and direction to their teams. They were successful to the extent that the evaluation reached a satisfactory conclusion resulting in twenty-seven completed projects and reports and the appointment of two of the researchers to the Sure Start staff as local evaluators.

Pescosolido also suggests that different group members can take on the leader's role at different times. To do this they must draw on their own emotions, values and behaviours to make events meaningful to others (2002:592; citing Yukl 1999) and send clear messages to the group as part of the crafting of emotional interpretations of different situations and contexts (2002:595-596). Pescosolido's view that different members of the group can take on a leadership role at different times is appealing since it proposes a more democratic and shared form of leadership rather than concentrating power and responsibility for complex emotion management in one or two individuals.

Implications for inner city regeneration work

This process evaluation has shown that Sure Start workers come from a variety of professions based on a range of values and beliefs. The regeneration work they undertake requires them to take risks in uncharted territory to work across boundaries and to act as emotionally intelligent leaders which includes hope as a key attribute. The Sure Start mission conveys hope but the implementation process is complex and involves constant change. Participatory action research offers a positive approach for partnership working to model new ways of working and navigate complex emotions associated with uncertainty and change. Participatory action research also recognises the processes required to manage ambiguity and conflict, promote trust and contain anxiety between partners in order to move forward. Notions of emotional labour and emotional intelligence help the identification of these processes and are important components of leadership required to read and reflect group emotions. The observation that leadership can be taken by different group members at different times, is an important recommendation for evaluation activities rather than seeing that role wholly invested in the all-knowing "critical friend".

Conclusion
This paper offers tentative connections between the emotional labour and emotional intelligence required for health and social workers in new management roles to develop complex partnerships in the field of inner city regeneration work as glimpsed through the lens of an evaluator. Issues of trust, ambiguity and conflict within partnerships (Lorentz 1989, Mackintosh 1992) and emotional labour and emotional intelligence required to negotiate relationships and provide leadership were identified from the literature as having particular relevance. Using the case of a participatory evaluation of Sure Start, these insights suggest the way in which emotions need to be recognised and navigated to develop successful and mutually beneficial partnerships. However, this is a complex process and not to be underestimated.

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