Xiongwei Song

Implementing Sure Start Policy

Context, Networks and Discretion

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Abbreviations

AES	Adult Education Service
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCT	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
CIS	Children's Information Service
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CMHT	Community Mental Health Teams
CPM	Childcare Partnership Manager
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
DCSF	Department of Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EYECS	Early Year Education Children's Service
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYP	Early Years Professional
FCT	Family Caring Trust
FL	Family Link
FLLN	Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy
FSA	Food Standard Agency
GP	General Practitioners
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LA	Local Authority
LSC	The Learning and Skills Council
MCDT	Manor and Castle Development Trust
MP	Mellow Parenting

NAO	National Audit Office
NCH	National Children's Home
NCMA	National Childminding Association
NESS	National Evaluation of Sure Start
NFPI	National Family and Parenting Institute
NHS	National Children's Home
No 10	Number 10
NPM	New Public Management
NSPCC	The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PEPP	Peers Early Education Partnership
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PIPPIN	Parents in Partnership-Parent Infant Network
PMDU	Prime Minister's Delivery Unit
PSA	Public Service Agreement
REF	Race Equality Foundation
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SOAs	Super Output Areas
SU	Sure Start Unit
UNICEF	United Nation Children's Fund

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Chapter 1
Research Agenda, Analytical Framework and Methodology

1.1 Context of the Research Agenda

The former Prime Minister Tony Blair, on a visit to a Children's Centre in West London in 2006 said:

> Sure Start is one of the Government's greatest achievements. This is what a modern welfare state should do. Be on the side of people, when they need it - allowing them greater freedom, greater choice and greater power over the things that they want to do. Not a nanny state, but an enabling one (No. 10 2006).

What Blair's comments reflect is the extent to which Sure Start, Welfare Reform and Public Service Delivery are three key and interconnected themes of the Blair/Brown administration. Couched in the language of the advocacy of the 'Third Way', Labour's welfare reform have attempted to break the traditional dilemma between old Labour's top-down welfare state, largely a nanny state, and a more devolved market-oriented welfare state, underpinned by neo-liberalism. New Labour has argued that the basic values and the main aims (social justice and equality) of the welfare state have not changed. In government, it has not wished to dismantle the welfare state and adheres to the original Beveridge values but in delivering welfare reform its rhetoric claims has abandoned traditional centrist policy instruments. It is within this context that New Labour has redefined the meaning of 'equality'—equality as inclusion and inequality as exclusion.

Since 1997, the issue of 'poverty and social exclusion' has become one of the most significant priorities in policy areas. The Sure Start Programme has become one of these policy initiatives, playing an important role in alleviating poverty and social exclusion of children and young people. New Labour's objective is to guarantee that, in the next two decades no child will live in poverty and all children will have opportunities to realise their full potential (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2003). Sure Start is a programme designed by Labour to deliver on these stated aims, which brings together early education, childcare, health and family support. As argued above, it concentrates on promoting the physical, intellectual,

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social and emotional development of young children to enable them to thrive when they go to school. However, in order to reach the objectives of Sure Start, New Labour has been acutely aware of the importance of effective delivery.

During Labour's first term, joined-up government was a central objective of public sector reform, covering both the making of policy and the delivery of service. Underpinning joined-up government was not only an awareness of increasing 'services fragmentation', but a response to the changing nature of the British state. This contends that traditional rigid hierarchical state structures are incapable of meeting the aspirations of fulfilling the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous society, but the pursuit of more minimal role for the state in society is not viable (Ludlam and Smith 2000). For the second and third term of the Labour government, putting the people at the heart of public service has become one of its key stated policy priorities arguing for the devolution of power back to the frontline as the best way to improve public services. In 2002, the Labour government sets out the strategies underpinning public service reform in 'Reforming Public Services: Principles into Practice'—National Standards, Devolution, Flexibility and Choice (Office of Public Service Reform 2002: 3). 'The notions of choice and flexibility are explicit references made by the government in response to what it regards as an entrenched approach in Whitehall to delivery in public services based on a view that 'one size fits all'' (Richards and Smith 2005: 25). In 2003, the Cabinet Office also issued an official document—leading from the front line–on empowering the frontline staff to improve public service delivery (Cabinet Office 2003).

However, the Labour government is more output driven than merely ideology driven. It can be clearly seen that 'National Standards' is one of the most important principles on reforming public service delivery in Labour's strategies. The Treasury has set out a series of PSA targets to measure the performance of service deliverers. In addition, New Labour has created 'joined-up government' as a mechanism for increasing control by the centre, because it offers a way of ensuring that strategies developed in No. 10 are not undermined by the conflicting goals of departments and different agencies or quangos (Belsky et al. 2007). The movement away from a concern with processes towards a stress on outputs means that non-state actors and frontline bureaucrats, such as agencies, voluntary organisations and quangos, are increasingly expected to deliver measurable improvements in their services by almost any means possible. The Labour government has also strengthened the centre's power through a wide range of alternative means rather than direct control, such as increasing the Prime Minister's power, audit and targets, and establishing new institutions. Ironically, on one hand, Labour's policy rhetoric is devolving more power to non-State actors and frontline staff; on the other hand, it attempts to maintain power by imposing the centre's intentions on public service reform. In conclusion, the Labour government's strategy on reforming public service delivery is based on the 'mixed approach'. Under the context of Labour's 'mixed-approach' on reforming public service delivery, the book sets out to explore one of Labour's flagship policies 'Sure Start'. It analyses how Labour's 'mixed-approach' public service delivery reform is reflected in Sure Start policy and in particular, the impact it has had on implementation. Commissioned by DfES, a research team at Birkbeck

College conducted an extensive wide series of research and reports on Sure Start Local Programmes on the impact of early intervention on social exclusion and child poverty. The resultant output by Belsky et al. (2007) '*The National Evaluation of Sure Start*' primarily focuses on the impact of Sure Start Local Programmes. In addition, the National Audit Office published a report on Sure Start Children's Centres to identify what the government has achieved and what needs to be improved (NAO 2006a, b, c). Beyond a number of governmental reports on the evaluation of Sure Start policy, there is a lacuna in academic studies on Sure Start policy, especially its service delivery process under the context of the Labour government's public service delivery reform. This book addresses this gap by analysing the implementation process of Sure Start in both Sheffield and Manchester from an academic perspective.

1.2 Defining Research Questions

Tony Blair commented in the foreword to the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) that 'we have looked at key problems across government. The old departmental boundaries often do not work. Provision for young children—health, childcare, support—will be coordinated across departments so that when children start school they are ready to learn' (HM Treasury 1998: 4). Subsequently, a cross-departmental review of services for young children was established and involved 11 government departments together with the Social Exclusion Unit and The Number 10 Policy Unit, with a Steering Group comprised of ministers from all the departments (Belsky et al. 2007: 3–6). The cross-departmental final report to the 1998 CSR argued that 'a range of services should ideally be integrated to support the complex and varied physical, developmental and emotional needs of young children and families' (Belsky et al. 2007: 5). With the cross-departmental research studies, Sure Start policy was established in 1999 and aims to tackle the child poverty by the end of 2020 through joined-up services. In the report from the 'social exclusion unit' in 2003, Tony Blair said that 'every child, whatever their background, must have the chance to make the most of their talents and potential' (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2003). Sure Start was to become one of the Labour's flagship policies in welfare reform.

More specifically, in terms of case studies, Sure Start policy was implemented in both Sheffield and Manchester since 1999 in order to give children the best start in their lives and help parents balance their work and family commitment. Particularly after 2003, Sure Start Children's Centres were established which integrate Sure Start Local Programmes, Neighbourhood Nursery, and Early Excellence Centres and provide holistic and one-stop services to the target groups in both cities. In Manchester, there are currently 34 Sure Start Children's Centres and 6 more will be built between 2009 and 2011; in Sheffield, it sets up 3 phases to establish Sure Start Children's Centres across the city.

In both Sheffield and Manchester, there are similarities and varieties in the implementation process of Sure Start policy. In Sheffield, EYECS (Early Years Education and Childcare Services) takes the leading role of developing Sure Start policy instead of relying on other accountable bodies, such as NCH (National Children's Home) and MCDT (Manor and Castle Development Trust); In Manchester, the Sure Start unit has the strategic role of rolling out Sure Start programmes. In terms of contextual factors, a joined-approach as a new way of delivering Sure Start policy has been applied in both cities. However, funding allocation for Sure Start is different in both cities. In terms of structural differences, different organisations are involved in the implementation process, for example, in both Sheffield and Manchester, there are different private, voluntary and independent organisations participating in the delivery process of Sure Start. In addition, there are variations in terms of autonomy and discretion of street-level bureaucrats in both cities. Interestingly, there is not any single document particularly evaluating the implementation process of Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester.

However, Sure Start policy, as a whole, is subject to many critiques, and even claimed as a failure policy by opposite Conservative Party and some research institutions. For example

> The government's Sure Start programme has proved a 'very serious policy failure' and a 'substantial wasted opportunity' for deprived black and ethnic minority families (The Guardian 2007).

In addition, on 19 December 2006, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report–Sure Start Children's Centres, which finds that the centres are valued by most of the families who use them (NAO 2006a, b, c). However, the report also reveals the problems and challenges in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres, such as less progress being made in improving services for fathers, parents of children with disabilities, and for ethnic minorities in areas with smaller minority populations. Furthermore, as illustrated above, Sure Start programmes have been criticised for not reaching the most vulnerable excluded groups. A report entitled 'Sure Start Sets Back the Worst Placed Youngsters, Study Finds' from the Guardian in 2005 argued that: 'The government's flagship Sure Start programme is setting back the behaviour and development of young children in the most alienated households, according to the first big national evaluation of the scheme' (The Guardian 2005a, b).

As explained in the context of research, New Labour employs 'mixed-approach' on the reform of public service delivery in order to improve the service provision. The guiding principles on Sure Start policy are: 'partnership', 'customer-focused services', 'start very early' and 'inspection and quality assurance'. 'Partnership' emphasises the government-civil society and public-private collaboration that reflects the 'joined-up government' strategy under New Labour. 'Customer-focused services', as one of the principles, illustrates that empowering frontline staff is conceived as the best means to provide services to children and families in Sure Start policy under the Labour government. Furthermore, in order to ensure the quality of services, the Labour government also sets out 'inspection and quality assurance' as one of the principles to guarantee the national standard children's

services under the context of strategy on strengthening central power through a variety of means, such as PSA targets, detailed in the Chap. 2. One of the book aims intends to explore the extent to which frontline staff in Sure Start have more autonomy and discretion to make their own decisions in the implementation process.

The original research question of this book focused on the notion of failure of policy implementation in Sure Start policy and why the original meanings of the policy were deflected and diverted in the implementation process at the grassroots. However, after the preliminary research, the research questions have been changed. Instead of examining the failure of the Sure Start policy, the book focuses on the implementation process of Sure Start policy, particularly on the period of 2003–2007 after the central government made a decision to integrate the Sure Start Local Programme, Early Excellence Centre and Neighbourhood Nursery into Sure Start Children's Centres. There are two reasons contributing to the change of the main research question. The first is that Sure Start is a long-term policy which finishes at the end of 2020; the second is that it is difficult to find a benchmark to judge the success or failure of Sure Start policy, especially as major controversy exists on the definition of what is a successful or failed policy. The former head of NAO Sir John Bourn said: 'Though it is too early to tell the long-term impact of Sure Start Children's Centres on children's lives, we do know that families value the services they provide' (NAO 2006c).[1]

The key question of this book is to explore: How Sure Start policy has been implemented under the New Labour government by employing the 'Implementation Network Approach' that aims to understand the implementation process of Sure Start policy, and analyses how the different actors in both Sheffield and Manchester involved in delivering Sure Start policy interact with each other, particularly, to what extent Labour's rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline staff in order to improve public service delivery has been carried out in Sure Start policy under the context of Labour's 'mixed-approach' on reforming public service delivery. In order to achieve the overall aim, the research has the following research sub-questions which are answered in the analysis chapters:

- Who are the actors involved in delivering Sure Start policy; what are the resources they have?
- How do the different actors involved in implementing Sure Start work together?
- What issues are they encountering during the implementation process?
- What is the role of Sure Start policy deliverers, and to what extent do their autonomy and discretion influence the implementation process?
- To what extent New Labour's rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline staff in the service provision is reflected in the actual implementation process?
- How has New Labour's mixed approach on public service delivery influenced the implementation process of Sure Start policy?

[1] http://www.nao.org.uk/whats_new/0607/0607104.aspx?alreadysearchfor=yes, last accessed on 15 Aug 2009.

- To what extent have targets facilitated the organisations and policy deliverers to reach their overall objectives for Sure Start?
- To what extent has New Labour's emphasis on 'joined-up government' and its 'claim of public service delivery' influenced the way in which policy has been implemented?

1.3 Theoretical Framework—Implementation Network Approach

The period from the election of the previous Conservative administration in 1979 up to the resignation of Tony Blair as Labour Prime Minister in 2007 has witnessed a number of changes to the nature of the British state. Under the Conservative administration of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, 'market mechanisms have been conceived as the best way to achieve government objectives and competition was also one of the guiding threads of public policy.

> State functions were dispersed through market and quasi-market mechanisms, by the outsourcing of government functions to private sector companies and by the establishment of civil service executive agencies, NHS Trusts, GP fund-holding and the proliferation of quangos (Newman 2001: 55–6).

Labour accepted the governance narrative that the policy arena had become a much more crowded environment with numerous actors competing for political space (Ludlam and Smith 2004). New Labour has argued for a new governing mode of 'joined-up government' and advocates a position in which the public and private sectors collaborate in order to deliver the required services.

With the changing nature of the British state and the emergence of new governance, the implementation process has become increasingly complex. More actors are now involved in the implementation process. Traditional 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to studying policy implementation have demonstrated weaknesses and are incapable of explaining the implementation process in a more comprehensive perspective. Regarding top-down approaches, the classic two pairs of scholars, Hogwood and Gunn in Britain and Mazomanie and Sabatier in the United States, synthesized a large number of variables into a shorter list of several sufficient and necessary conditions for the effective and successful implementation of policy (Hogwood and Gunn 1984; Sabatier 1986). Top-down approaches make a clear division between policy making and policy implementation. However, bottom-up approaches point out that the top-down model has provided only a partial explanation of the implementation process, neglecting the role of other actors and levels in the implementation process. Bottom-up approaches see the implementation process as involving negotiation and consensus-building, which stresses the fact that 'street-level' implementers have discretion in how they apply policy (Hill and Hupe 2002). Lipsky's work 'Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas

of the Individual in Public Services' has had an important influence on the research of implementation studies, and also in many respects has become the key text of the 'bottom-up' perspective (Lipsky 1980).

In addition, the research also draws heavily on the policy network analysis. The development of policy network theories in the UK has not only analysed state/society relations (Smith 1993), but is developed as an alternative to hierarchy and the market (Rhodes 1997). Rhodes provided an explicit application of intergovernmental theory to British central-local relations from a structure-centred meso-level analysis. In the British literature, Wilks and Wright (1987) place considerable emphasis on interpersonal relations as a key aspect of all policy networks. Furthermore, Marsh and Smith outline what they term a dialectical model of policy network analysis, which identifies three dialectics, that are interactive and iterative relationships—Network and Context, Structure and Agency and Network and Outcome (Marsh and Smith 2000). Chapter 4 has a detailed analysis of the implementation and policy network theories which also paves a foundation for the newly-built framework of 'Implementation Network Approach'.

There are five characteristics of the 'Implementation Network Approach' that comprehensively explain the implementation process:

- The implementation network approach takes political, economic, ideological and other networks factors into consideration;
- The implementation network approach embeds policy network theories into the framework and provides a holistic view on studying the implementation process, which incorporates context and outcomes factors;
- The implementation network approach adopts a 'bottom up' approach to studying the implementation process;
- The implementation network approach explores the relationship between structure and agency in an interactive way;
- The implementation network approach recognises the importance of interactive relations between the network and outcome, arguing that not only do networks affect policy outcomes, but policy outcomes impact the shape of the policy network directly.

By establishing the 'implementation network approach', the book aims to provide a new more holistic and comprehensive framework for analysing the implementation process. The implementation network approach is more concerned with what is happening and why rather than simply asking the top-down question: 'whether implementers comply with the prescribed procedures, timetables and restrictions' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 61). The implementation network approach addresses the issues of how to study implementation in a holistic manner, rather than the more established sequential form—e.g. agenda setting, decision-making and policy evaluation—by placing implementation studies within the broader policy making process, but recognised the usefulness of separation of policy stages as a tool to understand the roles of actors in the policy process. Furthermore, the implementation network approach recognises the implementation process involves various actors with competing goals, working in an increasingly complex web of

government programmes. The implementation network approach adds to the richness of the existing implementation literature by integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches while also accounting for the degree of discretion and autonomy street-level bureaucrat command.

1.4 Methodology

The book aims to understand variation in the implementation of the Sure Start policy by employing the 'Implementation Network Approach' and analyses how the different actors involved in delivering Sure Start policy interact with each other, particularly, to what extent Labour's rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline staff in order to improve public service delivery has been carried out in Sure Start policy under the context of Labour's 'mixed-approach' on reforming public service delivery. In order to address the research question, it is important to map out the complicated relations among different actors—organisations and street-level bureaucrats—both in the centre and at the local level, and reveal how they understand and interpret the environment they inhabit. According to Bevir and Rhodes (2003: 11), in order to 'understand actions, practices and institutions, we need to grasp the relevant meanings, the beliefs and the preferences of the people involved'. From these beliefs and traditions, actors form particular narratives to explain events and decisions. Hence, in order to give a full account of the complex relationship between different actors, the thesis uses a qualitative research strategy to answer the research questions. In epistemological terms, 'from a critical realist perspective, the account that is offered recognises that while social phenomena exists independently of any interpretation, or discursive construction of it, nevertheless the way in which actors discursively construct their interpretations, subsequently affects outcomes' (Richards 2007: 10).

Research Design

Bryman (2004: 27) argues that 'a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data'. However, there are some authors that consider the definition of 'research design' more broadly than just a framework for collecting and analysing data. For example, Flick (2006: 58) encompasses 'the goals of the study and the theoretical framework' as parts of the research design. In most literature on research methods, five different research designs are demonstrated and examined. They are experimental design, cross-sectional or survey design, longitudinal design, case study design, and comparative design (Burnham 2004; Bryman 2004; Flick 2006). The following section explains why a case study design is employed in this research.

Based on the idea of 'hierarchical research strategies'—reinforcing the idea that case studies are only a preliminary research strategy and cannot be used to describe or test propositions—Yin (2003) demonstrates three conditions that determine which research design is appropriate to use. They are 'the type of research question

posed, the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events' (Yin 2003: 5). This book focuses on how the implementation network approach helps to explain the implementation process of Sure Start policy under the context of the New Labour government. In addition, the policy implementation process is not something that can be easily established fully by investigators or researchers, as Sure Start policy Under New Labour involves many different actors of both organisations and street-level bureaucrats, and hard to control over their actual behaviours. Finally, Sure Start is also an on-going policy whose stated aim is to eradicate child poverty by the end of 2020, which meets the characteristics of case study design concentrating on contemporary events. In addition, it is also essential to point out again that the thesis is not about explaining success of Sure Start, but about the variations of implementation in the two case studies under New Labour's 'mixed approach' delivery strategy. Overall, case study design has distinct merit in that 'a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control' (Yin 2003: 9).

Case studies are a popular form of research design and are widely used throughout the social sciences. 'Case studies enable researchers to focus on a single individual, group, community, event, policy area or institution, and study it in depth, perhaps over an extended period of time' (Allison 1971: 132). However, there are a number of critiques of this approach. Yin summarised three common concerns from the opponents of case study design.

> Perhaps the greatest concern has been over the lack of rigor of case study research. Too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions; a second common concern is that they provide little basis for scientific generalisation; a third frequent complain about case studies is that they take too long and result in massive, unreadable documents (Yin 2003: 10–11).

Certainly, the first (systematic procedures) and third (massive and unreadable documents) pitfalls are easier to surmount than the problem of generalisability. Lack of systematic procedures can be overcome by creating a case-study protocol, which carefully records from the first step of the research to the closure of final data analysis. Massive and unreadable documents can also be reduced to a manageable level by employing the Internet and some new technologies. For example, governmental on-line documents are filed and categorised under different themes. With regard to this research's field work on Sure Start, it employs a systematic procedure from the beginning of drafting interview letters to the closure of data analysis. However, the second pitfall of scientific generalisation is a key question needing to be addressed. The following section proposes three means of resolving this problem through multi-case design, interpreting findings through theoretical framework propositions and by 'assuring the quality of field notes and guaranteeing the public access to the process of their production' (Silverman 2004: 227–8).

Firstly, in the context of case study research, Bryman argues that, in order to establish the merit of research in terms of this criterion of trustworthiness,

> Researchers should adopt an auditing approach, which entails ensuring that complete records are kept of all phases of the research process—problem formulation, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, selection of research participants, fieldwork notes, interviews transcripts, data analysis decision (Bryman 2004: 275).

Hence, generalisation is largely related to the systematic procedures in the method of case study, which, as Yin argued, can be resolved by creating a case-study protocol that records every single step and make use of recorded data to enhance intrinsic strength in terms of accuracy and public access. In the fieldwork of studying Sure Start, a digital tape recorder is used to guarantee the accuracy of the interview transcription in order to ensure the quality of the analysis of the collected information and increase the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research.

Secondly, the establishment of generalisation requires that qualitative findings from investigators ensure that the members of the social world are reflected and understood through the interpretations of events by key actors, and of course, my own subsequent interpretation of their accounts. Yin illustrated that 'an investigator will infer that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence, based on interview and documentary evidence collected as part of the case study' (Yin 2003: 36). In the book, the 'pattern-matching' approach is employed, which has three general strategies—relying on theoretical propositions, thinking about rival explanations and developing a case description (Yin 2003: 111–114). This research proposes a theoretical framework—the Implementation Network Approach–that is used to analyse the data collected from the fieldwork. This theoretical proposition shapes the data collection plan and also helps to organise the entire case study and focus attention on certain data. As analysed in Chap. 4, the Implementation Network Approach proposes explanatory variables to understanding the implementation process of Sure Start policy, which requires data on interactive relations among central and local government, agencies and voluntary and private organisations. This includes the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats at the local level, contextual factors, relations between structure and agency and the influence of policy outcomes on the networks. The above shapes what information and data needed to be collected in the field work, such as what Sure Start-related governmental departments exist at both the central and local level, how street-level bureaucrats deliver Sure Start at the grassroots level and what interactive relations exist between organisations and individuals.

Thirdly, with reference to multi-case design, it mainly deals with the problem of knowing whether a study's findings are generalisable beyond the immediate case study. Some scholars are skeptical of the generalisability of the single case study and critical of its limited base. For example, the theory of the 'implementation network approach' explains the first case study and whether it can be applicable and replicable in other case studies. That is, a theory must be justified by replicating findings to multiple cases. Yin illustrated five rationales for using single case study. They are

> When it represents the critical case testing a well-formulated theory; when the case represents an extreme case or a unique case; a third rationale is the representative or typical case; a fourth rationale is the revelatory case; a fifth rationale is the longitudinal case (Yin 2003: 40–42).

But in general, there is a criticism about single case studies based on the uniqueness surrounding the case. Therefore, it would be much convincing to use three or more case studies to explore the theory and enhance the external validity. That is, analytic conclusions from three or more case studies will be more powerful than those coming from a single case alone (Yin 2003). This book uses multiple-case designs (comparative two-case studies), and plans to collect data on both organisations and street-level bureaucrats involved in Sure Start policy at the local level from two cities—Sheffield and Manchester. It explores how the Sure Start programme was rolled out in two cities, identifies any differences in approach and consider why such differences have occurred. It then reflects on the degree of autonomy and discretion operating at the local level and its impact on the delivery of the Sure Start programme. This use of a two-case case study has a greater chance of generating more material and data to analyse; secondly, the contexts of the two cases are likely to differ to some extent. If under these varied circumstances, common conclusions about the theoretical propositions under consideration can still be generated from both cases, this will immeasurably expand on the external generalisability of the findings.

Sheffield and Manchester were chosen as two case studies for three reasons. First, Sheffield and Manchester are two northern industrial cities confronting the same type of social issues. They have similarities in terms of establishing Sure Start. Both cities established Sure Start programmes and also experienced the integrating process of Sure Start policy from Sure Start Local Programmes, Early Excellence Centre and Neighbourhood Nursery to more holistic and one-stop Sure Start Children's Centres. Secondly, there are a number of similarities, most notably that a variety of actors from both public and private sectors are involved in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres. This reflects New Labour's joined-up approach towards public service reform. But actors involved in Sure Start policy in both cities are differentiated, with variation in their roles, resources and power in the implementing of Sure Start, Thirdly, the author secured access to both cities making it a relatively rich resource for securing the requisite qualitative and quantitative data to effectively analyse the implementation process of Sure Start at the local level.

However, it is also important to identify the limitations of choosing Sheffield and Manchester as two case studies. The selection of two demographically, geographical, socially and economically similar types of cities neglects the potential variation to be found in other for example other types of socio-demographic areas, such as rural areas or small towns. This reduces some of the broader claims that can be generated from this specific study. Finally, it is worthwhile to reemphasise that the aims of the book focuses on the implementation process in both Sheffield and Manchester, rather than providing the generalisation of Sure Start implementation across the England.

Research Methods

Traditionally, academic discussions on quantitative and qualitative research methods have tended to create a somewhat exaggerated picture of their differences and theoretical irreconcilability (Bryman 2004). In the 1980s and 1990s, there was some

growing interest in integrating quantitative methods with qualitative methods (Bryman 1998; Hammersley 1992). Denzin takes the perspective of 'triangulation'. He 'identified five separate methodologies: (1) surveys; (2) interviewing; (3) documentary analysis; (4) direct observation; and (5) participant observation' (Marsh and Stoker 2002: 237). A triangulated method would make use of all of these or a combination of two or more methods in the study of the same empirical issue. Denzin also distinguishes between triangulation within methods and triangulation between methods. Triangulation within methods stress that if different ways of measuring a variable do not affect its relationship with another variable, then this adds validity to any conclusions about the relationship between the two. Triangulation between methods aims to 'either address aspects of the research question that the exclusive use of either quantitative or qualitative methods cannot cover or to add validity to results produced by one or other method' (Marsh and Stoker 2002: 238).

Prior to addressing the details of the research method, it is necessary to illustrate how the triangulation method contributes to the collection of data in the field work of this book. In this work, documentary analysis and interviewing are taken as the two most important methods of collecting the information and data on Sure Start policy. Bryman (2004) argues that there are five kinds of documentary sources, and they are: 'personal documents, official documents from the state, official documents from private sources, mass media outputs and virtual outputs (internet)' (Bryman 2004: 380). Firstly, documentary sources pave the foundation for the interviewing stage. The documentary sources (See Table 1.1) in the book have two primary roles. The first is to understand the background of Sure Start policy, its initiative stage, developing stage, and current progress, as well as exploring the related data on funding streams, targets and actors in Sure Start. The second is to identify relevant individuals to be interviewed and prepare for data collection in the subsequent interviewing stage.

In addition, there is a potential problem with the interview data. Richards argues that 'interviewees may exaggerate their own role or competence. So, for example, a

Table 1.1 Documentary sources

Government official websites	DCSF, DWP, DoH, Sheffield City Council, Manchester City Council, PCT, Jobcentre Plus, Sure Start Children's Centres, and other Private, Independent and Voluntary actors involved in delivering Sure Start
Governmental documentary materials	Civil Service Yearbook, Every Child Matters, Departmental Annual Reports, Treasury Comprehensive Spending Review, Public Service Agreements, and Sure Start related other documents
Existing literature and research undertaken on Sure Start programmes	The National Evaluation of Sure Start, a series of researches on Sure Start Local Programmes by Birkbeck College in UCL funded by Sure Start Unit, and other relevant documents

civil servant may be more positive or place a different emphasis on a particular event or issue than that of the view offered by minister, and, of course, vice-versa' (Richards 2008: 12). In terms of the interviews, the researcher attempted to ask a variety of respondents for their responses and interpretations on the same occurrence. When this is placed against other sources of qualitative data listed in the Table, it allows for some degree of triangulation (Richards 2007).

Semi-structured Interviewing as a Research Method

As argued above, it is essential to do preliminary research on the background of the chosen policy area. Utilising existing primary and secondary sources with reference to the chosen theoretical path, a topic guide is created and initial interview target organisations are identified. Specific interviewees are identified by analysing up-to-date primary literature from the target organisations (paper and electronic based), the Civil Service Yearbook and, in the later stages, information gathered in interviews with other actors (See Table 1.2). Interviewees are chosen from those involved in Sure Start policy from relevant departments and those initiating Sure Start policy. In addition, particularly at the local level, another important means of choosing interviewees is through the recommendations of other interviewees based on their local knowledge, since they know who relevant individuals are to contact on certain questions. After determining the content, nature and scope of the interviews necessary for this research, the next step is to arrange the interviews. Interviews are a varied and important research tool; they might be structured, semi-structured or unstructured, and qualitative or quantitative.

After completion of the preliminary research, it is clear that the number of actors involved in the policy arena is extensive. However, it is possible, within the given resource constraints, to carry out a series of in-depth interviews with actors involved in the implementation process. It is also clear that the type of information required from the policy actors would be qualitative in nature—looking at complex interactive processes and the reasoning behind them.

Based on the need for in-depth qualitative information, the structured interview path would have placed unacceptable limits on the research. A structured approach is too rigid to deal with the degree of complex and interrelated issues present. Furthermore, as the policy area is relatively unexplored, there is a strong chance that new questions would arise in the interview process that had not been uncovered through preliminary research, thus an approach is required that can be flexible enough to account for this. Unstructured interviews would have been suitable for examining the complex nature of the policy area and actor relationships in-depth, but this approach is rejected as an interview method because the research required a degree of regularity. If comparisons are to be made across similar actors, it is essential that certain core questions are asked in each group. Semi-structured interviews are therefore chosen as the best option for this particular research area, because it allows the interviewee space to express their thoughts and the interviewer the flexibility to adapt to new information during the interview, whilst maintaining enough structure to allow for comparisons to be made across interviews.

Table 1.2 Responses from interviewees in the fieldwork

Interview targets	Number of letters sent out	Number of responses with consent	Number of responses with rejection	Number of non-responses
DCSF	15	1	0	14
DWP	8	3	0	5
DoH	3	0	0	0
Treasury	2	0	0	0
Social exclusion and task force	1	1	0	0
No. 10	2	0	0	0
Manchester City Council	1	1	0	0
Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester	20	10	6	4
Sheffield City Council	2	2	0	0
Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield	18	9	2	7
PCTs	2	1	0	0
Jobcentre Plus	3	0	0	0
NCH	1	0	0	0
MCDT	1	0	0	0
Barnardo's	2	0	0	0
The BigLife company	2	0	0	0
Employees in Sure Start Children's Centres		3		
Total number	83	31	8	30

Weaknesses and Limitations

The section discusses some issues about the limitations and weaknesses of the research methods in this fieldwork. First, 'we have to recognise that the interviewees' views are partial in both senses of the word. They will be narrating a particular story; probably one in which their roles are exaggerated' (Marsh et al. 2001: 4). For example, interview material with managers in Sure Start Children's Centres indicates that managers tend to have a strong view on how important they are to forging the partnership at the local level and motivating their employees. However, it is important not to neglect the fact that structures constrain or facilitate the actions of agents (Marsh et al. 2001).

Secondly, there is an issue regarding the obstacles to conducting systematic procedures in order to obtain information. Systematic procedures can ensure that the researchers have sufficient time and discretion to complete data collection. Before conducting interviews, it is important to have a pre-arranged plan, such as how to get access and whether the interviewee's schedule fits with your research timetable. However, systematic procedures sometimes malfunction and cannot guarantee that all potential interviewees accept to be interviewed. In addition, due to time and resources constraints, it is unrealistic to cover all relevant interviewees. In the fieldwork, many interviewees identified as important are not able to be interviewed, which leads to the shortage of key information on actors involved in delivering Sure Start policy (See Table 1.2). 83 request letters have been sent out to ask for the interviews, out of which merely 31 responded to the requests. Particularly, there is no single response from No. 10, Treasury, Jobcentre Plus and voluntary and private organisations—NCH and MCDT in Sheffield, The Big Life Company and Barnardo's in Manchester—which contributes to the difficulties of analysing how they interact with actors involved in Sure Start.

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Chapter 2
Governance and Public Service Delivery Under the Labour Government

More than any previous Labour government, the present Labour administration has shown and maintained an interest in reforming the machinery of government with a view to improving policy delivery. 'Public service delivery' has become one of the key priorities for New Labour. In the Cabinet Office paper 'Modernising Government', the New Labour government uses the phrase 'public service' in three chapter headings out of six—'Responsive Public Services', 'Quality Public Services' and 'Public Services' (Modernising government, White Paper, Cabinet Office 1999). The current Labour government in the UK is desperately engaged in the quest for public service improvement. The Labour government also stated that delivery on its pledge to raise service standards is the single most important criterion for judging the success or failure of its second terms of office (Boyne 2003).

Given the ideas of New Labour's 'third way' and 'joined-up government', it begs the question whether New Labour's public service reforms also exemplify this 'third way' and 'joined-up service' that increasingly figured into Blair's speeches. What strategies is New Labour using to modernise public services? Is it still applying traditional top-down delivery measures? Or to what extent is New Labour continuing the Conservatives' (1979–1997) managerial and public service revolution? This chapter primarily argues that New Labour's approach takes neither the form of traditional top-down measures, nor does it go back to the period of marketisation espoused by the Conservatives. On the contrary, the New Labour government's approach to modernising public services is based on 'mixed measures', which not only stress the significance of devolution, decentralisation and marketisation, but also strengthen central control to ensure that public services are delivered efficiently.

This chapter will highlight the reforms of public service delivery under the New Labour government and also provide a wide context for analysing the implementation process of Sure Start and the extent to which New Labour's public service reforms affect the policy implementation process of Sure Start policy. The first part of this chapter will provide a brief illustration of the 'third way' and 'joined-up government', and try to answer 'what is the third way and joined-up government'?

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Under what circumstances do they emerge under the New Labour government? How are they influencing New Labour's strategies on public service delivery? The second part will review public service delivery under the welfare state in the post-war period and 'the managerial and public service reforms carried out under the Conservatives from 1979–1997, as a prelude to considering the significance of the changes occurring under New Labour following the May 1997 election victory' (Painter 1999: 1). The third part primarily concentrates on New Labour's 'mixed approach' to delivering public services and argue that, although New Labour emphasizes the importance of joined-up public service delivery and of empowering non-state actors and frontline bureaucrats (such as non-governmental organisations or voluntary organizations), the relationship between the central government and other actors are still asymmetric. Non-State actors and frontline bureaucrats still have many controls imposed on them by the centre, who controls the decision-making process. In the UK context, the core executive is usually identified as the 'centre' of a territorial nation state, consisting of the institutions of the Treasury, offices around the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and its committees, and the Cabinet Office (Smith 1999).

2.1 New Labour, New Governance

2.1.1 What Is Governance?

Governance has become a much-contested concept, and both academics and practitioners employ a variety of interpretations when using this term. This concept has been applied in a wide range of disciplines, such as economics, comparative politics, public administration and democracy (Pierre 2000). Rhodes defines governance as 'self-organizing interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game, and significant autonomy from the state' (Kjaer 2004: 3). Pierre and Peters analyse governance from two dimensions: 'governance as structure' and 'governance as process' (Peters and Pierre 2000: 14). Richards and Smith argue: the term should be understood as a concept that 'reflects the shifting patterns of the state over the last thirty years, from an era of government to a new era of governance' (Richards and Smith 2002: 15). These definitions of governance are only a small sample of many that can be encountered when assessing the literature. The term is also used to imply a recognition of an increasingly complex state-society and acknowledgement that the state's primary role is policy coordination rather than direct policy control. For example, Bache and Flinders employed multi-level governance as a way to explain the changing nature of the British state (Bache and Flinders 2004: 31).

Concensus on defining governance is difficult to achieve. However, in broad terms, governance can be seen as a way of conceptualising the many new forms of

government and as a way of understanding the relationship between the state and society. In the broad literature on governance, most highlight the following key questions:

> How to understand the process of governing within and beyond the government?
>
> How to conceptualise the complexity of the patterns of relationship involved in both the policy process and in the delivery of services?
>
> How to analyse the flows of influence and accountability in plural and fragmented systems?
>
> How to conceptualise the indirect forms of power, which flow through and beyond the state itself (Newman 2001: 22)?

The following section seeks to identify the extent to which New Labour engages in a rather different process of state restructuring and transformation towards the above questions posed by the conception of governance, and how New Labour intends to steer, direct, lead and coordinate actors both within and beyond government in the struggle to deliver its political objectives. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to first of all illustrate the New Labour government's ideational strategy, couched in terms of—The Third Way—to modernising social democracy, especially in reforming public service delivery.

2.1.2 The Third Way

Third Way politics is above all an endeavor to respond to the post-war welfare state, the Conservative government's series of reforms on the state and the challenges presented by 'governance narratives'. This section starts by outlining some general features of the post-war welfare state, the Conservatives' reforms and the pathology of governance to ensure the discussion of New Labour's third way is put into context.

It was in the aftermath of the Second World War that the Keynesian welfare state emerged. Based on the idea of 'Beveridgism' (a commitment to the collective provision of a comprehensive welfare service) and 'Keynesianism' (the aim of securing full employment), one set of authors claim that there existed a degree of political consensus among the main political parties in the development and consolidation of the Keynesian welfare state in the period after 1945 (Addison 1975; Kavanagh 1987; Kavanagh and Morris 1989). The Keynesian welfare state was dedicated to making sure the State played an active role in establishing full employment, managing the economy, taking over ownership and responsibility for a number of important industries and providing social welfare (Richards and Smith 2002: 70).

However by the 1960s, the principles of Keynesian welfare state were questioned in the light of evidence coming with political and economic decline. Politically

> This refers to Britain's absolute decline in Great Power status, from the ruler of a third of the World by the end of the nineteenth century to the decline of the British empire after 1945 and, finally, to Parliament's acceptance of a European regional role by joining the EEC in the early 1970s (Richards and Smith 2002: 81).

In terms of economic decline, the British economy performed less well compared with France or Germany, and also became increasingly prone to crises related to the pound. It was argued that governments had failed to deliver on many expectations or demands on them, which in turn resulted in a serious decline of public confidence in the government.

During the 1970s, narratives concerning 'ungovernability', 'crisis of the state' and 'government overload' emerged. This was based on a growing perception of the inability of governments of both political hues in the post-war era, to effectively address various politically contentious issues such as the exponential growth in government commitments to met sectional pressure group demands, the debate on 'declinism' exacerbated by recurrent 'stop-go' economic crises, the political power of trade unions and membership of the European Economic Community (King 1975; Rose 1980; Foster and Plowden 1996). Government became 'increasingly defined not as the solution to societal problems, but instead the very root and cause of these problems' (Peters and Pierre 2000: 62). The Conservatives (1979–1997) argued that government had become overextended and was unable to deliver successfully on its myriad commitments. The Conservative subsequent reforms led to Rhodes developing 'the differentiated polity' model, which is 'characterized by functional and institutional specialization and the fragmentation of policies and politics' (Rhodes 1997: 7). This is an alternative to the Weberian hierarchical model, and replaces strong cabinet government, parliamentary sovereignty and ministerial responsibility with interdependence, a segmented executive, policy networks, governance and hollowing out of the state (Rhodes 1997). This hollowing out of the state characterizes many of the changes that have taken and are taking place in British government. Since the 1970s, 'hollowing out' refers to the loss of functions of the central government upwards to the European Union, downwards to special purpose bodies and outwards to agencies. Market mechanisms were conceived by the Conservatives as the best way to achieve these government objectives. New Public Management and its various tools that were predominantly drawn from the private sector associated was introduced, alongside a programme of privatization, hiving-off and contracting out upon, aimed at limiting the role of the state and introducing the discipline of the market to the public sector (Boyne 2003: 153). Competition was one of the guiding threads of public policy under the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Martin and Entwistle argue:

> Public utilities, and other nationalised industries, were exposed to the full rigours of the market through privatisation. Competition was introduced into other parts of the public sector, notably the health service and local government, through the creation of new internal markets and compulsory competitive tendering (Entwistle and Martin 2005: 2).

In addition, based on Conservative's reforms since 1979, Labour accepted the governance narrative that the policy arena had become a much more crowded environment with numerous actors competing for political space (Ludlam and Smith 2004). This governance narrative proposed that the policy process had evolved in such a way that policy was developed in a much more isolated and segmented manner than in the more corporatist era of the 1970s (Ludlam and Smith 2004: 106–107).

The idea of the 'Third Way', associated most notably with Giddens (1998, 2000), was used to highlight New Labour's departure from the politics of the social democratic state, signifying a reconfiguration of relationships between economy and state, public and private sectors, and the government and people. The root of the third way is not only linked to the US Democratic Party in the Clinton era, but also can be found in political debates in Europe about the future of social democratic parties (Newman 2001: 40). New Labour sought to construct a new agenda for the Left to deal with the challenges of the globalised economy by redefining a new role for government in an approach that seeks to break with neo-liberal individualism and social democratic collectivism (Mullard 2000: 14). As New Labour went into the election in 1997, it claimed that the principles of equality and community were to continue to be Labour's guiding principles. However, such commitments to equality and community had to be located in the context of new challenges, which meant the need to reform the collectivist welfare state. In addition, New Labour was also critical of the neo-liberal idea that markets should take primacy over public goods in almost everything (Giddens 2000: 32).

As Giddens argues, the third way seeks to resolve the core ideological tension of the past two centuries—the clash between socialism and liberalism. It posits that the ethical foundations of socialism—fraternity and equality—can coexist with the freedoms of liberalised markets and liberal democracy. There is a particular set of values, which the third way embraces:

> *Interdependence*: because nations and communities can only meet the challenge of globalisation if they find new ways of working together and supporting each other.
>
> *Responsibility*: because in accepting the rights and benefits of citizenship, people also need to be made responsible for their actions and effort in society.
>
> *Incentives*: because in a world of constant change and uncertainty, people need to be encouraged to save more, to study harder and to work more intelligently.
>
> *Devolution*: because far from engineering society in the old way, governments now need to push the powers of democracy and public provision closer to civil society (Giddens 2001: 26).

