

The Pathways to Resilience Research Project (New Zealand):
Whāia to huanui kia toa

Youth-Centred Practice: Unlocking the Potential of Collaboration

Robyn Munford, Jackie Sanders

24 October 2014

Youthline: Papatoetoe, Auckland



Massey University



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
GROUP 1:	3
GROUP 2:.....	4
GROUP 3:.....	7
GROUP 4:.....	11
GROUP 5:.....	12
GROUP 6:.....	14
GROUP 7:.....	15
SUMMARY OF THEMES	18

INTRODUCTION

The seminar was facilitated by Robyn Munford and Jackie Sanders, Massey University and Stephen Bell CEO Youthline Auckland. Practitioners from NGOs and statutory agencies attended including health, mental health, welfare, justice and education. In the morning participants heard presentations from researchers, practitioners, managers and funders. The focus of these discussions was on exploring strategies for achieving collaboration and youth-centred practice. In the afternoon participants had an opportunity to work in groups to discuss the following:

- What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?
- What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.
- What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn't worked well? What strategies did you use to overcome these?
- In the current environment, what are the threats (at the agency level, policy level, wider community) to growing collaboration and achieving youth-centred practice?
- In terms of 'unlocking the door' what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and
- youth-centred practice?

The participants were divided into seven groups and gave the following feedback:

GROUP 1:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

- City Council – Community Development Team Leader
- Presbyterian Support – Practice Advisor, Family Works
- DHB – Asian Mental Health
- YWCA – Programme Coordinator
- PARS – People at Risk
- Te Aroha Noa Community Services (NGO)
- Genesis Youth Trust – Youth Social Work

What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.

- YWCA with schools – programme within schools for future
- Utilised social media and advertising through radio and press releases
- Greater presence within schools
- Realistic and idealistic
- Sharing information
- Client focussed
- Flexible and adaptable
- Collectively communicating
- Sharing the same vision
- Being present ☐ being human ☐ consolidating relationships and trust ☐ going the extra mile
- Understanding roles, expectations and information sharing
- Knowing the key people who bridge agencies (multi-level)

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and

youth-centred services? What hasn't worked well? What strategies did you use to overcome these?

- Not sharing the same vision (e.g. punishment vs restoration)
- Organisational resistance
- Consistency in service provider (e.g. staff turnover)
- Saturation of programmes
- Capacity – in time to outwork initiatives (outside of scope)
- Language
- Policies of different organisations – making sure to communicate these
- Cultural insensitivities and a lack of cultural understanding
- Government and agency policies (e.g. 1 hour /week per client)

In terms of 'unlocking the door' what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice?

- Make consistent contact
- Talk about the elephant/s (negatives or barriers) in the relationship
- Make them visible in order to move forward positively together

GROUP 2:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

- The Collaborative – Research and Training
- DHB – Asian Mental Health
- Te Aroha Noa Community Services – Mentor, Whānau Service, Connector
- WRYWT – Youthline, Education, Mental Health
- WRYWT – Hutt City Baptist

- Multi-agency worker – support agency, MASAS, Family Works, Secondary school
- Centre for Youth Health – health service, alternative education, training, transitions

What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.

- Bringing services to where the students are
- Youth at risk have links to justice system, CYF etc. Relationship building helps ensure that when young people are referred to other services, their workers know people in the agency.
- The more you have, the more you get – sharing resources between agencies
- Generational gaps and cultural conflict – liaison between parents and child to understand each other and care about each other. This leads to a good outcome. Use a collective and collaborative approach between clinical staff and family.
- Educating NZ clinicians/counsellors in mainstream services regarding best cultural practise for Asian clients
- Good listening
- Alternative education is deficit based ☹ flip this around; hear the rest of the story before getting to the passions/skills/interests. (E.g. taggers involved with an art programme – artists became role models, helped focus on wellbeing of the young people. Organised an art exhibition with the Learning Connexion and Youth Aid as well as other agencies)
- Listening to young people and being responsive to this
- Stigma of outside services e.g. Police, social workers ☹ invite to join for breakfast etc. E.g. have a Police officer teach alternative

education to help view them as ‘human’ just like us. Helps to break down barriers, feel more comfortable going to other organisations.