In terms of the above values, it is clear that New Labour is imposing a new way to coordinate the relationship between government and people, and public and private spheres. New Labour's rhetoric appeals to a new politics of greater decentralisation and devolution of government to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, reform of the House of Lords and the electoral system aimed at creating more stable and inclusive government (Mullard 2000: 15). Secondly, 'New Labour advocates the idea of networks of institutions and individuals working together in "mutually

beneficial" partnerships based on trust' (Ludlam and Smith 2004: 160). Thirdly, it also proposes to construct a new social contract based on the theorem that there are 'no rights without responsibilities' (Giddens 2000: 52). Fourthly, New Labour does not completely abandon the idea of central bureaucracy, nor does it embrace the wholesale use of markets; instead, it advocates the combination of these two approaches. Third way politics advocates that 'Government can act in partnership with agencies in civil society to foster community renewal and development' (Giddens 1998: 69). Under this approach, New Labour's programme for reforming the state was based on the notion of moving towards 'joined-up government'. In the following section, I will examine New Labour's new governing way as 'joined-up government'.

2.1.3 *A New Governing Way as 'Joined-up Government' Under New Labour*

With these ideological underpinnings of the third way, New Labour came into government in 1997. For the first term of the Blair Government, joined-up government was a central objective of public sector reform, covering both the making of policy and the delivery of services. This prompts the question, what is joined-up government in Britain? 'It is best viewed as a group of responses to the perception that services had become fragmented and that this fragmentation was preventing the achievement of important goals of public policy' (Ling 2002: 2). However, this definition does not fully explain the approach, as it is not only related to fragmentation of services but also is a response to the changing nature of the British state. This approach contends that not only are rigid hierarchical state structures incapable of meeting the aspirations and fulfilling the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous society, but the pursuit of a more minimal role for the state in society is not viable. In addition, Richards and Kavanagh argue that 'departmentalism' has been perceived as a negative aspect of British government and to some extent the emergence of 'joined-up government' is also a response to dealing with the problems of traditional departmentalism (Kavanagh and Richards 2001). The following section primarily focuses on New Labour's 'joined-up government' as a cure to the issues of 'fragmentation' and 'departmentalism'.

The idea of 'joined-up government' as an emerging form of governance is closely associated with the 'hollowing-out' of the state and the increasing fragmentation and complexity of the public realm (Newman 2000: 105). Rhodes argues that the state's ability has been undermined by change in the core's operating environment, and the core is losing its grip on the wider grouping of state and non-state actors on which it relies for policy implementation (Holliday 2000). New Labour realised that the market reforms of neo-liberalism had not delivered all that had been promised and market failures and inadequacies had not been eliminated. However, Blair also argued that the days of tax and spend are gone and that big

government is dead (Richards and Smith 2002). He claimed that there is no way back to the Keynesian Welfare state and 'Public' versus 'Private' is no longer a straightforward distinction. There are many ways of delivering public services and many different combinations of state and non-state agencies (Giddens 2002: 55), but New Labour advocates a position in which the public and private sectors collaborate in order to deliver the required services. The key to binding the various relationships together is trust and collaboration. New Labour argues that 'no formal structure should be adopted to condition this collaboration; instead, different options should be available in order to ensure flexibility and responsiveness' (Richards and Smith 2002: 238).

In addition, 'joined-up government' is also connected to reconsidering the concept of 'departmentalism'. New Labour still believes that the current Whitehall departmental structure, based on a functional organisation of responsibilities, works well for the bulk of the government's business. For example, a Cabinet office's report in 2000 argues that the current Whitehall departmental structure is highly effective in delivering many of the government's key policies and priorities, and undoubtedly has advantages:

> They provide a single clear line of accountability; and they are very effective at keeping tight control over scarce resources and at ensuring those resources are used efficiently and effectively (Cabinet Office 2000: 23).

However, New Labour also realised that this structure can inhibit effective cross-departmental working. 'In a major speech in 1999, Tony Blair complained of having 'scars on my back' from his attempts to get Whitehall departments to improve public service' (Kavanagh and Richards 2001: 1). There are a number of reasons why Whitehall is poor at cross-cutting policy. In the first place, policy makers can take too narrow a view of the issue, and focus purely on departmental objectives. Secondly, the existing weak and perverse incentive structures both allow and encourage ministers and civil servants to take more of an interest in what they themselves contribute to a policy and how that is recognised, rather than focusing on what the policy in practice achieves. Thirdly, the centre has not traditionally been proactive in promoting cross-cutting policy formation and service delivery (Cabinet Office 2000).

The following section focuses on the changing role of the British central government and non-state actors under Labour's new governing way of 'joined-up government'. Under the Conservative, networks were more popular through the late 1980s and early 1990s, though the form and approach varied considerably. Central government was only one of the participants among all the actors. Many government functions had been decentralised or devolved into many agencies. The Conservative government of the 1980s and early 1990s introduced a range of measures, such as the creation of agencies, internal markets, privatisation, market testing and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), intending to break up what was held to be a monolithic inward-looking public sector concerned too little with the needs of service users (Ling 2002: 4). However, this sort of approach exacerbated the difficulty of coordinating multi-agency responses to complex problems,

under which circumstances New Labour proposed 'joined-up government' to strengthen the coordinating role of central government. Therefore, New Labour created a large number of cross-departmental coordinating institutions. For example, Richards and Smith (2005) highlight the Social Exclusion Unit, which was 'set up to build sustainable responses to the problems of deprived communities and social exclusion, based on new forms of funding, joint resourcing and the development of outcome-based evaluation linked to cross-cutting performance indicators'. Under the New Labour government, the central government was regarded as a key coordinator among many different actors.

In examining the details of Labour's approach to public service reforms, a key point is that in a number of areas Labour was willing to accept a number of the reforms that had taken place in the previous eighteen years of Conservative government. For example, 'most of the Conservatives policies have been left intact, such as the public expenditure targets set by the Conservatives until 1999' (Boyne 1998: 46). And Whitfield also argues that 'the reality is that New Labour is creating market conditions in public services which include most of the structural components of markets' (Whitfield 2006: 48). Under the groundwork laid by the Conservative (1979–1997), New Labour argued that joined-up problems need joined-up solutions and effectiveness has been frustrated by obstacles to service integration across organisational boundaries in more fragmented public institutional structures (Jervis and Richards 1997). Partnership is a significant theme in Labour's approach to tackling complex policy issues. For example, the Sure Start program stresses the partnership with non-state actors to deal with the poverty and education issues of pre-school children in the most deprived areas. Non-state actors, such as voluntary sector bodies and private sector companies, still play important parts in the process of delivering public services, but they participate in a more coordinated way. First of all, it is necessary to review the characteristics of public service delivery before New Labour went into government in 1997, which will provide us a strong foundation for understanding the reforms of public service delivery under New Labour's control.

2.2 Public Service Delivery from the Post-war Welfare State to Thatcherite Managerialism

2.2.1 Public Service Delivery Under the Post-war Welfare State

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Westminster model has dominated analysis of the British state, providing an organising perspective with strong normative underpinnings that has informed the actions of those operating within it (Rhodes 1997, p. 5). Central to the model is the enduring principle of parliamentary sovereignty, wherein Parliament is 'an absolutely sovereign legislature' (Dicey 1915: 37).

Power within the model is conceived as fixed and static, wherein exchange is predicated upon zero-sum bargaining (Smith 2000, p. 26). In the Westminster model, all decisions are made within Parliament and there is no higher authority. Legitimacy and democracy are maintained because ministers are answerable to Parliament and the House of Commons is elected by the people. Decisions are seen to be taken by Cabinet and implemented by a neutral Civil Service (Smith 1998). Accordingly, the Westminster model produce strong executive government, insulating government from outside interference on the basis that 'government knows best', governing in the interest of the public good, rather that satisfying narrow self-interests (Flinders 2001).

Rhodes (1997) argues the Westminster model operates as an organising perspective offering a descriptive account of both the formal and informal rules underpinning the institutions of British government. The model offers a strong normative dimension, describing not just how government was thought to work but how it should work (Bache and Flinders 2004). However, throughout the twentieth century criticisms of the Westminster Model emerged, including: 'its over emphasis on the political elite, its narrow conception of politics, its simplistic assumptions about the location, and focus of power leading to false dualities and its essentially insular focus' (Bache and Flinders 2004: 95). In addition, the Westminster Model's efficacy was increasingly questioned by the emergence of the 'overload' narrative, and newly emerging governance theories from both American and European political studies, such as policy networks, multi-level governance and the differentiated polity. However, Rhodes still argues: 'The Westminster model was and remains part of mainstream political science' (Rhodes 1997: 6).

Based on the Westminster model, Britain is generally perceived as having a hierarchical and unified political and administrative system (Flinders 2001). Weber defines the ideal type of delivery in his description of bureaucracy. In principle, the Westminster model was able to ensure that decisions made at the centre were delivered on the ground through a process of hierarchical organisation with clear lines of control and subordination. For Weber 'The principles of office hierarchy and of levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones' (Weber 1948: 197). The delivery of public goods is achieved through the existence of bureaucratic authority and standardized rules. This approach ensures that goods are always delivered in the same way, based on clearly defined and rational rules. Within this model, public servants are what Le Grand calls knights—they are altruistic public servants ensuring that politicians service the general interest and act in a public service manner to deliver pubic goods (Grand 2003). Ling defined the characterising features of 'conventional' delivery of public services as

> The functional differentiation of spending departments with the treasury responsible for overall financial coordination; the spatial division between central and local government with some local revenue raising powers within a context shaped by the treasury and

> spending departments; self-regulation for professionals in delivering public services; non-professional services provided through relatively autonomous bureaucrats who were expected to be relatively passive administrators rather than active managers; and formal accountability upwards to ministers who in turn were answerable to parliament (Ling 2002: 617–618).

In this process of public service delivery, the state plays a significant role. The structure and personnel of the state exert their own independent influence on this process. The post-war welfare state was dedicated to making sure the state played an active role in establishing mass education, full employment, managing the economy, taking over ownership and responsibility for a number of important industries and providing social welfare. The state covered almost everything from state security to social security, from education to National Health Service. For example, the Beveridge report established the following defining principles:

> (1) A national minimum - central government should provide a common safety net of a national minimum, to protect the poorest and weakest in society. Thus, the state must take on the responsibility of setting a national minimum wage and a certain standard of living for those unable to work.
>
> (2) Equal and free access to health and education.
>
> (3) A crucial role for the centre - the central state needs to take on clear responsibilities for key areas of social policy, including social security, health, education and housing.
>
> (4) State provision - not only should central government be given a large role in financing social service, but the services themselves should be placed in the hands of state agencies.
>
> (5) Government accepts responsibility for maintenance of high and stable level of employment.
>
> (6) The idea that the British state has particular responsibility for ensuring the welfare of children, the elderly and adolescents became institutionally entrenched and the diversity of forms amongst the nation states through which these services were delivered was considerable (Richards and Smith 2002; Ling 1998).

Certainly, the description of state dominance over public service delivery is not illustrating or judging the effectiveness, efficiency and good-quality of public services offered by the state as a major provider. On the contrary, a large amount of literature illuminates on the failure of 'the overloaded state' (King 1975) and frustrations raised by its efficiency in delivering public services. For example, 'Scattered throughout the memoirs of former Conservative and Labour ministers over the last forty years are numerous testimonies expressing frustration and a sense of failure concerning their ability to deliver on their policy goals' (Richards and Smith 2005: 8). This pattern of delivering public service was seen to be insufficient with a succession of official reports and politicians' speeches highlighting its supposed deficiencies in the general areas of civil service, local government, financing and management, and specific areas such as urban policy, education, housing and social work (Ling 1998).

2.2.2 *Public Service Delivery Under the Conservatives Since 1979*

As the awareness of the 'overloaded state' and its failure in delivering public service increased, 'there had been a paradigm shift in the structure and organisation of the public services during the Thatcher-Major era—from public administration to public management—accepted as almost axiomatic' (Painter 1999: 95). Richards and Smith point out:

> The overloaded state creates an environment in which the state inexorably grows as governments try to satisfy promises to an ever-increasing range of pressure groups and ever-increasing tendency to intervene in all areas of political life—economy, civil society, etc. (Richards and Smith 2002: 88).

'The Conservative Governments of the 1980s and early 1990s introduced a range of measures intended to break up what was held to be a monolithic inward-looking public sector too little concerned with the needs of service users' (Ling 2002: 618). These measures included the creation of agencies, internal markets, privatisation, market testing, and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT). At the heart of these reforms was the creation of focused agencies driven by clear market-like incentives to perform ever better, especially in relation to costs and customers' needs.

> State functions were dispersed through market and quasi-market mechanisms, by the outsourcing of government functions to private sector companies and by the establishment of civil service executive agencies, NHS Trusts, GP fund-holding and the proliferation of quangos (Newman 2001: 55–6).

Under the Conservatives (1979–1997), public service delivery involved a variety of actors, such as private sectors, Non-Governmental Organizations and agencies. Such fragmentation is associated with a style of policy based on policy networks, and a style of delivery based on partnership. 'Competition' was one of the most important guiding threads of public policy (Entwistle and Martin 2005). It changed the traditional Weberian's hierarchical policy-delivery system and stressed efficiency and effectiveness of delivery through the mechanism of the market. The emphasis on management reform has brought improved productivity; better value for money and in many cases better quality services (Newman 2001). Allied to the notions of managerialism and competition is the idea of citizens as customers, not as clients. 'Consumer choice had some marked successes, such as the sale of council houses and the large growth in private sector provision, for example for the elderly' (Rhodes 1997: 124). Rhodes argues that there are three characteristics of service delivery under the Conservatives (1979–1997):

> 1. Services are provided by whomever can provide the best service at least cost – be that central agency, private sector, NHS or voluntary organization; 2. it is government by the community, in that it seeks to decentralize services and run them with and through many agencies; 3. service delivery systems become more complex with attendant loss in comprehensibility, effectiveness and accountability (Rhodes 1997: 113–128).

Hood argues that New Public Management (NPM) is based on two different streams of ideas, which are the 'development of public choice, transactions cost theory and principal-agent theory, a set of administrative reform doctrines built on ideas of contestability, user choice; and a set of successive waves of business-type managerialism in the public sector' (Hood 1991: 5–6).

> The public choice criticism of bureaucracy suggests that bureaucratic rules do not lead to the public good but game playing by bureaucrats who are driven by self-interest. Recognising the self-interested network of bureaucrats means that in order to achieve goals, it is important to change the incentive structure (Geddes et al. 2006: 5).

One mechanism for this is to create principle-agent relationships where actors at the centre and agencies involved in delivery are separated. The relationship is contractual; agents will be rewarded for the delivery of goals, but if they fail to meet the targets or goals specified in the contract, they may incur financial penalties, or in some cases the ultimate sanction of losing the contract to a competitor. This 'principal-agent' form of relationship captures the way in which local services were mandated to deliver government policy but under conditions of tight monitoring and control (Newman 2001: 85).

However, the nature and significance of UK public service reforms during the Thatcher-Major years is more problematic than perhaps apparent at first sight. Within the context of the UK, Marsh and Rhodes (1992) have adapted the policy implementation literature to argue that while the last Conservative administration (1979–97) may have had more radical objectives than previous post-war governments, its actual record of policy delivery was no better than its predecessors. It is noticeable that even in those areas that the government regarded as most important, and in those areas where many observers identified a substantial degree of change, the government's achievements were much less substantial than is often claimed. For example, 'as Jackson shows, any claim that the Thatcher Government transformed the economy or economic performance is, at best, highly questionable. Annual growth in the Thatcher years was slower than in previous comparable periods' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 178). They suggest that the Conservative government experienced policy delivery and implementation problems for a variety of reasons including: a rejection of consultation/negotiation with lobby groups; a lack of a clear ideological blueprint of reform; poor statecraft in the form of adopting the wrong models and/or tools; a failure to recognize that the resources available to government are constrained; and that implementing new polices often have unforeseen or unintended consequences (Richards and Smith 2005). For example, Cairney, in analysis on the legacy of health care reform under the Thatcher government, argued that prior to implementation, the Department of Health could not consult enough on the details of the reforms: 'the extent of joint working between the NHS and the centre…is of a greater order than it has ever been' (Cairney 2002: 3). In addition, Cairney also demonstrates the lack of a clear blueprint of reform under the Thatcher government through the analysis of health care reform and argues that 'Due to tight timetable and the partial formulation of

policy from the outset, there has therefore been no overall plan guiding the implementation of the reforms and little sense of where they will ultimately lead' (Cairney 2002: 8).

2.3 New Labour's 'Mixed Approach' to Public Service Delivery

2.3.1 The Asymmetric Relationship Between Non-state Actors, Front-Line Actors and the Center

Over the last ten years, several factors have led to increased pressure for partnership between policy makers. These include the combination of the hollowing out of the state through public sector reforms such as privatisation, the development of agencies, the use of market mechanisms and a growing realisation that complex social problems such as poverty, education and child protection are often cross cutting. (Sullivan and Skelecher 2002). Many, such as, Hogwood (1997), Holliday (2000) and Marinetto (2003), have questioned the "hollowing out' thesis by pointing to the growing range of powers that the core executive enjoys, and exploring the extent to which changes at the centre have *reinforced* its power' (Cairney 2009: 4). Some scholars argue that the 'hollowed-out state' is a contentious typology. For example, Ling argues that 'the Thatcher governments attempted to re-engineer central control over the state system' (Ling 1998: 119). Taylor supplements that 'hollowing out has utility as a broad-brush description, but its attractiveness has obscured powerful counter-tendencies, what I term filling in, at work in government' (Taylor 2000: 3). Holliday also refutes Rhodes' argument that the British state is hollowing-out

> The core is to an extent fragmented, but this does not mean that it is disabled. It is also power and resource dependent, but in each case the asymmetries frequently work to its advantage. Co-ordination is very much within the grasp of core actors, although, as the Thatcher experience showed, control is a more distant prospect. at the start of the twenty-first century the British core is more substantial than ever before, and is capable of securing many, though of course not all, of the policy outcomes it seeks (Holliday 2000: 175).

Richards and Smith also argues that even though privatisation has undoubtedly changed the boundaries of the British state, it has not necessarily reduced the role or power of the state and the government has continued to control the privatised monopolies through the creation of state regulatory bodies (Richards and Smith 2000: 274). Bevir and Rhodes (2003, p. 6) question the capacity of government to 'command' the policy-making arena. While 'the British executive *can* act decisively' and 'the centre coordinates and implements policies as intended at least some of the time', *on the whole*, 'to adopt a command operating code builds failure into the design of the policy' (Cairney 2009: 4). However, even though there is no agreement on whether the state is hollowed out, it is certain that more actors,

resulting from privatization, agencification or devolution, are involved in the process of policy making and implementation, and the state is much more fragmented compared with the period of the post-war welfare state.

With an increased range of bodies involved in delivering public services, effective public policy depends on the ability of different agencies to work together. Essentially, the third way represents a rebuttal of old certainties—neither the market nor collective provision has all the answers, and the answer depends not on the provision of universal mechanisms from a relatively fixed ideological position but on the best way to achieve a desired end (Temple 2000: 320). New Labour argues that good public service will not be delivered merely through top-down hierarchical modes, or through the form of complete marketisation, privatisation and bottom-up approaches, but through a combination of all of these approaches. New Labour has continued to involve a large number of non-state actors, such as quangos and agencies, and devolves power to street-level bureaucrats to stress the importance of flexibility and discretion in policy implementers. However, as Richards and Smith (2005) argue the policy capability of non-state actors is also weakened through the strengthening of power from the centre.

Even though New Labour, rhetorically at least, stresses the roles of non-state actors and street-level bureaucrats in the partnership on improving public service delivery, it either implicitly or explicitly strengthens the controlling power from the centre. The claim here is that the relationship between the centre and non-state, street-level actors is asymmetric.

2.3.2 *New Labour's Rhetoric on Devolving More Power to Non-state Actors and Front-Line Bureaucrats*

Partnership became a significant theme in Labour's approach to tackling complex policy issues such as neighbourhood renewal, social exclusion, community safety and child poverty. In such areas it emphasised the need for both better horizontal integration (partnership working between public sector organisations, voluntary sector bodies and private sector companies) and for stronger vertical integration (between central, local and community tiers of government). For example, Pierson and Ellison illustrate that in the process of dealing with the issue of social exclusion under New Labour, 'new groups were encouraged to enter into partnership with government in tackling the new agenda, especially representatives of the voluntary sector, churches, faith groups, charities and community groups' (Ellison and Pierson 2003: 68). The government placed particular emphasis on developing new policy initiatives through integrated local actions. The Performance and Innovation Unit's report 'Reaching Out' (2000) listed thirty-two government-inspired series of zonal initiatives to bring local agencies together to develop holistic solutions to local problems, offering additional funding and greater flexibility in how funds were spent for successful bidders in order to foster local innovation. The first wave of

education Action Zones was established in 1998, bringing together local education authorities, voluntary organisations, businesses and schools to raise educational achievement in areas of low educational performance. In addition, the Employment Zones have been a supplement for The National New Deal programmes, aimed at reducing long-term unemployment and joblessness in particular localities. 'The Employment Zones are delivered by private sector contractors who have flexibility in deciding the content of employment assistance and are paid through an output-related funding system' (Ellison and Pierson 2003: 119).

New Labour's approach, in particular, to public service delivery, has been based on wider devolution of powers. Their programme of reform has been framed in the context of devolving greater power to the frontlines and to non-state actors.

> In developing greater choice of provider, the private and voluntary sectors can play a role. Contrary to myth, no one has ever suggested they are the answer. Or they should replace public services. But where use of them can improve public services, nothing should stand in the way of their use. In any event, round the world, the barriers between public, private and voluntary are coming down (Blair 2001).[1]

Whitfield argues that 'New Labour is creating markets in public services on an unprecedented scale. Education, health and social care, children's services, housing, planning and regeneration, the criminal justices system are all being marketised' (Whitfield 2006: 177). For example, a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) working group concluded that 'HEFCE should guard against an overtly interventionist role in the market' (Whitfield 2006: 77). In some policy areas under New Labour, the private sector is considered to be more efficient than the public sector, and local authorities and public bodies should be restricted to a commissioning role in order to create the space for the private sector to develop more innovative ways of delivering services. For example, in terms of Labour's education policy, it requires schools, like hospitals and other public services, to compete against each other, forcing a separation between client and contractor and establishing a 'procurement culture' in which private and voluntary sector providers bid to take over service delivery (Seldon and Collings 2003). In addition, within the policy area of financial restructuring, New Labour extended the scope of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), which is an important part of the Government's strategy for delivering high quality public services in education, housing, the criminal justice system and defence, and has embedded it as a major source of infrastructure funding. PFI delivers a number of important benefits by requiring the private sector to put its own capital at risk and to deliver clear levels of service to the public over the long term (HM Treasury 2008).[2]

Under New Labour, customer satisfaction has become one of the most important aims in policy delivery. 'The starting point for all our public services should be that customers' needs and aspirations should genuinely and demonstrably be the basis

[1] http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page1632, last accessed on 20 May, 2007.

[2] http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/public_private_partnerships/ppp_index.cfm, last accessed on 5 Aug, 2008.

for designing and then delivering the services they receive' (Cabinet Office 2003a). Slater, action head of OPSR (Office of Public Services Reform), illustrated that 'at the office of Public Services Reform and across Government we are committed to improving public services; but we won't be judged on our intentions or targets. We will be judged on whether public services have improved in the eyes of those who use them—their customers' (Cabinet Office 2003b).

The challenge and demands on today's public services are not the same as forty years ago. The culture has been greatly changed since the war. Under the welfare state, the public service treats everyone the same and often overlooked individuals' different needs and aspirations. With the influence of New Right ideology, rising living standards, a more diverse society and a steadily strong consumer culture, the demand for good quality schools, hospitals and other public services has been dramatically increased. As a consequence, Public services need to respond to these changes and they have to refocus on the needs of the patients, the pupils, the passengers and the general public rather than those who provide the services. The New Labour government suggests that joining up public service is key to overcoming the defects of departmentalism, reshaping the services across traditional departmental boundaries, and targeting the delivery of the outcomes that citizens seek. Moreover, New Labour also argued that the best and most efficient solution to satisfy customers' needs is to free up the autonomy of frontline service deliverers.

In order to satisfy the demands and needs of customers and achieve customer-focused service, New Labour enunciates four 'principles for Public Service Reform':

> *National Standards*: means working with hospitals, schools, police forces and local government to agree tough targets and to see performance independently monitored so people can see how their local services compare.
>
> *Devolution*: means Whitehall is serious about letting go and giving successful front-line professionals the freedom to deliver these standards.
>
> *Flexibility*: means removing artificial bureaucratic barriers, which prevent staff from improving local services.
>
> *Choice*: acknowledges that consumers of public services should increasingly be given the kind of options that they take for granted in other walks of life (Office of Public Service Reform 2002: 3).

Customer-focused public service reforms are based on these four principles, but for these to work effectively there must be a tight relationship between them. Standards and accountability are important, but they must be accompanied by the greater trust that comes from devolution, the greater rewards that come from more flexibility and the greater choice that the customer wants. 'The notions of choice and flexibility are explicit references made by the government in response to what it regards as an entrenched approach in Whitehall to delivery of public services based on a view that 'one size fits all'' (Richards and Smith 2005: 25). Governments can no longer claim to know everything and assume that something rigidly designed will fit the expectations of everyone in the nation.

For the government, diversity of customers' requirements and public service provision has become the new mantra. This is to be achieved through devolution

and delegation to local providers, which can help tailor services to meet local needs. New Labour not only devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that allow them to be able to take their own approaches to public service reform, but they also freed up front-line professionals and street-level bureaucrats, who are best placed to understand the most appropriate means of delivery in order to meet the specific needs of their individual client groups.

> High standards are best delivered close to the customer, within a clear national framework of accountability. People value having their problem dealt with properly the first time rather than being told to return after checks have been made 'up the line'. The extras that matter to satisfied customers are those that cannot easily be imposed through national guidance, but can be provided by motivated front-line staff. Innovation and efficiency are much more likely to be achieved where people are given the incentive to do so at the local level, which is why the government is strongly committed to the principle of devolving and delegating responsibility and resources (Office of Public Service Reform 2002: 17).

One government on-line publication—'*Leading from the Front Line*', it illustrates clearly New Labour's steps and intentions on freeing up street-level bureaucrats and gives several specific cases on granting teachers, police officers, GPs and Local officers more autonomy to cope with different situations (Cabinet Office 2003a). There are no plans to impose a single shift pattern to improve services and deal with the lack of police forces to respond to emergency calls; instead of each unit having to reinvent the wheel, an established shift pattern could be used to match local needs. For example, two Met borough police units, Greenwich and Bromley, are trying out the Merseyside shift approach to see whether it could work in other areas. Indeed, some units in London also are developing alternatives that suit them, including a 12 h shift in Kensington and Chelsea and a permanent night shift in Charing Cross.

In addition, 'the Labour Government is committed to freeing up those frontline staff that have earned this right through a proven track record in meeting centrally imposed national standards in the form of PSA agreements' (Richards and Smith 2005: 26). In developing this strategy, Gordon Brown announced in his 2003 budget statement a review of new ways of providing departments, their agencies and other parts of the public sector with incentives to exploit opportunities for efficiency savings, and so release resources for front line public service delivery (HM Treasury 2003). This culminated a year later with the publication of the Gershon Report (2004)—Releasing Resources to the Front Line—which outlined a programme of efficiency savings aimed at financing the increased cost of the Government's new front-line delivery strategy. The report also identifies what it understands to be the delivery chain within the policy-making process.

2.3.3 New Labour's New Strategies on Strengthening the Centre's Power

Rhetorically, New Labour is committed to pluralistic forms of service delivery, delegation of management and the use of a range of public/private, local/national

providers. Central government is only one of the participants in the process of service delivery in the face of more complicated social problems. Within New Labour's official documents, such as, 'Modernising Government' and 'Leading from the Frontlines', non-state actors have been put into an important position in delivering public service to the public. At the heart of the strategy of 'joined-up delivery' lay two principles: (Cabinet Office 1999: para 7)

> Inclusiveness: policies are forward-looking, inclusive and fair;
>
> Integrated: policies and programmes, local and national, tackle the issues facing society—like crime, drugs, housing and the environment—in a joined-up way, regardless of the organisational structure of government (Cabinet Office 1999: para 7).

It can be argued that under the New Labour's government, the agenda is not ideologically driven, but output driven. The movement away from a concern with processes towards a stress on outputs means that non-state actors and frontline bureaucrats, such as agencies, voluntary organisations and quangos, are increasingly expected to deliver measurable improvements in their services by almost any means possible. The centre is seeking an alternative way to impose its control (top-down) on non-state actors and frontline bureaucrats. New Labour created 'joined-up government' as a mechanism for increasing control by the centre, because it offers a way of ensuring that strategies developed in No. 10 were not undermined by the conflicting goals of departments and different agencies or quangos. The New Labour government also created a range of bodies such as the Social Exclusion Unit, task forces, the Delivery Unit, tsars and the Strategy Unit to overcome departmentalism and redress the failure of public service delivery. In order to strengthen the power of the core executive, New Labour has taken the following measures—strengthening the Prime Minister's power, increased the role of special advisers and task forces and utilizing audits and targets.

Strengthening Prime Ministerial Power

In Britain, Prime Ministers have not been passive in the face of a changing external environment and the past thirty years have witnessed a significant development in terms of policy capacity (Richards and Smith 2005). Prime ministerial predominance can enable the prime minister to lead, if not command, the core executive, and, in concert with others, to direct, if not control, its policy development (Heffernan 2003: 347). Such predominance arises from the prime minister's ability to access a series of personal and institutional power resources. Holliday argues that:

> The skilful use of personal and institutional resources makes prime ministers predominant within the core executive, particularly when the centre of this executive is 'more substantial then ever before, and capable of securing many, though of course no all, of the policy outcomes it seeks (Holliday 2000: 175).

Some scholars argue that Blair's domination of the government and its ministers highlighted a shift from a prime ministerial to a presidential model of government (Foley 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005). The notion of presidentialisation conjures

up a profusion of associations relating to executive centralization and personal power (Foley 2000).

However, it is only with the election of Blair's Labour Government in 1997 that we saw a significant increase of institutionalisation in the Prime Minister's Office. 'The idea of a Prime Minister's department was extensively trailed as a plausible response to the need for a support agency to give Blair the capacity for co-ordinated intervention from the centre' (Foley 2000: 311). 'It is only the period since 2001 with the development of the Delivery Unit that Number 10 has developed a degree of formal, direct control over the implementation of policy' (Richards and Smith 2005).

Since 1997, an important development has been the way in which the resources of the Prime Minister have increased. 'Even though the constitution does not explicitly specify the Prime Minister's powers, and the limits have been contingent and not structural' (Richards and Smith 2006: 327). What was witnessed under Blair was a further reinforcement of the Prime Minister's position at the heart of the core executive, in an attempt to enhance executive coordination across Whitehall and beyond (Dunleavy et al. 2002). During the Blair era, the importance of the Prime Minister's role continued to grow because Blair saw himself as having a continued role in the development of policy and controlling most resources, such as authority and interpersonal relations with ministers. He was eager to strengthen the centre of government in order to better manage and co-ordinated an increasingly complex policy-making arena (Heffernan 2003). Tony Blair also used his position in government to pursue his own policy agenda, eager that people should 'know I am running the show' (The Sunday Times, 26 April, 1998). However, 'what marks the development of central capacity in British Government from the 1970s onwards has been an emphasis on personalism (Prime Ministers developed the sort of policy capabilities that suited their own personal requirements) rather than the formal development of institutional arrangements' (Richards and Smith 2006: 11). Often these were little more than formalizing the role of personal advisors, and in the case of Thatcher, it was an almost complete reliance on personal advisors rather than institutional mechanisms to counteract departmental positions. On the contrary, New Labour's government was concerned with establishing a clear agenda, which was coordinated by the centre and not undermined by the departmentalism of the British political system. 'The number of Cabinet Office ministers has steadily increased, among them several loyal Blairites, and an Office of Public Service Reform, a delivery unit and a Forward Strategy Unit have been set up, all based in the Cabinet Office but reporting to the Prime Minister' (Heffernan 2003: 361). Unlike the previous government, the focus of change was at the institutional, not the personalist, level. Richards and Smiths argue: (2006: 12)

> Traditionally, the centre of British government focused around the Cabinet office and Number 10 has been good at resolving conflicts and coordination but it has been weak at developing policy or controlling departments. Its focus has been on process not outcomes. Blair explicitly wanted to augment Prime Ministerial influence over departments, and in a way that does not rely on the personal interests or intervention of the Prime Minster (Richards and Smith 2006: 12).

When Blair came into office, he expanded the size of the Policy Unit (now the Policy Directorate), almost doubling numbers of personnel compared to the Major years (Smith and Ludlam 2004). Crucially, the role of the Policy Directorate became one not so much of making policy but instead one charged with ensuring that departments were aware of the Blair agenda and were delivering policy in line with Number Ten's wishes. Blair reinforced this policy steering through regular bilateral meetings with ministers to ensure that they and the Prime Minister agreed on policy objectives. This is an important development because it means that there is an institutional relationship between departments and Number Ten (Richards 2005). For example, 'it has been suggested that much of the policy drive in the Department for Education and Skills has been from the Policy Directorate and Number 10 rather than from the Department suggesting significant policy development within the centre' (Richards and Smith 2006: 12). The Former Cabinet Secretary Andrew Turnball illustrates that 'it is clear that the Prime Minister wanted a bigger, stronger centre. So we went through a period of very rapid growth, some of it before the election in 2001 and some of it immediately following it with the creation of new units' (Cabinet Secretary 2001–5).

After 2001, New Labour restructured the core executive and created the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, which is used to ensure the delivery of the Prime Minister's top public service priority outcomes. The aim of the Unit, which reports directly to the Prime Minister, is to ensure that the government delivers on its priorities in terms of health, education, crime and transport. The major functions of PMDU are:

> Monitoring and reporting on delivery of the Prime Minister's top delivery and reform priorities
>
> Identifying the key barriers to improvement and the action needed to strengthen delivery
>
> Sharing knowledge about best practice in delivery
>
> Supporting the development of high quality PSA targets that will effectively incentivise improvements in public services (Cabinet Office 2006).[3]

Richards and Smith argues that:

> In organizational terms, the use of Delivery Unit has led to a major change in the relationship between the centre and departments. Previously, departments had sole responsibility for the delivery of services. Now, the Delivery Unit institutionalizes Number Ten's and the Treasury's role in overseeing what traditionally has been a relatively autonomous area of departmental activity (Richards and Smith 2006: 339).

Barber argued that: 'taken together with other Cabinet changes, and in the light of the development of the Office of Prime Minister over recent decades, it may well be that it marks a further stage in the evolution of British government from a Cabinet system to what is virtually a Presidential system' (Barber 2007: 295). He suggested that: 'the establishment of the Delivery Unit was not just a personal whim of Tony Blair, but an institutional response to the demands of the time' (Barber 2007: 298).

[3]http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/pmdu/, last accessed on 2 January, 2006.

With the creation of the Delivery Unit, there is a significant transformation in resources to the core executive and also a direct line of responsibility is built between those on the ground and the centre. However, the Delivery Unit is not the only way New Labour took to strengthening the centre's power. They also extensively employ the Special advisor and task forces to enhance resources in the centre.

Special Advisor and Task Forces

As we have seen in the Westminster Model, civil servants were integral to the policy process and intimately involved in the making and taking of decisions. However, because the civil service was considered too wedded to the post-war consensus, the Thatcher government undermined the traditional role of civil servants and only defined their role as policy implementers rather than policy analysts. Under New Labour, it is increasingly the case that ministers rely much less on officials for policy advice (Richards and Smith 2002). With the increasing distrust of the civil service, Labour has questioned Whitehall's ability to develop and deliver policy and has looked much more to outside sources for policy advice. Number Ten is developing capabilities to direct departments, which are based on special advisers and task forces overseeing and commenting on the policy proposals that are coming from departments. Again, this is an important change in the patterns of dependency between departments and the Prime Minister, with departments becoming more dependent on the Prime Minister for policy initiatives (Richards and Smith 2005).

The way that special advisers have been used can be illustrated by looking at both No. 10 and the Treasury. The introduction of special advisors has generated the loss of the monopoly on advice held by civil servants.

> The employment of Special Advisers adds a political dimension to the advice and assistance available to Ministers while reinforcing the political impartiality of the permanent Civil Service by distinguishing the source of political advice and support. Special Advisers are employed to help Ministers on matters where the work of Government and the work of the Government Party overlap and it would be inappropriate for permanent civil servants to become involved (Cabinet Office 2005).[4]

In the Treasury, Gordon Brown oversaw an important change in the role of civil servants. Increasingly, policy is made in consultation with special advisers rather than the senior officials of the Treasury. In addition, Brown also had a collection of ad hoc advisers to undertake 'blue skies' thinking, their role being to keep the chancellor in touch with fresh ideas that are developing outside the corridors of the Treasury (Ludlam and Smith 2004). Overall, the growth of special advisors has changes the dynamics of resources in the core executive.

The New Labour government also created an array of ad hoc bodies—task forces—with the intention of crossing departmental boundaries and providing a range of

[4]http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/propriety_and_ethics/special_advisers/code/, last accessed on 2 January, 2008.

sources of advice. Task forces were intended to convey a spirit of urgency and commitment on the part of new administration intent upon action and delivery. 'They were designed to be emblems of Labour's desire to be seen to be implementing manifesto pledges briskly and in a spirit of trust' (Foley 2000: 311). The purpose of a taskforce is to identify and overcome obstacles to effective co-ordination but, at the same time, the taskforce model can be used to enhance central control. The taskforce seeks to achieve three objectives:

1. to encourage greater autonomy at lower levels of government while providing overall central direction;
2. to allow street-level variety a flexibility whilst securing a degree of uniformity;
3. to increase local responsiveness whilst enhancing efficiency and economy (Taylor 2000: 9).

There has been an increase in the number of taskforces but, more importantly, there has also been a change of function, with a move away from advising policy-makers towards making policy. Many taskforces have oversight functions to promote accountability as well as monitoring and evaluating policy implementation and outcomes. Task forces draws upon individuals from the private, public and voluntary sector, including academics and civil servants, in order to explicitly attempt to impose horizontal linkages on vertical networks. This aims to create a matrix structure enjoying a high level of political support in order to avoid ad hoc or symbolic bureaucratic politics (Taylor 2000: 57).

Audit and Target

The previous Conservative administration (1979–97), while willing to abandon its role as service provider in many areas was much less willing to relinquish any controlling capacities (Richards and Smith 2005). Rhodes illustrates: 'there are at least 32 major regulatory bodies in British government covering such policy area as: state audit, housing, the lottery, education, the city and finance, the press and broadcasting, employment, discrimination, the environment and civil aviation' (Rhodes 1997: 91–92). 'Individuals employed in 'oversight bodies for public organizations' rose approximately 90% between 1976–95, whilst at the same time Civil Service numbers were cut by about 30% and local government service by 20%' (Richards and Smith 2005: 20). Moreover, the Major Government also institutionalized this process through the initiative of the 'Citizen's Charter'.

New Labour adopted a similar approach to reform the state and improve public service delivery. For example, the Citizen's Charter was rebranded as 'Service First'. The New Labour Government's rationale behind this approach was still to put the consumers first in the process of public service delivery. And accompanying the process of overseeing performance to schools, hospitals etc., there are a large number of regulatory bodies created by the last Conservative government, but again, rebranded by New Labour. These include the Better Regulation Unit (later known as the Regulatory Impact Unit), the Better Regulation Task Force, the National Audit Office, the Audit Commission and the Public Sector Benchmarking Service. Growth in the use of targets and audit mechanisms reflects an attempt by

central government to ensure it maintains control over those agencies or actors delivering services to the public (Hyndman and Eden 2002).

However, one of the most important institutional forms of target-setting has been the establishment of Public Service Agreements (PSAs). The new spending regime has revitalized the role of Treasury in the domestic policy-making process, and the system has been perceived as consistent with the characterization of 'a 'strong' Treasury that actively intervenes in public activity' (James 2004: 399). The PSA system was designed to bring all of central government under a system-wide performance regime to reduce fragmentation, and it was also intended to improve the co-ordination of priority setting where policy or delivery issues cut across departmental boundaries. 'The problem of departmentalism, with ministers and officials focusing on their own activities regardless of the consequences for other parts of government, has long been recognized' (James 2004: 400). Some joint PSA frameworks and targets have addressed so-called 'wicked issues', for example poverty, teenage pregnancy and social exclusion, which cross-cut different functional departments and so establish a set of shared goals. There are three main aims for the PSA:

> The PSA system was intended to promote Treasury influence over the priority setting of bodies beyond central government; the second main aim of setting up the PSA regime was as a detector tool to allow the Treasury to monitor the performance of departments and other bodies against their objectives and targets, including monitoring shared objectives and targets; the third aim of establishing the PSA regime was as an effector tool to provide incentives for politicians and officials to undertake activities consistent with the priorities of the core executive (James 2004: 399–402).

Most significantly, the PSA system is also integrated with the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit to ensure that the Government achieves its key delivery priorities across the important areas of health, education, crime and asylum, and transport. These priorities include value for money and a statement of who is responsible for the delivery of these targets. For example, one of the most ambitious cross-cutting PSA targets for public services was set for the Criminal Justice System (CJS), involving about 8500 million pounds of expenditure under the supervision of the Home Office, the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Law Officers' Departments (NAO 1999: 18). The cross-cutting CJS PSA for 2000 was set in addition to the three departments' own departmental PSAs with the aim: 'to reduce crime and fear of crime and their social and economic costs; and to dispense justice fairly and efficiently and to promote confidence in the rule of law' (Chief Secretary to the Treasury 2000, p. 49). Where organisations fail to meet the prescribed targets laid down by government, they can incur an array of prescribed penalties ranging from a simple cut in government funding to the outright closure of an organisation, such as has occurred, for example, with a number of 'failed' secondary schools (Richards and Smith 2005).

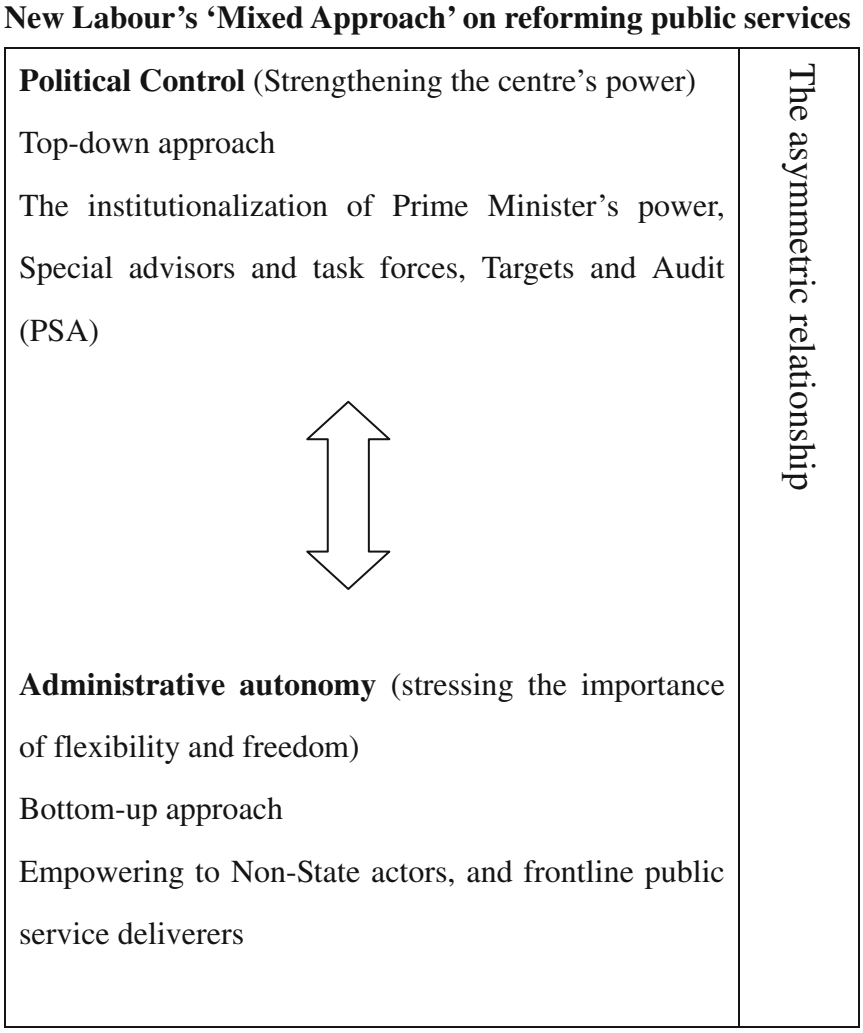

Fig. 2.1 New Labour's 'Mixed Approach' on reforming public services

2.4 Conclusion

There is no doubt that 'improving public service delivery' has been a core theme since New Labour entered its first term of government. As Blair put it, 'modernising our public service is crucial to everything the government wants to achieve for the country' (Office of Public Service Reform 2002: 1). However, Labour's strategy for ameliorating public service has been to create a 'mixed approach' (See Fig. 2.1). On the one hand, it stresses the importance of non-state actors and frontline

bureaucrats in improving pubic service delivery and continues the legacy bequeathed by the Conservatives (1979–1997). On the other hand, it still believes that the center should use a 'top-down' approach and it consistently imposes national standards on the service deliverers. For example, New Labour argues that:

> Demanding standards and devolution need to go together. The best way in which a national standard can be met is by recognising local and often individual differences, and giving service providers the flexibility to shape services around the needs and aspirations of customers and communities. Equally, taxpayers fund public services and have the right to expect that they will be provided fairly to customers, wherever they live, so national standards are essential (Office of Public Service Reform 2002: 18).

Certainly, there is no consensus on whether this mixed approach has improved public service delivery. In this chapter it is not possible to elucidate the pros and cons of this mixed-approach, since there is not enough evidence to support either claim. However, it sets up the context for the Sure Start policy, and also raises several research questions:

- how does the ideology of 'joined-up government' influence the implementation process of the Sure Start policy?
- how does the Labour's rhetoric on devolving more power to the Frontline staff influence the process of public service delivery in Sure Start?
- to what extent do the unforeseen and unintended implementation consequences relate to this mixed approach?
- is public service delivery operation more varied than before or, on the contrary, has it been more routinized by the regulations of national standards, such as, PSA targets?

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Chapter 3
New Welfare State and Sure Start Policy

The Sure Start programme, as one of the most important policy initiatives under the New Labour government, has been considered as the key policy to tackle the problems of social exclusion and poverty of children and young people. As analysed in Chap. 2, New Labour's strategy on public service reform is based on 'mixed-approach'. On one hand, New Labour strengthens the centre's power through a variety of means; on the other hand, it also places the importance of giving more autonomy and flexibility to frontline staff at the forefront of service delivery. Sure Start policy is a good reflection of New Labour's 'joined-up' governing mode and 'mixed approach' to public service delivery. In the first place, 'joined-up government' as a new governance mode has been prevalent under most policy areas in New Labour's government, such as industrial, economic and education policies. Sure Start policy not only strengthens cross-departmental cooperation between departments such as the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department of Health (DoH), but it also requires collaboration between public, private and voluntary sectors and other actors. For example, multi-agency panels, multi-agency teams and multi-agency services have all been considered as different forms of multi-agencies working to support children and young people with additional needs, and securing real improvements in their life outcomes.

Secondly, Sure Start also reflects New Labour's mixed approach on public service reform. The Treasury sets out a series of PSA targets for each department involved in delivering Sure Start policy in order to reach the national standards of the service delivery in Sure Start. For example, one of the Sure Start principles is 'inspection and quality assurance'. Furthermore another principle of Sure Start policy is 'customer-focused services' that requires more discretion and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats to respond to the different needs of families and children. Sure Start policy reflects New Labour's rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline staff, such as, giving more power and autonomy to managers of Sure Start Children's Centres to run the centres.

The book intend not to pre-determine the success or failure of Sure Start policy, but focuses on the implementation process of Sure Start policy and how different

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actors play out in the service delivery process in Sheffield and Manchester. In the first place, Sure Start policy is one of the policies under New Labour that aims to end the child poverty by 2020. Hence, it is still too early to make a final judgement on the success of Sure Start. Secondly, the official NAO (National Audit Office) documents 'Sure Start Children's Centres' also reveals that 'It is difficult to measure the impact of children's centres in the short term. Improvements in the life chances of young children may take several years or longer to emerge' (NAO 2006a, b, c: 17).

However, there are definitely many critiques on the delivery process of Sure Start policy, and its impact on the improvements of children's lives. A report entitled 'Sure Start sets back the worst placed youngsters, study finds' from the Guardian in 2005, argues that:

> The government's flagship Sure Start programme is setting back the behaviour and development of young children in the most alienated households, according to the first big national evaluation of the scheme. Though the £3bn programme is benefiting some poor families, the government commissioned study concluded that children of teenage mothers and unemployed or lone parents did worse in Sure Start areas than those in similarly deprived communities elsewhere (The Guardian 2005).[1]

In addition, in a report on 15 February 2007, it argues that 'Norman Glass, Sure Start's founding director, complained after he had resigned; it went in the wrong direction. A significant proportion of the budget has been wasted on the provision of group day care—including expensive and unnecessary buildings' (The Times 2007).[2] Therefore, it is intriguing to figure out what occurs in the process of implementation under New Labour government.

Under this context, this Chapter explores the Sure Start policy, demonstrates its origins, purposes, settings and evolutionary process since its establishment that paves the foundation for the analysis of varieties in the implementation process of Sure Start policy, and to what extent Sure Start policy is embedded in New Labour's strategy on reforming public service delivery in Sheffield and Manchester. The first part begins with a brief illustration of the transformation of the welfare state since 1945, especially focusing on the descriptions and characteristics of the new welfare state under New Labour. The second part answers what are social exclusion and poverty, and the measures New Labour takes to tackle the problem of social exclusion and poverty. Then the third part focuses on demonstrating the specificities of the Sure Start Programme, its aims and principles, followed by illustrating the settings and services in both Sheffield and Manchester. Especially, throughout the introduction of service provision in Sure Start Children's Centres, it paves the solid foundation for analysing the varieties in the implementation process of Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester.

[1] http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2005/dec/01/childrensservices.childprotection, last accessed on 30 May, 2007.

[2] http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article1386943.ece, last accessed on 15 Oct, 2009.

3.1 New Labour, New Welfare State

3.1.1 Classic Welfare State

Some scholars argue that the welfare state was present before the Second World War; for example, 'Gilbert claims that by 1939, the British state had committed itself to the maintenance of all its citizens according to need as a matter of right' (Powell and Hewitt 2002: 32). However, there is general agreement that Britain's classic welfare state was established between 1944 and 1948. The post-war Attlee Labour government introduced and developed major social policies committed to social reform, which manifested a radical break with the past. 'Universalism' has been seen as the heart of the 'classic welfare state', and as Sullivan illustrated, there are two impetuses for this. 'First, universalism was the only way of guaranteeing that best quality services could be made available to all who needed them, second, only universal services would remove the stigma associated, as a result of inter-war experience, with state services' (Sullivan 1996: 54).

The classic welfare state contains another very important key element, which is full use of the powers of the state to maintain full employment. First, this illustrates the importance of Keynesian demand management to the classic welfare state. Second, it stressed the deliberate use of the organised power of the state (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the effect of market forces (Pierson and Castles 2000: 18). It is generally claimed that the years up to the 1970s saw few major changes to the classic welfare state, marked instead by continuity and incrementalism. Powell and Hewitt argued that 'the classic welfare state did experience some major changes, but none was significant enough to change its fundamental character' (Powell and Hewitt 2002: 41).

3.1.2 Dismantling the Welfare State?

There is no general agreement on when the 'classic welfare state' ends. Some writers such as Glennerster (1995) suggest that the mid-1970s saw the end of the classic welfare state. Others, such as Walker (1998), views 1979 as a watershed in social policy and the end of the classic welfare state. However, there is one thing to be certain: the resurgence of conservatism in the late 1970s marked an important development for western industrial democracies. The 1979 Conservative victory signalled a juncture of economic, social, and political pressures that challenged the Keynesian settlement of the post-war period (Pierson 1994: 164).

'The aim of 'new Conservatism' was to shatter the post-war consensus on interventionism, mixed economy and welfare or, in the words of one Thatcherite, to reject the 'false trails of Butskellism' (Sullivan 1996: 97). As the antithesis of previously dominant consensus principles, the new guiding principles included

> A commitment to large-scale state intervention in social and economic life being replaced by a commitment to a market economy;
>
> A commitment to the authority of the state being replaced by a commitment to the rule of law;
>
> A commitment only to large-scale state intervention in welfare being replaced by a commitment only to a residual welfare state (Howe 1983).

In short, the Conservatives at the beginning of the 1980s promised a transformation of the relationships between state and society—a transformation that was to be based on the economic principle of sound money and the moral principles of individual freedom and individual responsibility. Many scholars believed the classic welfare state to be so vulnerable and fostered an image of the welfare state beset by crisis, based on their understanding of those economic (fiscal strain, enhanced mobility of capital e.g.), political (massive growth of public sector, bureaucratic tendencies, state's rigidity e.g.), and social pressures on the classic welfare state (Pierson 1994: 179–181).

Certainly, this is not to say that fundamental changes were not introduced. Shifts in the direction of welfare did occur during the 1980s in each of the social policy areas. For example, the NHS became more market-oriented and less of a monopoly provider of services than it had been in the classic welfare state. The internal market was established under the reform of NHS and the separation between commissioner and provider to the NHS has led hospitals in both public and private sectors to compete for patients based on the principles of value for money and the needs of patients (Seldon and Collings 2000). In education, the private, or quasi-private, sector has been strengthened. For example, through the voucher system, parents could shop around and choose the one either from public or private schools they thought the best.

However, the structure of the welfare state remained relatively intact by the end of Mrs. Thatcher's premiership. Pierson argued that 'despite the aggressive efforts of retrenchment advocates, the welfare state remains largely intact' (Pierson 1994: 179). As Sullivan argues, 'the changes are less fundamental than new conservatism promised: the structure of the welfare state remains largely intact; privatisation, though it has occurred, has been less extensive in outcome than in policy intention' (Sullivan 1996: 119). In addition, the main source of continuity comes from the high political costs associated with retrenchment initiatives. Pierson illustrated:

> The welfare state's political position does not seem to have been seriously eroded by the decline of its key traditional constituency, organised labour. The maturation of social programs has produced a new network of organised interests–the consumers and providers of social services–that are well placed to defend the welfare state (Pierson 1994: 182).

In the last, the evolution of public opinion provided the clearest sign that the welfare state is unlikely to undergo radical change, since mass publics remain strongly attached to the central features of modern welfare state (Gladstone 1996).

3.1.3 New Labour, New Welfare State

New Labour's third way claims to be different from both the Old Left and the New Right, from Old Labour and the Conservatives. The second chapter identified that there is a considerable debate on the third way. Blair and Giddens view it as a modernised or renewed social democracy. Elsewhere, it can be seen as a more non-ideological, pragmatic, policy-driven practice with theory lagging behind (Powell 1999). This work will not join this debate, instead focusing more on its influence on the transformation of the welfare state under New Labour.

New Labour's welfare reform has been criticised on the one hand for being a continuation of the neo-liberal Thatcherite agenda, and on the other as typical of Labour's classic welfare state (Ludlam and Smith 2000). With the underpinnings of the 'third way', New Labour, in common with the New Right, recognises the failure of the statist approach to meet the diverse needs of welfare recipients in increasingly heterogeneous social conditions. At the same time, New Labour argues that the basic values and the main aims (social justice and equality) of the welfare state have not changed, and New Labour does not wish to dismantle the welfare state but also follows a strong demand to change the old approaches and traditional policy instruments (Powell 1999).

The Third Way rests on four basic values: equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility and community (Blair 1998). However, the meanings of some values and aims have been redefined. New Labour has moved from equality to inclusion and from equality of outcomes to equality of opportunity, signifying that the importance of redistribution has declined (Powell and Hewitt 2002). New Labour now offers 'genuine' or 'real' equality of opportunity, which is differentiated from the Right's conception of a meritocratic society—the open road rather than an equal start. According to Giddens (1998: 102) 'the new politics defines equality as inclusion and inequality as exclusion'. New Labour's emphasis is on paid work and education as the mechanisms of inclusion. Claire argues that 'social inclusion' has been the most important motivation for New Labour to reform the welfare state (Ludlam and Smith 2000).

Furthermore, the redefinition of equality is linked closely with the redefinition of citizenship. Miliband stated that the traditional welfare state was socially active when citizens were economically passive (Miliband 1994). The new welfare state is active throughout people's lives. Powell and Hewitt illustrated that:

> Welfare must be economic as well as social: the most potent social policy is a successful economic policy. Economic and social policies are seen as different sides of the same coin. The government's aim is to rebuild the welfare state around work. This work-based social policy explains the special emphasis given to education, which Blair has termed the best economic policy we have: 'welfare is not only about acting after events have occurred…the welfare system should be proactive, preventing poverty by ensuring that people have the right education, training and support (Powell and Hewitt 2002: 70).

New Labour stresses the link between opportunity and responsibility. People are urged to become more responsible and make provision for the risks facing

themselves and their families. In addition, there will also be increasing partnerships within civil society, where the 'community' appears in a number of initiatives, such as a revival of mutual aid and a more localised and community-based civic society.

New Labour's welfare ethos can be clearly distinguished from the market-led, neo-liberal policies of preceding Conservative governments, which indicated no interest in social justice or social inclusion. There is also a clearly-defined aim to New Labour's welfare strategy, which is to identify and overcome the complex phenomenon of social exclusion. The following section briefly illustrates what social exclusion and poverty is, and what measure New Labour has taken to deal with it.

3.2 Social Exclusion and Poverty

In the 1990s, the phrase 'social exclusion' gained prominence in the political lexicon. However, it has different implications and meanings. For example, 'Social exclusion, as used in international and European social policy discussion, is closely linked to core concepts of poverty, deprivation, change, development, participation, marginalisation, rights and social justice' (Ellison and Pierson 2003: 57). The European Commission placed the concept at the centre of its social policy, linking it to the idea of an inadequate realization of social rights. Social exclusion and poverty are often discussed together but the connection between them is a complex one.

For Room (1995), the concepts of poverty and social exclusion became more clearly distinguished. Room illustrates that 'poverty is about the lack of resources available to an individual or household and the resulting low level of consumption; by contrast, social exclusion has to do with relational issues—inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power' (Room 1995: 243). Social exclusion is about more than poverty. It is about having the personal capacity, self-confidence and aspiration to make the most of the opportunities, choices and options in life that the majority of people take for granted. In the context of the UK, the Labour government not only treats poverty as limited or low incomes, but it also means that people are denied opportunities to work, to learn, to live healthy and fulfilling lives and to live out their retirement years in security. 'Lack of income, access to good-quality health, education and housing, and the quality of the local environment all affect people's well-being', which constitutes New Labour's view on the definition of poverty (First Annual Report 1999: 23). Even though social exclusion and poverty are terms that are often used interchangeably, New Labour still recognises some further dimensions to the concept of social exclusion.

> Social exclusion is the term used to describe what happens when people or areas are excluded from essential services or every day aspects of life that most of us take for granted. Socially excluded people or places can become trapped in a cycle of related

> problems such as, unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poverty, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown (Communities and Local Government 2007).[3]

Social exclusion occurs where different factors combine to trap individuals and areas in a spiral of disadvantage.

Under the New Labour government, the issue of 'poverty and social exclusion' has become one of the most significant priorities in a number of policy areas. In the annual report of 'Opportunity for All, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion' in 1999, New Labour outlines many facets of 'Poverty and Social Exclusion', such as, 'lack of opportunities to work', 'lack of opportunities to acquire education and skills', 'childhood deprivation', 'disrupted families', 'barriers to older people living active, fulfilling and healthy lives', 'inequalities in health', 'poor housing', 'poor neighbourhoods', 'fear of crime', and 'disadvantaged groups'. Social exclusion is a wide-ranging phenomenon representing systemic malaise, which cannot be solved just by the provision of income or jobs, but is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be dealt with by cross-departmental cooperation. It covers a number of policy areas, such as health, education, employment and so forth. With New Labour's constitutional reform, the Labour government sets up different institutions and initiatives across the UK on the development of policies in this field. 'The Scottish Social Inclusion Strategy', 'Building an Inclusive Wales', 'New Targeting Social Need' in Northern Ireland and 'Social Exclusion Unit' in England set out their own programmes and plans to tackle the issues of 'social exclusion and poverty'.

As Scotland, Wales and the proposed devolved administration of Northern Ireland develop their own policies and indicators in areas for which they are responsible to reflect their nation's particular circumstances and the needs and wishes of their people, the following primarily focuses on the relevant policy areas in England. 'The lead departments taking the work of dealing with the issue of social exclusion and poverty forward are Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Office' (Communities and Local Government 2007).[4] Under the auspices of 'joined-up government', the New Labour government also takes the strategy of partnership. Central and local government, the voluntary sector, business communities and individuals all have vital roles to play in dealing with social exclusion and poverty. The key step in the government's strategy was the setting up of the 'Social Exclusion Unit' (SEU) in 1997. Initially, it was part of the Cabinet Office. Then the Unit moved to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in May 2002. From 5 May 2006, the Unit is now located in the department of Communities and Local Government. The SEU has been seen as one of the success stories of the New Labour government, especially because it aims to join up all government departments and get them to focus on the issue of social exclusion and promote new ways of working in partnership across government and between government and non-statutory bodies. In addition, the purpose of the department of Communities and Local Government is to bring together for the first time several

[3] http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1127160, last accessed on 2 March, 2007.

[4] http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1127160, last accessed on 2 March, 2007.

responsibilities of local government—social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal, which the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) already had, and new responsibilities for communities, race, faith and equalities (Communities and Local Government 2007).[5] On 13 June 2006, Social Exclusion Minister Hilary Armstrong announced a new 'social exclusion taskforce' that put social exclusion at the heart of government. This taskforce draws together the expertise of some staff from the Social Exclusion Unit, the Department of Communities and Local Government, and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Its primary role is to complement the departments' responsibility for delivering social exclusion policies on the ground (Cabinet Office 2007c).[6]

In rhetoric, New Labour has claimed progress on tackling poverty and social exclusion. For example, Tony Blair has spoken that millions of people have been lifted out of poverty in a press conference. New Labour policies on social exclusion and poverty have been wide-ranging, principally on building a dynamic economy and reducing unemployment. New Labour has described 'lifelong effects' and 'reinforcement' as two key features linked with social exclusion and poverty. As is illustrated in the First Annual Report:

> With respect to the 'lifelong effects', deprivation in childhood can lead to low educational achievement and on to worse outcomes in adulthood. In terms of 'reinforcement', unemployment can lead to poor health; poor housing can lead to worse health; young people can get trapped in a 'no-home no-job' cycle (First Annual Report 1999: 26).

Therefore, policies on solving the problems of social exclusion and poverty have to be comprehensive and multi-faceted, along with a need for good coordination and cooperation between different departments and other non-state actors.

In a report from the Social Exclusion Unit in 2003, Tony Blair argued that: 'every child, whatever their background, must have the chance to make the most of their talents and potential' (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2003). The Government had pledged to eradicate child poverty by 2020, reducing it by half by 2010. Initiatives such as Sure Start would tackle those disadvantages that start early in life so that all children would have the same opportunities to benefit from education and training. In order to eradicate child poverty, New Labour also attempts to provide opportunities for their parents to work. On the economic front, key policies have included the national minimum wage, the various New Deals and alterations to taxes and benefits. In the centre of government policy on jobs was the New Deal, with its various special programmes for distinct groups. According to the different age groups (children and young people, people of working age, older people) and the level of communities being disadvantaged, New Labour sets up the different approaches and initiatives to tackle the issues of poverty and social exclusion (see Table 3.1).

[5] http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1165650, last accessed on 26 Nov, 2007.

[6] http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2006/060613_se.asp, last accessed on 30 July, 2007.

Table 3.1 Approaches and initiatives to the issues of Poverty and Social Exclusion

	Policy priorities	Policy initiatives
Children and young people	**Ensuring** that all children get a high-quality education wherever they go to school and providing additional help to children in the crucial pre-school years **Combating** family poverty and social exclusion through our policies to tackle worklessness **Increasing** financial support for families and improving the environment in which children grow up **Supporting** vulnerable young people, especially in the difficult transition from childhood to adult life	Investment in early years (Sure Start Programmes) Investment in improving literacy and numeracy for 11 years olds; and reducing exclusion and truancy Education Action Zones New Community Schools Extra help for families through the tax and benefits system (Working Families' Tax Credit) Supporting Families (National Childcare Strategy; Ministerial Group on the Family; Family-friendly employee rights) Reducing teenage pregnancy Quality Protects Educational Maintenance Allowances
People of working age	**Building** a proactive welfare system to help people into work **Making** work pay **Promoting** lifelong learning to ensure people have the skills and education to respond to the modern labour market **Supporting** vulnerable groups and those most at risk of discrimination and disadvantage	New Deal for Young People New Deal for Long-term Unemployed People aged 25 and over New Deal for Lone Parents Employment Zones New Futures Fund Making work pay (National Minimum Wage) Lifelong Learning Equality of opportunity for people with disabilities (Disability Rights Commission; Disability Discrimination Act) Equality of opportunity or all ages (The Active Ageing Project) Better health (Health Action Zones)
Older people	**Ensuring** that more of tomorrow's pensioners can retire on a decent income **Tackling** the problems of low income and social exclusion among today's pensioners **Improving** opportunities for older people to live secure, fulfilling and active lives	New Insurance Contract for Pensioners A new Minimum Income Guarantee Action to tackle fuel poverty The development of a National Service Framework for Older People Improving access to key services, such as, free eye tests, and standards across a range of care and health issues Tackling crime Action to improve access to cultural and leisure services An Inter-Ministerial Group on Older People A Sure Start to later life (2006)

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

	Policy priorities	Policy initiatives
Communities	**Targeting** help to areas with the greatest problems so we can tackle the root causes of poverty and social exclusion **Integrated** policies to address the special needs of deprived areas	New Deal for Communities National Strategy for neighbourhood renewal Policy Action Teams Single Regeneration Budget Health Action, Education and Employment Zones IT Learning Centres

Source Cm4445, Opportunity for all, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

Table 3.1 highlights the complex nature of poverty and social exclusion. As we can see, the Sure Start Programme as one of the policy initiatives play an important role in alleviating poverty and social exclusion of children and young people. The early years are important for a child's development, as a child's behaviours are established long before a child goes to school and will influence a child's life chances in the future. 'Early intervention is a life cycle approach, so the argument does not just apply to the first years of life. Much can be done during pregnancy and infancy to get children on the path to success and provide protection, but support needs to be persistent' (Cabinet Office 2007a). The following section primarily focuses on the description of Sure Start programmes and provides us a background on what the Sure Start policy is. What it is for? which actors are involved in this programmes? and what roles do they play?

3.3 Sure Start Policy

Under the circumstance of New Labour's determination to tackle the issues of social exclusion and poverty, New Labour' objective is to guarantee that, in the next two decades, no child shall live in poverty and all children shall have opportunities to realise their full potential. A child's prospects are strongly affected by the background, health and education of their parents. 'A boy born into the bottom social class is still more likely to leave school with no qualifications, to live in relative poverty and to live seven years less than his peer born into the professional classes' (Cabinet Office 2006).[7] In order to eradicate the sources of children and young people's exclusion and poverty, New Labour argued that a joined-up approach is necessary to draw together a range of service providers to families with children and young people in areas, where they are most at risk from social exclusion and poverty, since the reasons resulting in children's poverty and social exclusion are multi-faceted and related closely with 'access to education

[7] http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/page0b30.html?id=2, last accessed on 28 June, 2007.

opportunity', 'family low incomes', 'health inequalities', and 'housing environment'. Sure Start is a programme designed by Labour to deliver the best start in life for every child, which brings together early education, childcare, health and family support. It concentrates on promoting the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of young children to make sure they are ready to thrive when they go to school.

3.3.1 What Is the Sure Start Programme?

In geographic terms, the policies and programmes of Sure Start apply in England only. Responsibility for early education and childcare in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rests with the separate devolved administrations. Sure Start is comprised of a wide range of programmes both universal and those targeted on particular local areas or disadvantaged groups within England. The Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Group is mainly responsible for delivering Sure Start, which is a part of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate of the department for Children, Schools and Families. It has headquarters based in London and a regional structure with teams based in each of the nine government offices for the regions. The origins and evolution of Sure Start has rendered it a complicated and to some extent indistinct policy. So while it has relatively clear aims and principles, the Sure Start programme and policies have been constantly evolving since its establishment in 1999. Its complexity can be seen in the ways some elements of the programme overlap. For example, Sure Start Local Programmes co-exist with Sure Start Children's Centres in some areas. The rhetoric of Sure Start claims it provides the best start for children by integrating a variety of services, such as childcare, early education, health and family employment (First Annual Report 1999). This suggest that it is an all-inclusive policy, but in so doing potentially risks undermining the key aim of Sure Start. In addition, the Sure Start programme lacks a clearly identifiable target group. Documents on Sure Start aim to improve the children service from the birth to 14 years old.[8] However, the interviews with key front-line deliverers stress that the target group of Sure Start is the 0–4 year old cohort. In order then to assembly a foundation for understanding the implementation process of Sure Start, the following section sets out the evolution of the Sure Start programme.

Government Official Papers and Childcare Acts on Sure Start

In 1998, the New Labour government published a Green Paper 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge', which sets out the National Childcare Strategy. This document explains how New Labour's vision for childcare will be achieved and gives examples of how they will support everyone who looks after children. 'For too

[8] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/, last accessed on 3 May, 2007.

long, the UK has lagged behind in developing good quality, affordable and accessible childcare and the approach taken by previous Governments to the formal childcare sector has been to leave it almost exclusively to the market' (Green Paper 1998: 5). It is informed by three key problems that 'the quality of childcare can be variable', 'the cost of care is high and out of reach for the parents' and 'in some areas there are not enough childcare places and parents' access to them is hampered by poor information', New Labour believes that it is the government's responsibility to ensure that parents have access to services to enable them to make genuine choices, which means good quality, affordable childcare for parents and support for parents, relatives and other informal carers.

In 2003, Lord Laming's report referred to the incidence of the death of Victoria Climbié, a young girl who was horrifically abused and tortured, and eventually killed by her great aunt and the man with whom they lived (Every Child Matters and Change for Children 2007c).[9] The Government published a green paper called Every Child Matters alongside its formal response to Lord Laming's report. The green paper launched an unprecedented debate on services for children, young people and families and 'explained how the Government wanted to improve the way that people and organisations work with children and young people' (Every Child Matters and Change for Children 2007a).[10] In addition, based on a wide consultation with people working in children's services, and with parents, children and young people, the government published 'Every Child Matters: the Next Steps' and also passed the 'Children Act 2004', aimed at providing the legislative foundation for developing more effective, accessible and affordable services concentrated around the needs of children, young people and families.

In 2004, the government published the 'Ten Year Childcare Strategy, Choice for parents, the best start for children', which re-emphasised the motifs of the government's 'Green Paper 1998', and also complemented them by bringing up 'Choice and Flexibility', 'Availability', 'Quality' and 'Affordability' to the parents, children and young people. Its aim is to make early-years and childcare provisions a permanent, mainstream part of the welfare state. The strategy will be implemented through the framework provided by the Every Child Matters programme for the reform of children's services (Ten Year Strategy 2009). 'The Government undertook a range of detailed consultations on particular issues featured in the Strategy, including the workforce, proposals for legislation and single quality framework. There were also structured discussions with parents up and down the country early in 2005' (Sure Start 2007j).[11]

After consultation began in July 2005, the Childcare Bill was published on 8 November 2005 to take forward and give statutory force to key commitments in the Ten Year Strategy. The Bill includes new and extended statutory duties for local

[9] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/information/, last accessed 5 June, 2007.

[10] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/children/background/, last accessed on 10 June, 2007.

[11] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/about/strategy/, last accessed on 5 June, 2007.

authorities, building on their existing roles and responsibilities, and the reform of regulation and inspection.

> It puts the needs of children and their parents at its heart, ensuring families' views are heard in the planning and delivery of services; and it enshrines in law a parent's expectation that high quality childcare will be available for all those who want to work. It also confirms the vital role of local authorities as strategic leaders, working in partnership across all sectors to shape the future provision of childcare and delivery of early childhood services, raising the quality of provision and improving outcomes for all children (Sure Start 2007j).[12]

On 11 July 2006, the new Childcare Act passed into law and became the first exclusively concerned with early years and childcare. 'The Act is aimed at transforming childcare and early years services in England for generations to come, taking forward some of the key commitments from the Ten Year Childcare Strategy, published in December 2004' (The New Childcare Act 2006).[13]

Aims and Principles of Sure Start

The above outlined the main government's official documents and Acts which are relevant to the Sure Start Programme. It indicates the strong intentions of government to tackle the problems of children, young people and their parents. The following section illustrates the aims and principles of Sure Start Programmes. Sure Start is a government programme, which aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by:

- Increasing the availability of childcare for all children
- Improving health and emotional development for young children
- Supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment (Sure Start 2007b).[14]

The programme was originally intended to support families from pregnancy until children were four years old but the brand was extended to cover an undefined responsibility up to age fourteen, or sixteen for those with disabilities.

The guiding principles draw on best practice in early education, childcare and local authority programmes. The first principle is '*partnership*', which is a key word running through the New Labour's government documents and policy rhetoric. Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Group works with local authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Jobcentre Plus, local communities, public agencies and voluntary and private sector organisations. It also builds partnerships with parents and children. For example, one of the key underlying principles of 'Every Child Matters' is the active involvement of parents and local communities in the planning and delivery of services. The second principle is '*customer-focused services*', which means outcome-driven services for everybody and flexibility. All services for children and parents need to have as their core purpose better outcomes

[12] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/about/strategy/, last accessed on 5 June, 2007.

[13] http://www.gos.gov.uk/gosw/news/newsarchive/430514/?view=TextOnly&a=42496, last accessed on 20 Oct, 2009.

[14] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/, last accessed on 3 May, 2007.

for children. The government acknowledges this by reducing bureaucracy and simplifying funding to ensure a joined-up approach with partners. In addition, families have distinctly different needs, both between different families, in different locations and across time in the same family, and services should recognise and respond to these varying needs. All services should be designed to encourage access. For example, opening hours, location, transport issues and care for other children in the family need to be considered. Where possible we must enable families to get the health and family support services they need through a single point of contact.

The third principle is '*Start very early*'. New Labour believes that the 'best start' can win the best opportunity for children and young people to fulfil their potential in the development of their future life. Services for young children and parents ought to start at the first antenatal visit. This means not only advice on health in pregnancy, but preparation for parenthood, decisions about returning to work after the birth and advice on childcare options and on support services available. The fourth principle is '*inspection and quality assurance*'. New Labour wants to ensure that all services are of good quality in order to meet the needs of children and parents. Therefore New Labour adopted quality assurance arrangements and established pilot projects to demonstrate the highest standards in education and childcare provision. This included setting targets from the centre, disseminating good practice, using qualified, skilled and well-motivated workforce and setting standards in the training, skills and qualifications of service staff.

As argued in Chap. 2, New Labour's strategy is based on 'mixed approach' on reforming public service delivery, which, on one hand, stresses the national standard, and on the other hand, emphasise the flexibility and devolution. As outlined above, it can be seen that principles of Sure Start are the reflections of New Labour's principles of public service reform. 'Inspection and quality assurance' stands for 'national standards' that ensure the quality services in the service delivery. 'Customer-focused services' represent the principles of 'flexibility and devolution' in New Labour's public service reform, as New Labour believes that 'customer-focused services' could only be achieved through granting more autonomy and discretion to the frontline staff at the forefront of public service delivery. In addition, the principle of 'partnership' in Sure Start also reflects New Labour's 'joined-up government' approach in the welfare reform. Overall, it is clear that New Labour's mixed approach on public service delivery is reflected in its Sure Start policy.

3.3.2 Sure Start Settings and Services

In the above, the aims and principles of Sure Start programmes were set out. This section, explores Sure Start's general services and settings which pave a foundation for the establishment of Sure Start Children's Centre. Sure Start Children's Centres are at the heart of the Government's Every Child Matters: Change for Children

Programme (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). Sure Start Children's Centres are places where children under 5 years old and their families can receive seamless holistic integrated services and information, and where they can access help from multi-disciplinary teams of professionals (Sure Start 2007i).[15] Children's centre plays a central role in improving outcomes for all young children and in reducing the inequalities in outcomes for the most disadvantaged children and the rest. Since 2004, Children's Centres are moving from a range of local initiatives, such as local programmes, to a mainstream national service, which builds on successes of Sure Start local programmes, early excellence centres and neighbourhood nurseries and mainstreams the lessons learned to extend the benefits to all families. Before demonstrating the details of Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester, it is important to understand the foundations of these Children's Centres, looking at the general Sure Start local programmes, early excellence centres, and neighbourhood nurseries.

Sure Start Local Programmes

The first Sure Start local programmes were set up in 1999 as the result of the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review. As the Review developed, there was an accumulation of evidence that successful intervention in the earliest years offered the greatest potential for making a difference (Comprehensive Spending Review 2007: 3). Sure Start local programmes are an area-based initiative with the aim of improving the health and well being of families, parents and their children from before birth to four in disadvantaged areas, so children are ready to flourish when they go to school. Local programmes are concentrated in neighbourhoods where a high proportion of children are living in poverty. Districts were selected to develop Sure Start local programmes according to the levels of deprivation within their areas, which is measured by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Communities and Local Government). Super Output Areas are now used to determine levels of deprivation. Super Output Areas (SOAs) are geographical units developed by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and each SOA has approximately the same number of households and population. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Communities and Local Government) has looked at the characteristics of the households living in each SOA and these characteristics make up the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Each SOA is ranked on how deprived it is.

There are also two sub-programmes running under the Sure Start Local Programmes, which are 'Mainstreaming Pilots' and 'Mini and Rural Sure Start'. The Sure Start Unit funded seven mainstreaming pilots between March 2002 and March 2004. They explored the mainstreaming of Sure Start-type services across their districts. Mainstreaming pilots considered how strategic planners could use the experience from Sure Start and Early Excellence Centres to adapt mainstream early

[15] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/settings/surestartchildrenscentres/, last accessed on 10 June, 2007.

years, childcare, health and family support services to make them more integrated and responsive to children's and families' needs and provide more preventative services which better meet the needs of children in poverty. The mainstreaming pilots undertook a range of joined-up activity, such as multi-disciplinary training for professionals, use of para-professionals to supplement the work of specialised staff, use of information technology to create more joined-up services and combining services in existing settings. Forty-five smaller Sure Start programmes in rural areas and pockets of deprivation, which would not normally be covered by the larger, traditional Sure Start local programme model, have also been set up. These Mini Sure Start programmes are linked to Neighbourhood Nurseries, Early Excellence Centres or other provisions to deliver some Sure Start-type services to around 150–170 children under four in each catchment area.

The National evaluation of Sure Start is funded by the Sure Start Unit and will study the effectiveness of all Sure Start Programmes in England (524 programmes) and will last until 2012. The evaluation is being conducted by a group led by Professor Edward Melhuish at the Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues (NESS 2008).[16] Of the 524 original Sure Start local programmes most are now forming the basis of the Sure Start Children's Centre.

Early Excellence Centres

The Early Excellence Centres programme was set up in 1997 to develop models of good practice in integrating services for young children and families. Early excellence centres offer high quality practice in one-stop integrated education and day care programmes for young children, and services and opportunities for parents, carers, families and the wider community both directly and in cooperation with other providers. There are now 107 designated centres across England, providing a wide range of early years settings in rural, urban and inner city areas. The Sure Start Children's Centre programme is based on the concept that providing integrated education, care, family support and health services is a key factor in determining good outcomes for children and their parents.

Early Excellence Centres are expected to demonstrate high quality practice across a broad range of education and care services for children and families. Building on that existing good provision, Early Excellence Centres are expected to deliver, or have well advanced and convincing plans to develop, the following core activities:

- The provision of good quality integrated early education and daycare for children requiring centre-based extended-day and extended-year provision;
- Parental and carer involvement in the education and care of children e.g. schemes for family learning, developing parenting skills, raising parents' expectations and in other ways;
- Support services for parents and carers of children, e.g. home support, drop-in facilities, counselling and information services;

[16] http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/, last accessed on 20 Aug, 2008.

- Effective early identification and intervention for children in need and children with special educational needs, with a view to improving the children's prospects and, whenever appropriate, achieving inclusion in mainstream provision;
- Access to adult education and training by parents of young children and other adults, including those seeking skills and qualifications for employment;
- Raising standards of integrated early years provision amongst other early years providers, including voluntary and private providers, childminders and other carers, by contributing to the training and development strategy of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and through the development and dissemination of good practice (Sure Start 2007c).[17]

Neighbourhood Nurseries

The Neighbourhood Nursery programme was introduced in 2001 to narrow the gap in childcare provision between the most disadvantaged areas of the country and their counterparts in more affluent communities. It aimed to create 45,000 new high quality, accessible and affordable, full day care places for children under 5 in the poorest areas of England. Many of these areas had little or no childcare. The target was achieved by the end of August 2004 and the programme has now officially ended. Neighbourhood nursery projects were developed across 142 local authorities, with areas eligible for neighbourhood nurseries funding being the 20% most deprived wards in England, as defined by the IMD (Index of Multiple-Deprivation) 2000. Pockets of extreme deprivation outside these wards were also eligible with suitable supporting information (Sure Start 2007g).[18]

The new childcare places created by the programme are being delivered through a diverse range of local and national providers in maintained, private and/or voluntary sectors. Some are joint projects across a number of sectors. The full-time childcare offered in neighbourhood nurseries is integrated with nursery education and support services to families, including training for parents, for which other finance has been made available. Many of the neighbourhood nurseries that have been developed are linked with Sure Start local programmes. These and other settings—like early excellence centres, maintained nursery schools, primary schools, family centres, voluntary and private sector provision—are now forming the basis of Sure Start Children's Centres.

Sure Start Children's Centre and its Services in Sheffield and Manchester

So far, the government has created over 3000 centres and reached over 800,000 young children and their families since the centre was begun in 2003. By 2010, every community will be served by a Sure Start Children's Centre. 'Children's Centre aims not to duplicate existing provision or provide unnecessary levels of services that have been delivered well by pre-existing early years services' (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005: 15). In phase 1 of the Children's Centres

[17]http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/settings/earlyexcellencecentres/, last accessed on 10 May, 2007.

[18]http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/settings/neighbourhoodnurseries/, last accessed on 10 July, 2007.

programme (2004–2006) the majority of Sure Start Children's Centres were developed from Sure Start local programmes, neighbourhood nurseries, early excellence centres and maintained nursery schools, clinics or health centres (Sure Start Children's Centres Planning and Performance Management Guidance 2008: 5).

In phase 2 (2006–2008) local authorities were tasked with ensuring that Sure Start local programmes, Sure Start mini programmes and early excellence centres that are not already designated as such are supported to become Children's Centres. The continuing use of maintained nursery schools is also encouraged as the bases for the development of Sure Start Children's Centres. The Sure Start Children's Centre programme is based on the concept that providing integrated education, care, family support, health services and support with employment are key factors in determining good outcomes for children and their parents. The concept itself is not a new one, but Sure Start Children's Centres are about building on existing good practice rather than setting afresh.

In Phase 3, local authorities are working towards delivering 3500 Sure Start Children's Centres in total, nationally, by 2010, offering universal access to children's centre services. All Phase 3 centres will be situated outside the most disadvantaged areas and will therefore offer a less intensive level of support than those Phase 1 and 2 centres serving families in the 30% most disadvantaged areas. Local authorities have greater flexibility in deciding what services should be provided in the more affluent areas and this must be based on an assessment of local needs.