- Need to remember our purpose – youth at the centre. Need to focus on this when working together, ensuring it is meaningful.
- Asked ‘how did we fail you?’ – changed service delivery e.g. moving it into the community, having camps, summer games etc. Helped reduce stigma around mental health and encouraged people to ask for help.
- Prevention vs. post-vention

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn’t worked well? What strategies did you use to overcome these?

- Not enough time to build rapport and listen
- Increasing case loads
- What value is important – need to prioritise – how we use resources – thinking differently (mind set)
- Engaging young people in health screening – youth expect to trust you
- Completing assessments within set time frames that are too short
- Discharging clients because they didn’t engage – goes against your job to see them as a young person
- Funding – money is targeted at groups not the entire school etc. Have to meet criteria
- Bigger social issues to focus on

In the current environment, what are the threats (at the agency level, policy level, wider community) to growing collaboration and achieving youth-centred practice?

- Lack of transparency
- Confidentiality issues
- What are you doing as a mentor? Evasive regarding sharing i.e. 'patch protection'
- Reduce costs if working in collaboration – limits duplication
- Utilising communication channels such as phone calls, emails
- Spread everywhere instead of focusing on quality
- One service doing everything is incompatible with collaboration

In terms of 'unlocking the door' what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice?

- Changing mind sets – respecting young people first, not expecting; exploring ways to change policy
- Bring other services into youth space – helps them be seen as 'human' and de-stigmatises involvement

GROUP 3:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

- Family Works – service manager
- Youthline
- Te Aroha Noa Community Services – women's programme
- Youth Worker in Secondary School – working with low risk, high needs; truancy; transitions; CSI; supported bail; whānau; food; sports
- Upper Hutt City Council – Community Development Advisor – working around safety; youth; alcohol and drugs; facilitate programmes for general community and youth
- Hamilton Police – Youth Development Case Manager

- Youth offenders
- Hamilton Police – wrap around service, early intervention
- Family Works and Anglican Trust – youth work and secondary schools; ‘check & connect’

What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.