Under the guidance of Sure Start Children's Centres, both Sheffield and Manchester fit into these three phases in terms of developing the number of Sure Start Children's Centres. In Sheffield, the first 13 Children's Centres (Phase 1) are located where support is most needed and the initiative has now been extended. In the second phase, a further 18 Children's Centres have been developed, ensuring that all areas within the 30% most disadvantaged areas of the city have access to a Children's Centre. Phase 3 Children's Centre services are now being developed in the remaining areas of the city, and these are due to be rolled out between March 2008 and March 2010 (Sheffield City Council 2009). Prior to 2004, there were a number of accountable bodies in Sheffield: the Sheffield PCT was one, National Children Home was another, and the other one was Manor and Castle Development Trust. However, EYECS (Early Years Education and Childcare Services) has taken the lead on developing Sure Start Children's Centres since 2004. There are three phases in terms of developing required number of Sure Start Children's Centres.

In Manchester, there is a children's board which is comprised of Manchester local authority, Chief Executives and Children's Services, Primary Care Trust, Jobcentre Plus, Greater Manchester Police, Learning and Skills Council and Voluntary and Community sector (Manchester City Council 2007). Unlike Sheffield, Manchester specifically created the Sure Start Unit as a part of local authority to deliver the Sure Start policy in Manchester area. There are currently 34 Sure Start Children's Centres across Manchester and six more will be opening between 2009 and 2011 based on the national guidance of Sure Start Children's Centre (Manchester City Council 2009).

Overall, Sure Start Children's Centres provides services on 'Early Year Provision', 'Childcare', 'Childminding', 'Information and Services for Parents', 'Parental Employment', and 'Health'. The general service guides are also applied in both Sheffield and Manchester. The following will demonstrate the general services Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester provide, and give readers a background what the Sure Start Children's Centres are offering, its importance on improving children's services; more significantly, pave a foundation for analysing the implementation process of Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester.

Early Year Provision

Illustrated in Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance, High quality early-years provision—integrated early education and care—improves the intellectual, emotional and social development of children, particularly children from more disadvantaged backgrounds (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). All Sure Start Children's Centres (including Sheffield and Manchester) in the 30% most disadvantaged areas will offer early-years provision, with other centres offering a service appropriate to the level of local need, in order to improve outcomes for young children. Since April 2004, all three- and four-year olds have been entitled to a free, good quality, part-time early education place, which includes 12.5 h of free early education per week for 38 weeks each year and can be accessed through a range of provision in the maintained and private, voluntary and independent sectors. The goal is to increase this to 20 h a week of free high quality care for 38 weeks for all 3 and 4 year olds by 2010. Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) have the discretion to decide if Children's Centres outside the most disadvantaged areas include early-years provision on site.

Early Years provision reflects the evidence-based approaches outlined in Birth to Three Matters, which applies to provision for 0–3 year olds (providing support, information, guidance and challenge for all those working and caring for babies and children from birth to three years), (Birth to Three Matters 2002) and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, which applies to 3–5 year olds (providing balanced and purposeful curriculum delivered through planned and spontaneous play activities to help all children learn with enjoyment and challenge) (The Foundation Stage Curriculum). From September 2008, all settings (including Sheffield and Manchester) offering early years provision are required to deliver the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is a single, coherent framework for the delivery of integrated care and early education. It will remove the existing legal distinction between care and education build on the Birth to Three Matters framework, Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and the national standards for under eights day care and childminding (Sure Start 2007f).[19]

Monitoring and recording children's progress is essential and any particular needs must be identified and addressed as early as possible. Parents should be

[19]http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/ensuringquality/eyfsconsultation/, last accessed on 10 June, 2007.

involved in assisting practitioners to know their child's development and learning. Currently, settings which provide 'childcare' for more than 2 h a day and for more than 6 days a year are required to be registered by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)—a non-ministerial government department inspecting and regulating care for children and young people and education and training for learners of all ages—and to meet the requirements of the national standards for under eights day care and childminding (Ofsted 2007b).[20]

Moreover, in order to help children in the transition from pre-school to a school setting, children centres link with local primary schools in order to try and meet recommendations. These recommendations include the goal of having School managers enable staff in the Foundation Stage to meet with staff in primary schools to discuss children's transition, or allowing Staff to communicate with parents about the transition to school. In addition, early years' staff in both Sheffield and Manchester receives basic training to work with parents, and it is good practice to help both mothers and fathers. Currently, all Children's Centres offering early years provision must have a minimum of a 0.5-time qualified teacher involved in planning and delivering the service before designation (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). By 2010 all Children's Centres (including Sheffield and Manchester) offering early years provision are expected to employ an Early Years Professional (EYP) to plan and lead the delivery of the integrated day care and early learning provision. Teachers are expected to work closely with other early years' staff in observing, supporting and extending children's learning.

Childminding

The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) to assess their local childcare needs and to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. The Government wants to ensure that every child gets the best start in life and to give parents more choice on how they balance work and family life. The Government's ten year strategy for childcare includes 'Choice for parents, the best start for children', which was launched in December 2004 and sets out a vision for a childcare system that meets parents' requirements for choice, availability and affordability (Sure Start 2007a).[21] Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) are expected to work with local private, voluntary and independent sector providers to meet local needs, especially with local childminders due to their key role in the planning and delivery of early childcare services.

Registered childminders play an important role in giving parents a greater choice of high quality, flexible childcare and family support services. Children's Centres and childminders work collaboratively to support the delivery of good quality integrated home-based services to parents. The most effective way to do it is

[20] http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/, last accessed on 12 Nov, 2007.

[21] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/childcare/childminding/aboutchildminders/, last accessed on 15 June, 2007.

through the establishment of childminding networks that can bring local knowledge and a wide range of skills for Children's Centres. Beverley Hughes says:

> The survey shows that the majority of Sure Start Children's Centres are working in this way and it is encouraging that so many recognise the need to work with childminders. We must build on this so every Sure Start Children's Centre offers a range of support to their local childminders, and encourage childminders to draw on this support and enhance the quality of service they provide (DfES 2007).[22]

Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester provide a range of support to childminders for the quality and availability of childminding and other forms of home-based care. These include a network coordinator to support childminding, arrangement for childminders to use centre facilities, vacancy coordination and inclusion in staff training and opportunities to meet other early years professionals. In addition, Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester are a hub for training and development for local childcare providers including childminders and play a central role in delivering the ten-year strategy objective that more childminders will achieve level 3 and other relevant qualifications and develop long-term careers as part of the children's workforce. This is also a part of workforce reform, which is vital to having a skilled, well-led and well-supported children's workforce through effective shared systems and process. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) takes the lead and works with partners to identify good practice by setting up a clear, supportive national framework, which includes the children's workforce strategy, practical guidance on multi-agency working, the Common Assessment Framework, a common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce and a better infrastructure for employer-led reform through the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (Every Child Matters and Change For Children 2007d).[23]

Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) also need to ensure the quality of childminders through collaboration with the National Childminding Association (NCMA), which is a national charity speaking on behalf of registered childminders in both England and Wales (Leight on Buzzard Childminding Association 2007).[24] Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) also attempt to develop models that lead to childminders being seen as partners of Children's Centres, delivering services on their behalf with clear agreements on what each party can expect from the other.

Information and Advice for Parents

As illustrated in Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance, Parents are children's first and primary educators and carers (Sure Start Children's Centres

[22] http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0017, last accessed on 23 January, 2008.

[23] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/workforcereform/, last accessed on 15 June, 2007.

[24] http://www.lbcma.org.uk/NCMA.asp, last accessed on 5 April, 2007.

Practice Guidance 2005). Good information is important for parents to make decisions on their children's life chances. This includes what support and services are available to help them bring up their children and how to access them, help that is available to make childcare affordable and information about all aspects of growing up and child development to help their children reach their full potential.

Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) through their Children's Information Service (CIS) must provide information to parents relating to childcare in their local area. By 2008, every local authority in England offered comprehensive information on local childcare, children's services and parenting support for parents of children and young people up to their 20th birthday. This draws together information on all local services for families, including details of any local parenting groups, opportunities for family learning, sports and leisure facilities, community support groups and counselling. as well as signposting to national service like the Child Support Agency, helplines and websites. Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester can source written information for parents from a variety of organisations, including the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI), Positive Parenting, Parentline Plus, the Pyramid Trust and The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005).

Parenting and Family support

As illustrated in Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance, due to the important influence of parents on their children, it is essential for the government to give parents and family sufficient and tailored support to meet their different needs (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). Issues requiring support might possibly includes families or other family members having poor physical or emotional health, problems with substance abuse, poor experiences of statutory services, poor environment, experiencing domestic violence, being discriminated against due to their ethnicity, poor parenting themselves and caring for a disabled child. Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) together with stakeholders such as children centres develop a parenting strategy for designing and delivering a continuum of parenting support services.

A single commissioner of Parenting Support Services will be identified by the local authorities. They work within the context of the Children's trust joint commissioning unit, who have responsibility for assessing the need for parenting support, identifying gaps in provision and ensuring that parenting support is appropriately reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester are encouraged to work with the appointed Single Commissioner. In addition, the services from Children's Centres in both cities needs to be coordinated with other family services, extended services through primary schools and healthy schools programmes.

There are a number of different parenting programmes available with a proven record of success from different organisations, such as the Family Caring Trust (FCT), Family Link (FL), PIPPIN (Parents In Partnership—Parent Infant Network),

Mellow Parenting (MP), the Race Equality Foundation (REF), Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) and Parents as first teachers (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester are working with them to choose appropriate programmes for different types of parents. Children's Centres, in partnership with DfES, are launching an on-line database of evidence-based parenting programmes for Single Commissioners of parenting support services.

In addition, special attention needs to be given to those families that need extra help with their children, and practitioners must consider the balance between group-based activities in the community, home visiting or a combination of both. For families facing severe difficulties, such as illness, disability or having disabled children, it is hard for them to attend group-based activities. Therefore outreach services and home visits are important for parenting support. Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester work in close partnership with health visitors, midwives and family support workers to coordinate support and ensure that such partners are involved in the development of services. Staff in Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester also utilise parenting skills and ways of encouraging parents to take an active role in supporting their child's development and progression. All members of the children's centre team receive training in working with parents as part of the common core for the children's workforce, which sets out the basic skills and knowledge needed to work with children, young people and families.

Employment Support

One of the DWP's official documents—'what is new deal', it illustrates that Employment helps lift families from poverty, can help to break intergenerational cycles of deprivation and is a significant tool in dealing with children's poverty and social exclusion (DWP 2008). Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester works with local agencies and partners—such as Jobcentre Plus, local education and training providers, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the local authority's Adult Education Service (AES)—to improve the employability of parents. Children's Centres in both cities provide a wide range of employment-related services, such as promoting work related skills, providing e-learning opportunities and providing childcare for parents.

One of the policy priorities of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is to help children have the best possible in life, growing up in secure homes and developing skills for the future, an end child objective by 2020. DWP has a wide range of services and benefits to help all sorts of people starting work or returning to work (DWP 2008).[25] Jobcentre Plus is a part of the DWP and plays a major role in supporting the Department's aim to 'promote opportunity and independence for all through modern, customer-focused services' (DWP 2007).[26]

[25] http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/#ministers, last accessed on 30 June, 2008.

[26] http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/index.html, last accessed on 18 July, 2007.

> New Deal is a Government programme that aims to give unemployed people the help and support they need to get into work, such as New Deal for Young People, for Lone Parents, for 25 plus, for disabled people and for partners. A personal adviser will be allocated to them to offer advice on how to get into work, what work to look for, and how much better off they could be in a job (DWP 2008).[27]

In addition, it is important to involve Jobcentre Plus at the planning stage of children's centre development. The collaboration between Jobcentre Plus and the local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) is negotiated according to the needs of the local community. Jobcentre plus can offer parents many services, such as group information sessions for lone parents, promoting and delivering Jobcentre Plus services at Children's Centres, 'warm phones' with a direct link to the local Jobcentre Plus or Jobseeker Direct service, and integrating Jobcentre Plus staff with children's centre planning and team management arrangements (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). In addition, each Jobcentre Plus district has a Childcare Partnership Manager (CPM), who provides the strategic link between Children's Centres and Jobcentre Plus. Children's Centres in both cities also work closely with local employers and help them with fill vacancies by developing job-related skills or hosting recruiting fairs.

Step into Learning is a joint Sure Start and Skills for Life Strategy Unit initiative, which encourages key staff working in early years and childcare to support parents and carers to take up opportunities to improve their basic skills. The Skills for Life Strategy Unit is within the DfES and responsible for its implementation, overseen by a cabinet committee across all the relative government departments (National Literacy Trust 2008).[28] Local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) are encouraged to embed the Step into Learning Training and Development Programme into their strategic planning for the Childcare Strategy and across their Children's Centres (Sure Start 2007h).[29] The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN) programmes (Learning and Skills Council 2007).[30] Courses are jointly planned and taught by an early years' school teacher or nursery nurse and a specialist adult literacy, numeracy or English-for-Speakers-of-Other-Languages teacher. Staff in Children's Centres delivering literacy, language and numeracy programmes or financial education are required to be equipped with the skills necessary for identifying parents and carers with relevant needs. Finally employment support strategies need to be tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, such as single parents, minority ethnic families and disabled parents.

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[27] http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/New_Deal/index.html, last accessed on 10 January, 2008.

[28] http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/socialinclusion/adults/skills.html, last accessed on 3 Sep, 2008.

[29] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/stepintolearning/, last accessed on 20 June, 2007.

[30] http://www.lsc.gov.uk/, last accessed on 2 April, 2007.

Health service

The Government's public health white paper 'Choosing Health: Making healthier choices easier' (DoH 2004) recognises the importance of addressing children's health needs from pre-conception throughout the journey to adulthood. Choosing Health also emphasises the importance of reducing health inequalities and the need to address a broad range of issues, such as poverty, education and housing. Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester work in partnership with government departments such as the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Skills(now the Department for Children, Schools and Families)and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the network of health agencies and health professionals. In terms of health services, it encompasses maternity service, reducing obesity, reducing smoking in pregnancy and smoking around young children, and improving mental health and well-being of young children and their parents (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005).

The government considers childhood obesity to be one of the key public health challenges facing society today by New Labour. In order to tackle this problem, the government has set a Public Service Agreement target to halt, by 2010, the year-on-year increase in obesity among children under 11. This target is the joint responsibility of the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Children's Centres are placed to educate children about healthy living from a young age and also can engage parents to promote a whole-family approach to eating well and keeping active. They can play their part through the promotion of breastfeeding, diet and nutrition and physical activities. Diet and nutrition are especially fundamental to health throughout life, and therefore the centres are also required to work in partnership with the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Food Standard Agency (FSA) to reduce the risk of a number of health problems including obesity, heart disease, and some other illnesses (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). The training will be provided for staff in Children's Centres to ensure that they are aware of the importance of a balanced diet and nutrition, and how to help families with specific needs, especially how to collaborate with parents, due to the influence of parents on their children.

According to the government document, children growing up in a home where their parents smoke every day are more likely to develop lung cancer than children of non-smokers. In government strategy, smoking cessation services will be offered as a mixture of one-to-one support, group support, drop-in sessions and other interventions, such as Smoke Free Home initiatives. Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester work in partnership with health visitors, midwives and other health practitioners to support smoking cessation. Practitioners also play an important role in stopping parents from smoking, because they can provide specialist advice and offer pre-conception counselling to encourage cessation before pregnancy and reduce the risk of low birth weight. Centres also liaise with Primary Care Trust (PCT) and National Health Services (NHS) to make the most of their resources to

stop parents smoking, including programmes such as the NHS Smoking helpline for pregnant smokers (Sure Start 2007e).[31]

In order to promote good mental health in parents and children, Children's Centres in both cities have built on a strong structure of networks and partnerships between services: adult and child mental health services, drugs and alcohol services, child protection teams, clinical psychologists, GPs and voluntary sector services like Young Minds (Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2005). The knowledge and expertise of health professionals is key to the success of Children's Centres, because they have knowledge of the community and have access to local and family information. Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) are formed to support people with providing a care coordinator or key worker who will coordinate their care and offer a single point of call for them to access support or advice (Community Mental Health Teams 2007).[32] Furthermore, in terms of speech and language development of children, Children's centres in both cities also need to work with local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit), children's trusts, PCTs and other organisations such as the Children's Communication charity, in order to provide training for early years staff and practitioners and disseminate resources and activities.

Extended Schools

In June 2005 the Secretary of State for Education and Skills launched the 'Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All, a Prospectus' outlining the vision of extended schools along with funding up to 2008. The government's Extended Schools programme has a key role to play in boosting the whole community and is ideally placed to give parents and communities access to a wide range of services and support (HM, Treasure and DfES 2004). By 2010, all extended schools are expected to offer access to a full menu of extended activities and services, including:

> High quality 'wraparound' childcare provided (primary schools) on the school site or through other local providers, available 8 am–6 pm all year round or to reflect community demand; a varied menu of activities to be on offer such as homework clubs and study support, sport, music tuition, special interest clubs and volunteering; parenting support including information sessions for parents at key transition points, parenting programmes and family learning sessions; swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services such as speech and language therapy, family support services and behaviour support; and providing wider community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities, including adult learning (Sure Start 2007d).[33]

[31] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/healthrelated/healthandfamilysupport/smoking/localactivity/, last accessed on 17 June, 2007.

[32] http://www.cambsmentalhealthinfo.nhs.uk/services/pboro/community_mental_health_teams.html, last accessed on 8 Sep, 2007.

[33] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/childcare/extendedschools/, last accessed on 2 June, 2007.

Extended schools develop themselves by working with parent groups, voluntary sector providers, local business and community groups, or building on existing links with other local schools and working as a cluster. Under partnership with other service providers, extended schools can provide the right type of support to the parents and the communities they serve, and tailor what they provide to support local parents and communities. An extended school needs to enable the community to come together to address its own needs, which means co-locating a range of different public services within an extended school and ensure the right expertise is available within the school (Every Child Matters and Change for Children 2007b).[34] The above sections illustrates Sure Start's main services and actors involving in the implementation process of Sure Start in both Sheffield and Manchester. The following section will primarily focus on what monitoring and inspecting instruments the New Labour government is applying to guarantee the achievement of targets from the centre.

3.3.3 Monitoring and Inspection

Public Service Agreement (PSA)

New Labour enhances the centre's power through a variety of means, such as audit and target, special advisor and task forces, among which PSA is used as one of the important means to monitor and inspect the effectiveness of Sure Start policy. Since their introduction in 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review, PSA plays a vital role in driving major improvements in outcomes, and provides a rigorous framework for expenditure and policy decisions across Whitehall aiming to increase the strategic and leadership capacity of the centre in accordance with its two broad pillars of reform, delivering joined-up public services within a national framework of priority setting and accountability. In addition, the PSA is also an ambitious tool of governance which incorporates improved priority setting, information about performance and incentive effects for ministers and officials through a system of performance targets.

The Sure Start PSA targets are demonstrable milestones towards the programme's longer-term aims and objectives. The targets apply to specific local programmes and Children's Centres that target disadvantaged areas within the wider Sure Start programme. The targets are expected to be achieved on average across Sure Start programmes fully operational at 1 April 2003 and new Sure Start programmes and Children's Centres that become operational between 1 April 2003 and 31 March 2005 (Sure Start 2006a: PSA targets 2003–2006)[35] (Table 3.2).

[34] http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/extendedschools/, last accessed on 10 June, 2007.

[35] http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/targets/psatargets200306/, last accessed on 17 June, 2007.

Table 3.2 PSA targets for Sure Start 2003–2006

Objective 1: Improving social and emotional development	In fully operational programmes, achieve by 2005–06 a [x]% increase in the proportion of babies and young children aged 0–5 with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age
Objective 2: Improving health	In fully operational programmes, achieve by 2005–06 a 6% point reduction in the proportion of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy
Objective 3: Improving learning	In fully operational programmes, achieve by 2005-06 a [x]% increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage and an increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age 2 years
Objective 4: Strengthening families and communities	In fully operational programmes, to achieve by 2005–06 a 12% reduction in the proportion of young children (aged 0–4) living in households where no one is working

Source Sure Start (2006a), http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/targets/psatargets200306/

The Spending Review White Paper, published on 12 July 2004, announced the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for 2005–08. Those relating to Sure Start and improving outcomes for children and young people more generally are listed under Objective 1 (Sure Start 2006b: PSA Targets 2005–2008)[36] (Table 3.3).

The above has described the PSA targets for Sure Start policy. In accordance with the Joined-up Government analysed in Chap. 2, departments were also encouraged, where appropriate, to work together to achieve policy goals that transcended traditional Whitehall boundaries. It can be seen that PSA for Sure Start policy are joined-up targets as well, which require the collaboration among DCSF, DWP and DoH. The above paves the foundation for the following chapters to analyse to what extent the targets have influenced the implementation process of Sure Start policy.

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

The Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Group is also working with Ofsted to improve the system of childcare registration and inspection over time, which inspects and regulates care for children and young people, and inspects education and training for learners of all ages. Ofsted has carried out the functions of registration and inspection within the childcare sector since 2001. It does not report to government ministers but directly to Parliament (Ofsted 2007a).[37] Ofsted delivers an inspection of maintained primary schools, including the education they provide

[36]http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/targets/psatargets200508/fulldetails/, last accessed on 1 July, 2007.

[37]http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/portal/site/Internet/menuitem.455968b0530071c4828a0d8308c08a0c/?vgnextoid=e99c8587fd24a010VgnVCM1000008192a8c0RCRD, last accessed on 10 Sep, 2007.

Table 3.3 PSA target for Sure Start 2005–2008

Objective I: Safeguard children and young people, improve their life outcomes and general wellbeing, and break cycles of deprivation
1. Improve children's communication, social and emotional development so that by 2008 50% of children reach a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage and reduce inequalities between the level of development achieved by children in the 20% most disadvantaged areas and the rest of England (Sure Start Unit target, joint with the Department for Work and Pensions)
2. As a contribution to reducing the proportion of children living in households where no one is working, by 2008: Increase the stock of Ofsted-registered childcare by 10% Increase the take-up of formal childcare by lower income working families by 50% Introduce, by April 2005, a successful light-touch childcare approval scheme (Sure Start Unit target, joint with the Department for Work and Pensions)
3. Reduce the under-18 conception rate by 50% by 2010 as part of a broader strategy to improve sexual health (Joint with the Department of Health)
4. Halt the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010 in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole (Joint with the Department of Health and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport)
5. Narrow the gap in educational achievement between looked after children and that of their peers, and improve their educational support and the stability of their lives so that by 2008, 80% of children under 16 who have been looked after for 2.5 or more years will have been living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption

Source Sure Start (2006b), http://www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/targets/psatargets200508/fulldetails/

for three and four year olds in nursery classes. It also delivers a similar inspection service for government-funded nursery education provided in non-school settings. Sure Start, Extended Schools and Childcare Groups, together with Ofsted, will be keeping registration and inspection arrangements under review as more integration of a wider range of services is developed and services are brought together within Children's Centres.

3.4 Conclusion

As argued above, tackling the issues of social exclusion and poverty became one of New Labour's most important motivations to reform the welfare state. Sure Start policy is one of New Labour's policy initiatives to tackle the issues of social exclusion and child poverty among a set of policy measures shown in Table 3.1. Since its establishment in 1999, Sure Start policy has been transforming over time, particularly, since 2003, the Labour government determined to integrate Sure Start Local Programmes, Neighbourhood Nursery and Early Excellence Centres to Sure Start Children's Centres which provide one-stop services for all children under five years old. The book focuses on the time period of Sure Start policy from 2003 to

2007. Hence, This Chapter primarily illustrates the services of Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester. Sure Start Children's Centre, as illustrated above, plays a core role in delivering the policy goals of Sure Start Programmes, and aim to provide the best start for all children from 0 to 5 within the context of New Labour's new welfare state. It has been considered by Labour as one of its flagship policies to tackle the social issues of poverty and exclusion.

This chapter attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- The Chapter provides a general overview of Sure Start policy, particularly Sure Start Children's Centres and their services in Sheffield and Manchester, and paves a useful foundation for understanding the analysis of implementation process of Sure Start policy in case studies.
- Sure Start is a long-term policy and aims to end the child poverty by 2020. Hence, this chapter argues that it is so far hardly possible to evaluate the success or failure of Sure Start policy, and its impact on service users. Instead, this thesis focuses on the implementation process of Sure Start policy, particularly, in Sheffield and Manchester.
- Multiple agencies or actors are involved in the service delivery of the Sure Start policy and the actors range from the central government and local government to private, voluntary and some independent sectors in both Sheffield and Manchester. They work closely in the partnership, and Sure Start reflects New Labour's 'joined-up government' strategy on delivering public services.
- Through demonstrating the services of Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that in the process of service delivery of the Sure Start programme, street-level bureaucrats or implementers in Sheffield and Manchester, such as staff in Children's Centres, GPs, midwives, health visitors, professional trainers, and staff in the government, have a direct contact with children and their families. Street-level bureaucrats exert on important influence on the implementation process of Sure Start policy.
- The Treasury sets up the PSA targets for Sure Start policy to monitor the performance of the Departments for Education and Skills (now Department for Children, Schools and Families), the Department of Work and Pensions, the Department of Health the Sure Start unit, and other bodies against their objectives. As argued in Chap. 2, New Labour's strategy on public service is based on 'mixed approach', in which the centre strengthens the power through a variety of means, such as Audit and Target. In Sure Start policy, PSA is also used as one of the most important tools for the centre to oversee the performance of actors involved in Sure Start.

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Chapter 4
Implementation Network Approach: A New Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, research on policy implementation has been primarily focused on top-down and bottom-up approaches. However, with the development of a new governing mode, more actors have become involved in the implementation process. This chapter seeks to build a theoretical framework 'The Implementation Network Approach' to explore the processes involved in policy implementation, in particular with an emphasis on trying to offer a holistic analysis. In the existing public policy literature on traditional top-down approaches, one issue is a tendency to underplay the extent to which actors shaping policy in the decision-making stage, also operate at the implementation stage. The point here is that a policy is not merely dominated by central governmental departments, but contains a multiplicity of actors that are interconnected both horizontally and vertically. In recognising this feature, the approach of this study emphasises what is referred to as the 'implementation network approach', rather than the 'formulation network approach'. In addition, bottom-up studies, of which this one is a part, also aver that policy is not only shaped at the policy formulation stage, but also in the implementation process. Hence, the 'implementation network approach' developed here, adapts Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats model to analyse the implementation process, specifically focusing on the implementers' role in decision-making within the policy process.

Furthermore, over recent decades, the nature of service delivery systems has become increasingly complex, disaggregated and indeterminate, so placing a much greater emphasis on the need for effective co-ordination. In the light of this dynamic, this study adopts a policy network approach, as it offers a potentially useful mechanism to understand the implementation process. In this context, it is first important to recognise that the network approach has useful parallels to the bottom-up framework presented by Hjern (1982) that emphasises the rise in network complexity through its recognition of the role of different organisations from both public and private sectors (Hjern 1982). Second, and more broadly, the network approach is located within the subsequent emergent literature on governance, that identifies the transition from hierarchical forms of government to a mix of state, networks and market emphasising greater plurality, differentiation and reflexivity

X. Song, *Implementing Sure Start Policy*,
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(see for example Rhodes 1997). These themes are crucial to this study and as such, the policy network approach provides an appropriate means of understanding the dynamics involved.

This chapter is then organized around five sections. The first part focuses on the review of policy implementation including its definition, stage models and implementation studies as old or new phenomenon. The second part reveals the critiques of top-down approaches and argues that top-down approach is inappropriate as it denies the role of central government in the implementation process. The third part argues that implementers not only carry out policy made in the formulation stage, but as decision makers in the implementation process as they have discretion and autonomy on how to actually implement policies. The fourth part maps out the developing process of network theory from the UK's perspective, paving the way for understanding the implementation network approach; Finally, the theoretical framework to implementation studies—implementation network approach—will be outlined in order to analyse the implementation process holistically.

4.1 A Review of Policy Implementation Approaches

When public policy is formulated during the stage of decision-making, it has to be implemented in the following stage. At this point, attention will be paid to how the policy made in the first stage is carried out (Lineberry 1977). According to Webster and Roger, the process of carrying out, accomplishing, fulfilling, producing and completing is considered to be the process of 'implementation' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 3). The most influential and classical definition of implementation is that formulated by Mazmanan and Sabatier:

> Implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions, ideally, that decision identifies the problems to be addressed, stipulates the objectives to be pursued, and in a variety of ways, 'structure' the implementation process. The process normally runs through a number of stages beginning with passage of the basic statute, followed by the policy outputs of the implementing agencies, the compliance of target groups with those decisions, the actual impacts—both intended and unintended—of those outputs, the perceived impacts of agency decision. And finally important revisions in the basic statute (1983: 1–20).

The implementation process is critical to producing the intended impacts of the policy: the short-circuiting of intended policy goals in implementation is a commonplace event (Lineberry 1977: 69). Once policy is implemented, it will have certain impacts on target and non-target groups, among whom some will have obtained their goals straightaway and with minimal cost, and others have impacts entirely unplanned and unexpected. A key theme in implementation studies is understanding how successful policy implementation occurs. Unfortunately, successful implementation is itself a controversial term. Implementation is not the same as outcomes, so we cannot employ the same measures used to evaluate outcomes

that we use to judge the success or failure of implementation. Obviously, we think of successful implementation as congruence between the intentions of policy formulators and the outcomes of these policies. However, if the intended outcome of a policy is not attained, is this merely a problem of implementation? Does it mean it was a failure in implementation? Implementation itself could be successful, but the policy may fail because the policy aim, made in the policy-making process, is unrealistic and unattainable. In the literature on policy implementation, different approaches or perspectives will arrive at different conclusions on why implementation fails and offer different way of improving implementation processes. The next section reviews some of the main arguments to emerge from this literature.

4.1.1 The "Stage Model" in Public Policy—Its Strengths and Weaknesses

Nakamura described the concepts and metaphors used for analysing the policy process as the 'textbook approach', which represents a broadly shared way of thinking about public policy (Nakamura 1987). Models of policy stages or policy cycles have been developed to assist comprehension of the complexities of the process of decision-making. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith provide a catch-all term—'the stages heuristic' (1993: 1)—derived from the work of Harold Lasswell, David Easton, and others. 'In the late 1970s, the concept of the policy cycle was reviewed in a collection of papers edited by May and Wildavsky' (Parsons 1995: 78).

Drawing upon Easton and Lasswell's works, much literature on public policy has made distinctions between the stages of problem identification, agenda setting, adoption, implementation and policy evaluation. A core theme is that policy emerges from the interrelationships between the intentions and the actions of political participants. Through many chains of cause and effect or commands and responses, policy emerges in stages. In the UK literature, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) identify nine stages in the policy cycle: 'issue search, issue filtration, issue definition, forecasting, objectives and priorities, options analysis, implementation, evaluation, and policy succession and policy termination' (Hogwood and Gunn 1984). Hogwood and Gun's approach goes beyond a simple identification of stages to suggest actions that they think ought to occur.

Despite the fact that there are various critiques of the 'stage model', this approach continues to be the basis for the analysis of the policy process. 'As a heuristic device on the policy cycle, it enables us to construct a model with which we can explore public policy' (Parsons 1995: 80). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue that 'by shifting attention to the process stream, the stages model has encouraged analysis of phenomena that transcend any given institution' (Sabatier and Jenkins-smith 1993: 2). It has provided an alternative to the institutional approach of traditional political science, which only emphasizes the analysis of specific institutions. Furthermore, the approach is also useful in disaggregating the policy

process into a number of different stages, each of which becomes amenable to more detailed analysis. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith consider it as a useful tool for the 'disaggregation of the complex and varied policy process into manageable segments' (Sabatier and Jenkins-smith 1993: 2). Finally journalists, bureaucrats and politicians also try to represent policy-making as an orderly process because of the attractiveness of clarity. For example, "Bureaucrats seek to impose order on decision-making in order to prevent too much participation, a practice which is often called 'gatekeeping'" (John 1998: 25).

The 'stagist' model is not without its critics (Nakamura 1987; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; John 1998), who argue that it creates an artificial world of policy-making. They maintain that the real world is much more complicated and not merely composed of tidy, neat steps, phases or cycles (Parsons 1995). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue: 'in general, then, while the stages metaphor served a useful purpose in the 1970s and early 1980s, it has outlived that usefulness and needs to be replaced or substantially revised' (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993: 4). They also identify six disadvantages of the 'stage model'

> The stages model is not really a causal model, it does not provide a clear basis for empirical hypothesis testing, the stages heuristic suffers from descriptive inaccuracy in its positing of a sequence of stages starting with agenda setting and passing through policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, it also suffers from a built-in legalistic, top-down focus, it inappropriately emphasizes the policy cycle as the temporal unit of analysis, and it fails to provide a good vehicle for integrating the roles of policy analysis and policy-oriented learning throughout the public policy process (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993: 3–4).

Many similar critiques also have been advanced. For example, Hill argued: 'stages are not insulated from each other and there may be a succession of feedback loops between them' (Hill 1997: 24), and Nakamura portrayed the textbook approach as unrealistic, that neglect the sometimes blurred distinctions between the phases (Nakamura 1987). As John illustrated, in terms of the implementation process

> What appears to be a neutral and straightforward mechanism to translate intentions into reality is in fact a complex matrix of public, quasi-public and private decision-making bodies, all of which are involved in the policy process but which have their own autonomy, interests and values (John 1998: 27).

However, even though many critiques had been offered of the 'stage model', the stagest approach remains popular because it provides a way in which complexity can be reduced to a more manageable form. In this chapter, policy implementation will be considered as a distinct stage within policy cycles and different theories and models of researching the implementation process in the literature will be evaluated.

4.1.2 Implementation: Old or New Phenomenon?

It is broadly recognized that implementation studies emerged in the 1970s first in the United States and, later in that decade, in Europe. Hargrove provides sufficient rationale in the study of public policy, which is a 'missing link' between concern

with policy making and the evaluation of policy outcomes (Hargrove 1975). At the same time, Pressman and Wildavsky's influential work 'Implementation', published in 1973, also signified the emergence of implementation research. However, according to Hill's argument, scholars are good at 'dressing up old concerns in new language and thereby claiming originality' (Hill 1997: 175). The absence of necessary theories and literatures on 'implementation' in Pressman and Wildavsky's work does not mean that there were no previous attempts to address 'implementation', even though the term had not been used at that time.

Van Meter and Van Horn argue in another of the seminal contributions to the modern implementation literature that

> There is a rich heritage from the social sciences, which is often overlooked by those purporting to discuss the policy implementation process; this literature includes theoretical and empirical work in several disciplines, including sociology, public administration, social psychology and political science (Meter and Horn 1975: 3–452, cited from Hill and Hupe (2002: 19).

Furthermore, Hargrove revised his earlier arguments and admitted that a substantial literature existed from the perspective of other disciplines, such as organizational theory or public administration, applied in various case studies. Hill and Hupe examined literatures that explored questions pertinent to the subject of 'implementation', without using the term 'implementation'. 'Within that literature concerns are expressed that are central to controversy within implementation theory: about the rule of law, accountability and the roles of civil servants within the policy process' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 19).

If we trace back to Greek and Roman literature, we can find that much of this material tended to explain power and the state, which are two central topics in political science. If we use the Webster and Roger's definition on 'implementation', it is not difficult to find in those literatures references to the relations between 'objective settings' and 'the carrying out of those objectives'. We also could turn to Weber's 'bureaucratic mechanism', which argued that: 'the structural components of administrative organizations were viewed in terms of a centralized, hierarchical pyramid' (Nakamura and Smallwood 1980: 1). Weber described the ideal bureaucracy as a highly rationalized, legalistic kind of authority and structure, controlled at the top by a small group of decision-makers whose policies were dutifully carried out by subordinate administrators. In Weber's model, the 'implementation process' is based on a classical hierarchical model that is a firmly ordered system. In addition, based on examinations of the two themes of the rule of law and the development of democracy, they provide us with a useful context within which policy implementation has been studied or operated (Hill and Hupe 2002). In the academic area, Hill and Hupe emphasized the importance of institutional theory in the research of policy implementation

> The other direction was to stress how the exploration of aspects of human organization – particularly in the literature on institutions – has led to work that throws light upon implementation processes carried out by scholars – many of them sociologists – uninterested in and indeed sometimes unaware of the implementation literature (Hill and Hupe 2002: 39).

Implementation issues are by no means a new phenomenon, having been the subject of extensive debate and scholarly activity long before anyone called them implementation studies. However the research for this book is shaped by recent studies on implementation since the 1970s. The literature on implementation pays significant attention to the study of processes by which policies are translated into action, and analyses more concrete reasons why policy implementation is unsuccessful.

4.2 The Implementation Process as a Web of Actors

Drawing on Lindblom's descriptions of the rational-comprehensive approach to decision making, Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) added some logical steps to bring policy implementation into this 'classical' mode. This is primarily built on the theory's contributions from Max Weber (highly rationalized hierarchal model), Woodrow Wilson (the separation of politics and administration), and Taylor (the principles of scientific management). Nakamura and Smallwood argue that in classical implementation

> An agent to carry out the policy is chosen by the policy maker according to technical criteria; the policy is communicated to the agent as a series of specific instructions; the agent implements the specific instructions according to the policy guidelines specified in the communication from the policy maker (1980: 9).

This top-down perspective is located in the stages model, and involves making a clear distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation.

Pressman and Wildavsky's influential book, *Implementation*, 'presented a case study coupled with a series of prescriptive warnings, rather than a theoretical model of the implementation process'. Their work has contributed to the emergence of a logical starting point for research on implementation, especially to top-down research (Nakamura and Smallwood 1980: 12–13). In their work, '*Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland*', they list a series of reasons why the Oakland experience was so frustrating. The EDA (Economic Development Administration) programs in Oakland were widely supported by almost all actors involved in the process, but support itself could not guarantee the success of implementation. Lineberry concluded from Pressman and Wildavsky's case study that 'the larger the number of actors and agencies involved, and the greater the number of interdependent decisions required, the lower the probability of successful implementation' (Lineberry 1977: 78). The overall approach of Pressman and Wildavsky explicitly adopts the 'top-down' approach. They argue implementation is a process of interaction between the settings of goals and the actions geared to achieve them (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973). In addition, after analysing the case study, they concluded with a series of observations and warnings that could be used to gauge the chance of successful implementation.

> Implementation should not be divorced from policy; designers of policy must consider direct means for achieving their ends; consider carefully the theory that underlies your actions: continuity of leadership is important to successful implementation; simplicity in policies is much to be desired (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973: 143–149).

The authors also hoped that the lessons drawn from Oakland could be applied by other policy-makers that 'implementation requires a top-down system of control and communications, and resources to do the job' (Parsons 1995: 464), and effective implementation requires a good chain of command and a capacity to coordinate and control.

Since the publication of Pressman and Wildavsky's work, others have contributed to the approach of 'top-down' research on implementation. Van Meter and Van Horn define policy implementation as 'those actions by public and private individuals that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions' (Van Meter and Van Horn 1975: 445). In particular, two influential pairs of scholars, Hogwood and Gunn in Britain and Mazomanie and Sabatier in the United States, used the same style and synthesized a large number of variables into a shorter list of several sufficient and necessary conditions for effective and successful implementation. 'Hogwood and Gunn defend their 'top-down' view (in a discussion of the alternative perspective of two other British writers, Barrett and Colin Fudge 1981), on the ground that those who make policy are democratically elected' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 50). In addition, Hogwood and Gunn also followed Hood's example in his study of 'the limits of administration' and borrowed his analytical concept of

> Perfect administration, by which they offered some factors, such as the circumstances external to the implementing agency or inadequate time and insufficient resources, which explain why perfect implementation is unattainable, and also set out the conditions for the realization of the perfect implementation (Hogwood and Gunn 1984).

Another top-down approach from the US is employed by Mazmanian and Sabatier, who sought to identify a number of legal and political mechanisms for affecting the preferences and constraining the behaviour of street level bureaucrats and target groups both in the initial policy decision and then subsequently over time (Sabatier 1986: 21–48). 'The Mazmanian and Sabatier paradigm belongs to the long tradition of constitutionalist approaches using 'single-authority top-down' methodology to assess the impact of political organisation' (Hjern 1982: 4). They followed a basic top-down logic, and argued that

> The essential features of a top down approach are that it starts with policy decision by governmental officials and then asks (1) to what extent were the actions of implementing officials and target groups consistent with the objectives and procedures outlined in that policy decision; (2) to what extent were the objectives attained over time; (3) what were the principal factors affecting policy outputs and impacts both those relevant to the official policy as well as other political significant ones; (4) how was the policy reformulated over time on the basis of experience (Sabatier 1986: 22).

For Mazmanian and Sabatier: 'implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually made in a statute (although possible through important executive

orders or court decisions) and the crucial role of implementation analysis is to identify the factors that affect the achievement of statutory objectives' (Hjern 1982: 4). They also identified some factors involved in controlling or adjusting those steps from 'the top' to attain better implementation (see Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983). Three categories of independent variables are given and one cluster of dependent variables is defined: 'The headings of the boxes are suggestive of their contents: (1) Tractability of the problem; (2) ability of statute to structure implementation; (3) non-statutory variables affecting implementation; (4) stages in the implementation process' (Hjern 1982: 4–5).

Cairney also argues that the top-down approach to implementation: 'identifies the conditions for policy success and explains failure with reference to these requirements not being met:

1. There is an understanding of clear and consistent policy objectives;
2. The policy will work as intended when implemented;
3. Tasks are fully specified and communicated to skilful and compliant officials;
4. The required resources (including political will) are committed to the programme;
5. Dependency relationships are minimal and support from interest groups is maintained;
6. External, or socioeconomic, conditions do not significantly undermine the process' (Cairney 2009: 3).

The top-down approach has a clear view of the policy-implementation relationship, and this model demonstrates that

> Implementation is about getting people to do what they are told, and keeping control over a sequence of stages in a system, and about the development of a programme of control, which minimizes conflict and deviation from the goals set by the initial policy hypothesis (Parsons 1995: 466).

Top-down approaches tend to assume that actors in the policy formulation stage are only accountable for making decisions, rather than implementing them. The literature then often makes an artificial division between policy formulation and policy implementation. Top-down approaches, as argued above, identify a large number of factors considered to be essential conditions for implementers to achieve the policy outcomes or objectives. However, the literature fails to acknowledge that actors in the policy formulation stage are also involved in policy implementation. In the first place, actors making decisions at the centre during the formulation stage, may also have a role in the implementation process particularly in terms of determining the distribution of resources, rather merely giving commands. Hence, the top-down approach can have its limitations, by presenting an artificial separation between the policy formulation and policy implementation stages. This issue has generated a number of critiques from other schools of thought, most notably, the literature concerned with bottom-up, implementation studies. Broadly, the arguments concern the nature of policy and the interrelationship between policy formulation and the policy implementation process.

Secondly, it is unreasonable to presume that actors in the implementation process will simply act as the passive bearers of the commands directed from the

centre, simply implementing the intentions of the actors in the policy formulation stage. As Cairney (2009: 3) observes:

> It is difficult to force decisions on actors within the implementation structure who are employed by other organizations, so it is unrealistic to think that a sole central actor could secure its own aims and objectives irrespective of the actions of the others involved.

Implementation studies require an element of realism, by the need to recognise that a key determinant shaping policy in the implementation process are the actors themselves operating within the implementation network, and the degree of autonomy they command from the centre. The point here is that the policy is not merely dominated by central governmental departments, but contains a multiplicity of actors that are interconnected both horizontally and vertically. In recognising this dynamic, the approach of this study emphasises what is referred to as the 'implementation network approach', rather than the 'formulation network approach'.

4.3 Implementers as Policy Makers in the Implementation Process: The Role of Street-Level Bureaucrats

From the perspective of bottom-up scholars, the top-down model has provided only a partial explanation of implementation, as it does not take into account the role of other actors and levels in the implementation process. The bottom-up model involves two contexts: firstly the management skills and cultures of the organizations involved in implementing public policy; and secondly, it sees the implementation process as involving negotiation and consensus-building, which stresses the fact that 'street-level' implementers have discretion in how they apply policy. Bottom-uppers also raise the objection that the 'top-down model could not be used in situations where there is no dominant policy or agency, but rather a multitude of governmental directives and actors, none of them pre-eminent' (Sabatier 1986: 30).

Among those bottom-uppers, Lipsky's 'street-level bureaucrats' model focuses on the discretion and autonomy commanded by street-level bureaucrats in the implementation process. While Elmore observes that: '…the implementation of policy is really about street-level workers with high service ideals exercising discretion under intolerable pressures, hence attempts to control them hierarchically simply increases their tendency to stereotype and disregard the needs of their clients' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 53). Lipsky's study of implementation is particularly useful as it shifts the attention away from the concerns of top-down studies over how to improve on implementation from a top-down perspective, to instead consider how street-level bureaucrats exercise power to influence the implementation process. Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats not only play key roles as implementers, but in many circumstances, they also act as decision-makers influencing the policy itself. Drawing from the Lipsky approach, the next section focuses on both the street-level bureaucrat as implementers and also as decision-maker in the implementation process.

Understanding the Street-level Bureaucracy

In discussing the bottom-up perspective, Lipsky's *Street-level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* has had an important influence on the research of implementation studies, and also in many respects has become the key text of the 'bottom-up' perspective. Lipsky illustrates that 'the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 52). The essence of Lipsky's case is that street level bureaucrats have enormous power, which is scarcely acknowledged in the literature on public administration (Hudson 1989). In addition, he has also attempted to synthesize much of the research done in the USA on the activities of such personnel and to develop a new body of theory on the roles of 'street level bureaucrats'.

Before we examine the details of Lipsky's work, we first have to make sense of definitions of 'street-level bureaucrats' and 'street-level bureaucracy'. According to the work of Lipsky,

> "Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work are called street-level bureaucrats in this study" and "public services agencies that employ a significant number of street-level bureaucrats in proportion to their work force are called street-level bureaucracies" (Lipsky 1980: 3).

Lipsky uses the term street-level bureaucrat to describe public service employees and also points out that teachers, social workers, police officers, doctors, health visitors and so forth comprise a great portion of all public employees working in domestic affairs, particularly in state and local governments. He argues that there are two general reasons why street-level bureaucrats dominate political controversies over public service and play a critical role in the public arena. First, 'debates about the proper scope and focus of governmental services are essentially debates over the scope and function of these public employees'. For example, a financial crisis of government could lead to the firing of many public employees. Second 'street-bureaucrats have considerable impacts on peoples' lives'. For example, by determining eligibility for benefits they enhance the claims of some citizens to governmental goods and services at the expense of general taxpayers and those whose claims are denied (Lipsky 1980: 4–12).

Street-level Bureaucrats as Policy Makers

Street-level bureaucrats are not just policy implementers but frequently act as policy makers as well. Lipsky draws on two interrelated facets illuminating why they are highly involved in the decision-making process: 'relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority' (Lipsky 1980: 13). These two factors are based on the power held by street-level bureaucrats, including such factors as information and expertise. It is also reasonable to suggest that the relative degree of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority constitute the sources of their power.

Unlike lower level workers in most organisations, street level bureaucrats have a considerable amount of discretion in determining the nature, amount and quality of benefits and sanctions provided by their agencies. Policemen decide who to arrest and whose behaviour to overlook. Teachers decide who will be excluded and who will remain in school, and health care workers on what treatment to use. Especially, to what extent street-level bureaucrats are professionals determines how much discretion can be expected. Professionals are expected to exercise discretionary judgment in their field. They are regularly deferred to in their specialized areas of work and are relatively free from supervision by superiors or scrutiny by clients. However this does not necessarily mean that 'street-level workers are unrestrained by rules, regulations and directives from above, or by the norms and practices of their occupational group' (Lipsky 1980: 14). Rules, regulations and administrative norms still to some extent structure the policy choices of street-level bureaucrats. But sometimes rules may become impediments to supervision and they may conflict with each other, leading to the emergence of street-level discretion. For example, rules are constantly changed so that policemen have to decide on their own whether to make arrests for all the infractions they observe during their working days. In addition, certain characteristics of the jobs of street-level bureaucrats make it difficult to seriously reduce discretion. Due to the complexity of the tasks, rules, regulations and instructions, the different ways in which street-level bureaucrats undertake these guidelines cannot always be constrained. For example, street-level bureaucrats work in situations that often require responses to the human dimensions of situations, where they have discretion to judge each different situation and circumstance, or where the situations are too complex to reduce them to programmatic formats. For example, the police cannot carry around instructions on how to intervene with citizens, particularly in potentially hostile encounters.

The differences between street-level bureaucrats and managers and their resources for resistance result in autonomy from the organizational authority. Street-level bureaucrats have different job priorities than managers, and they have an interest in minimizing the danger and discomforts of the job and maximizing income and personal gratification. Managers on the other hand are properly result-oriented, and they are more concerned with performance and the cost of securing performance. Managers are interested in achieving results consistent with agency objectives. Street-level bureaucrats are interested in processing work consistent with their own preferences and only those agency policies salient enough to be backed up by significant sanctions. In particular, street-level bureaucrats always want to maintain and expand their autonomy, even though managers try to restrict their discretion in order to attain certain results. Through the possession of their own resources, it is obvious that street-level bureaucrats have already created the capacity to act with discretion and maintain their own interests or preferences. Street-level bureaucrats enjoy the benefits of collective resources that strengthen their position considerably.

> The costs of firing or demoting workers tend to be so great under civil service regulations that managers often prefer to retain workers than to endure a prolonged period of arbitration while the post in dispute remains unfilled, or worse, remains filled by the accused incompetent (Lipsky 1980: 24).

In addition 'expertise, willingness to become interested and to expend effort, personal attractiveness and structural considerations such as location with the organization' (Lipsky 1980: 24) are all resources street-level bureaucrats can employ to have discretion and at the same time make themselves involved in the decision-making process.

The relationship between managers and street-level bureaucrats has two primary characteristics: 'first, it is a relationship best conceived in large part as intrinsically conflictual, secondly it is a relationship of mutual dependence' (Lipsky 1980: 25). Street-level bureaucrats do not always comply with their agency's objectives, which are normally made by people in the top positions; on the contrary, they exercise a decision-making role within the process of implementation. To a large extent, this is also complicated by the capacity of street-level bureaucrats to resist organizational pressures by mobilizing their own resources. As argued above, some of these resources are common to public service workers generally and some are inherent to their position as policy deliverers with broad discretion.

The Dilemmas of Street-level Bureaucrats as Implementers

Lipsky questioned top-down scholars' assumptions that influence over policy implementation flows with authority from higher to lower levels and that there is an intrinsic shared interest in achieving agency objectives. He argues that the implementation of policy is really about street-level workers with high service ideals exercising discretion under intolerable pressures. He analysed this situation from the perspectives of 'understanding of the working conditions and priorities of those who deliver policy and the limits on circumscribing those jobs by recombining conventional sanctions and incentives' (Lipsky 1980: 25).

Street-level bureaucrats are consistently criticized for their inability to provide responsive and appropriate service. However it is easy to overlook the fact that street-level bureaucrats always have to face dilemmas as they put a concrete policy into practice. Ordinarily, in their work they experience a variety of conditions, which oblige them to deal with inescapable dilemmas.

> 1. Resources are chronically inadequate relative to the tasks workers are asked to perform. 2. The demand for services tends to increase to meet the supply. 3. Goal expectations for the agencies in which they work tend to be ambiguous, vague, or conflicting. 4. Performance oriented toward goal achievement tends to be difficult if not impossible to measure. 5. Clients are typically non-voluntary; partly as a result, clients for the most part do not serve as primary bureaucratic reference groups (Lipsky 1980: 28).

According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats always work with inadequate resources in circumstances where the demand will always increase to meet the supply of services. They also work under great strain and make considerable sacrifices to provide clients protection or service no one else would be willing to provide. Street-level bureaucrats attempt to perform well in doing their jobs.

However, Lipsky (1980) argues it is impossible to do this in ideal terms with the above constraints. Therefore, street-level bureaucrats develop three general responses to deal with this indeterminacy.

> First they develop patterns of practice that tend to limit demand, maximize the utilization of available resources, and obtain client compliance over and above the procedures developed by their agencies; second they modify their concept of their jobs, so as to lower or otherwise restrict their objectives and thus reduce the gap between available resources and achieving objectives; third they modify their concept of the raw materials with which they work – their clients – so as to make more acceptable the gap between accomplishments and objectives (Lipsky 1980: 83).

Much of the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats has been developed in the form of routines and simplifications to cope with complicated tasks, and to maintain their sense of security. The structures of routines and simplifications have determined the allocation of particular goods and services in the society, utilizing positions of public authority in which street-level bureaucrats made decisions. According to Lipsky

> The routines of work in street-level bureaucracies appear to be directed toward achieving one or more of four purposes in processing clients: 1 they ration service; 2 they control clients and reduce the consequences of uncertainty; 3 they husband worker resources; 4 they manage the consequences of routine practice (Lipsky 1980: 86).

That is, street-level bureaucrats already find some ways out of their dilemmas as implementers. Sometimes routines will be entirely informal and contrary to agency policy and at other times they will be largely consistent with agency objectives.

Street-level Bureaucrats Accountability

Lipsky argues that 'Accountability is the link between bureaucracy and democracy' (Lipsky 1980: 160). Hence it is the case that accountability must mean more than just answering to a superior or expecting to be called to account for one's actions. However, Lipsky also argues that accountability to the organization is virtually impossible to achieve where street level bureaucrats exercise a high degree of discretion. As public managers, they are trying to make street-level bureaucrats more accountable by reducing their discretion and constraining their alternatives. Normally public managers employ 'goal clarification' and 'performance measures' to increase the accountability of street-level bureaucrats. Lipsky, however, has demonstrated the considerable difficulties managers have to face that cause many problems for attaining accountability over street-level bureaucrats.

Accountability to the Organisation

Attempts to increase accountability to the organisation through administrative controls are the most common method used to increase the congruence between worker behaviour and agency policy (Hudson 1989). Clear objectives could help street-level bureaucrats to maintain their responsibility, but if public managers are not clear about their objectives, how can street-level bureaucrats attain these objectives? In addition, public officials also make great efforts to develop

performance measures in order to control employees' behaviour. However, most of the work of street-level bureaucrats is heavily qualitative in nature, not based on easy-to-measure quantitative work. This makes it considerably more difficult to guarantee the accuracy of performance measurements. Furthermore the phenomenon of "creaming"—where 'street-level bureaucrats will make choices and exercise discretion by directing their activities in ways that will improve their performance scores' (Lipsky 1980: 166), also reduces the effectiveness of performance measurements and decrease accountability to the organization. This means that street-level bureaucrats 'select their programs clients likely to do well in them, in order to improve the appearance of success' (Lipsky 1980: 166).

Organizational measures to increase scrutiny of street level activity are strewn with difficulty. Downs refers to this as a law of organisational behaviour, where 'the greater the efforts made to control subordinated officials, the greater the efforts by those subordinates to evade or counteract such control' (Downs 1966). For example, Fox (1974) shows how a 'top-down' approach concerned with detailed prescription creates and reinforces low-trust relationships (Fox 1974). Subordinates may just feel little commitment, which results in even further tightening of control and a further diminution of commitment.

Accountability to Consumers (clients)

Lipsky above argued that agencies are not well equipped to assess the appropriateness of the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats, and he further illustrates how it is difficult for citizens to assess the appropriateness of a service. First, consumers have been taken as non-voluntary groups by Lipsky, which means they have an unequal relationship with street-level bureaucrats and are in a disadvantaged position. These clients sometimes unwillingly have to sustain the relationship because they highly desire a good for which there is no alternative. 'Street-level bureaucrats can impose costs of personal abuse, neglectful treatment, or inconvenience without necessarily paying the normal penalty of having the other party retaliate' (Lipsky 1980: 56). Generally clients remain relatively powerless, because comparatively, street-level bureaucrats have access to information and techniques that clients do not have. There are four basic dimensions to the control exercised by street-level bureaucrats over clients.

> Briefly, street-level bureaucrats exercise control in: (1) distributing the benefits and sanctions that are supposed to be provided by the agencies; (2) structuring the context of clients' interactions with them and their agencies; (3) teaching clients how to behave as clients; and (4) allocating psychological rewards and sanctions associated with clients entering into relationships with them (Lipsky 1980: 60).

However, some potential remains for changing the relations between street-level bureaucrats and their consumers. Hudson argues that there are two main variants that can be used to attempt to make street-level bureaucrats more accountable to consumers. One approach is to eliminate street level workers as buffers, which promises to import consumer sovereignty into the production of welfare services. The other method is to eliminate public workers from service contexts, which, with

proper support, might be handled by citizens with little assistance (Hudson 1989). A further possibility for enhancing the accountability of street-level bureaucrats is to democratise the process by instituting forms of participation within the processes of service delivery. A 'citizen jury' is an obvious attempt to involve citizens (consumers) in the daily activity of street-level bureaucrats.

From the UK perspective, Barrett and Fudge draw upon developments in organization theory that involve challenging hierarchical perspectives of the way organizations work. They particularly emphasize the notion that most action depends on compromises between people in various parts of single organizations or related organizations. They argue that 'implementation might be best understood in terms of a "policy-action continuum", in which an interactive and negotiative process is taking place over time, between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends' (Barrett and Fudge 1981: 25). The emphasis upon 'policy' and 'action' is related and seen as linked 'dynamically'. 'Policy cannot be regarded as a constant. It is mediated by actors who may be operating with different assumptive worlds from those formulating the policy, and inevitably, it undergoes interpretation and modification and, in some cases, subversion' (Barrett and Fudge 1981: 251). This analysis causes Barrett and Fudge to arrive at a distinct position on the normative assumptions embedded in the traditional 'top-down' literature.

The literature on bottom-up model is both substantial and extensive. However, overall bottom-up approaches provide us with an alternative way of analysing the implementation process, such as, 'street-level bureaucrat' and 'policy-action' models. It is important to recognize the notion of bargaining and negotiation process at the bottom level. A key argument of the bottom-up approach is that the distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation is misleading and useless. As shown above, traditional top-down and bottom-up approaches have shown their weaknesses in the study of policy implementation. Top-down approachers ignores the interactive nature of different policy stages and bargaining and negotiation process at the bottom level. Bottom-up approachers loses sight of the role of institutions and structure in the implementation process. Policy network theory, as a meso-level concept, provides a new perspective 'as a set of relatively stable relationships which are of non-hierarchical and interdependent nature linking a variety of actors' (Borzel 1998: 3). In the third part, I will mainly concentrate on introducing policy network theory from the UK's perspective. This part will pave the way for analysing the implementation process from a network perspective.

4.4 Policy Network Theory: A UK Perspective

The study of policy networks has, for several decades, spanned a number of disciplinary field including organizational studies, sociology, international relations and of relevance to this study, political science (Milward and Provan 1998;

Dowding 1995; Rhodes 1997). From within the British school of political science, the policy network approach has been characterized by an emphasis on the stability and durability of within the policy-making arena. Here, There is now a large body of anglo-network literature, prompting Dowding to argue that: 'policy network analysis has become the dominant paradigm for the study of the policy-making process in British political science' (Dowding 1995: 136). In particular, the policy network approach has generated numerous studies of the nature of policy-making within the UK (see for example, Marsh and Rhodes 1992).

However, few scholars attempt to employ network framework to analyse the implementation process. Grantham attempted to use the framework of network concept to analyse the unintended policy implementation outcomes through the example of UK rail privatisation (Grantham 2001). Elsewhere, Cairney extends the policy network analysis into the arena of policy implementation and argues that:

> It (The Thesis) presents a defence of policy networks analysis by reformulating the concepts at the formulation stage and extending this analysis to areas such as implementation and Parliament, since much criticism stems from its apparent inapplicability to stages other than policy formulation (Cairney 1999: 1).

The changing nature of the British state has led to the increase in complexity of public service delivery. What effect of this change is that the implementation process itself has become much more cluttered and complex, involving a greater number and variety of actors than before. Thirty years ago, a generic study of implementation by Hjern (1982) highlighted the rise in network complexity, recognising the growth in the role of various organisations from both the public and private sectors (Hjern 1982). Within the UK context, Barret and Fudge, drew on Hjern's notion of an 'implementation structure' to suggest that: 'much action depends upon compromises between people in various parts of single organisations, or related organisations' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 55).

At a broader level, the network approach is closely related to the debates that emerged within the governance literatures, illustrating the increasing importance of networks and partnerships in the coordination of public services. In particular, the governance literature emphasis a shift from top-down control, to a mix of state, networks and market, but that increasingly the primary means of governance invoke network-based collaborations, requiring greater coordination across increasingly complex and numerous arenas (Newman 2001; Rhodes 1997). The policy network approach therefore offers a useful tool to analyse the dynamic involved. The following section highlights the various approaches that emerged from the anglo-policy network school, in order to pave the foundation for the implementation network approach employed in this book.

The British literature on policy network theory owes a great deal to European sources, especially German, and American sources (Marsh 1998; Rhodes 1997). Borzel argues that 'While British and American scholars usually conceive policy networks as a model of state/society relations in a given issue area, German works tend to treat policy networks as an alternative to hierarchy and market' (Borzel 1998: 253). The development of policy network theory in UK has not only analysed

state/society relations, but position this theory as an alternative to hierarchy and market. For example, Smith's '*Pressure, Power and Policy*', employs a policy network framework as a means of categorizing the relationship between groups and the state, essentially the relationship between state and society (Smith 1993). Meanwhile, Rhodes' '*Understanding Governance*' treats policy networks as a new form of governance, which is an alternative to the traditional Weberian model and the 'incentive' model (Rhodes 1997).

Under the influence of Heclo and Wildavsky's idea of policy community, Richardson and Jordan made the earliest contribution to the study of policy communities in the UK (Jordan and Richardson 1979). 'They see policy making in Britain as taking place within a sub-system in which government agencies and pressure groups negotiate' (Marsh 1998: 6). Jordan and Richardson (1979) take the 'group interaction' approach and suggest that policy communities are the key to understanding the vast bulk of policy-making in settled Western-type political systems.

> The main feature of the British system is that ongoing problems and constraints force successive governments into very similar policy positions. Problems are handled similarly irrespective of what government is in power. Agreement will be sought within the community of groups involved. Our argument posits strong boundaries between subject matters and indistinct, merged relationships between departments and relevant groups within individual policy areas. The central point is that policy making is fragmented into sub-systems, and that the main boundaries are between sub-systems rather than between the component units of the sub-system (1979: 43–4).

Jordan and Richardson 'conclude that there was a 'development of exchange relationships' in which policy makers in both government and groups share an interest in the avoidance of sudden policy change' (Jordan 1990: 8). They also claim that it is more realistic to see a 'policy community' operating in practice at the level of a British civil service found at the old Grades of 3 or 4, rather than at departmental level (Jordan 1990: 9). They stress the interpersonal rather than the structural nature of these relationships within policy communities. Richardson and Jordan describe: 'the British policy style as an incremental process reflecting consensual arrangements between groups and government departments, characterised by the term 'bureaucratic accommodation', in which policy decisions are facilitated by interactions between civil servants and: 'civil service-like officers of interest groups'' (Jordan and Richardson 1987: 29–30).

The group interaction approach argues that the policy process resides on the stability of the membership of those consulted interest groups. In particular, the group interaction approach focuses on those actors deemed to be central to the successful implementation of policy. There are various criticisms of the 'group interaction' approach in terms of explaining the nature of policy communities. For example, Dowding (1995: 137) argues that the term "policy community" fails to serve as the driving force of explanation. However, in the mainstream of policy network theory in Britain, in essence the argument is about the relative importance of structures and agents in affecting policy outcomes. Some authors, for example Marsh and Rhodes (1992), stress the structural aspect of networks while others, like Dowding, emphasize intentional explanations.

4.4.1 Structure-Centered Meso-level Analysis

Rhodes's policy network constitutes the mainstream of the British literature, and it also provides a major boost to the study of policy networks underpinned by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) research initiative on the central-local government relationship (SSRC 1979). Rhodes provides an explicit application of intergovernmental theory to British central-local relations. His framework was based on a theory of power-dependence that contains five propositions.

(a) Any organization is dependent upon other organizations for resources.
(b) In order to achieve their goals, the organizations have to exchange resources.
(c) Although decision-making within the organisation is constrained by other organizations, the dominant coalition retains some discretion. The appreciative system of the dominant coalition influences which relationships are seen as a problem and which resources will be sought.
(d) The dominant coalition employs strategies within known rules of the game to regulate the process of exchange.
(e) Variations in the degree of discretion are a product of the goals and the relative power potential of interacting organisations. This relative power potential is a product of the resources of exchange between organisations. (Rhodes 1981: 98).

Resources as a key mean—whether visible or invisible, are deployed by central and local participants to manoeuvre for advantage. Rhodes develops a typology that distinguishes between five types of networks, which range along a continuum from highly integrated policy communities to loosely integrated issue networks (see Table 4.1). A policy community is characterized by (Rhodes 1997: 38).

Table 4.1 Types of network

Type of network	Characteristics of network
Policy community/ Territorial community	Stability, highly restricted membership, vertical Interdependence, limited horizontal articulation
Professional network	The pre-eminence of one class of participant in policy making. Stability; highly restricted membership, vertical interdependence, limited horizontal articulation, serves interest of profession
Intergovernmental network	Topocratic membership, an extensive constellation of interests encompassing all the services of local authority; Limited membership, limited vertical interdependence, Extensive horizontal articulation
Producer network	The prominent role of economic interests; fluctuating membership, limited vertical interdependence, serves interest of producer
Issue network	Unstable, large number of members, limited vertical Interdependence

Source Rhodes (1997)

> Stability of relationship, continuity of restrictive membership, vertical interdependence based on shared service delivery responsibilities, and insulation from both other networks and invariably, the public; they have a high degree of integrated and normally are based on the major functional interests in and of government.

Conversely in an issue network there is a wide range of actors moving in and out of the policy arenas with different views of policy outcomes and a wide range of decision-making centres (Heclo 1972). In an issue network, policy making is more likely to be pluralistic with many groups in conflict over the policy outcomes in addition to conflict between various decision-making centres (Evans 1998: 14).

However, facing some critiques (Dowding 1995; Saward 1992) and charged with inflexibility and failing to take level-analysis into account (Rhodes 1997; Saward 1992), Rhodes built on four dimensions along which networks vary—interests, membership, interdependence and resources (see Table 4.2). In 1992,

Table 4.2 Types of policy networks: characteristics of policy communities and issues networks

Dimension	Policy community	Issue network
Membership		
No. of participants	Very limited number, some groups consciously excluded	Large
Types of interest	Economic and/or professional interests dominate	Encompasses range of affected interests
Integration		
Frequency of interaction	Frequent, high-quality, interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issue	Contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity
Continuity	Membership, values and outcomes persistent over time	Access fluctuates significantly
Consensus	All participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome	A measure of agreement exists, but conflict is ever present
Resources		
Distribution of resources within network	All participants have resources; basic relationship is an exchange relationship	Some participants may have resources, but they are limited, and basic relationship is consultative
Distribution of resources within participating organizations	Hierarchical; Leaders can deliver members	Varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members
Power		
	There is a balance of power among members. Although one group may dominate, it must be a positive-sum game if community is to persist	Unequal powers, reflecting unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero-sum game

Source Rhodes (1997: 44)

Rhodes and Marsh adapted the original typology and removed the three middle types of network, due to the ambiguity of the location of these three types of network on the continuum (professional communities, intergovernmental networks and producer networks) and instead focused on the differences between issue networks and policy communities.

Rhodes and Marsh have acknowledged that it is unlikely that any given policy area will fit exactly under any one heading and state that this is why it is necessary to retain the term 'policy network' rather than replace it with 'policy community' and 'issue network'. Yet the Rhodes and Marsh approach continues to consider the primary function of a network to be negotiation by members over resources, through which different interest groups strive to the maximum possible extent to protect their interests. In terms of meso-level analysis of policy networks, Rhodes and Marsh have actually provided us with a tool, which we can employ to analyse the relationships among different interest groups, such as the central-local relationship (see Marsh and Rhodes 1992 for Case Studies). Overall, they argue that the structure of networks affects policy outcomes.

4.4.2 Agency-Centered Micro-level Analysis

In terms of the micro-level dimension, British scholars arguing that agents matter have been greatly influenced by the US literature (Heclo and Wildavsky 1974), which emphasizes the micro-level, dealing with personal relations between key actors rather than structural relations between institutions. Inclusion within the network depends on the gaining of personal trust, through the awareness of, following, and reproduction of the "rules of the game". It involves a process of individual socialisation, in which new members learn to act according to their ascribed roles. In the British literature, Wilks and Wright, as a classical example, place considerable emphasis on interpersonal relations as a key aspect of all policy networks. According to Evans

> The personal interaction or anthropological approach, as it has sometimes been termed is concerned with how networks are used to transmit values to new actors and how those values are reproduced and interpreted as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion (Evans 1998: 5).

They see interpersonal relationship as underpinned by rules of 'kinship' and 'culture', based on notions of trust, confidence and shared values. According to Wilks and Wright, the only way to understand Industry-Government relations is to view policy making as disaggregated and government as 'fragmented, differentiated and fissiparous' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 16).

In addition, in Wilks and Wright's policy network theory, although they use a meso-level analysis of inter-organizational relations, the way they define 'policy network' and 'policy community' is largely different.

> The term 'policy community' is reserved for a more disaggregated system involving those actors, and potential actors, who share an interest in a particular industry and who interact with one another, exchange resources in order to balance and optimise their mutual relationships (Rhodes 1997: 41).

The 'policy network', to Wilks and Wright, only becomes: 'a linking process, the outcome of those exchanges, within a policy community or between a number of policy communities' (Wright 1988: 606). However, there are a number of disadvantages if considered as a micro-level approach. First, as Marsh and Smith (1996: 10) argue, it loses sight of, 'the outside world and how it affects departmental networks'. Second, it overplays the importance of personal relations, suggesting that the only way to become a regular consultee is if one follows the rules and gains personal trust.

4.4.3 Critiques of Policy Network Theory

Dowding makes the critique that: 'policy network analysis began as a metaphor, and may only become a theory by developing along the lines of sociological network analysis' (Dowding 1995: 136). He suggests that: 'they fail because the driving force of explanation, the independent variables, are not network characteristics per se but rather characteristics of components within the networks' (Dowding 1995: 137). Dowding argues that policy network theory is no more than a metaphor, and it is just a descriptive approach, rather than an explanatory one. Hansen (1997) attempts to combine the institutional approach with the policy network approach to make policy network theory more explanatory and also tries to answer three questions to which policy network theory could not respond: how are policy network created, why do policy network change and why are policy networks so persistent? He treats policy networks as institutions and demonstrates how an institutional understanding of policy networks may answer the troublesome questions of network analysis.

Secondly, there is no really agreement on what a policy network is. Rhodes and Marsh complain that 'there is a danger that the study of policy networks will become, like the study of corporatism, a field bedevilled by arguments over the 'best' definition' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 202). Even Rhodes suggested that the definitional problems should be left aside and attention should be 'turned to matters of substance' (Rhodes 1990: 311). He identifies certain 'networks characteristics' about which there is some agreement and argues that 'future developments do not hinge on the need for definitional agreement (Rhodes 1990: 312). However, Hansen argues that 'this view is both too pessimistic and too pragmatic and certainly, a basic conceptual agreement must be a precondition of fruitful, intersubjective research' (Hansen 1997: 673).

4.4.4 Towards a Dialectical Model of Policy Networks

Drawing on the above description, a dialectical model of policy networks offers: 'an attempt to overcome the insularity of personal interaction and the pluralism and methodological flaws of group interaction, whilst avoiding the sole use of quantitative measures, although retaining some hope for the usefulness of structural constraint' (Cairney 1999, Ph.D. Thesis Chap. 2). Marsh and Smith outline what they term a dialectical model of policy network analysis, which identifies three dialectical, that is interactive and iterative, relationships. These relationships are between: (1) the structure of the network and the participants in the network; (2) the network and its political and socio-economic context; and (3) the policy network and the outcome (Marsh and Smith 2000).

Beyond structure versus agency

Marsh and Smith stress that policy networks are structures that both constrain and facilitate agents. They are structures that (Marsh and Smith 2000) 'define the roles the actors play; shape the issues which are discussed and how they are dealt with; have distinct sets of rules; and contain organizational imperatives'. These structures also involve the institutions of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour.

Marsh and Smith also argue that agents do make strategic calculations shaped by their interpretation of that structural context. Three points are important here:

> First, the interests of preferences of members of a network may not be defined merely, or perhaps even mainly, in terms of that membership; second, the constraints on, or opportunities for, an agent's action which result from network structures do not happen automatically; they depend on the agent's discursive construction of those constraints or opportunities; third, network members have skills which affect their capacity to use opportunities or negotiate constraints (Marsh and Smith 2000).

Beyond network versus context

Marsh and Smith are critical of the distinction of trying to explain network change by either stressing endogenous or exogenous factors. Instead they argue that in order to understand how networks affect outcomes, a dialectical relationship between the network and the broader context within which it is located has to be recognized (Marsh and Smith 2000). Firstly, policy networks reflect exogenous structures. The structure of networks is likely to reflect the broader pattern of structured inequality within society, such as class and gender structure. Secondly, network structure, network change and the policy outcome may be partially explained by reference to factors exogenous to the network, but these contextual factors are dialectically related to network structure and network interaction (Marsh and Toke 2003). In addition, Marsh and Smith argued that other networks are also a crucial part of the broader context within which a particular network is located.

Overall, they argue that exogenous changes could affect the resources, interests and relationships of the actors within networks.

However, they also contend that these changes do not have an effect independent of the structure of the network. All such exogenous change is mediated through the understanding of agents and interpreted in the context of the structures, rules and interpersonal relationships within the network (Marsh and Smith 2000).

Beyond networks versus outcomes

Based on the recognition that policy outcomes also affect the shape of the policy network directly, as well as having an effect on the structural position of certain interests in civil society and the strategic learning of actors in the network, Marsh and Toke (2003) conclude that outcomes might affect networks in at least three ways:

> 'First, a particular policy outcome may lead to a change in the membership of the network or to the balance of resources within it; second, policy outcomes may have an effect on the broader social structure that weakens the position of a particular interest in relation to a given network; third policy outcomes can affect agents' (Marsh and Smith 2000: 9).

4.4.5 Critiques of the Dialectical Model of Policy Network and a Move Towards the Implementation Network Typology

As a reflection back on the original propositions of the four strands of network analysis, Marsh and Smith set out the problem as a series of propositions in order to clarify some of the issues (Marsh and Smith 1996). Their 'dialectical approach' seeks to combine certain merits of the four competing approaches and to integrate them into a coherent analytical whole.

> Methodologically Marsh and Smith's dialectical approach combines micro-anthropological and sociological levels of analysis with Marsh and Rhodes' meso- and macro- levels of analysis to produce a multi-level, interactive theory of policy networks (Evans 1998: 21).

Marsh and Smith (1996) argue that existing approaches to policy networks are either structure-centred or agency-centred (Marsh and Smith 1996). A dialectical approach would acknowledge that there is an interactive or dialectical relationship between structure and agency. Policy outcomes are determined through the processes that constitute this relationship.

For Marsh and Smith, a dialectical relationship exists both within the network, and between actors and different networks (Evans 1998). However even this more contemporary development has been criticised. Evans argues that the term 'dialectical' is a problematic one, and it is unclear in Marsh and Smith's article how the reader is supposed to understand the term 'dialectic'. The ambiguity of the conception of dialectic could lead to a possible misperception and misunderstanding of the theory that Marsh and Smith are trying to develop (Evans 1998).

Secondly Evans argues the inadequacy of empirical evidence of a dialectical approach, which does not support the existence of a dialectic. Despite these two defects, Evans claims that the dialectical approach does present a great deal of potential for furthering Policy Network Analysis, because it may be able to 'make stronger knowledge claims' (Evans 1998) even though, as already outlined, in its current form it suffers from the possibility of misinterpretation.

In addition, Toke and Marsh also picked up three weaknesses based on the empirical evidence and issues associated with GM (Genetically Modified) crops. Firstly, Smith and Marsh do not distinguish between individuals and groups as agents; secondly, the model may also exaggerate the influence of 'insider' groups at the expense of 'outsider' groups; thirdly, the model also focuses exclusively on policy outcomes emanating from the policy networks (Marsh and Toke 2003). Cariney adds that:

> The problem with Marsh and Smith's conception of policy networks as structures (which are distinct entities), is that these structures do not appear to have the means available to formulate and act on decisions, and hence to exercise power. It is therefore unclear as to how structures could constrain and facilitate action: there are no demonstrable means of action. We are thus left with a black box (Cairney 1999, Ph.D. Thesis Chap. 2).

Marsh and Smith's dialectical policy network model reveals the interactive relations between structure and agency, context and network, and network and outcomes, but needs to embed other elements to become an explanatory model in terms of exploring actors behaviours within networks. The above has critically reviewed the literature of policy implementation and policy network theories. Drawing on them, the following section attempts to build a newly theoretical framework the 'Implementation Network Approach' to holistically understand the implementation process.

4.5 The Implementation Network Approach

How a government assures the policy implementation process and makes the outcomes of implementation consistent with initial policy goals made in the decision-making stage has recently become an important issue. There are two major approaches scholars have been using to interpret the implementation process, the 'top-down' (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Meter and Horn 1975) and 'bottom-up' (Elmore 1979; Hjern and Hull 1983) approaches. Top-down approach prescribes the conditions to attain the success of policy implementation and reach the policies objective. For example, Marsh and Rhodes pointed out that various policies to some extent failed under the Thatcher government, as they ignored the managerial conditions for successful implementation inherent in the 'top-down' approach, which are:

> (1) That there is an understanding of, and agreement on, clear and consistent objectives; (2) That a valid/adequate causal theory exists, in which the relationship between cause and effect is direct; (3) That subsequent tasks are fully specified and communicated (in correct sequence) to a team of skilful and compliant officials; (4) That the required time and resources are available, and fully committed, to the relevant programme; (5) That dependency relationships are minimal and support from interest groups is maintained; (6) That external, or socioeconomic, conditions do not significantly constrain, or undermine, the process (Marsh and Rhodes 1992).

In certain cases, a 'top-down' approach may be inappropriate because the main actors shaping policy may be operating at the implementation level, so the policy is not dominated by central government departments (Cairney 1999). In these cases, a 'bottom-up' approach recognises the complexity of the implementation process and argues that the: 'top-down model may not be appropriate used in situations where there is no dominant policy or agency, but rather a multitude of governmental directives and actors, none of them pre-eminent' (Sabatier 1986: 30). Benson argues that the network of interests appear within a policy sector, which he defines in terms of: 'a cluster of complex of organisations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies' (Parsons 1995: 484). In addition, Hjern also suggests that:

> :(a) departments are made up of more than one programme, and hence intra-departmental conflict may occur; and in this case, policy implementation has become more complicated and risky, as different actors have different objectives, and this can also lead to a clash of purposes. (b) Few policies are fully implemented by one organisation, and this exaggerates the potential for failure and highlights a lack of power in implementation (Cairney 1999, Chap. 4: 5).

Programmes can be conceived as being implemented in pools of organisations, they may involve a multiplicity of organisations of various kinds—national and local, public, private and voluntary, business and labour, and so on—and implementation is often undertaken by a matrix or set of organisational pools not a single organisation (Parsons 1995: 484).

However policy network theory offers a new perspective on studying implementation. This is especially true in an era of governance. In the first place, the perceived fragmentation of service delivery organisations in the United Kingdom makes it difficult to control the direction of implementation (Rhodes 1997). The last Conservative Adminstration argued that government had become overextended and was unable to deliver successfully on its myriad commitments. Their subsequent reforms led to Rhodes developing 'the differentiated polity' model, which is 'characterized by functional and institutional specialization and the fragmentation of policies and politics' (Rhodes 1997: 7). Secondly, the subsequent Labour Administration accepted the governance narrative that the policy arena had become a much more crowded environment with numerous actors competing for political space. 'The Labour government has adopted a new top-down style to 'regain control over policy outcomes'. Organizations were asked to adhere to strict targets, which have potential to cause unintended consequences' (Cairney 2009: 7). Even

though New Labour, rhetorically at least, stresses the roles of non-state actors and street-level bureaucrats working in the partnership to improve the public service delivery, it has nevertheless implicitly and explicitly strengthened the controlling capacity from the centre. The claim here is that the relationship between the centre and non-state, street-level actors is asymmetric (Richards and Smith 2002).

With the changing nature of governance under New Labour, both top-down and bottom-up approaches have limitations in analysing the implementation process. Top-down approaches tend to overlook the complicated interactive process between different organisations, and merely focuses on central government's role on setting up a variety of conditions to establish the objectives of policies. the great number of actors in the service delivery arena has increased the complexity of policy making under New Labour, in part can be traced to the programme of marketisation and privatisation bequeathed by the previous Conservative regime. For example, Whitfield (2006) and Needham (2007) illustrated the increasing number of actors in delivering public services under the context of continuing marketisation under New Labour. Conversely, bottom-up approaches do account for the increase in complexity by taking account of the role of different organisations from both public and private sectors (Hjern 1982). In addition, bottom-up approaches analyse the behaviours of street-level bureaucrats and their influence on the implementation process. However, the Labour government consistently strengthened central control through a variety of means, including PSA targets, institutionalising Prime Ministerial power, setting up task forces and using more special advisors. Nevertheless, bottom-up approaches have been criticised for their tendency to 'overemphasize the ability of the periphery to frustrate the centre (Hill and Hupe 2002: 64).

If then we recognise that the service delivery systems have become increasingly complex, disaggregated and indeterminate, policy network theory offers a complementary and useful approach to explaining implementation process and provides a framework to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches. As Richards argues, 'Many public goods are not delivered through a simple line bureaucracy but instead involve a series of complex interactions between numerous organisations and individuals' (Richards 2005). This is particularly evident in an era of public service provision by contract, which relies on central authorities placing adequate incentives such as grants or market guarantees to secure participation. More actors are involved in the process of policy implementation than anytime before. The following section primarily focuses on proposing a theoretical approach—the implementation network approach—to analyse the implementation process.

First, we have to be clear about the use of the term the 'implementation network' approach in this section. Here, it signifies an arena in which different actors interact with each other and deploy their resources to carry out policies made in the decision-making stage and is a process of continuous policy-making re-shaping the form of the implementation output. It is neither embedded in policy network theories nor completely separate from them. There are major distinctions on policy network theories among literatures in Europe, UK and the States, and less agreement on the nature and role of networks. Therefore, it is not easy to find a

benchmark to have a comparison between implementation network and policy network theories. However, the implementation network approach does absorb some elements—ideological or analytical—from different policy network theories to make it explanatory to the phenomena of the implementation process. 'What is important is that, as Scharpf points out is that networks approach may be crucial for the sort of implementation deficit that Pressman and Wildavsky were so concerned about' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 60). The 'implementation network' approach takes interactive relations between structure and agency, context and network, and network and outcomes proposed in Marsh and Rhodes's dialectical network model as an analytical framework in order to provide a philosophical structure to put implementation issues in a more holistic view, and Rhodes' meso-level policy network theory will be considered as an analytical factor to understand how organizations interact with each other.

The implementation network approach is a dynamic concept and can be adapted to explore different policy areas. For example, some actors are involved in implementing agricultural policy but not in environmental policy. Cairney argues that: 'If policy networks are to be explanatory, then one must demonstrate that they act, or exercise power, to affect policy outcomes' (Cairney 1999). Therefore, how to analyse the behaviours of different actors in the implementation process is a key question since these behaviours are likely to affect the implementation process and could divert the original meaning of policy formulated in an earlier stage. There are two types of actors in the implementation process: organizations and individuals. How they interact with each other is very important to understanding the implementation process. Finally, when analysing behaviours of actors in the implementation process, we cannot also lose sight of other factors, such as implementation context and implementation outcomes (Fig. 4.1).