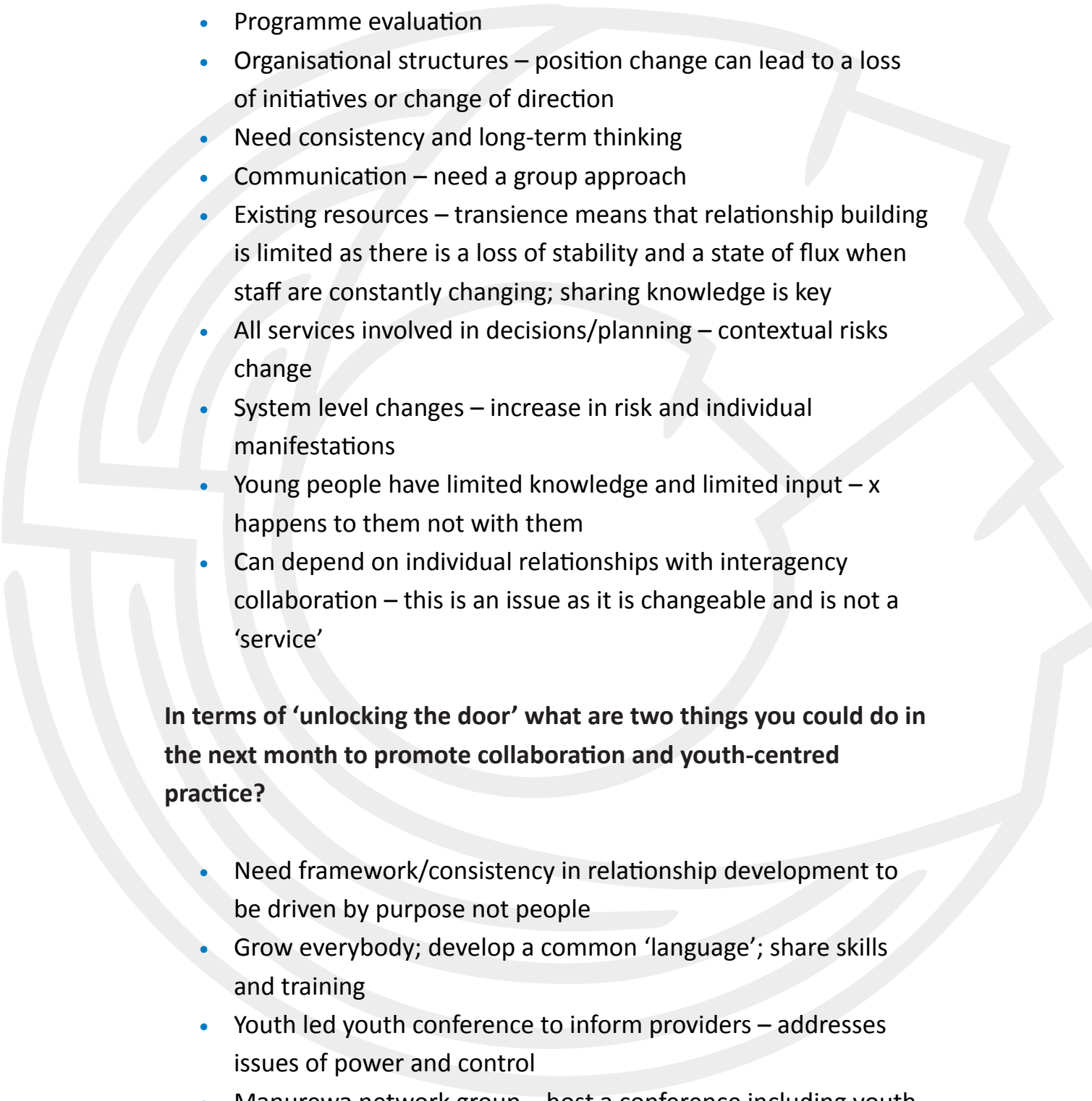
- Children’s teams
- International input and multi-agency at local level via Strengthening Families – coordinators to be key points of collaboration; needs-led not resource-led; youth have choice within wider processes (e.g. choosing who they want included)
- NZ Police early intervention via frontline officers or schools (truancy staff) – working with CYF and MSD for integrated attendance services. Involves assessing young person’s needs then referring to appropriate agency. Can challenge relationships and involves contextual challenges within organisations (e.g. organisational politics)
- Pre FGC – speculation, not evidence. So a pre-FGC consultation develops more robust understanding of circumstances and the situation. It is an opportunity for young people to have their say, explain their pattern of behaviour. Young people are offered advocacy at FGC to be a voice when the young people can’t. Empowerment via relationships and agency influence
- Extension of training opportunities and face-time
- Strength of multiple perspectives

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn’t worked well? What strategies

did you use to overcome these?

- ‘Territory’ and lack of information sharing can get in the way of ‘youth first’
- Parents becoming frustrated as a result of a lack of information sharing – transparency is important for whānau
- Lack of connection and follow-up from all agencies
- There is a question of ‘what happens next?’ and a missing link in the on-going processes (e.g. activity + information + educate programme with PSM (with family involvement) needed to be wrap-around).
- School transition season – ILC low learning, Level 1 NCEA credits do not contribute to Level 2 NCEA, so need to help young people build a pathway for the future. Issues may include low attendance.
- Having a good relationship with people like MIT (tertiary training provider) can help with NCEA credits and transitions. Solomon group supported the truancy service but was overwhelmed with work and had insufficient capacity
- At school it is like grabbing fish out of a bucket
- Police in schools – build positive relationships through playing touch rugby at lunch etc. – helps change attitudes
- FGC voice with suicide – not alone
 - + learning at school
 - + culture orientated extra-curricular activities
- NPT and Family Violence Team – knowing the people who work with leads to a better experience at key moments
- Strength-based relationships and continuity with key stakeholders

In the current environment, what are the threats (at the agency level, policy level, wider community) to growing collaboration and achieving youth-centred practice?