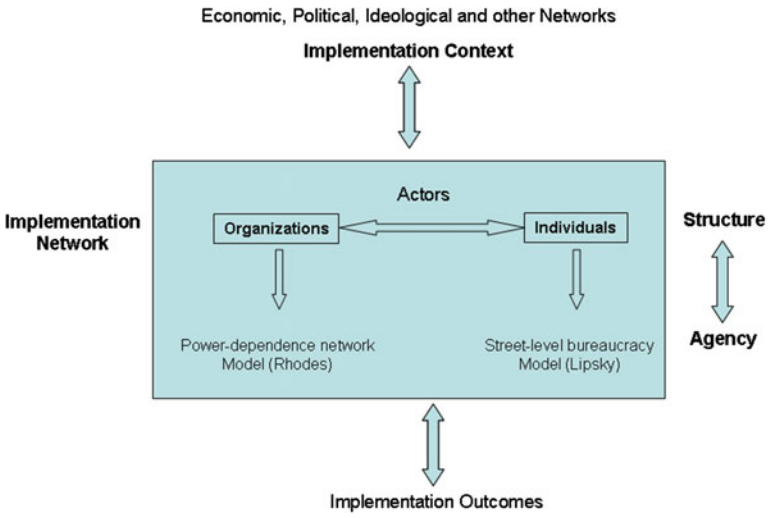

Fig. 4.1 Implementation network approach (Xiongwei Song)

In order to analyse the implementation process, the implementation network approach provides a framework for a holistic perspective to the study of the implementation process. Overall, three interactive relations are presented in the implementation network approach: structure and agency, network and context, and network and outcomes. In terms of relations between network and context:

> First, policy network reflect exogenous structures; second, network structure, network change and the policy outcomes may be partially explained by reference to factors exogenous to the network, but these contextual factors are dialectically related to network structure and network interaction (Marsh and Smith 2000: 7).

Therefore, when we analyse the implementation process, we have to consider how exogenous factors influence actors within these networks, whether they are networks of an economic, political, ideological or some other nature. It is important to consider how these factors influence the change of implementation networks and resources and interests of actors? For example, the issues raised in Chap. 2 requires a consideration of the impact of Labour's 'mixed-approach' on reforming the public service delivery and how it affects the actors in the implementation network; an exploration of the way in the ideas underpinning 'joined-up government' affects the way different actors interact in the implementation network; and finally, the need to consider how the changing power between central government and local authorities influences the actors in the implementation network?

The implementation network approach also provides us with an opportunity to put the implementation process into a policy cycle to analyse how the other policy stages, such as agenda setting, policy making and policy evaluation, influence the implementation networks as political factors, particularly in relation to the actors in the policy formulation stage and their influence on those operating at the implementation stage. It is of course important to recognise that one of the perennial problems of much of the network literature is that, in both theoretical and applied terms, there is a tendency to impose a somewhat artificial separation depicting the various stages of the policy cycle (see Rhodes 2009; Howlett et al. 2009). While in theoretical terms, the INA attempts to embrace a holistic approach to the network that recognises the interactive and strategic nature of the policy cycle, nevertheless when applying the approach to empirical settings, it is accepted that there is a utility to analysing the effect of the various stages upon each other to highlight the interactive nature in the overall functioning of the network. The claim here is the importance of identifying certain actors that may play a key role in both the decision-making stage and the implementation stage, tand in so doing (see Jordan and Richardson 1979, 1987). For example, certain actors within implementation networks have the capacity to mediate or minimize the effect of implementation context. Here, actors in implementation networks could make use of their knowledge or skills to adapt to a change of environment. Particularly, excluded from policy formulation stage as a result of actor's specialisation in the 'policy community' defined by Jordan and Richardson and lack of information, those actors attempts to mobilise resources and use their power to impose their influence on a particular policy area in the implementation stage (Jordan and Richardson 1987).

Jordan and Richardson also argued that: 'Groups have at least one of two bites at the cherry: if consultation appears to be rejected (by ministers, in a small number of cases) during policy formulation, the process will return to 'normal' during implementation (Cairney 2009: 9). Cairney adds that: 'consultation minimises problems of compliance by creating a sense of involvement and greater commitment to policy success. It also allows the government to benefit from the practical experience of those consulted' (Cairney 2009: 9). The implementation network approach builds upon Jordan and Richardson's concerns over the complex ties of different actors at the micro-level in the policy process to account for the impact of policy formulation and key actors within this stage on the implementation network.

Secondly, the implementation network approach also considers the interactive relations between networks and outcomes. When we bring this into the study of implementation process, we have to consider the role of implementation outcomes on the implementation process. Firstly, a particular implementation outcome may lead to a change in the membership of the implementation network or to the balance of resources within it. Secondly, implementation outcomes may have an effect on the broader social structure, which weakens the position of a particular interest in relation to a given actor in the implementation network.

Thirdly, the interactive relations between structure and agency proposed by the implementation network approach provide an opportunity to integrate top-down and bottom-up approaches. In the implementation network approach, there are generally two types of actors—organizations and individuals—who carry out policies together. In interactive analysis of relations between structure and agency, the role of both structure and agents are stressed. That is, to understand the interactive process of different actors in the implementation process, it is essential to consider the role of organizational structure, but also to account for the role of agents when analyzing the implementation process.

However even if the implementation network approach emphasizes the interactive relationship between structure and agency, it still needs the power to explain how different actors interact with each other in the implementation process. There are no analytical elements so far which address how different organizations or individuals interact with each other or between themselves in implementation networks. How can we get to know enough about actors' skills, learning and perceptions of their resources? How should we understand what goes on in their bargaining? Perhaps more important, how can we explain why it is these agents, and not some others, who participate, and how and when these actors are involved in the process? These are crucial issues that still need to be addressed. Therefore, in order to illustrate how different actors interact and why they cannot coordinate with each other consistently, it is necessary to integrate some other explanatory theories into the implementation network approach to explain how the behaviour of the different actors may affect the implementation process. At the meso-level, Rhodes's policy network theory is employed to analyse the interactive process between different organizations in the implementation process, and in the micro-level, Lipsky's 'street-level bureaucrats' model is used to analyse the behaviour of individuals at the street-level in the implementation process.

Certainly, when using the terms 'organization' and 'individual' in the implementation network approach, it is important to reiterate structure-agency relations in order to put them in more clear positions in this approach. There are three questions needed to be addressed.

(1) Is the term 'organization' equal to 'structure' or 'agency'?
(2) How is the term 'individual' understood in this different context? Does it only stand for 'individual person' or could it be 'individual organization'?
(3) How do the organizations interact with individuals?

In order to answer the above three questions, we first have to understand the definitions of structure and agency. In recent years, political scientists have felt the need to question their own assumptions about structure and agency and its debate has been deemed to constitute a valid explanation of a political effect or outcome. Structure means the ordered nature of social and political relations, such as political institutions, practices, routines and conventions. Agency refers to action, that is the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously to attempt to realize his or her intentions (Hay 2002: 94).

Organizations have rules, regulations and formal procedures to manage their operation. In this sense, organization can be considered as a 'structure'. Organizations have their own goals and intentions, and they employ their abilities and resources to attain them. In this respect, organizations can be taken as 'agency'. Secondly, herein the word 'individual' is only being used to stand for 'individual persons', and specifically means 'street-level bureaucrats'. I primarily analyse the behaviour and conduct of bureaucrats and their influence on the implementation outcome. Their conducts will be considered as agential factors that are useful in explaining the reasons for implementation failure.

In terms of the relationship between organisations and individuals, Jessop developed the strategic-relational approach to transcend the artificial dualism of structure and agency.

> The key relationship in the strategic-relational approach, is emphasizing the strategic content of action, in which agents internalise perceptions of their context and consciously orient themselves towards certain outcomes and objectives; and also the strategic environment itself is strategically selective in which it favours certain strategies over others as means to realize a given set of intentions or preferences (Colin 2002: 127).

Organizations as structure have rules, regulations and procedures to constrain and affect the behaviour of individuals within it; meanwhile, as agents, organisations have resources and strategies to attain its own goals. In addition, individuals also strategically adapt themselves into an advantageous position in the interactive process with structural constraints.

Drawing from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective, the implementation network approach is concerned with asking what is happening and why rather than simply: '…whether implementers comply with the prescribed procedures, timetables and restrictions' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 61). The implementation network approach goes beyond a typical top-down analysis, as it requires a recognition that a

key determinant shaping policy in the implementation process stems are actors in the implementation network, rather than, for example, the central government ministries the dominance of. Here, while it is recognised that some of the bottom-up literature criticise the attempts to artificially impose a divisions of policy stages by top-down approachers, but as Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993: 2) observe, that the: 'disaggregation of the complex and varied policy process into manageable segments' can be a useful research tool (Sabatier and Jenkins-smith 1993: 2). When applying the implementation network approach there is some recognition of the mutual effect of different policy stages and the implementers involved in the stages throughout the policy cycle. This separation of the policy stages allows for a categorises of the actors involved throughout the network and an analysis of both their status and role in the policy process.

The claim here then is that the implementation network approach importantly built on the existing literature offered by bottom-up approaches to recognise that the implementation process involves many key actors holding diffuse and competing goals who work within a context of an increasingly large and complex mix of government programmes that require participation from numerous layers and units of government and who are also affected by powerful factors beyond their control. Hajer (2003: 175) refers to this as the world of: 'polycentric networks of governance'. In this context, a core theme of this research is to explore the discretion and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats and its impact on the implementation process under the Labour Government.

As Chap. 2 observes, the notion of the British state being 'hollowed-out' has been challenge by a number of scholars who instead assert that the core executive still retains a strategic and dominant position within the policy-making arena vis-avis other actors. In particular, Marsh et al. (2003) employ there 'asymmetrical model' to claim that the British core executive has possessed the capacity to adapt to the changes wrought by the forces of governance and reconstituted its political power. Nevertheless, the Labour government has pursued a number of reforms in the policy making arena concerned with the devolution of power to front-line services [see for example '*Leading from the Frontline Staff*' (Cabinet Office 2003) '*Principles for Public Service Reform*' (Office of Public Service Reform 2002)]. The issue this raises and which this research in part explores is the extent to which the Labour Government has continued to pursue a top-down model of control while mitigates again their rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline staff to improve service delivery. The implementation network approach is employed to explore this issue, in particular drawing upon the elements within this approach that are concerned with a bottom-up analysis, by focusing in the response and behaviour of frontline staff in involved in public service delivery In response to Labour's reform programme.

The aim of the research is to employ the implementation network approach to provide a more holistic view of the policy implementation process under New Labour and the extent to which reform has change the nature of network relations. Here it is worth again outlining the five characteristics of the 'Implementation Network Approach' employed to explore this process:

- The implementation network approach takes political, economic, ideological and other networks factors into consideration;
- The implementation network approach embeds policy network theories into the framework.
- The implementation network approach adopts a 'bottom up' approach to studying the implementation process;
- The implementation network approach explores the interactive relationship between structure and agency;
- The implementation network approach recognises the importance of interactive relations between the network and outcome, arguing that not only do networks affect policy outcomes, but policy outcomes impact the shape of the policy network directly.

Building on these five component elements, the INA addresses a number of questions in the subsequent case-study exploration of Sure Start:

- Who are the actors in implementation networks?
- What are the resources they have?
- How do different organizations in implementation networks interact with each other to attain their own advantages based on Rhodes's power-dependence model?
- How do street-level bureaucrats respond to the policy made in the decision-making stage and why do they divert the policy's original meaning strategically?
- How do political, economic, ideological or other networks affect implementation networks?
- How do implementation outcomes in turn influence the nature of implementation networks?

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the key literatures of policy implementation and network theories and developed a holistic theoretical approach to understand the implementation process. This approach is based on a number of criticisms to emerge from traditional top-down and bottom-up approaches and incorporates policy network theory into the implementation network approach. The chapter has identified that a key issues with the Top-down approach concerns a neglect of the policy implementation stage, as it fails to recognise o the role of actors in the policy formulation stage also participating in the implementation process. The 'implementation network approach' breaks the traditional policy cycles analysis that considers the central governmental departments are also involved in the implementation process. In addition, top-down approaches tend to prescribe a rigid set of conditions needed

to attain success at the policy implementation stage. However, bottom-up approaches recognise that implementers do not always carry the intentions established at the policy formulation stage. They possess varying degrees of discretion and autonomy to make decision in the implementation process. The 'implementation network approach' presented in this book utilises this latter perspective, in particular by drawing on Lipsky's 'street-level bureaucrats' model to help understand the role of actors in the Implementation stage.

During the transition to the governance era, more actors are being involved in the process of public service delivery. Moreover, the reforms introduced between 1997 and 2001 by the Labour Government contributed to this trend. What the Governance literatures also highlights is that the nature of service delivery systems has become increasingly complex, disaggregated and indeterminate. With this mind, the 'implementation network approach' utilizes the policy network approach as a useful tool to try and unpack the complexities involved in the implementation process. Furthermore, in order to offer a more analytical-rich study of the dynamics involved in implementation, the approach adapted here sets out to consider the relationship between structure and agency, network and context, and network and outcomes. This approach is employed to examine the case-study presented in this book of the implementation process of Sure Start policy in Sheffield and Manchester.

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Chapter 5
Types of Networks and the Interactive Processes at the Meso-level

In the previous chapters, the theoretical approach and background of New Labour's strategy for public service delivery have been analysed to understand the implementation process of Sure Start policy. The implementation network approach incorporates the explanatory element of Marsh and Rhodes' power-dependence model, which assists in analysing how different organisations interact with each other, illustrates the implementation process of Sure Start at the meso-level and also acknowledges the internal disagreement, both ideologically and institutionally, among actors in the policy community and issue network. The implementation network approach recognises the weaknesses of 'stage heristic' model separating policy chains into agenda setting, policy making, implementation and policy evaluation, but conceives it as a useful tool to identify the roles of actors in Sure Start policy. Namely, No. 10, Treasury, DCSF, DWP, DoH in the implementation network are mainly considered as actors in the decision-making stage; on the contrary, local authorities, PCT and Jobcentre Plus in the implementation network are mainly involved in the actual delivering decision made in the policy-making stage.

This chapter primarily analyses how these internal differences within the policy community and issue networks affect the implementation process of Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester. In the absence of any existing comprehensive documentation on key partners and the liaison pathways in Sure Start, it also attempts to map out the relationship among different organisations and what type of networks they fall into in both cities.

Based on the material drawn from primary and secondary sources and interviews, the first part of this chapter reiterates the theoretical approach regarding its explanatory power in relation to the implementation process of Sure Start. Applying the power-dependence model, it argues that there are two types of networks coexisting in Sure Start policy–policy community and issue network in Manchester

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and Sheffield at the local level. The second part primarily focuses on the analysis of the existing Sure Start policy community, arguing that actors such as DCSF, DoH, DWP, Number 10, the Treasury, and local authorities in Sure Start constitute the policy community in both cities, and also analyses the internal differences among actors in the policy community and its impact on delivering Sure Start policy. The third part concentrates on the analysis of the local issue network in Sure Start policy, which encompasses a large number of actors delivering Sure Start policy at the local level in both cities, such as Sure Start Children's Centres, Voluntary, Independent and Private Organizations, analyses its impact on delivering Sure Start policy, and also illustrates the interaction between actors in the policy community and issue network in Sure Start policy.

5.1 Reiteration of the Theoretical Approach

The implementation network approach signifies an arena in which different actors interact with each other and deploy their resources to carry out policies made in the decision-making stage and is also a process of continuous policy-making that re-shapes the form of the implementation output. In terms of Sure Start policy, implementation networks provide an area in which actors responsible for delivering Sure Start depend on each other to attain their own objectives and aims by employing their resources. The New Labour government uses a cross-departmental strategy to deliver Sure Start policy, hence, it is not only involved in one department, but involves multi-departmental collaboration. There are actors such as DCSF (DfES), DWP, DoH, the Treasury, No. 10, local authorities and private and voluntary organisations. In addition, from a micro-level perspective, street-level workers are important in delivering public services, especially as they are the first contact points for service users.

There are five related characteristics of this theoretical framework related to comprehensively explaining the implementation process of Sure Start. In the fist place, the implementation network approach takes political, economic, ideological and other networks factors into consideration. It enables researchers to place the policy implementation process into a broad context, and also brings the study of implementation into the policy cycles. In so doing it overcomes the traditional drawbacks of studying policy implementation separately.

Secondly, the implementation network approach embeds policy network theories into the framework. The model uses Marsh and Rhodes' 'policy network' theory (1992) at the meso-level as an explanatory tool to map out the relationship among organisational actors in Sure Start policy.

Thirdly, the implementation network approach also adopts the bottom-upper's approach to studying implementation process. It is important to take street-level

bureaucrats actors into consideration, such as health visitors, receptionist, managers in Sure Start Children's Centre and midwives, who operate at the point where policy is translated into practice and have direct interaction with the public service users. Their work practices and orientations determine a great deal of actual public service policy delivery.

Fourthly, the implementation network approach understands the relationship between structure and agency in an interactive way. Structure 'defines the roles the actors play; shape the issues which are discussed and how they are dealt with; have distinct sets of rules; and contain organizational imperatives' (Marsh and Smith 2000). Meanwhile, the model also takes that agents do make strategic calculations shaped by their interpretation of that structural context.

Fifthly, the implementation approach recognises the importance of interactive relations between the network and outcome, arguing that not only networks affect policy outcomes, but policy outcomes impact the shape of the policy network directly. As outlined above, these five characteristics will be analysed and used to explain the implementation process of Sure Start throughout the subsequent chapters. Based on the interview materials, the next section maps out organisational actors involved in delivering Sure Start policy and paves a foundation for the analysis of their behaviour in the 'implementation network'.

5.2 Policy Community in Sure Start

'Resource' is a key concept in Marsh and Rhodes' power-dependence model. The five key resources which they list as 'central to exchange' in sub-central government—authority, money, legitimacy, information, and organisation—are clearly important (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). In addition, Marsh and Rhodes also regard 'rules of the game' as resources with which a network as a whole is endowed or resources differentially empowering one actor or organisation within the network (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). The extent to which different organisations dominate the networks and influence other actors relies on the resources they own. This section identifies that DCSF, DWP (Jobcentre Plus), DoH (PCT), No. 10, the Treasury and local authorities (EYECS in Sheffield and Sure Start Unit in Manchester) constitute the policy communities in Sure Start, and argues that DCSF, DWP, DoH, No. 10 and the Treasury make up a decision-making body that is not directly involved in the implementation process of Sure Start; and local authorities, PCTs and Jobcentre Plus constitute the implementation element of the policy community. They maintain a stable relationship within the communities in terms of delivering Sure Start. Based on the interview materials, the following section briefly illustrates the relationship among actors identifying their resources and roles in Sure Start and paves a foundation for the analysis of how policy communities influence the implementation process of Sure Start.

5.2.1 Actors in the Community

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

At the commencement of the Brown government in 2007, the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) was divided into two to create the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) (DCSF 2007). Previously, the DfES took the leading role in developing Sure Start policy. Originally from 1999–2003, there were 500 Sure Start Local Programmes, which brought together health, family support, employment support and Jobcentre Plus into one building and one service. The role of DfES was to manage around 500 Local Programmes directly, which obtain money directly from the centre. Each of the Local Programmes had an accountable body. DfES created a research team around them to provide statistical information on what they are doing, and set a series of indicators used to measure their quality. For example, National Evaluation of Sure Start was commissioned by DfES and studied the effectiveness of all Sure Start Programmes in England (NESS 2008). At the same time, DfES also tests out another programme, childcare and disadvantaged areas nursery initiatives, early excellence centres, pre-school education, and then DfES decided to integrate all the services into the Sure Start Children Centre. One of the senior officials from DCSF explained that:

> That is when (2004) the role of DfES (DCSF) changed. We can no longer run the programme from the centre, certainly, the targets of 3500 centres are set, local authority are responsible for the centres, we really test out which one is working. Our responsibility is we set out strategic frameworks, what minimal level of service should the centre provide? We provide money to build centres and run centres to the local authority. We provide tools to help the local authority to delivery and attain the objectives. When we realised from the evaluation form that centres have difficulties to reach the disadvantaged parents, we issued this practice guidance to set out what works, what from evaluation works in targeting and supporting these disadvantaged parents. We also set out a performance management framework for local authority to manage the policy of Sure Start, what information and issues they should collect from centres. We see ourselves as a strategic lead, now, that is our role, help local authority to deliver the centre's policy. We also set out legislations to underpin children's centre, Childcare Act passed in 2006 to set the local authority has a duty to provide integrated service for the children under five, and have a duty to improve the outcomes of all children, and reduce the equality between the disadvantaged and the rest. We are kind of setting out a kind of strategy to help the local authority, which is a change.

However, after the establishment of the new department in 2007, DCSF officially took responsibility for running the Sure Start programmes. One of the senior officials from Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs group commented:

> The new department is just changing a name that was to raise the reputation of the government; this is the department for children, family and schools. Partly, it is a big department closely linked with the Prime Minister. Partly, because it got dual responsibility with the DWP and DoH, that in the main is joined-up much more than we have ever done, we got new joined-up child poverty units between two departments, and we got new joined boards, a new PSA jointly. So there is much stronger partnership workings, which result in more money being given to children, so the priority around the Children Centre has been improved because of that.

DCSF (DfES) is one of the key actors in making decisions on Sure Start policy. It possesses institutional and structural advantages and so plays a determining role in establishing their policy priorities in order to achieve targets (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). For example, DCSF can set out legislation, regulations and rules to underpin the policy it intends to develop and create guidelines or practice guidance to channel the way it wants other actors to develop, such as planning and delivery guidance. In July 2006, DfES issued a consultation document on proposed childcare legislation and the Bill largely reflects the matters raised at that time on new duties of local authorities[1] DCSF can also hold actors responsible for the achievements of a programmes' aims. In addition, DCSF holds the budget that is required for developing either Sure Start Local Programmes or Sure Start Children's Centres. Before 2006, Sure Start Local Programmes received funds from the DfES; from 1 April 2006, the Department has provided funds to local authorities for Children's Centres (National Audit Office 2006a, b, c). In 2004–2005 and 2005–2006, DfES spent some 850 millions Pounds (revenue) on Children's Centres and Sure Start Local Programmes. A further sum of over 1.3 billion Pounds has been allocated for revenue expenditure for 2006–2007 and 2007–2008. By March 2008, DCSF will have invested over 1.2 billion Pounds in capital to deliver 2500 Children's Centres (National Audit Office 2006a, b, c). In sum, DfES (DCSF) is a core actor responsible for developing Sure Start policy in the policy community, particularly, the Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs Groups is within the DCSF responsible for delivering Sure Start. As described above, it can be seen that DfES (DCSF) has the institutional and financial resources to influence other actors in the policy network, such as, through setting out regulations and strategic performance framework.

Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus

Part of the DWP's aim is to help children to have the best possible in life, growing up in secure homes and developing skills for the future, and to end child poverty by 2020. It has a wide range of services and benefits to help all people start work or return to work (DWP 2008). DWP is also one of the main actors in the decision-making stage in the Sure Start policy community. One of the senior officials from the Work, Welfare and Equality Group, illustrated that

> When it (Sure Start policy) was set up, it was jointly managed by education, finance, and us, because it highly focuses on the childcare. One of the key reasons that we as a department are interested in childcare is mainly for the employment, and also with the focus on child poverty, which has been a strategic aim for this department, and the focus on the prevention, better health, better education, and key interests for us in terms of long-term outcomes. I think when it is beginning, it has joint links with DWP to DCSF (DfES), over time, and it became DfES-oriented. And much more around their sort or agenda, it moved completely over that way, but we still retain very big interest in this agenda.

DWP is one of the most important stakeholders in the Sure Start programme, and its main interest lies in the targets of getting lone parents back into employment as part

[1] http://nd.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/etech/DCCMinutes.nsf/375078fce317fabb80256aef003c01ac/ea2a2cf1333402ba8025711600566599?OpenDocument, last accessed on 25/10/2009.

of the PSA target to 'promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, while protecting the position of those in greatest need' (DWP 2004: 37). DWP is actively involved in the decision-making process, and have a considerable impact on the implementation process of Sure Start. One of the senior officials from the Work, Welfare and Equality Group, illustrated that:

> There was a board, which is chaired by DWP and DCSF (DfES), to which the directorate of the Sure Start Norman and Sheila report to, and the joint chair of the board during the period was Michael, subsequently me again, but we were there to make sure DWP interest were fully represented in the Sure Start programme. Particularly, Sure Start was in Children Centre there to support low-income families, support our objectives of chid poverty, support to get lone parents to back to work, but the responsibility for delivering the policy is the unit which is located in DCSF.

In addition, in terms of financial resources, DWP holds separate funding from DCSF, which is used to support the local Jobcentre Plus to move their customers from welfare to work (Jobcentre Plus 2008). As one of the senior officials from the Work, Welfare and Equality Group illustrated,

> In financial resources, DCSF have a budget for Sure Start, we have a budget for lone parents. The policy is interrelated, but budgets are separate, in policy terms. Where there is quite close coordination, two ministers then meet regularly, on the grounds, local Sure Start centres liaise with Jobcentre Plus, which has a childcare partnership member who liaise with the Sure Start Children Centre, to make sure information available in Jobcentre Plus is also available in the centre.

Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of DWP. Chief Executive Strathie stated: 'Jobcentre Plus has been working closely with local authorities and Sure Start on childcare' (Jobcentre Plus 2007: 6). Jobcentre Plus implements the DWP's policies in terms of getting lone parents back into employment and plays an important role in reaching DWP's policy goal of ending child poverty by 2020, one of the targets established for the 2005–2008 PSA cycle (DWP 2007). Jobcentre Plus is one of the key partners at the local level that provides families who use the Children Centres for job information and training opportunities. In sum, DWP is also one of the core actors in the policy community, and shares the benefits of tackling unemployment and poverty issues through delivering Sure Start policy. Institutionally, DWP established a board with DCSF to ensure that DWP's interests are reflected in the community. In addition, DWP is also actively involved in delivering Sure Start policy through its local organisations—Jobcentre Plus. Finally, DWP also influences other actors in the policy network through holding financial resources to Jobcentre Plus.

Department of Health (DoH) and Prime Care Trust (PCT)

The Government's public health white paper entitled 'Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier' (DoH 2004) recognises the importance of addressing children's health needs from pre-conception through the journey to adulthood. In England, health service has been one of the key themes in Sure Start policy since 1999. Although in 2003, responsibility for policy on social services for children and

young people transferred from the DoH to the DfES and came under the new Minister for Children, Young People and Families (Belsky et al. 2007: 17–18), DoH remains one of the key partners in making decisions in terms of Sure Start policy. The finalised National Service Framework thus became the joint responsibility of both departments. It can be seen as one of the most comprehensive exposition of child health policy in the UK, reflecting a very broad view of what is meant by health. It endorsed previous policy developments in the fields of early detection, child mental health and child protection, reinforcing guidance on interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the report 'Commissioning Framework for Health and Well-being' from the DoH, it argues that (Department of Health 2007a, b, March)

> Health service is still too focused on commissioning for volume and prices, rather than for quality and outcomes. Too much long-term care is provided in institutional settings. Health inequalities still exist. There is too much of a focus on treating illness rather than preventing it. There are too few providers, and we need to do more to incentivise innovation and join up services. Excluding elective care, individual choice for many patients remains limited and we need to strengthen local voice.

This highlights the needs of the DoH and its own priorities and interests, which it seeks to achieve through the Sure Start policy. One of the senior officials from Social Exclusion and Task Force, illustrated:

> It has been to encourage a joining up between midwives, health visitors and Children Centres. In the beginning of Sure Start, the programmes had a lot of money brought into health. And they want health visitors, local health organisations, should be placed in the disadvantaged areas in Children Centres, and the DoH's role is to ensure speech and language, health visiting and midwives services collocated into Children Centres.

For the DCSF, working in partnership with DoH is considerably important in delivering health promotion activities and programmes that help DCSF meet children's health targets such as reducing health inequalities, reducing children obesity, reducing smoking in pregnancy, increasing the rate of breastfeeding and working around nutrition and physical activity (HM Government 2017). In addition, the DoH also can point health professionals who play an important role in dealing with families to the wider range of services that Children's Centres offer to promote health and well-being, such as access to childcare and educational opportunities (Department of Health 2007a, b).

DCSF (DfES) has a close connection with DoH in terms of the decision-making process in the policy community. One of the senior officials from DCSF, the Assistant Director of Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs group, illustrated:

> We meet them quite regularly. We've now got 'first-years board' where we talked about services from families with children under five. Most of the services are health from health visitors, General Practitioners, and we are trying to develop joint policy around areas to show again Children Centres' work. This is on health, how children's centre hit the targets, trying to persuade the PCT to help as much delivering health' services as delivering local authority's services. And we have done a number of things, such as, we issue practice

> guidance to set out what children's centre can deliver in health services and set out basic case studies, and let them know the health service is important.

Primary Care Trust covers all parts of England and receives budgets directly from the DoH. Before Sure Start Children's Centres, the PCTs are one of the major leading organisations developing the Sure Start Local Programmes. After the establishment of the Sure Start Children Centre, health remains at the top agenda in the Sure Start. In addition, PCT, as one of the main implementers in the Sure Start policy community, also provides a lot of staff to Sure Start Children Centres, such as midwifery, health visitors and family support teams, who are key to service provision in Sure Start Children's Centres. In sum, DoH is also one of the important actors in delivering Sure Start policy. Institutionally, it has the 'first-year board' with DCSF, and ensures their health agenda, such as, child health inequality, health obesity and so forth, is reflected in Sure Start policy. Particularly, before the establishment of Sure Start Children's Centres in 2004, PCT was one of the accountable bodies in developing Sure Start Local Programmes. After 2004, PCT is no longer accountable to develop Sure Start Local Programmes. Instead, Local Authorities have been given a strategic and leading role on rolling out Sure Start Children's Centres. However, DoH, together with PCT, is still important actors in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres in terms of sharing resources and providing health staff to Sure Start Children's Centres.

The Treasury

The Treasury is also one of the most significant participants in establishing Sure Start policy, because the original Sure Start was announced by Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown in July 1998 and proposed about 200 Local Programmes —concentrated in areas of deprivation (Belsky et al. 2007). After giving the Bank of England operational independence from the government, including freedom to set interest rates, one consequence of this change was that a number of high-level economists at the Treasury had time to pursue other tasks. Especially, Gordon Brown wanted the government to break the cycle whereby disadvantaged children relived their parents' experiences of poor education, physical ill-health and poverty (Belsky et al. 2007: 3). Then, the Treasury is also actively involved in integrating Sure Start Local Programmes, early excellence centres and neighbourhood nurseries into Sure Start Children's Centres.

Budget setting for the departments has always been the key resource for the Treasury in pursuing its policy objectives. Immediately after winning power in 1997, the Labour government commenced a wide range of reforms to achieve the aims of joined-up government and improving service delivery. The Comprehensive Spending Review represented 'the first time that departmental aims and objectives have been looked at in the round and it forms a coherent and comprehensive guide to the public' (HM Treasury 1998: p. 2). and 'the objectives cover all the main responsibilities of the department so as to provide the basis for the policy directions set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review and as important in the development of Resource Accounting and Budgeting' (HM Treasury 1998: p. 2)

Cross-departmental reviews were also established as an integral part of the spending review, such as Sure Start and Services for Under fives (HM Treasury 2009a, b). For example, 'The 2000 Spending Review includes provision for a major geographical expansion of Sure Start—doubling the number of programmes from 250 to at least 500 by 2004 and more than doubling planned expenditure to almost £500 million by 2003–04. The expanded Sure Start programme will reach one third of poor children under four years old' (HM Treasury 2009a, b). The Treasury plays a big role in terms of allocating the majority of financial resources across governmental departments in Sure Start policy.

One of the officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force explained:

> The Treasury had an enormous say and were giving ring fenced money. If the Treasury said that the money cannot be spent in something else, then it cannot be spent on something else. And it makes it very powerful in policies and even in ten year Childcare policy which is co-produced between Treasury and DCSF, so the Treasury is deeply involved in early year policy from very beginning.

One of the senior officials from the DWP also illustrated:

> It was the Treasury, which somebody came and said we should do it (attain targets). The Treasury inspired, because it is also money-attached. Very much combination of DCSF, health and DWP as well. They are always key players. Big interests among them, but anything with Treasury is good, always money attached.

In April 2000, child benefit was raised to 15 lb per week for the eldest child, a 36 percent rise and the largest ever increase in child benefit. From 2001, a Children's Tax Credit was introduced giving an extra 8 lb a week to most families. In 1999, HM Revenue and Customs replaced the Family Credit with the Working Families Tax Credit, available to working families who are responsible for at least one child under 16.

As argued above, Comprehensive Spending Reviews set firm and fixed three-year Departmental Expenditure Limits and, through Public Service Agreements (PSA), define the key improvements that the public can expect from these resources. The Treasury sets up Public Service Agreements (PSA) to monitor the progress of the Sure Start policy (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). Chief Secretary to the Treasury Alan Milburn suggested that the PSA framework has made the Treasury more strategic and outward looking (HM Treasury 2007). The Treasury is actively involved in the decision-making process on Sure Start and so have a substantial influence on other actors at the decision-making stage in the Sure Start community. However, the role of the Treasury has been diminished since the Childcare Act 2006. According to one official from the Social Exclusion and Task Force,

> Less so now, the role of Treasury in policy formulation is different from what it was. Because we have early year system embedded in legislation, and we had the Childcare Act in 2006, and once it is in law that the local authority had provided certain kind of service and the role of Treasury diminished, because responsibility became the local authority's. But until legal framework, at 2003 we still had ring fenced money.

Overall, The Treasury still has powerful tools to influence the Sure Start policy community through the Comprehensive Spending Review and PSA targets.

Number 10, The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) and Strategy Unit

Even though there is a concern that the increasing remit of the Treasury has led to 'a rivalry for control of domestic policy', creating fractions between the Treasury, on the one hand, and Number 10 and the Cabinet Office on the other (Burch and Holliday 2004, p: 6), it is clear that Tony Blair and Number 10 have also been the key advocates of the Treasury for Sure Start policy.

> In 2004, Tony Blair hailed Sure Start as one of the government's greatest achievements. He wrote in the Guardian newspaper, It has become a new frontier of a changing welfare state. Sure Start is now converting to offer a wider and larger programme of Children's Centres, with the benefit of increased overall levels of funding—and that programme today sees the one thousandth centre open. The programme target is 2500 by the year 2008—and full national coverage by the year 2010 (Education Today 2007).

In his speech at the Labour Party Conference in 2004, Blair also make the provision of childcare facilities—one of the core tenets of Sure Start—as one of the central tasks of any Labour administration (Office of Deputy Prime Minister 2003). It is obvious that Number 10 took a key interest in Sure Start policy, which has been seen as one of New Labour's flagship policies. As one official from DCSF argued:

> The previous prime Minister (Blair), and the current one were very interested in children centre, they were both monitoring what we are doing, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit has done a review of delivery of Children Centre, and they still keep close eye on what we are doing. That is good and bad. The good thing is that they give us very much high priority, and open doors which you could get in the Comprehensive Spending Review because they see it as priority, also it is challenging, because that means, we are told what to do and what to deliver, and both of them were very keen.

The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) was established in 2001 with a remit to strengthen the Government's ability to deliver the Prime Minister's key public service priorities. The PMDU works closely in partnership with Number 10, other parts of the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury and other stakeholder Departments in order to assess delivery and provide advice and guidance on ways to achieve step–change improvements in performance (Richards and Smith 2006). Similarly, the Strategy Unit also report directly to Number 10 and the Prime Minister, as well as working closely with government departments on a broad range of domestic policy issues. One of the senior officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force commented:

> There is always an interest from PMEU and strategy unit, basically the Prime Minister is interested, then he ask strategy unit to do the investigation, and he maintains a strong interest in Sure Start Policy, and that is a very good thing, because it kept early year agenda become a high level of agenda.

In addition, tensions between Blair and Brown increased over the years, which have been perceived as significant. Burch and Holliday suggest that this has had a 'considerable impact on the structure and operation of the Labour government', wherein attempts at administrative change driven by 'prime ministerial whim' have

been offset by the increasing power afforded to the Chancellor over domestic policy, creating a struggle for ascendancy at the heart of government (Burch and Holliday 2004, pp. 18–20). As argued above, the creation of PMDU and SU were described as 'an attempt by the Prime Minister to at least partly recapture some sovereignty from Gordon Brown and the Treasury over domestic policy formulation in England' (Lee and Woodward 2002, p. 53).

Local Authority (LA)

Local authorities have been given strategic responsibility for the planning and delivery of Children's Centre services in their communities. The overall responsibility for the Children's Centre and the delivery of integrated services rests with the local authority. Local authorities have an important role to play in relation to financial management at the central level. Through children's trust arrangements—bringing together services for children, particularly local education, children's social services and health services, ensuring that planning and delivery is coordinated and information is shared–local authorities should discuss with local partners in the health, private and voluntary sectors (DCSF 2009). From 2008 they will, as a result of the Childcare Act 2006, have statutory responsibilities for the provision of integrated early childhood services in their area and for improving the outcomes of young children and reducing inequalities. Based on the interview materials in Sheffield and Manchester, the following section analyses the changing roles of the local authority in both cities against the statements of official documents.

Early Years Education and Childcare Service (EYECS) Sheffield Local City Council and Sure Start Unit Manchester Local City Council

In Sheffield, EYECS is responsible for implementing the government Sure Start agenda, developing and maintaining cross-directorate working and establishing and forging good partnership working through commissioning and contracting with the statutory, private, voluntary and independent sectors (Sheffield City Council 2008) (Fig. 5.1).

Prior to 2004, there were a number of accountable bodies in Sheffield: the Sheffield PCT was one, National Children Home was another, and the other one was Manor and Castle Development Trust. They had the responsibility to lead the programmes in their areas, setting up partnership boards, monitoring the targeting and making sure the evaluation went to the central government Sure Start unit. However, EYECS has taken the lead on developing Sure Start Children's Centres since 2004. One of the Senior Managers in EYECS, illustrated:

> From 2004, the local accountable bodies no longer had the accountability to Sure Start. The funding instead going to National Children Home, Manor and Castle Development Trust, come directly to the EYECS, and it was up to the EYECS to distribute the funding to the Local Programmes. In that time, we could have said we are going to bring it all into one house in local authority; we are going to deliver it. We didn't do that in Sheffield, what we did do is to continue contracting those existing accountable bodies to deliver the services on our behalf. There is also another shift in 2004, because there is a clear direction all Sure Start Local Programmes had to demonstrate that they are involving in local Sure Start

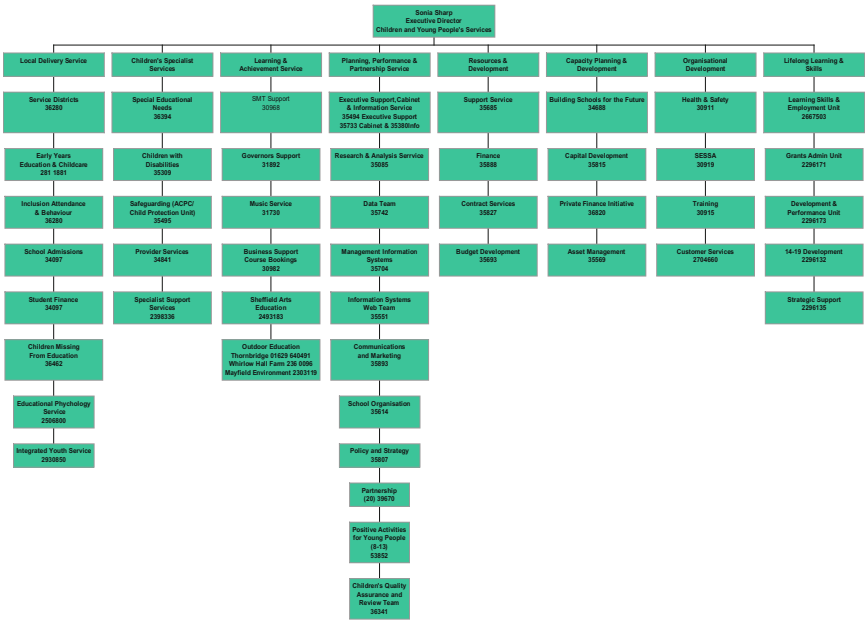

Fig. 5.1 Organisations of key service areas in Children and Young People's Directorate in Sheffield City Council (see Appendix I for Enlarged Picture)

> Children's Centres. So it was the policy change, there were two sets of agendas coming together, one is old Sure Start Local Programmes, one is the new Sure Start Children Centre agenda.

In Manchester, there is a children's board which is comprised by Manchester local authority, Chief Executives and Children's Services, Primary Care Trust, Jobcentre Plus, Greater Manchester Police, Learning and Skills Council and Voluntary and Community sector (Manchester City Council 2007). Unlike Sheffield, Manchester specifically created the Sure Start Unit[2] as a part of local authority to deliver the Sure Start policy in Manchester area. One of the senior officials explained why Manchester set up a unit for implementing Sure Start.

> I think, originally, Manchester is a city which had a lot of deprivation, we had 11 Local Programmes. Then we had targets to reach 34 Children Centres. Because of the significance of this task, we created this strand, but we are now moving to bring together what was existing children early years services provision with the Sure Start provision, and bring them together into one department, one early year department it will be. But I know what you are saying; some of the department has gone down to the amalgamation immediately with their early year section. We kind of kept it separate for a while. Because we had such a

[2]The equivalent of organisational charts for Sure Start unit in Manchester is not accessible on the website and relevant official documents in Manchester.

> big early year provision, then we have a big programme to live officially start. Now we are bringing them together.

Since 2004 local authorities play a more significant role in reaching the aims and objectives of the Labour government. One of the senior officials stated that local authorities' main responsibilities are:

> Our biggest responsibility is to make sure to deliver all Children Centre's asked to deliver. We commissioned all those service going to the Children Centres, and we also look after big piece of work to do with private, voluntary and independent sectors there, we have duties there, and we have team of business and finance managers to look after the needs of private sectors, like business planning, sustainability issues. We also did childcare sufficiency assessment, and we have childcare strategy for each of our districts, and look at the childcare market, making sure there is sufficient childcare for family, we also have a quality team, we have the duties to improve the outcome of the children, we work with the settings to improve the quality and improve the outcome of the children.

Local Authorities both in Sheffield and Manchester had much more power and resources than it had before 2004. DfES proposes new childcare bill in 2006, and aims to set out new duties placed upon local authorities in England, including 'improving outcomes for young children; securing sufficient childcare and providing information for parents'.[3] In April 2008, the new bill has come into force and confirms that Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to reduce child inequalities, which means its role has been embedded in law, and no matter which government comes to power in the future, its role will not be easily changed. In addition, local authorities in both cities also hold the mainstream funding from the central government and they gained the power of redistributing the mainstream Sure Start funding to different Children's Centres. From the community level, local authorities have a better understanding of the local needs and without involving local authorities in the mainstream service, it is difficult to join up all the local actors. One of the Senior Officials from Social Exclusion and Task Force commented:

> A serious problem is if you don't let the local authority have a role, and how can you join up with the rest of the children world. Everything we said in Every Child Matters in 2003, you wanted a clear sense of responsibility for children. You couldn't have someone in local authority level who is responsible for the children except the 600 Sure Start children who lives in this particular neighbourhood. You need to join things up. The managers manage who had a huge amount of independence would be unhappy, because they think you are taking away the community control, and in some sense, that is true, we are moving from neighbourhood to town hall, moving from Whitehall to town hall. So from central, we are devolving control, from neighbourhood, we are absorbing control, there was a lot of dissatisfaction, I think, if you want to embed it as a part of the system, then you need to give it to the local authority, there is a danger of losing parents participation and a danger of losing a sense of community. I think you have to guard against the risk, that is just my sense.

[3] http://nd.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/etech/DCCMinutes.nsf/375078fce317fabb80256aef003c01ac/ea2a2cf1333402ba8025711600566599?OpenDocument, last accessed on 25/10/2009.

As seen above, it is clear that a policy community type network clearly exists in Sure Start in both Sheffield and Manchester. This policy community is integrated and has a restricted membership with shared interests among actors. In the first place, all those involved in Sure Start policy community have a common target of reducing child poverty by 2020. DCSF, DWP, DoH, the local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start Unit), Number 10 and Treasury all emphasises the importance of Sure Start policy on eradicating child poverty by 2020. Secondly, all the actors in the Sure Start policy community accepted that Sure Start policy plays an important role to deliver the best start in life for every child across the UK, and recognised the significance of bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support. Thirdly, actors in the community share the benefits Sure Start provides. For instance, DCSF aims to improve children's services; DWP focuses on getting lone parents back to work; DoH seeks to achieve its health targets set by the Treasury; No. 10 and the Treasury are also key stakeholders which play an active role in pushing forward delivering Sure Start policy; Local Authority (EYECS and Sure Start Unit) in both Sheffield and Manchester have taken the strategic and leading role in developing Sure Start Children's Centres, and have a statutory responsibility to reduce child inequalities through Sure Start policy. Fourthly, all actors in the community are resources-dependent and closely interrelated vertically and horizontally as illustrated above. The Treasury holds the funding for delivering Sure Start and other actors need financial support from it; DCSF needs the partnership with DWP and DoH to make sure that Sure Start Children's Centres work; DWP needs the assistance from Sure Start to provide childcare for children in order to help parents back to work; DoH needs DCSF to reach the targets related to the health of children; Local authorities in both cities needs the empowered authority to implement the Sure Start policy from central government.

However, though actors in the policy community are interdependent and closely connected, the implementation network approach identifies the internal differences within the policy community and analyses how the differences influence the delivery process of Sure Start in both cities.

5.2.2 Policy Community and Its Influence on Sure Start Delivery

Ever since work by Richardson and Jordan (1979), policy network analysis has proven to be a popular tool for analyzing decision making and interest group influence in government (Toke 2000: 886). In the implementation network approach, policy network theories have been used to analyse actors in Sure Start policy and the degree of inclusion or exclusion of interest groups in policy making and the implementation process in Sure Start policy. As illustrated above, actors in the Sure Start policy community are firstly resources-dependent and rely on each other to reach their own targets; secondly, they need to establish an institutional mechanism to make sure their own interests are reflected in the policy community.

No. 10, the Treasury, DCSF, DoH, and DWP are the actors in the policy community that negotiate resource exchanges in the decision-making process, which in turn have an impact on the implementation process of Sure Start. Jobcentre Plus, local authorities and PCTs are actors in the community that implement the decisions made in the community representing the interests of policy community.

As concluded above, ideologically they share the vision of ending child poverty by the end of 2020. More importantly, the vision is documented in governmental papers under Labour's overall strategies on reforming social welfare policy (First Annual Report 1999). The Government also strongly believe in the efficacy of partnerships between public sectors and non-public sectors, such as private actors. Institutionally, they form a tight and closed structure dominating the decision-making and implementation process on Sure Start policy. Richards and Hay propose 'a strategic approach to networking within the core executive', and argue that 'networking is understood as a practice—an accomplishment on the part of strategic actors (or the organizations they nominally represent)—which takes place within a strategic (and strategically selective) context which is itself constantly evolving through the consequences (both intended and unintended) of strategic action' (Richards and Hay 2000: 14). Actors in the Sure Start policy community use strategic actions, such as agreed ideological consensus and established institutions, to exclude other groups and issues from the policy agenda. However, under the broad consensus among actors in the Sure Start policy community, this section reveals the disaggregated ideologies and institutional divisions inside the policy community in the decision-making process, which to a large extent affects the implementation process of Sure Start.

The Policy Community and the Excluded in Sure Start

Prior to the analysis of the disaggregated ideologies and institutional divisions in the policy community (see Fig. 5.2), it is useful to illustrate, using the interview material, how the Sure Start policy community strategically excludes actors in the decision-making process from outside groups. In the case of Manchester, 'Friends of Levenshulme' is a voluntary campaigning group comprised of residents in the district of Levenshulme in Manchester, and one of its campaigning objectives is to oppose the privitasation of children's services in Levenshulme.

In Manchester, 'Sure Start, the government's "vision" for Early Years education is coming to Levenshulme. The city council is planning to convert Broom Avenue Children's Centre into a "Sure Start Hub" (Personal interview). This involves some major changes both to the building and to the way it is run' (Friends of Levenshulme 2008). The campaign group believes that privatisation of children's services will make the Children Centre less accountable and lead to poorer quality services. One of the committee members from the Friends of Levenshulme explained that 'the Big Life company will make the profits from providing this services, and it will cause the qualities being degraded' (Personal Interview).

Though the campaign group has taken many measures, such as internet campaign, to keep the Sure Start Children's Centre from being run by private companies, such as the Big Life company, its impact has been considerably limited due

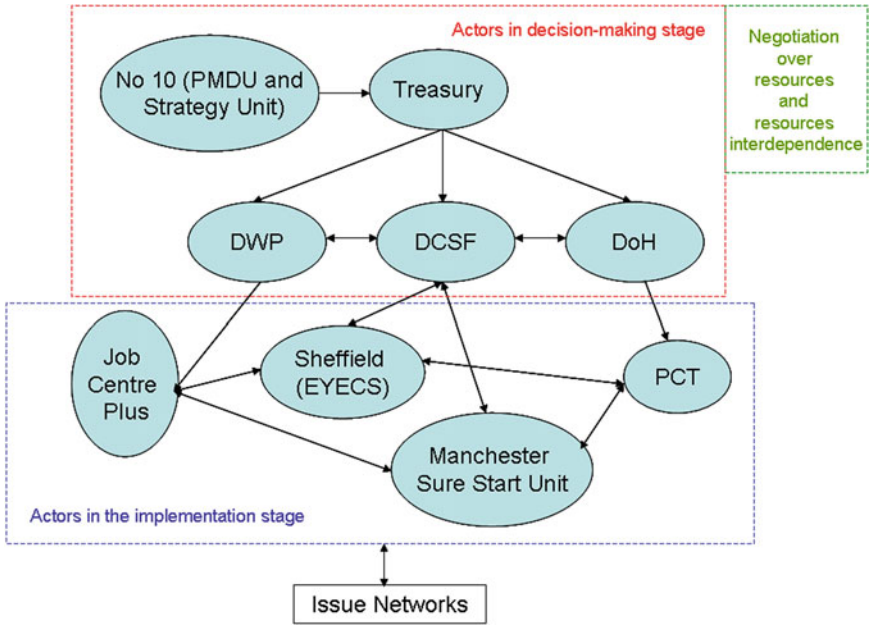

Fig. 5.2 Actors in policy communities in Sheffield and Manchester

to its exclusion from the Sure Start policy community, and the campaign group has almost no involvement in influencing the decision-making and implementation process. In the first place, the campaign group disregards the 'rules of the game' operating in the Sure Start policy community and multi-agency collaboration; secondly, the campaign group has much fewer resources than the actors in the policy community, and the rules of the game are set up by the actors in the Sure Start policy community; thirdly, strategic actions have been taken by the actors in the Sure Start policy community to exclude the campaign group. One of the committee members from the campaign group in Manchester commented:

> Local authority's response is poor, and we held several public meetings talking with the local authority, and they never showed up. Local Authority said that the way they run the centre is what they are told by the central government, and they push the responsibilities aside.

One of the senior officials from the Sure Start Unit in Manchester also commented: 'they (Friends of Levenshulme) even went to the Prime Minister and Number 10' (Personal Interview). However the campaign group still failed to receive any positive response from the central government. The response of the 'Friends of Levenshulme' challenged the rationale the way of delivering Sure Start Children Centre and what was conceived to be one of the fundamental beliefs in the Sure Start policy community—multi-agency working and bringing in more private partners in the delivery process. In addition, local authorities have the legitimate

power and authority to implement the policy without seriously taking other groups concerns into its considerations.

This example illustrates the closed nature of the Sure Start policy community in Manchester, and how it intentionally excludes some actors from outside groups to access the policy community. The following section mainly analyses the ideological divisions and institutional differences within the policy community and their influence on the implementation process. The Sure Start policy communities have a number of specific features. It has two important internal structures: the ideological and the institutional. The ideological structure is the dominant set of beliefs (ending child poverty, multi-agency partnership and mutual dependence on resources) which are shared by members of the Sure Start policy community. However within this ideological dominance in the policy community, there are also disaggregrated ideologies between different participants.

Disaggregated Ideologies in the Community

While Marsh and Rhodes' description of policy community identifies a set of dominant beliefs shared by members in the policy community as argued above, it fails to further explore the internal ideological divisions among actors in the community at the decision-making stage, which to a large extent acts as an influence on the implementation process of Sure Start. There are two types of decisions made in the community; the first decision type is that actors' fundamentally shared beliefs and ideologies in the community are being challenged as argued above; the second is that actors make decisions in favour of themselves as they encounter goal conflicts, cultural differences and resources constraints in the community. For example, in the decision-making circle in the policy community in Sure Start, DCSF is more concerned with the outcome for children and DWP is more concerned with employment. DoH focuses more on children's health and teenage pregnancy. Their views diverge significantly on how to solve these problems. DCSF attempts to achieve the shared policy aims through improving the outcome of children. In contrast, DWP aims to attain the shared aim by increasing parental employment (personal interview). DoH concentrates on improving children's health to alleviate children's poverty. One of the officials from the DCSF illustrated:

> Even though they have the same priority, but different emphasis and different wording. DCSF talk about more on outcome for young children, childcare, nursery school, and DWP talk about employment, but it is the same way. If parents are working, the outcome of children would be much better. The two things are combined, they are trying to join up the message, when we were saying the same, but using different ways of taking, and different language, and therefore we need a language to speak to different audiences.

Although New Labour highlights the 'joined-up' approach in delivering public service delivery, it has been criticized by both academic scholars and practitioners. Talbot argues in a recent published report that 'the tragedy of Baby P[4] is an

[4]Baby P's death raises the question of why would a head of children's services only just be finding out these things? The answer is simple: Shoesmith is an education manager by trade, not a social

illustration of what can happen when disparate organisations are merged for the sake of a joined-up approach. Specialist expertise is sidelined, and 'group-think' leads to disastrous decisions (Talbot 2009). The 'Joined-up' strategy faces challenges from the goal conflict among different departments, cultural differences and the clash of departmental interests, which contribute to ideological differences. Another official from the Social Exclusion Task Force also illuminated:

> There are still tensions in joined-up in terms of not just what the key goals of departments are, but the culture of the different departments and the culture is very inward looking. At the end of the day, a good servant is to progress the key interests of your secretary of state, and if the secretary of state cannot agree on key targets, then your job is to serve your secretary of state, not the secretary of state from other departments.

Lowndes and Skelcher argue that 'resource dependency issues have been an important motivator in the development of partnerships by UK public service agencies' (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998: 2). In this policy community, the Treasury attempts to control public spending and restrain it within a certain scope. Hence DCSF, DWP and DoH have to negotiate with the Treasury to bid for their respective funding to deliver the services. One of the senior officials from the DWP commented:

> There is a natural conflict between us. We want money to defend the service, and the Treasury who wants to control public spending, so we have both negotiations on Comprehensive Spending Review. We recently published a green paper and then a white paper, to deal with the programme of lone parents. In the run-up to publication, there are details of disagreement, there are complicated negotiation between us and the Treasury with the intervention of No. 10, what precisely proposals would be announced for lone parents and how they are going to be funded? Eventually, agreement is reached, but that is the normal negotiation process.

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, illustrated in the foreword of the 'Children's Plan' that 'the plan and the new department mean that more than ever before families will be at the centre of excellent, integrated services that put their needs first, regardless of traditional institutional and professional structures' (DCSF 2007: 2). DCSF at in the centre of the Sure Start policy and holds the key interest in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres, and it has the responsibility to communicate with other departments to encourage them to recognize that Sure Start Children's Centres can help them to reach their targets set by the Treasury. DCSF sees Sure Start Children's Centres as the best means to achieve the shared aim with other actors involved in Sure Start policy community. For example, Skinner argues that a 'lack of childcare still presents a barrier to employment and a key component of the strategy is to place a new legal duty on local authorities to ensure there are sufficient places in the community' (Skinner 2006: 5). One of the senior officials from DCSF commented:

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workers. she is one of the many education bureaucrats who became heads of children's services when the latter were created—in the name of joined-up government—by the merger of local educational departments and the much smaller children's social services function.

> We have a lot of meeting with DWP, the same with health.We try to let DWP use their communication with Jobcentre Plus managers to understand Children Centre can help them to reach their targets at the National level. Employment service is key to Children Centre service, particularly around helping young mothers getting back to work, either education training. That is quite challenging, many of the mothers are not able to work, because they haven't got enough basic skills. So the Children' Centre needs to build their self-esteem, self-confidence, helping them to see they can get back to work, to learn basic skills, then they can get basic qualifications to work.

Even though DWP's departmental PSA objective is to end child poverty by 2020, the main aim for DWP is to meet the needs of lone parents, and ensure that Sure Start benefits low-income families, which is also reflected at the local Jobcentre Plus. DWP considers getting more parents back to work as one of the best means to end child poverty by 2020. 'Public Service Agreement for 2005–2008' from DWP clearly indicates the objectives and performance targets set by the Treasury, which determines the inclination of DWP—'Objective II: Promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age, while protecting the position of those in greatest need' (DWP 2007). National Audit Office report also showed that centres were less effective at meeting the needs of some groups, such as fathers and some minority ethnic communities, than others such as lone parents (House of Commons 2007: 10). One of the senior officials from DWP illustrated:

> I mean, the challenge to ensure to meet the needs of lone parents families for DWP, you know both for wide social reasons. DWP is to make sure that Sure Start is tuned to the low-income families. Both for wider social reasons, we care about poverty; lone parents families, especially to get the lone parents to work. Sure Start focuses on those groups. So it doesn't become only about middle-class people. That is also the key concern for DCSF, I don't feel the difference between us, our concern is with mainly the low-income people.

Norman Glass, a creator of the government's much vaunted early years childcare programme, in 2005 accused the DoH of showing no interest in Sure Start since it was founded (Communitycare.co.uk 2005). However, DoH, as one of the stakeholders in Sure Start, does pursue its own objective within the broad ideological framework. It considers the Sure Start Children's Centre as one of the instrumental tools to reach its targets. At the same time, DoH is not willing to invest as many resources as they can, which can have a direct impact on the role of the PCT as implementer in the policy community. One of the senior officials from DCSF illustrated:

> Culture is one of the main challenges when working with DoH, people working different ways, trying to get them to work together and respect each other, understand what other does, is quite challenging. Again, the Children Centre are modelling expertise and help health visitors professionally. They have more satisfaction from it.

Institutional Divisions in the Community

Smith argues that 'institutional structures are the second means for excluding unwelcome groups from the agricultural policy community' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 29). In Sure Start policy, the community also forms the institutional structure to exclude some potential participants from the processes of decision-making and

implementation of Sure Start. However, the institutional structure in Sure Start policy community is less highly integrated and exclusive than the agricultural community described by Smith (see Marsh and Rhodes 1992). From the establishment of Sure Start Local Programmes to the Sure Start Children's Centre, the Sure Start policy community has gradually embedded early years and childcare in law through the Childcare Act in 2006. The internal institutional structure inside the policy community still has its divisions and has a slow development process regarding partnerships in the implementation circle of the community, especially with actors such as Primary Care Trust and Jobcentre Plus, which will be illustrated in the following analysis. Lowndes and Skelcher argued based on the data from their studies of urban regeneration that partnerships are used to develop a four-stage partnership life cycle: pre-partnership collaboration, partnership creation, partnership programme delivery, and partnership termination (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998). The following section illustrates the institutional structure differences of the Sure Start policy community and also analyses the interactive process in this relation and its impact on the implementation process of Sure Start in both Sheffield and Manchester.

DCSF(LA) and DWP (Jobcentre Plus)

DCSF is responsible for establishing Sure Start Children's Centres and is an important decision-maker in the community with the strong support of Number 10 and the Treasury. A report from the Committee of Public Accounts in the House of Commons illustrates that 'local authority are responsible for managing local service levels, though they are bound by a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department. The Memorandum sets out what the government requires in return for the General Sure Start Grant, which the Department allocates to authorities for children's centre funding using formulae for each of the first phases of the children's centre programme' (House of Commons 2007: 9). In addition, most local authorities interviewed by the National Audit Office did not have a good understanding of how much services should cost and more than half of them have not been monitoring performance (House of Commons 2007: 9). There is therefore no substantive evidence that funds are being spent in the areas where they are needed most. The Department (DfES then) accepts that local authority needs to improve the way they administer and monitor spending on Children's Centres. In November 2006, it issued guidance to local authorities on performance measurement and monitoring.

Sure Start-related services in local authorities in both cities (EYECS in Sheffield and Sure Start Unit in Manchester) are line managed, supervised and overseen by DCSF. In Sheffield, based on the interview materials, the working relation between DCSF and the local authority is comparatively better than Manchester. EYECS has been chosen by DCSF as one of the leading authorities to develop guidance around the childcare strategy and is in a position to influence the way in which DCSF develops Sure Start policy. One of the officials from the local authority in Sheffield commented:

> Our relation with DCSF is very good. They (DCSF) kind of oversee, they support us in the delivery of all the Children Centres and we report back to them about; and we use two trackers, we use tracker to eye evidence on how far we are achieving as a nation of Children Centres and the achievement of four core offers; and we report back to them and meet them on a regular basis to report back how far we are in that. But at the moment the thing that we are reporting back is about designation, so we have to designate 31 Children Centres by the end of March 2008, and we also have get another indicative target back to another six out of ten.

In Manchester, officials in the Sure Start Unit also recognise the leading role of DCSF and the Unit is monitored as well by DCSF. However, officials in the Sure Start Unit are more concerned with the problems with DCSF and argue that 'the main issue for us is the time schedule is quite constrained, in terms of how to deliver a programme in two years. That is fairly tight in terms of planning a building, get it open and ready (Personal interview).

However, DCSF and local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit) are not the only players in the community, with DWP and Jobcentre Plus, together with DoH and PCT, also having important roles in the process of decision-making and implementation in Sure Start policy. As argued above, DCSF, DWP and DoH are the actors involved in the decision-making stage in negotiating resources and making sure their own interests are reflected in Sure Start policy. One of the senior officials from DWP commented: 'We didn't get involved in the implementation, DfES (DCSF) as it was responsible for the Sure Start, and the budget was in the DfES. The people who run from the centre were civil servants in DfES (DCSF)' (Personal Interview).

However, in institutional terms, there is a mechanism to ensure the involvement of DWP and that its policy concerns are being reflected in the community. As mentioned above, DWP is more concerned with how its current system operates to produce incentives to work and to reduce poverty for families with children (Evans and Scarborough 2006). One of the senior officials from DWP also illustrated that

> There was a board, which is chaired by DWP and DfES (DCSF), and it is an ordinary civil servant committee. It got report and held the director to account, and her unit were responsible for reporting on budgets, targets, how many centres have been built, how they are working, what programmes should be made, what the various targets are. And you know the board seems to be the programme management of the unit.

At the local level, Jobcentre Plus is line-managed by DWP, which largely determines the extent to which Jobcentre Plus provides services concerning the employment of families with children under five, and it jointly works with local authorities in a concerted way in the implementation process of Sure Start.

In Sheffield, one of the officials from the local authority argued that Jobcentre Plus is minor element of the work of DWP and there is a lack of the level of commitment and focus from Jobcentre Plus (personal interview). Jobcentre Plus is not seen by other members within the partnerships as absolutely central to the main purposes and roles of the Centres, and rarely seen as vital or crucial. As a result, Jobcentre Plus cannot reasonably expect to play a central or pivotal role in these

partnerships (Dench et al. 2008: 59). One of the senior officials from the Local Authority in Sheffield commented that

> I think it is just a lack of understanding. It might have something to do with the high turnover of their managers in Jobcentre Plus. And I think there is reluctance in some cases for workers to come out of their offices. I think there is something to do with the set of their organisations.

In Manchester, the Sure Start unit encounters resources issues in its partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus faces financial and human resources cuts due to the decisions made by DWP in the policy community. In Manchester, staff in Jobcentre Plus have been cut across the county, partnership managers especially, which decreases Jobcentre Plus' partnership capacity with the Sure Start unit. For example, one of the senior officials from Manchester Local Authority commented:

> Partnership managers are part of Jobcentre Plus, but have to cover a big patch. We work fairly with Jobcentre Plus, the CIS work closely with Jobcentre Plus, in terms of lone parents advice, making referrerals. And childcare provision. That is fairly well. I think, it feels like the capacity issue now, but it might not be the capacity issue. But it is something about getting them to understand that actually we can help to reach your own targets. Until people understand that, they see it as additional work, rather than seeing them assisting them.

A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of DWP also identifies that 'the key factor for successful partnership working is a good level of understanding between Jobcentre Plus and Local Authorities staff of each other's roles' (Dench et al. 2008: 72). In Manchester, it can be seen that there is a lack of organisational understanding between the Sure Start Unit and Jobcentre Plus. One of the senior officials from the local authority in Manchester illustrated that:

S: How do you find the partnership with Jobcentre Plus?
I: Poor, they don't want to know, not very good.
S: What is the reason behind that?
I: I don't know, I can only say that, I don't think there is a commitment there, I offered their room for nothing, and they can come and do things.
S: What are the services provided by Jobcentre Plus?
I: A list of jobs. That is it.

In the implementation process, as DWP encounters the constraints of resources, particularly in Jobcentre Plus, it tends to restrict the services offered to local authorities. From interviews, both senior officials in Sheffield and Manchester indicated that there is a lack of strong cooperation with Jobcentre Plus, and the only service occurring in Sure Start Children's Centres is information provision to families with children under five and nothing else in most centres. It is reported by a number of Children's Centres staff that Jobcentre Plus is often viewed negatively and with distrust by both professionals and users, and still perceived by many as an agency that is largely interested in reducing the number of benefits claimants and individuals' own benefit entitlements by pushing people into work (Dench et al. 2008: 72). One of the senior officials from the Sheffield local authority commented:

> In fact, they kind of think that Children's Centres should do everything, they don't want to do their own work, but they want all their boxes ticking. So they want to have their targets reached, but they don't want to do anything about it, so they want Children's Centres to reach targets for them.

Furthermore, Jobcentre Plus receives funding from the DWP for its own departmental policy delivery. In over two-thirds of Jobcentre Plus districts, the majority of funding for work with Children's Centres comes from district budgets and there are a number of ways in which funding limitations affect Jobcentre Plus' ability to deliver in Children's Centres. For example, Job points[5] was the least commonly provided of all services, because it has generally only been funded as part of Jobcentre Plus' New Deal Plus pilot project (Dench et al. 2008: 53).

In addition, there is often a clash on the cost and who should pay. For example, those interviewed in local authorities in both Sheffield and Manchester reported that Sure Start Children's Centres were looking forward to having a warm phone. However, at the local Jobcentre Plus, it was said this was unlikely as they had no funding to run it. One of the officials from Sheffield local authority said that at

> Jobcentre Plus, we've got a memorandum of understanding, basically that means no funding attached. Like a partnership agreement, you'll do this, we'll do that, and ultimately the joined-up targets, the JCP depended on the personality, it is depending on people really. Some are good and we deliver, some are not good and we don't deliver. Because we've got no clout with them, we've got no leeway to say what we want from them.

Finally, 'around a fifth of all Jobcentre Plus districts cited this disparity between formal Jobcentre Plus targets and DWP central goals as a barrier to better partnership working' (Dench et al. 2008: 83).

DCSF(LA) and DoH (Prime Care Trust)

According to one of the official documents from DoH 'Delivering Health Services through Sure Start Children's Centres' (2007a, b), the Department is aware of the significance of collaborative work between DoH and DCSF, PCTs and local authorities. 'Through good collaborative working between primary care trusts (PCTs), practice based commissioners, local authorities and Children's Centres, there is the potential for a mutually beneficial partnership. PCTs and practice-based commissioners can benefit from the opportunity to provide services in a new and innovative way' (Department of Health 2007a, b: 6). Similarly, at the decision-making stage in the community, DCSF holds regular meetings with DoH to negotiate resources and make sure their own interests are reflected in decisions on Sure Start. One of the senior officials from DCSF illustrated that

> We now have a 'first-year board' where we talked about services from families with children under five, most of the services are health from health visitors, General

[5]Job point is an automated system to improve the job vacany display process across their network of over 1000 Jobcentre offices. Job vacancies sent to Jobcentre Plus can now be displayed throughout the country within minutes. Job seekers can use the touch screen by location and category and print out details of the jobs they want to apply for.

> Practitioners, we are trying to develop joint policy around and to show again Children Centre works.

At the local level in Sheffield and Manchester, as one of the key partners and in its role as implementer, PCT is line managed and financed by the DoH. As described above, health service is one of the key themes in Sure Start policy. At the same time, working in partnership with Children's Centres to deliver health promotion activities and programmes is an effective means of helping PCTs in both Sheffield and Manchester to meet public health priorities such as reducing health inequalities, reducing adult smoking rates, or halting the rise in obesity among children (Department of Health 2007a, b).

Both Sheffield and Manchester experienced a major re-organisational transformation in PCTs that influenced the implementation process of Sure Start policy at the local level. The number of PCTs in England was reduced from 303 to 152 on 1 October 2006 in order to create a closer relationship between health, social care and emergency services, improve value and services for patients, develop better emergency planning with more resources to respond to major incidents and ensure that service continued as normal, with more money for frontline services (DoH 2008).

In Sheffield, PCTs have been merged from the original four PCTs to one PCT that currently manages three Sure Start Children's Centres. Since 2004, the PCT also is no longer accountable for delivery and the local authority is accountable in Sheffield. Given that the PCT was the accountable body under the original Sure Start Local Programme, it has been quite difficult for the PCT to shift from having autonomy around how the partnership can make decisions and develop services to actually having to work within a specifically scheduled framework. 'It is quite difficult to move from where the PCT had power and control over the process to being in a position where you are actually not leading and controlling delivery, which is now done by the EYECS' (Personal interview). In addition, one of the senior officials from Sheffield local authority argued that:

> We haven't particularly had one here, they have their own monitoring and recording, we have our own monitoring and recording. They are not same thing, and we are not allowed to access to the PCT data under NHS and it is restricted. They don't want to do our data, because they have done once for the PCT, and it is not that you have problems with monitoring and recording, because you are not allowed to access PCT data.

In Manchester, the PCT has also undergone major reorganisations in 2007. There were three different PCTs in north, central and south Manchester under the Sure Start Local Programmes but now they have been merged into one PCT. The organisational transformation of the PCT has brought a series of problems in implementing Sure Start policy in Manchester. One of the officials from Manchester local authority said that

> When we have local programme, we work with three different PCTs, in north, central, and south PCTS, and last year, they became one PCT. They had a major re-organisation, and brought a big problem, you know in terms of how different personnel, different managers do the different parts of the work. That has brought us a few problems. We are starting now

> to look at the city strategy, so we are moving away, we have three different contracts and now moving into one, that one makes it much more difficult.

In addition, based on the interview materials in Manchester, the PCT re-organisation has caused difficulties for the Sure Start Unit to engage with them in delivering health services in Sure Start Children's Centres, because PCT's capacities have been too stretched to meet their needs. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres argues 'there have been less contributions from PCTs since they had a major reorganisations' (Personal interview).

In financial terms, unlike Jobcentre Plus the PCT is heavily involved in bargaining with the local authority for financial resources. In 2004, the Government issued guidance around development childcare—the health element in core offerings like midwifery and health visitors—to be delivered through PCTs. On one hand, local authorities contract to the PCT to deliver the service. On the other hand, the PCT also become responsible for the mainstream health services, which was the early health part of the core offering in Sure Start and is part of the normal PCT budget. PCTs do hold some funding from two sources—one is through their own health budget, and another is money from local authorities given to them through the contract. In both Sheffield and Manchester, local authorities encounter the difficulty of funding issues with PCTs in different ways. One of the officials from the Sheffield local authority commented:

> The issues are what they want to deliver, how they want to deliver it. We want to dictate what to deliver, that relationship isn't working. We've an issue with contracts at the moment. We've wanted to fund some core offer contracts much broader than the PCT, but they're saying we're not giving them enough money. So they go to politicians to lobby against us, Sure Start are, so maybe you should ask me in a few weeks' time and I'll be able to tell you more about it and what happened to the grant funding. What happened to them is that we came up with a grant funding plan, gone back to PCT and said, how you're going to deliver these requirements and how much it is going to cost. We gave them a ceiling, but that ceiling they're saying isn't enough. They know how much is ring fenced in the part, in the part of the big Treasury, how much has been ring fenced. So they've said, 'ah, you've been sneaky, we know how much is in that part'. We said, 'no, we've not been sneaky'. So they've gone to elected members to lobby for our money. So that's how it is tied in that way. So what it means was that it impacted upon all the Children Centres across the city, whatever we funded the PCT Sure Start, we cannot spread the money across the other remaining 20 whatever Children Centres. So that's one of the issues.

The main problems are different funding streams (local authorities and PCTs hold their own funding, which needs to be negotiated when pooling them together to Sure Start), different targets, different priorities and different way of working with PCT. Local authorities and PCT are addressing the issue of joint funding in different ways. They also have joined-up targets about health strategy about children. For example, breast-feeding and disabled children are joint targets and PCT can now pull the budget to achieve these targets through the development of Children's Trust, where the local authority and PCT discuss the joint priority and how they should commission the service. In addition, PCT also needs to sign the contract each year with the local authority and the process is tough and interests-oriented. In Manchester, funding negotiation between the local authority and PCT is partly done

on a human resources basis, rather than on the basis of what actual work needs to be done. One of the senior officials from Manchester local authority commented that

> We do funding negotiation every year. It is not always easy. The PCT heavily invested in staff, where they led in Sure Start Local Programmes, and their funding issues is around the staff. When we are saying, 'look we now have 34 Children Centres with the head of the centre, whose job is to coordinate to bring things in, and we are also paying for health managers', I am saying, 'we don't need health managers; we need health workers on the ground'. Because they have been investing in those people, it is hard for them to move from, because they will have employment issues, they will get redundancy, and what actually gets tied up in the negotiation are people, rather than the actual work needs to be done. That is difficult sometimes, because they are interested in their HR issues. And I am interested in actually work getting done. I don't want to pay for a lot of managers. Because we have enough managers to manage the coordination, I want to pay for the workers on the ground who are delivering to children and families. That is where the most difficult negotiations come in.

In the above, it suggests that a policy community exists in Sure Start policy in which actors hold key interests in pushing forward the development of Sure Start. Actors in the community can be categorised as operated at two levels—No. 10, Treasury, DCSF, DWP and DoH are at the decision-making level, and local authorities, Jobcentre Plus and PCT are at the implementation level in the community. However, as argued above, there are two types of divisions in the Sure Start policy community—ideological and institutional—which are analysed regarding their influence on the implementation process, based on the interview materials in both Sheffield and Manchester. As noted above, there appears to be a policy community at the formulation stage based on a shared understanding of the problem. But the implementation process suggests that actors' views in the policy community diverge significantly on how to solve the problem. The next section focuses on the analysis of the issue network in Sure Start and how it influences the implementation process of the program in both Sheffield and Manchester.

5.3 Issue Network in Sure Start Policy

This section starts by exploring the actors in the Sure Start issue network and argues that Sure Start Children's Centres and other voluntary, private and non-public sectors constitute the issue network, which mainly functions at the implementation stage. In addition, this section also reveals that the policy community and the issue network in Sure Start are interconnected and actors at the implementation level in the policy community, such as local authorities, Jobcentre Plus and PCTs, have access to the issue network and exert influence based on the decisions made at the decision-making level in the policy community.

Heclo suggests that in: 'looking for the few who are powerful, we tend to overlook the many whose webs of influence provoke and guide the exercise of power' (Heclo 1978: 281). He goes on to observe that issue networks: 'comprise a large number of participants with quite variable degrees of mutual commitment or

of dependence on others in their environment; in fact it is almost impossible to say where a network leaves off and its environment begins' (Heclo 1978: 283). In addition: 'issue networks operate at many levels, from the vocal minority who turn up at local planning commission hearings to the renowned professor who is quietly telephoned by the White House to give a quick reading on some participant or policy' (Heclo 1978: 283). Issue network also is difficult to say what it looks like, as it may sometimes be active or sometimes fade away (Heclo 1978). Heclo's work '*Issue networks and the executive establishment*' (1978) provides the basis for setting up the characteristics of issue network in Marsh and Rhodes' (1992) and Rhodes' (1997) policy networks models.

In Marsh and Rhodes's (1992) and Rhodes' (1997) policy networks models, an issue network is characterised as a 'large number of participants with a limited degree of interdependence; stability and continuity are at a premium, the structure tends to be atomistic, access significantly fluctuates, basic relationship is consultative and Zero-sum game' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 14; Rhodes 1997). Based on the interview material in both Sheffield and Manchester, it is evident that there are a large number of actors involved in this issue network and only a few actors remain stable in the issue network. There are almost no vertical interdependences among actors in the issue network. At the local level, Sure Start Children's Centres are in partnership with a large number of voluntary, independent and private actors, and the partners vary largely in different Children's Centres. Namely, the access to the issue network significantly fluctuates. However, due to poor interview responses and unavailable websites,[6] this part primarily draws information from managers in Sure Start Children's Centres to analyse the issue network and its impact on implementation process.

5.3.1 Actors in the Issue Network

Sure Start Children's Centres

Sure Start Children's Centres are obviously in the heart of the community and provide frontline service to children and families across England. Managers of Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester argued that the Children's Centre provides glue for previously-existing activities and links with a variety of partners. There are currently 34 Sure Start Children's Centres across Manchester

[6]In order to understand the relations between sure start children's centres in both Sheffield and Manchester with voluntary, private and non-public actors in delivering sure start policy, letters regarding interviews have been sent out to those organisations. However, without exception, I failed to receive responses from voluntary, private and non-public actors to do interviews in both cities. Hence, a lack of information has contributed to difficulties in analysing the relationship between them and the only information source is from interviews with managers in sure start children's centres.

and six more will be opening between 2009 and 2011 (Manchester City Council 2009). In Sheffield, the first 13 Children's Centres (Phase 1) are located where support is most needed and the initiative has now been extended. In the second phase, a further 18 Children's Centres have been developed, ensuring that all areas within the 30% most disadvantaged areas of the city have access to a Children's Centre. Phase 3 Children's Centre services are now being developed in the remaining areas of the city, and these are due to be rolled out between March 2008 and March 2010 (Sheffield City Council 2009). According to interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester there is a lot more community cohesion than before, because Centres provide an opportunity for integration with the community. Numerous interviewees have commented that Children's Centres are providing coordination to a lot of activities. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> The role is to provide services to local people who need the most, things like child care, children playing activities for children health service, ante-natal, baby massage, weaning advice, all health service, links with Jobcentre Plus. We've got services in Children Centre, health advice, benefit advice, education for adults, such as basic skills course, English classes, math, IT, those skills, self-esteem, confidence building, to enable people to learn things.

The Sure Start Children's Centre is the core unit for implementing and delivering government Sure Start policy, and it functions as a hub to link all different key services at the local level, such as education and employment. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester argued that

> Linking with Children's Centres is vital while working with all partners in geographical areas. We have to go and bring back to the beginning, supporting parents from conception right through to 5 years old. There is a whole range of parents will come in contact with, and we have to make sure that what they are doing is coordinated in the way that makes sense to children and families, and they know who is delivering services, how to access. So if we do not work with key partners, we are not providing accessible service to people.

Most of the Children's Centres are run by local authorities, and a few others are run by other voluntary organisations, charities or private companies. National Children's Home (NCH) and Manor and Castle Development Trust (MCDT) run a few Children's Centres in Sheffield, and Barnardo's and the Big Life company run some in Manchester. Based on the 3 interviews with heads of Children's Centres in Sheffield and 9 in Manchester, it can be seen that Children's Centres themselves cannot generate their own funding, and largely depends on funding from the local authority. However it has a large amount of autonomy to decide how to spend that money to suit the local needs. For example, one of the managers from the Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield illustrated:

> They do have the resources, we have all the things like TV and DVD to demonstrate a video to all the groups, and we've got all that kind of facility. We will fund things. For example, we provide the mattress for the baby massage, behind the screen there, there is a couch for examination, if a mum is pregnant coming to a class, and the midwifery can examine that. We provide the facilities. We provide the Sonic Aid which does the baby

> heart beat, that just means when they come, they don't have to bring all this stuff, it is a lot easier for them to come if it is here.

In addition, there is a similarity that staff in the Children's Centres in both cities act as the first contact point for service users at the local level, and based on this frequent interaction with children and families, Sure Start Children's Centres can get access to first-hand information, such as the number of unemployed in a family or the condition of a child's health, which gives the centre flexibility and discretion to make their own judgement and decisions on coping with daily issues.

National Children's Home (NCH)—Sheffield

NCH is a children's charity and aims to help children achieve their full potential. Through its services, NCH supports some of the UK's most vulnerable and excluded children and young people (NCH 2008). One of the managers from the Sure Start Children's Centres commented:

> There is also NCH, one of the biggest partners in Sheffield. They deliver four of our programmes. They have done to adapt differently to the pressure put on by the central government. And what they have done is focusing on the expertise and areas and knowledge for their organisation which has been helpful for them.

NCH is committed to continuing to deliver Early Years services from a variety of settings, including schools, community and family centres and possibly in the future, from primary health care settings too, such as GP practices. The aim is to make it as easy as possible for children and families to access the services they need.

Manor and Castle Development Trust (MCDT)—Sheffield

Manor and Castle Development Trust was a community response to the challenges faced by the neighbourhoods. It was established in September 1997 to manage the delivery of SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) Challenge Fund Round 3 in the Manor and Castle area. The Trust's holistic and community-led approach to community regeneration was so successful that the Trust became an accountable body for managing a Sure Start programme and a Healthy Living Network, which received a £1 million award from the Lottery (Manor and Castle Development Trust 2008). In addition, it also oversees a diverse range of activities, including neighbourhood regeneration, house building partnerships, environmental work, small business development, the provision of training and business services and land and property development. Running Sure Start Children's Centres is only a part of its diversified services.

Barnardo's—Manchester

Barnardo's is a children's charity which is a national organisation, operating locally in the UK and Ireland through over 390 community based projects. Currently Barnardo's works with over 132,000 children, young people and their families in urban and rural communities every year, helping vulnerable and disadvantaged children to overcome issues such as poverty, abuse, homelessness, bereavement, discrimination and disability (Barnardo's 2005).

It runs several projects in Manchester, such as Family Action Benchill, Health Through Action, Making it Work and Salford Families, which provide a range of services to children and families in Manchester, and as such Barnardo's are an important partner in delivering children's services in Sure Start. In addition, Barnardo's also run Sure Start Children's Centres, even though the local authority runs most of the Sure Start Children's Centres.

The Big Life Company—Manchester

The Big Life company aims to grow successful social enterprise by providing a range of support services to help social businesses grow and in turn to help people change their lives (The BigLife group 2009). The Big Life company has been commissioned by the Sure Start Unit in Manchester to deliver two of the Sure Start Children's Centres—Levenshulme centre and Longsight centre.

Other Voluntary, Private and Non-public Sectors Actors

There are a large number of voluntary and private actors involved in assisting the development of Sure Start Children's Centres. Chapter Three listed these organisations through the services provided by Sure Start. NSPCC links with Sure Start Children's Centres to offer Early Year Provision; CWDC and NCMA provide childminding services; Family link, PIPPIN and PEEP offers parenting and family support; LSC and the Skills for Life Strategy Unit give employment support; and FSA and CMHT offer health services.

In conclusion, Rhodes argues that governance today involves self-organising networks with services provided by any permutation of government and the private and voluntary sectors (Rhodes 1997: 51). The Labour government emphasised the importance of involving private, voluntary and other third-sector organisations in the public service delivery process. Based on the interview materials above, it can be argued that the issue network of Sure Start is a loose self-organising network. At this level, government lacks sufficient command power to exert its will on other actors. For example, the local authority is unable to designate any actors from private or voluntary organisations to deliver key services in Sure Start policy, which are largely autonomous, Here: 'autonomy not only implies freedom, it also implies self responsibility, and autonomous systems have a much larger degree of freedom of self-governance' (Rhodes 1997: 52).