- 
- Funding and policy decisions
 - Information of decision makers
 - Programme evaluation
 - Organisational structures – position change can lead to a loss of initiatives or change of direction
 - Need consistency and long-term thinking
 - Communication – need a group approach
 - Existing resources – transience means that relationship building is limited as there is a loss of stability and a state of flux when staff are constantly changing; sharing knowledge is key
 - All services involved in decisions/planning – contextual risks change
 - System level changes – increase in risk and individual manifestations
 - Young people have limited knowledge and limited input – x happens to them not with them
 - Can depend on individual relationships with interagency collaboration – this is an issue as it is changeable and is not a ‘service’

In terms of ‘unlocking the door’ what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice?

- Need framework/consistency in relationship development to be driven by purpose not people
- Grow everybody; develop a common ‘language’; share skills and training
- Youth led youth conference to inform providers – addresses issues of power and control
- Manurewa network group – host a conference including youth panels
- Spreading the pockets of excellence

GROUP 4:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

- Family Works – Social Worker in Schools
- DHB – Portfolio Manager: Maternal, Child and Youth Health
- YOSS; 298; Kapiti Youth Support; Waipuna – Social worker
- Community Probation
- Advance Training Centre – Private training establishment, Military Prep. School
- Genesis Youth Mentoring
- DHB – Asian Mental Health
- Social worker in the Office of the Chief Social Worker, Child Youth and Family

What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.

- Sincerity
- Shared values
- Nurturing relationships
- Respect
- Creativity
- Commitment
- Understanding our own kaupapa – keeping young people at the heart, listening to them, giving them voice
- Trust in each other

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn't worked well? What strategies

did you use to overcome these?

- Constrained by funding expectations
- Timeframes
- Discrepancies between frameworks of different organisations

In terms of ‘unlocking the door’ what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice?

- Work on a transition programme in schools for year 8 students
- Incredible Years Programme for Asian parents will be planned soon
- Send a Christmas card and box of chocolates to key people I have collaborated with this year
- Make contact with key people and strengthen key relationships with collaborators/parents/caregivers
- Find a way to engage with important agencies in our local area
- Never judge

GROUP 5:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

-
- Genesis Youth Trust
- Taiohi Toa Trust – Hamilton Police Youth Department
- Family Works – Youth Worker in Secondary Schools
- University of Auckland – Researcher
- Toi Ora – Creative Youth Health
- Youth Law Aotearoa
- Lighthouse Girls’ Home and Baptist Church – Youth worker

What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and

collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.

- Working to what is needed rather than job descriptions
- Investing in the partnership
- Role clarity
- Relationship building
- Partnership
- Honesty
- Trusting the other organisation
- We had a consultation process with young people
- Shared beliefs
- Staying relevant to young people as we developed the project

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn't worked well? What strategies did you use to overcome these?

- Agencies losing some funding
- Staff turnover
- Social service fatigue/burnout
- Having a common goal to work towards and being on the same page helped overcome some barriers
- It is a strength to know what your weaknesses are
- Systems-wide approach rather than organisation – looking at the big picture
- Keeping youth at the centre
- Investing in your organisation's human resource
- Relationships can be lost unless they are maintained at higher levels (ensure on-going support from 'the top') – this helps promote efficiency

- Being proactive

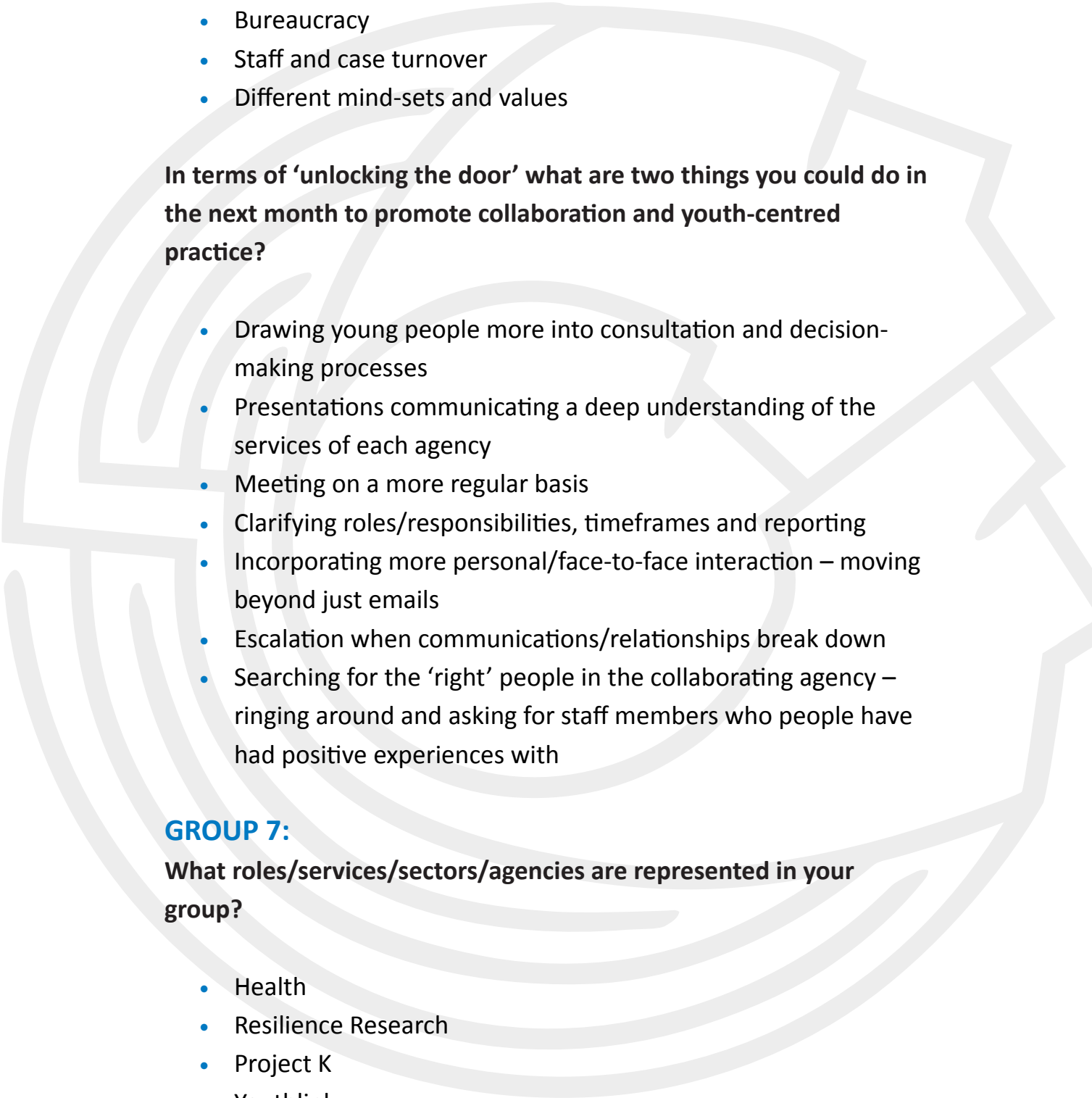
GROUP 6:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

- SERCO – Corrections
- DHB – Asian Mental Health
- Youthline
- Taiohi Toa Trust
- Equip – Mental health service
- Manurewa High School
- Anglican Action
- Taiohi Toa Trust
- Anglican Trust for Women
- Dingwall

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn't worked well? What strategies did you use to overcome these?

- Information guarding and reluctance to share
- Trust between agencies and between people across agencies
- Agency reputations
- Competing priorities/concerns/interests
- Connection/relationship between youth and particular agencies (and not others)
- Contractual obligations
- Differing levels of accountability
- Lack/absence of transparency
- Unclear processes around accountability
- Personal relationships
- Resolution/voice processes not set up

- 
- Not having the right people at the right places
 - Interagency politics
 - Bureaucracy
 - Staff and case turnover
 - Different mind-sets and values

In terms of ‘unlocking the door’ what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice?

- Drawing young people more into consultation and decision-making processes
- Presentations communicating a deep understanding of the services of each agency
- Meeting on a more regular basis
- Clarifying roles/responsibilities, timeframes and reporting
- Incorporating more personal/face-to-face interaction – moving beyond just emails
- Escalation when communications/relationships break down
- Searching for the ‘right’ people in the collaborating agency – ringing around and asking for staff members who people have had positive experiences with

GROUP 7:

What roles/services/sectors/agencies are represented in your group?

- Health
- Resilience Research
- Project K
- Youthlink
- Community Trust
- Dingwall Trust

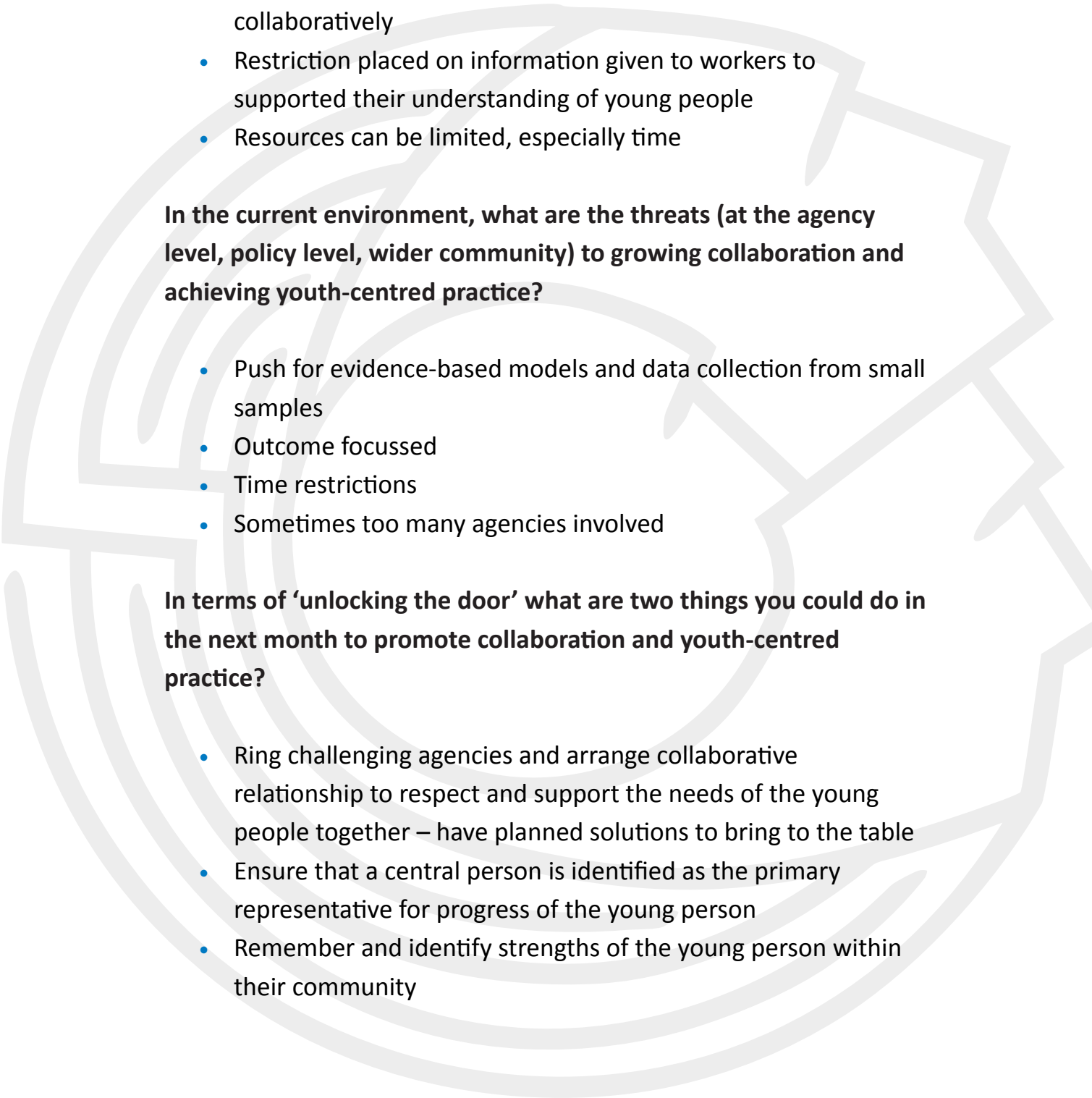
- Youth worker

What are your positive experiences of youth-centred services and collaboration; that is, when have things worked well? Where are the green shoots? That is, where are the opportunities to make things work better with regard to collaboration so that youth benefit.

- Growth of resources and engagement with schools and families
- The more we engage with schools the more services become woven into our practice
- Professionals meeting to allow collaboration between services and providers
- Creation of network opportunities within communities and allows for extended young person review
- Interagency mapping wraparound approach to overcome community challenges and environmental risks
- South Auckland youth worker networking occurs monthly
- Youthlink has shared training
- Thrive
- Sporting events to provide information
- Collaboration with CYF, Police and Youth Justice
- HDM processing to work alongside DHB to keep young people supported within the community
- Young people as part of processes to help support their needs
- Continued support for young people into their 20s

What have you experienced as barriers to collaboration and youth-centred services? What hasn't worked well? What strategies did you use to overcome these?

- Funding is an on-going problem
- Governmental interest

- 
- Youth may not be a priority
 - Individual workers uneven in their willingness to work collaboratively
 - Restriction placed on information given to workers to supported their understanding of young people
 - Resources can be limited, especially time

In the current environment, what are the threats (at the agency level, policy level, wider community) to growing collaboration and achieving youth-centred practice?

- Push for evidence-based models and data collection from small samples
- Outcome focussed
- Time restrictions
- Sometimes too many agencies involved

In terms of ‘unlocking the door’ what are two things you could do in the next month to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice?

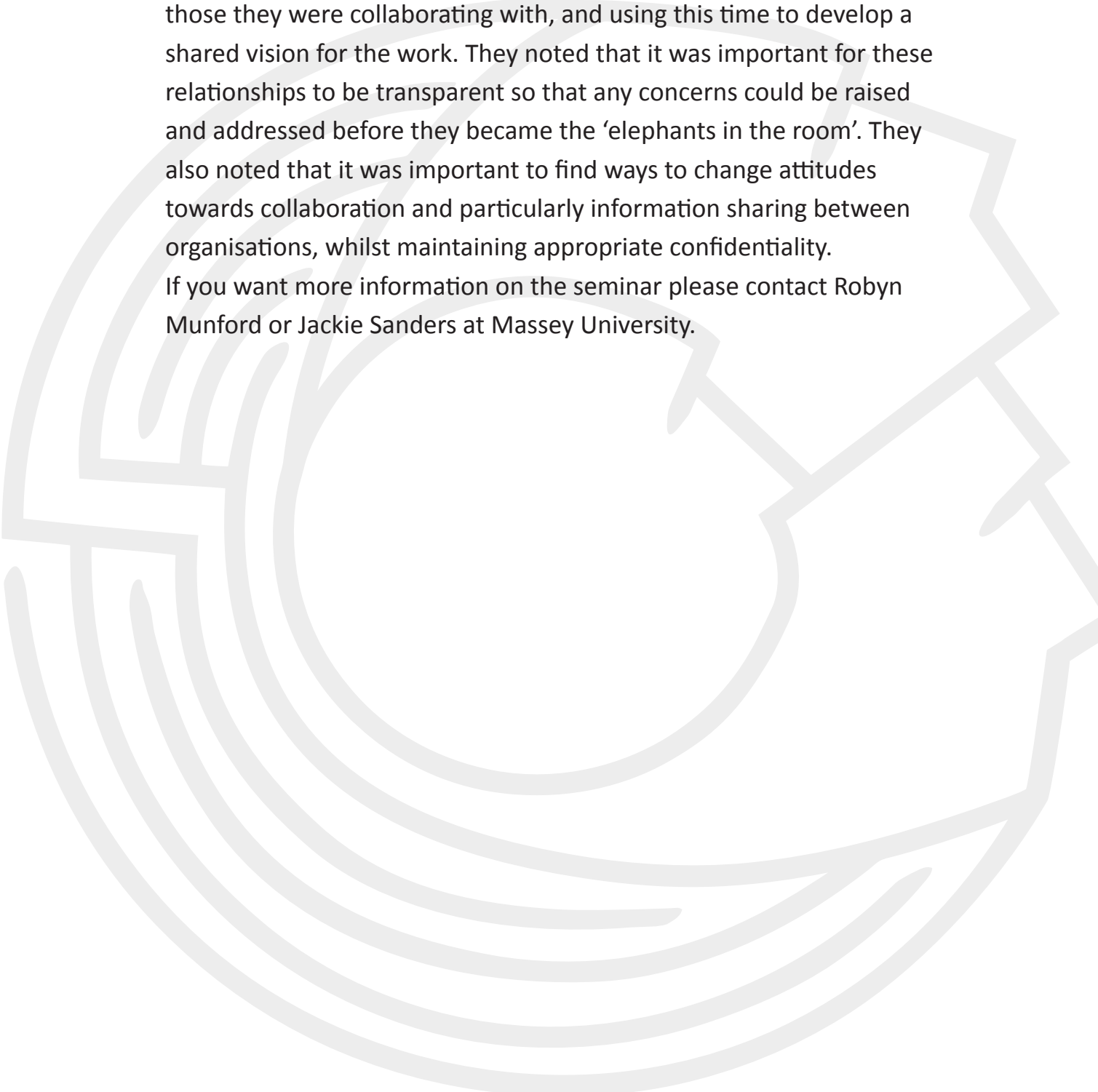
- Ring challenging agencies and arrange collaborative relationship to respect and support the needs of the young people together – have planned solutions to bring to the table
- Ensure that a central person is identified as the primary representative for progress of the young person
- Remember and identify strengths of the young person within their community

SUMMARY OF THEMES

Throughout the feedback given by the participants, there were some common themes. Participants noted that collaboration was enhanced when people worked hard at maintaining an open, honest and transparent relationship with one another. Being able to share information and resources across agencies supported everyone involved including young people. Sharing information and resources means that practitioners had access to a wider range of resources, and were able to develop a fuller picture of the circumstances of those they were working with. The participants felt that it was very important that collaborative relationships were centred on a shared vision for the work to be completed, and maintained a strong 'client centred' approach to work. This helped to overcome some of the boundaries between 'different agencies' and approaches to the work they were doing. It was also important to the participants that collaborative relationships featured clear expectations around the roles and responsibilities of each person involved.

The participants identified a number of barriers and threats to collaboration across social services. Challenges such as funding and contractual obligations were identified by many as a barrier they had experienced in trying to collaborate with another organisation. Participants also identified that they had experienced barriers when organisations did not share the same values, priorities, working models and attitudes towards things such as information sharing. They noted the importance of ensuring that collaborative relationships were built around ensuring that issues were addressed throughout the relationship.

Participants identified a number of ways they could 'unlock the door' to promote collaboration and youth-centred practice. Many suggested developing a 'shared language' and some shared



assessment frameworks across services. Participants also said that they would make time for more regular and meaningful contact with those they were collaborating with, and using this time to develop a shared vision for the work. They noted that it was important for these relationships to be transparent so that any concerns could be raised and addressed before they became the 'elephants in the room'. They also noted that it was important to find ways to change attitudes towards collaboration and particularly information sharing between organisations, whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality. If you want more information on the seminar please contact Robyn Munford or Jackie Sanders at Massey University.