What this study reveals is that here are a large number of participants with a limited degree of interdependence in the issue network in both Sheffield and Manchester. In Sheffield, Sure Start Children's Centres, NCH and MCDT are three main actors in the issue network. The MCDT has been successful in delivering many city objectives, such as the regeneration of the Manor and Castle areas and providing many useful training courses. There is also NCH, one of the biggest partners in Sheffield, which deliver four of Sheffield's programmes. They have adapted themselves differently to the pressure put on them by the Central government. For example, NCH in Sheffield has been focusing on the expertise and areas of knowledge in their organisations which have been helpful for them. However, in terms of core provision of services, each Sure Start Children's Centres

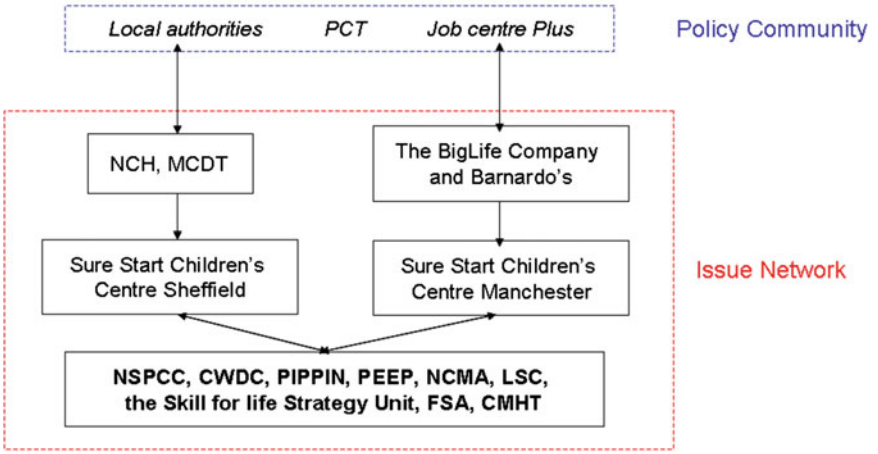

Fig. 5.3 Issue network in Sheffield and Manchester

links with different voluntary and private organisations at the local level (see Fig. 5.3). A similar situation exists in Manchester, with Sure Start Children's Centres, Barnado's and The Big Life company as the main actors in the issue network, and other unstable voluntary and private actors existing in the issue network to provide services for Sure Start.

Secondly, there is limited stability and continuity in the issue networks in both Sheffield and Manchester. As argued above, Sure Start Children's Centres are one of the main actors in the issue networks. However, based on the interviews in Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that different Children's Centres form partnerships with differentiated voluntary, non-public and private actors that provide services towards the needs of different Children's Centres. In addition, access to the issue network significantly fluctuates, and actors in voluntary, independent and private organisations only have access to Sure Start Children's Centres when they are being asked for partnerships. One of the staff of a Sure Start Children's Centre in Sheffield commented that 'we have partnerships with lots of voluntary and private actors across Sheffield, but they do change at times' (Personal interview). Thirdly, the relationship of actors in issue networks in both Sheffield and Manchester are consultative and there is no tight structure or regulations on actors in issue networks. Based on the interview materials, it can be seen that the development of a community support project in Sure Start aims to engage local people in supporting parents and young children. For example, MCDT in Sheffield uses the community-led approach to help deliver their services. At most times, the relations among voluntary, independent and private actors is consultative. Fourthly, the structure in issue networks in both Sheffield and Manchester are atomistic. Based on interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that actors in the issue networks rarely interact under any set structure. In Sheffield, actors such as

NCH and MCDT have no institutional mechanism to ensure a process of interaction, and neither does Manchester. Unlike established negotiation boards in policy communities, such as board between DCSF and DWP, actors in the issue networks don't have established negotiation and consultation mechanism to interact with each other. One of the managers in Sheffield commented: 'when we need services from some voluntary partners, I just pick up the phone and call them. we cannot have a regular meeting with so many different voluntary organisations' (Personal Interview).

5.3.2 Issue Network and Its Impact on Sure Start Delivery

Under the context of 'multi-agency' work, there are a large number of voluntary, independent and private partners involved in Sure Start policy, and these actors vary in different areas. However there are some key actors responsible for running the Sure Start Children's Centres, such as NCH and MCDT in Sheffield, and the Big Life company and Barnardo's in Manchester. As described above, the following section primarily analyses those partners involved in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester.

In terms of implementation, they (NCH, MCDT and the BigLife Company, Barnardo's) are in charge of delivering a few Sure Start Children's Centres, though most centres are delivered by the local authority. They hold their own budget and human resources in the process of implementing Sure Start, which gives them opportunities to place main actors in the issue network. For example, the Manor and Castle Development Trust is managing a Sure Start programme and a Healthy Living Network, which received a £1 m award from the Lottery (Manor and Castle Development Trust 2008). One of the managers from a Sure Start Children's Centre in Sheffield argued that:

> There are three bodies that manage Sure Start, one PCT, Manor Castle Development Trust and NCH. These three employ their own managers to manage Sure Start Children Centres. The rest of children centres are covered by early year staff by Local Authority.

In Sheffield, NCH and MCDT, two large national charity organisations, were two of the four accountable bodies for the Sure Start Local Programme. They manage the funding from DCSF (DfES) that goes directly to the NCH, and they are accountable for the funding and performance measured through the Sure Start unit in DCSF. The NCH are managed by their partnership board and expected to work with EYECS. One of the officials from the local authority in Sheffield illustrated that:

> There is also NCH, one of the biggest partners in Sheffield. They deliver four of our programmes. They have done to adapt differently to the pressure put on by the central government. And what they have done is focusing on the expertise and areas and knowledge for their organisation, which has been helpful for them.

However from 2004, since EYECS has been taking the leading and strategic role for delivering Sure Start Children's Centres, funding has been going to EYECS

directly, which then commissions services to other local deliverers. One of the heads of Sure Start Children's Centres delivered by NCH illustrated: 'So at the moment, they commission NCH to deliver and coordinate the co-offer in the five centres' (Personal interview).

Barnardo's is a national charity, and in Manchester is also a key partner in delivering services for children. The Big Life Company is a private company which is also involved in developing two Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester. However in terms of finance issues, there is negotiation between the Sure Start unit in Manchester and private partners that reflects the interactive relations between the policy community and issue network in Sure Start policy. Local authorities reflect the interests of the policy community and their interaction with the issue network influences the implementation process of Sure Start. The Sure Start Unit in Manchester ensures that good services are provided by the private sector and prevents them from being too mercenary. One of the senior officials from the Manchester local authority commented that

> In the private sector, the main issue there is on finance issues; because they want to make profits through it. So it is about making sure there is a balance there, we get good service for what we are paying for. It is around the performance—management issues and negotiation contract. But what we have done is to provide nursery rent free, we charge for overheads. But we don't actually charge for property. They are getting a good deal, and try to encourage them in, because in the city, the deprivation level is so high, and where the centres are often, you wouldn't normally get a private actor operating provision, because they don't have the incentives to do it. They are not making the kind of income they want to make. So they can get a decent nursery only paying the overhead not paying for the rent. Again the working relation is good.

In addition, based on interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, it is agreed that Sure Start Children' Centre is one of the few stable actors in the issue network and acts as a role linking different services in the Children's Centres. One of the managers from the Centre in Manchester commented:

> In a way, children' centre provide a glue for some of the activities already happening. There is a lot more community cohesion than before, because centre give us a opportunity to do this, and in fact, a lot people have said it to me. Not just my assumption. Centres are providing coordination to a lot of activities.

One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also said that 'everybody in the building, because it is the contact point with health visitors, park rangers, everybody using in the building, that is the cost we bear alone'.

As illustrated above, NCH and MCDT in Sheffield and the BigLife Company and Barnardo's in Manchester are main actors in the issue network, which are partly responsible for delivering Sure Start Children's Centres. Furthermore, in both Sheffield and Manchester, there are a large number of voluntary, independent and private actors coming in and out of the issue network. There is a very limited stability and continuity in the Sure Start issue network (see Fig. 5.3). One of the managers from the Sure Start children's centre in Sheffield commented:

> In terms of provision here, we have local authority provisions, parenting in course in Sure Start Children's Centres, and we have a close link with primary schools, and work with NSPCC, it is not proactive in our areas, but they are active in other areas.

Based on the interviews, it can be seen that in terms of service provision, different Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester employ different providers, such as day care services. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented that 'at the moment, you are right; there are a lot of people from different backgrounds (voluntary, independent and private actors) and we are working together'. In Manchester one of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres commented:

> Yes, more or less, if there isn't Sure Start centre its own right, it will be a satellite for Children Centre somewhere. So my colleague works in Ashburn Meadow, she is attached to a school, her satellite deliver her day care, it is called Hibry Close, it is a separate building, that does the day care. They are all different. Saindland Children Centre have a private company providing the daycares, it is a private provider from the area.

In addition, actors in the issue networks in both cities all have their own different resources enabling them to be involved in the implementation process. For example, some Children's Centres in Sheffield need to use the premises of primary schools, or need staff from some voluntary organisations. In Manchester one of the managers from Children's Centres commented that

> We are working with extended school team, because their agenda is very similar with the Sure Start agenda, and on the ground we also are working closely with local primary school and in fact this centre will move in with newly built primary schools.

However, there is a similarity in both Sheffield and Manchester in that actors in the issue networks don't share the same goals with each other, resulting in the 'network structure' being loose. For example, in both Sheffield and Manchester, Childminders provides childcare services for the Children's Centres; however, they have their own network team from the National Childminder Association and only come to the Centres once a week. Furthermore, the relationship between actors in the issue network is at times consultative. For example, the Citizen's Advice Bureaus manage through a consultation process, which is in the voluntary community sector. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield illustrated that:

> We have a partnership board with members of community, parents, local businessman, Sure Start, other local projects, actually oversee what we do and they had the main sort of say on whether buildings is in a particular way, what we deliver from that building, it came through what is called local partnership board, they had pack of what we deliver at that.

In addition, actors in the issue networks in both Sheffield and Manchester also intend to provide services without significant resource exchange. However, under some circumstances resource exchange does take place to enhance the overall capabilities of meeting the needs of actors in issue networks. One of the managers from a Children Centre in Manchester illustrated:

> Local authority definitely, and within it, like area planning coordinator, keep abreast with them, the two local forum, they already deliver a lot of services. They've got community view, one of the difficulties for us to face is the funding for phase 1, it isn't there for us, we cannot buy in service, we've got to link what services are already there by other providers. Local players and partners are critical. Two forums are already providing a lot of services; they need only a little bit additional input in it. Between the two of us, we might be able to achieve something. On our own, we cannot achieve anything, but together we can be a strong force.

Financially, Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester don't have enough funding to develop all the services and some of managers are part of a local group—a public health involvement team—and they manage to draw down some funding (e.g. from PCTs), which is used alongside to develop services. Furthermore, sometimes partnerships are not well coordinated. One of the managers from the Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield argued that 'We have to make sure what they are doing is coordinated in the way that makes sense to children and families, and they know who is delivering services, how to access, so if we do not work with key partners, we are not providing accessible equitable service to people' (Personal Interview). Another of the managers from the Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also argued:

> The headache I suppose is that we have number of agencies based in the building. The headaches is really who pays what to keep the building, what budget pay for what; for example, we pay for the reception staff, which are used by health visitors, park rangers, everybody in the building, because it is the contact point with health visitors, park rangers, everybody using in the building, that is the cost we bear alone, that is quite complicated arrangement about square footage and the building, funded after one budget after another.

Finally, in the Sure Start issue networks in both Sheffield and Manchester there is not a highly integrated structure. The structural arrangement is not well-organised, which leads to the duplication of resources affecting the implementation process. One of the managers from the Sure Start Children's Centre in Manchester illustrated:

> Probably the baby group might be one of them, in the health visitors very involved in with children under five, very interested in running community clinic, and post-natal groups, that overlaps part of what we might do. We have looked at with health visitors in how we might duplicate services. So they might run the post-natal group from mums, at the same time, we might run something called baby group, which is quite similar in as much as much with children under twelve months come along with groups to meet other mums. We have been looking at this. You are running some, we are running some, what if we just run one between us? We have had family support workers, you know, we will free them up our time and stop duplication. That is one of the examples, because it takes time to do that, because people feel that of my group. What you ask them to do is to get together a bit more.

However, it is important to be aware that the policy community and the issue network in Sure Start are not isolated from each other and have mutual influence. The following section focuses on the interaction process between the policy community and issue network.

5.4 The Interaction Between Policy Community and Issue Network

Actors in the policy community in Sure Start are not isolated from those in the issue network. Decision made in the policy community will certainly have an impact on the behaviour of actors in the issue network, through actors at the implementation stage of the policy community such as local authorities, PCTs and Jobcentre Plus. In the first place, actors in the policy community have the power to make decisions to change the roles of the actors in the Sure Start networks, which in turn have an impact on the implementation process of Sure Start. local authorities have been taking leading and strategic roles in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres since 2004. This decision triggers a series of changes in how Sure Start is delivered at the local level. Firstly, the bodies previously held accountable at the local level—such as NCH and MCDT in Sheffield and the Big Life company and Barnardo's in Manchester—are no longer responsible for delivering Sure Start policy. Secondly, funding has flowed to the local authorities directly from the central government, and then local authorities commissioned it to the actors at the local level that are responsible for delivering Sure Start Children's Centres. Thirdly, most of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres are designated by local authorities, through which the policy community makes an impact on the implementation process of Sure Start policy. Managers in both Sheffield and Manchester agreed that local authorities' influence on the managers in the Centres is considerable. One of the managers from a Sure Start Children's Centre also commented that 'all the commissioning services are done centrally from the local authority. I don't commission service, we have district commissioning managers. They work together and the services are commissioned by the city' (Personal interview).

In the second place, decisions made in the policy community also influence the distribution of resources for actors in the issue networks. Sure Start Children's Centres work with PCT and Jobcentre Plus, but in terms of the strategic level, only local authorities in Manchester and Sheffield have connections with PCT and Jobcentre Plus. Firstly, actors in the community can influence the implementation process at the local level by setting targets. One of the managers from the Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> We have just been given directive that what we do with a certain amount of budget and there have been no negotiations as to why and what services we got out of them, or even any evaluation happening in the local community. Our speech and language service was working well for us in this area, but other services we would contribute to, we would actually set up an agreement, we would stop paying for that service, because we didn't feel we have got the local authority to use our services in the areas, but we have to continue paying a considerable sum of money for the service, so there has been no sort of evaluation of the services either, it just being a blanket. You know you need to contribute X amount of pounds, because that is service we are having in the citywide services, so it is like a core service we've got to have.

The Sure Start Children's Centre, as a hub, is directly influenced by the actors in the policy community in Sure Start. A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of DWP identifies the services Children's Centres can provide for Jobcentre Plus—information dissemination through leaflets, targeted labour market information, a range of IT-based means of providing information, sponsorship of one-off events and adviser outreach (Dench et al. 2008: 11–12). DWP made decisions on distributing both personnel and financial resources to the local Jobcentre Plus. However, it is commonly agreed in both Sheffield and Manchester in Sure Start Children's Centres that working with Jobcentre Plus is not as beneficial as expected due to the constrained resources of Jobcentre Plus. One of the managers from the Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> Jobcentre Plus did worse than the PCT in one sense. Although we work with different people on the job front, Jobcentre Plus, their managers change at the local job centre on a regular basis, so you get the built-up relationship, then it changed around with somebody else. They used to have one worker for Manchester, who is a key liaison person, In the size of Manchester, that was a big job. Now the same job has gone out and now covers Great Manchester areas.

In addition, there is a common characteristic that insufficiencies in resources in Jobcentre Plus in both Sheffield and Manchester lead to the difficulties of partnership. The simple pressures on time and responsibilities can mitigate against partnerships working on a more day-to-day basis. For example, there is a growing realisation that with the total number of Children's Centres being planned, it would be impossible for a Jobcentre Plus adviser to visit each on a regular basis. Managers in Children's Centres in both cities show their concerns on the limited services offered by Jobcentre Plus, which primarily results from the shortage of staff. One of the managers from Sure Start Children Centres in Sheffield commented:

> That is a very limited service. The Jobcentre Plus don't have enough staff to be able to send them out there, to actual be hands-on person in the centre, what we do is they send us top ten jobs each week, I just print them out, and put them on the board.

This section mainly analyses the nature of the issue network in Sure Start and its influence on the implementation process of Sure Start. As mentioned above, poor responses to interview requests from actors from voluntary, private and non-public sectors resulted in the lack of sufficient information to have a thorough analysis on the issue network. However, the above does reveal the existence of an issue network and its interaction with the policy community in Sure Start, and partly reflects the impact of the issue network on Sure Start delivery.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter primarily analyses the implementation process of Sure Start policy after 2003 through the implementation network approach at the meso-level in Sheffield and Manchester. Sure Start policy is a highly differentiated multi-actor

implementation process. Rhodes's five propositions in the 'power-dependence' model have been key and useful in illuminating the relationships among different policy participants, which are of importance in understanding the implementation process of Sure Start.

The following key findings can be reached by applying the implementation network approach at the meso-level:

- The Policy community and issue networks co-exist in Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester.
- (DfES) DCSF, DWP, DoH, the Treasury, No. 10 and Local Authorities (EYECS and Sure Start Unit) are the main actors involved at the decision-making stage in the Sure Start policy community.
- Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus and PCTs are the actors involved at the implementation stage in the Sure Start policy community in both cities.
- The above actors are resource-dependent and have shared ideologies and interests that help to form the consensus to exclude actors outside of the policy community.
- The implementation network approach also recognises the disaggregated ideologies and institutional divisions that exist within the policy community. The ideological and institutional divisions have contributed to the difficulties of establishing partnerships in the implementation process of Sure Start policy.
- Local authorities, Jobcentre Plus and PCTs in both Sheffield and Manchester also interact with actors in the issue networks. This forms the basis of the interaction between the policy community and issue network.
- Sure Start Children's Centres, NCH, MCDT (Sheffield), Barnardo's and the Big Life Company (Manchester) comprise the issue networks in both cities. Contrary to the policy community, actors in the issue network frequently change according to service requirements and they have almost no say in the decision-making process of Sure Start.
- Actors in the issue network also have an influence on the implementation process, and the extent to which they have an impact largely depends on their resources.

From the establishment of Sure Start in 1997, actors in the policy community remain static and closed, though there was considerable transformation in delivering Sure Start policies. In 2003, the central government gave local authorities more power and resources to take the strategic role in delivering Sure Start policy at the local level, which places the local authority at the core of delivering Sure Start. This structural change has had a considerable impact on the implementation process of Sure Start. This will be supplemented by using the implementation network approach through a dialectical model, which encompasses the relations between context and networks.

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Chapter 6
Discretion of Street-Level Bureaucrats and Sure Start Implementation

Delivering public services tailored to the needs of their customers has been one of the key reasons for the Labour government to reform public services. Particularly, in March 2002 New Labour enunciated four '*Principles for Public Service Reform*'—National Standards, Devolution, Flexibility and Choice—in which devolution and flexibility are seen as important means to reach national standards by giving more autonomy and discretion to the frontline service deliverers (Office of Public Service Reform 2002). In addition, one of the Government's on-line publications—'*Leading from the Front Line*' illustrates clearly New Labour's steps and intentions on freeing up street-level bureaucrats and gives several specific cases on granting teachers, police officers, GPs and local officers more autonomy to cope with different situations (Cabinet Office 2003).

The previous chapter primarily analysed the implementation process of Sure Start from the organisational perspective by utilising an implementation network approach at the meso-level. This gave a picture of how different organisations interact with each other in the implementation process in both Sheffield and Manchester. However, in order to have a broad understanding of the implementation process in both cities, the implementation network approach takes bottom up analysis into consideration as well, especially the actions of street-level bureaucrats such as health visitors, receptionists, midwives and managers in Sure Start Children's Centre in both Sheffield and Manchester. These actors are involved at the point where policy is translated into practice, and have a direct interaction with public service users. Their work practices and orientations determine a great deal of actual public service delivery. Prottas argues that 'the bureaucracy's dependence on its street-level bureaucrats for the efficacious translation of its environmental inputs (citizens) into processable units (clients) provides the bureaucrat with the leverage to interfere in the organisation's "enforcement sequence"' (Prottas 1978: 285).

Sure Start policy involves a large number of public and private sector agencies through which street-level bureaucrats make an initial contact with service users. Especially in the Sure Start Children's Centre, it provides one-stop services delivered by frontline staffs that have their own discretion and autonomy to treat

X. Song, *Implementing Sure Start Policy*,
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service users differently. Based on interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, this chapter primarily analyses the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats at the local level as policy makers and implementers and how they influence the implementation process of Sure Start policy. In the first part, the street-level bureaucrats in the Sure Start policy will be identified according to the definition of street-level bureaucrats in the model and the relationship of street-level bureaucrats with service users will be shown. Based on the description of street-level bureaucrats' discretion and autonomy, the second part will draw on the interview materials and official documents to analyse comparatively how the street-level bureaucrats' behaviour in both Sheffield and Manchester affects the implementation process of Sure Start; to what extent the Labour government has devolved power to frontline staff in Sure Start policy; and it will reveal the similarities and varieties of street-level bureaucrats as both decision-makers and implementers in both Sheffield and Manchester as they use their own discretion and autonomy.

6.1 Street-Level Bureaucrats in Sure Start Policy

As argued in Chap. 3, although street-level bureaucrats are regarded as low-level workers, they do occupy some critical positions in Sure Start policy, which constitutes the services delivered by the Labour government. The discretionary actions of public workers are the benefits and sanctions of government programs and determine access to government rights and benefits.

Most children and parents encounter these services not through letters or by attendance at a board meeting but through street-level bureaucrats, and each encounter of this kind represents an instance of policy delivery. Lipsky defines that 'Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work are called street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky 1980: 3). Street-level bureaucrats comprise an important part of reaching the policy objectives of Sure Start, especially on reaching out to families with young children who have a negative view of government programs or lack of confidence to use the Sure Start Children's Centres.

As mentioned in Chap. 3, a Sure Start Children's Centre is the first, local point of call for all families with young children, whether they need advice or support on their child's health, development or care, or help with the challenges parents face every day in bringing up their children in the crucial early years. In the Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester, integrated services are provided, ranging from early education and health services to family employment. This provision involves managers of Children's Centres employed by the local authority or different private and voluntary organisations, health visitors and midwives from Prime Care Trust, parental involvement workers, outreach workers and employees from Jobcentre Plus and so forth, delivering all these services through their daily

contact with service users. In this chapter, they are the main street-level bureaucrats who are responsible for implementing Sure Start policies on the ground, and their behaviour has a direct influence on how Sure Start policy is played out at the grass-roots level in both cities. The following section briefly illustrates the roles and job responsibilities of these street-level bureaucrats through the findings of the interviews and official documents, in order to appreciate and understand the importance of their impact on the implementation process.

6.1.1 Managers and Staff in Sure Start Children's Centres

Needless to say, managers and staff in the Centres play important roles in ensuring the quality of services and adapting themselves to the needs of service users. According to one of the reports—'Sure Start Children's Centre' from the National Audit Office—centre managers are responsible for taking a wide view of training needs (NAO 2006a, b, c). Through interview materials in both Sheffield and Manchester, it is evident that managers and staff in Children's Centres show considerable importance in delivering services to service users. For example, family support workers referred to the need for counselling training, health visitors stressed the need for training in handling domestic violence, and both reported a need for continuing and diverse professional development. One of the managers from a Sure Start Children's Centre in Manchester explained:

> I am responsible for improving outcomes for all children under five in this part of Manchester, also working with agencies and partners. I am also responsible for children in Falafield, so in Moss Side ward, there are 1750 children under five, and there are 730 children under five in Falafield. We work closely with health, with adult education, speech and language services, other agencies, substance alcohol abuse outreach workers who work along with us. So we can referral to them if they need individual or family support. We also work with Manchester Adult Education Service. So we put courses in the centre for people to start building their confidence to pick up the courses to, and some parents might not have done anything since school, they might not have been in employment from leaving school, and they might need a little bit assistance from us for developing their confidence regards getting into employment. We will put courses on confident parent, confidence child, and relaxation courses. It is all about being with people, building their confidence, and maybe going a little bit steps further. Hopefully the idea is to look at parents getting out of poverty, children out of poverty.

One of the staffs from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also illustrated:

> I have been working here for five years, which is quite a long time. I'm the information monitoring officer, which grows. Previously I was just an information officer, my job area was originally around publicity, newsletters, flyer, making sure people know we're here and what we're up to. Since we had a restructured monitoring office, I also do database, data collection, analysis. From the very beginning, I was involved in publicity, because it took a long time to get started and local Sure Start is quite a slow process.

One of the parental involvement workers said:

> I am a parental involvement worker, I am doing family support. I am hoping to stay on family support, but I don't know yet. About family support, I am working on outreach department, we go to parents' own homes, help them with practical advice and emotional support, get them to come to the group stuff. I am running a baby massage course now, and we are in a process of doing more baby massage.

As interview materials show, in practice managers, parental involvement workers and other street-level workers are at the forefront of delivering services to children and their parents and to a large extent determine whether services reach the target groups.

6.1.1.1 Health Employees in Primary Care Trust (PCT)

The role of health visitors in both Sheffield and Manchester involves promoting health in the whole community and these practitioners are particularly involved with families who have children under five and with the elderly population. One of the official document, '*Delivering Health Services through Sure Start Children's Centres*', argues that 'Health services play a vital role in the earliest years of children's lives, with health professionals as the first point of contact with parent even before their child's birth' (DoH 2007a, b: 5). Health visitors work closely with others such as speech therapists, social workers, schools nurses and district nurses, and also offer help and advice to parents on a variety of issues in both cities, such as children's growth and development and breastfeeding, weaning, healthy eating, hygiene, safety and exercise.

Health workers from the PCTs in both Sheffield and Manchester actually deliver health-related services, and family support workers support families with regard to anything from filling in forms, behaviour of children, behaviour management, safety, and getting them involved in Children Centres. Some parents and children require encouragement and support for coming to Children Centre. They might never use the services in the Centres, but they could get a referral to a family support worker, who will go along to see them and introduce them into the Children Centre.

6.1.2 Staff in Jobcentre Plus

As argued in this chapter, Jobcentre Plus provides staff and resources for Sure Start Children's Centres, and also put on training sessions and employment courses. In both Sheffield and Manchester, staff in Jobcentre Plus provide the same services as described above. One of the staff in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield comments that 'we have a crèche place, the Jobcentre Plus come in, they would do all day sessions. It is about to make them ready for work, they have a whole week

of that' (personal interview). A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions lists the following services provided by Jobcentre Plus: 'information dissemination, sponsorship of, or participation in, one-off events, and adviser outreach delivering services in the Children's Centres' (Dench et al. 2008: 11).

Furthermore, in both cities, apart from the Jobcentre Plus, other agencies from the voluntary, private and non-public sectors would come in and also provide services related to getting lone parents back to work. One of the staff in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented that 'yesterday, there is an agency and they are doing employability skills (other agencies) with a group of women, looking to see whether they can put on course for them' (personal interview). In addition, staffs from Jobcentre Plus are responsible for offering information, such as putting kiosk machines in the Children's Centres and linking them to relevant jobs websites and the Jobcentre Plus website. The above indicates the extent to which Sure Start services are delivered by these street-level bureaucrats to services users, and shows that all the strategies, policies, plans or schemes made in the decision-making stage cannot take effect unless they are being implemented. For example, one of the managers from Children's Centres commented that 'a lady come into café every single day and not working for years, but now she's got a job with the help from Sure Start Children's Centre, a local lady. It is like she's like a different person, a confident, the self-confidence, really different people, it is making a difference to people's lives' (personal interview). As argued in Chap. 3, street-level bureaucrats tend to be the focus of public controversy because of the immediacy of their interactions with citizens and their impact on people's lives. The policy delivered by street-level bureaucrats is most often immediate and personal, so they often have a lot of discretion and autonomy to make a decision on the spot. The next part primarily focuses on the sources of street-level bureaucrats' discretion and autonomy with an analysis of Sure Start bureaucrats at the grass-roots level in both Sheffield and Manchester.

6.2 Discretion and Autonomy of Street-Level Bureaucrats in Sure Start

6.2.1 Discretion and Autonomy: Relative Concepts

Blau raises some of the issues that have become perennial in the study of street-level bureaucrats (Blau 1955). What is the balance of autonomy and control in street-level bureaucrat's daily work? What implications does that balance have for the treatment of clients? 'However, Blau, like many who followed him, found the balance surprisingly tilted towards autonomy—a finding with various implications for the treatment of clients by public service bureaucracies' (Prottas 1978: 286). In his article 'the power of the street-level bureaucrat in public service

bureaucracies', Prottas concludes two important points. The first is that 'the practical content of public policy for individual clients is very affected by the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats', and the second is that 'the surprisingly large degree of autonomy and self-direction displayed in the behaviour of these bureaucrats' (Prottas 1978: 288). Discretion and autonomy are relative concepts and it depends on the nature of street-level bureaucrats work and the situations they encounter. It follows that the greater the degree of discretion the more salient this analysis is in understanding the character of workers' behaviour.

There is a substantial literature on the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats and its influence on the policy outcomes. Jacobs (1970) and Zimmerman (1969), both taking a phenomenological approach, have pointed out the independence and influence of caseworkers in public welfare agencies. Handler and Hollingsworth (1971) use a more policy-oriented approach and come to substantially similar conclusions. Certain characteristics of the jobs of street-level bureaucrats make it difficult to severely reduce discretion and autonomy. They undertake complex tasks for which elaboration of rules, guidelines, or 'instructions' cannot circumscribe the alternatives of implementing tasks.

Through the interviews, it is shown that street-level workers in Sure Start from both Sheffield and Manchester all have relative discretion and autonomy, which largely depends on the complexity of the tasks. In the first place, street-level workers in both Sheffield and Manchester agree that they often encounter unpredictable situations that need discretion and autonomy to deal with. For example, one of the staffs from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester observed that 'members of staff often face unpredictable situations, and again we have open policy, we would deal with it at all the time, we were on demand all the time' (personal interview). Another manager in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also commented that:

> We have a certain amount of autonomy within the centre, because we expect to go in Children Centre, expect to see exactly the same. You would see many similarities, but I would expect that Children Centre to meet whatever the community needs; you should see there are differentiations between different communities, and we've got different targets, different areas, and different people. In terms of autonomy, that gives your autonomy to deliver to your areas.

Secondly, street-level workers in both Sheffield and Manchester also argue that street-level bureaucrats often work in situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats, and ones that often requires responses to the human dimensions of situations. However, bureaucrats' discretion and autonomy in Sure Start are relatively dependent on the nature and characteristics of their job tasks and positions, which require different working formats and responses to the human issues. Prottas argues that 'the basis of power in public service bureaucracies lies in their complex relationship with their clients' (Prottas 1978: 289). The discretion and autonomy of managers in Sure Start Children Centres or heads of other voluntary and private sectors is largely different from the discretion and autonomy of actors like receptionists. For example, managers have more autonomy in making decisions

regarding the allocation of resources, linking with partners at the local level and managing his or her own staff; on the contrary, receptionists have more autonomy in dealing with the customers at the front door, while managers rarely intervene in daily business.

The second aspect of the relativity of street-level bureaucrats' discretion and autonomy lies in the financial control of the local authority and central government. In both Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that managers in Sure Start Children's Centres are constrained financially by EYECS and the Sure Start unit. In Manchester, managers in Sure Start Children's Centres feel limited as regards autonomy in budget management. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester argued that:

> We have a finance department in the local authority. These are Sure Start finance departments. Things appear on the budget which I don't know. Some of the departments receive the bill, and they will take them out of the budget so I don't have true autonomy in the budget. Although I am called cost-centre manager, because the computer system I have, it is not like I hold it, they are per stream. So it is difficult, but obviously I can allocate, I have different headings, class room materials, training, funding raising event, for staffing, but there is no flexibility in it.

Managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also feel the same way regarding budget control. For example, another manager in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented that:

> So I suppose I have got more autonomy, although we are still line-managed to a degree. I don't have the autonomy as the head teachers have, and head teachers have really a lot of autonomy. In my budget, I am told I am managing the budget, but actually I don't manage the budget. It is all done by other people in other departments.

The above illustrated the relative concept of discretion and autonomy and highlights how different types of street-level bureaucrats have variable degree of discretion and autonomy in the implementation process. The following section analyses how the street-level bureaucrats' discretion and autonomy as decision-makers in Sure Start influence the implementation process of Sure Start at the local level in both Sheffield and Manchester.

6.2.2 Street-Level Bureaucrats as Decision-Makers in Sure Start

As argued above, the decisions made by street-level workers, the routines established by them and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures effectively become the pubic policies they carry out (Lipsky 1980). As implementation network approach suggested, Decisions in pubic policy are not merely made in legislatures or by high-ranking governmental officers, because in important ways they are actually made through street-level workers at the

grass-roots. One of the managers of Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented that:

> Each department comes in and works in this centre. It is professionally managed by their own department, even down to the teacher, that come to this building, has done the professional development done by the education department. From the autonomy point of view, you are always working with people to be managed separately. I can make a lot of decisions; I am allowed to make decisions. My district commissioning manager (local authority) doesn't line manage me like she used to do when I was a manager in the nursery school. She very much backs me up on decision I made, if somebody challenge me to her, she will say I am sorry you need to go back to the manager.

One of the Managers of Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> We (manager and staff in Children's Centres) fit very neatly into there. We are here to provide services and people and organisational regulations are expecting us to provide accessible service for families and we are also covering a wide range of services. In terms of support, early childcare and education, accessible information, early health support, so yes, we do work with a lot of actors. However, we are quite a new children' centre, only recently designated, and have to develop them further by using resources we have wisely.

As shown from interview materials above, it is evident that though street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester are restrained by rules, regulations and directives from political or administrative officials, and norms and practices governing their occupational groups from policy elites, they still have space to operate under their own codes or habits that makes them discretionary in their daily routines. As illustrated in above materials, working with different people and actors in service delivery becomes one of the main reasons for street-level bureaucrats to have certain autonomy and discretion to deal with relations. The following section looks at how street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester as decision-makers in the service delivery process affect the implementation process in Sure Start policy.

6.2.3 Discretion as Decision-Makers

As argued in implementation network approach in Chap. 4, street-level bureaucrats are not merely policy implementers, but also decision-makers. Street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield and Manchester are professionals, such as midwives, speech and language therapist or health visitors, who are expected to exercise discretionary judgment in their field. For example, Sudnow (1965) points out that professional bureaucracy, such as the self-directed behaviour of district attorneys and public defenders, has considerable and unsanctioned influence over pleas and sentencing in lower courts (Sudnow 1965). Street-level bureaucrats' attitudes towards service users also significantly influences the implementation process of Sure Start.

The implementation network approach recognises that central government is sometimes incapable of establishing or setting up regulators, rules and guidance under many circumstances, as there are a large number of unexpected situations in the implementation process, such as human issues. Street-level bureaucrats in

Sheffield and Manchester agree that they work in situations that often require responses to the human dimensions of situations, where they have discretion to judge each different situation and circumstance or the situations are too complicated to reduce them to programmatic formats. For example, a report '*Sure Start Children's Centres*' from NAO argues: 'Most children's centres need to deal with some disadvantaged groups that distrust formally provided services and require special encouragement to use them' (NAO 2006a, b, c: 28). Even the receptionists have the discretion to make decisions which also have a big influence on the implementation process. They are the first contact point in the Sure Start Children's Centres and provide first-hand information to services users, such as lone parents with children under five, which is often vital to reach out to target groups. At the same time, they also are the first contact point in dealing with a lot of issues with a human dimension. They are non-professionals without formal training, and they play an important role as 'gatekeeper' in the implementation process of Sure Start policy. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester described the role and the significance of the receptionist.

> The receptionist answers the phone and tells people they are here, things likes that. As midwives is growing, they get pregnant women coming into the door. Because midwife is not here all the time, they have to make decision how serious to treat the request they asked, so not meaning they make a clinic decision, but some people come in and ask is the midwife here, and you will say no, if that is the close conversation, you come in with your wife, no they only work on Wednesday and Thursday, then you go away, think that is it, your partner need medical attention, but it might be your first baby. The skillful receptionist, when you ask it, they will say, no they are not here, but without going into the details, bring out how much the emergency that is, because it could be this is the first time you come to the meeting, they could come on next Wednesday, but it could be they need the midwife in next ten minutes. That is a very highly skillful job, I have highlighted with my line manager, and we are going to look at specific training for that. That is just one example.

However, it varies in both Sheffield and Manchester on how the autonomy and discretion of receptionists is used in dealing with emergency cases. As shown above, in Manchester, some managers in the Children's Centres are aware of the importance of the autonomy of receptionists and take active measures to channel the discretionary power of receptionists in favour of the local clients. In Sheffield, managers of Children's Centres also realize the discretion and autonomy of receptionists, but they are more reticent in dealing with their power of autonomy and discretion. One of the managers of Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented that 'we sort of know their importance of coping with customers, but we just let them get on with their jobs, and don't intervene too much' (Personal interview).

Street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester also agree that they sometimes work in situations which are too complicated to predict, and at most times, it is extremely difficult to work in the programmatic formats set by their superiors. Abstract situations are fluid and need discretion to reduce broad public problems into something less ephemeral and more manageable for a public service worker (Wong 2007). Bovens and Zouridis agree that decision-making power helps

street-level bureaucrats to constrain broad administrative procedures into concrete situations (Bovens and Zouridis 2002). They have a lot of autonomy under the circumstances of uncertainty, especially when street-level bureaucrats deliver services offering families different approaches. They play a vital role as decision-makers to suit different families' needs. In both Sheffield and Manchester, street-level bureaucrats encounter circumstances of working in diverse communities, which increases the uncertainties of delivering Sure Start services to local clients. Hence, the decision-making power of street-level bureaucrats can help them reduce the difficulties of implementation to a manageable level. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester argued that

> In this community, it is such a diverse community, and culturally diverse community. People move in and out very quickly. We're still not working in a joined-up with all agencies, although we are a lot better than we were, we still got a long way to improve that. I don't think we are equipped to meet needs of the best way for all families, that is hard and there is typically culture barriers as well, then you got language barriers on top of that.

One of the managers from Sure Start Children' Centres in Sheffield commented that 'we are working in a highly diverse community with lots of ethnicity, and we do allow our family outreach workers to make their decisions regarding dealing with different cultural needs in this community' (Personal interview).

In addition, the implementation network approach not only recognises the discretion and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats dealing with unforeseen circumstances, but also it suggests that in respect to managing workload, street-level bureaucrats undertake continuous, often sizeable judgments and decisions to cope with demanding workloads. Street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester also have the responsibility and autonomy to decide which direction they intend to take. As Yvonne argues, in response to managing workloads and addressing the needs of clients, there is a certain urgency for street-level bureaucrats in making judgments and executing decisions (Yvonne 2000). Staff interviewed in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester illustrated that they have the power to decide in which direction they give support to the family in need, what kind of support they require and how much support they give them (personal interviews).

The implementation network approach recognises the intricacy of membership in the network, but also argues that street-level bureaucrats' discretion and autonomy influences the partnerships among organisations involved in the implementation process. In terms of partnerships, managers in Sure Start Children's Centres have the initiative to include or exclude partners in order to reach the objectives of Sure Start policy, which is also a common characteristic in Sheffield and Manchester. For example, as argued in this chapter, Sure Start Children's Centres encounter difficulties in collaborating with Jobcentre Plus in both Sheffield and Manchester. In dealing with this difficulty, different strategies are employed in both Sheffield and Manchester. In Manchester, managers tend to be more inventive in bringing in other partners from voluntary, independent and private sectors. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester illustrated that 'we

have to be quite inventive. For example, we don't have a good relation with Jobcentre Plus. However, we can bring other partners into delivering worklessness agenda; something I was talking with you about, then you just find different way of doing that' (personal interview). On the contrary, in Sheffield, managers tend to take measures to attempt to build closer connections with Jobcentre Plus at the local level. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented that 'we try to make more connections with Jobcentre Plus to solve the problems we face, such as lack of staff in the Centre' (personal interview).

In addition, there is a similarity that managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester have the autonomy and discretion to decide who should use the services provided by centres and who is not entitled to use them. The decision will certainly influence the distribution of limited resources and also have a direct impact on the services users are entitled to. For instance, one of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> I think there is an issue. The reason I am hesitating about is that it is when working with refuge and asylum seekers, and they might have come in using the building for some services, I just don't ask them, because it is a grey area. Some asylum-seekers they are not entitled to, because their status is not allowed, and I don't ask questions, because I don't want people to ask me why?

Street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield also take their initiatives to make a decision on who should be entitled to using the services and the extent to which they are making an effort to scatter around the information on services provided with Sure Start. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start Children's Centres from Sheffield commented:

> The problem is how do we know the families we don't see, how do we check they know about us. So we are doing some work at the moment. So as a midwife goes out to visit the family, so as a health visitor goes out to visit the family, when we ask family to start registration with us. Then we start track to those registered family, do they come to see us, if they don't, why is that? Or is there an area over here we don't see families, is that because far away. Could we take some services and run them in a church or a building? Could we run some services over there, and see if that pulls them in. So we are consistently looking for a way where we were missing families as well.

Based on the interview materials in both Sheffield and Manchester, the above has analysed the decision-making power of street-level bureaucrats and how this influences the implementation process. The next section looks at the relative autonomy from organisation authority.

6.2.4 Relative Autonomy from Organisational Authority

Top-down approach tends to take for granted that that the work of street-level bureaucrats will more or less conform to what is expected of them. However some organisational theorists recognise that there will be always be some implementation gap between orders and the carrying out of orders (Lipsky 1980: 16). The

implementation network approach recognises that some explanation for an implementation gap resides with poor communication between lower-level workers and organisational authorities, but as argued above, it can also be due to the unpredictability of the working environment. Prottas argues that 'a general rule in the analysis of power is that an actor with low "compliance observability" is relatively autonomous' (Prottas 1978: 297), which means if it is difficult or costly to determine how an actor behaves and the actor knows this, then he is under less compulsion to comply. Street-level bureaucrats receive a large number of behaviour codes when dealing with service users. One can expect a distinct degree of non-compliance if lower-level workers' interests differ from the interests of those at higher levels. Through interview materials, this part argues that both in Sheffield and Manchester there is relative autonomy of street-level bureaucrats from organisational authority. In Sheffield, managers interviewed in Sure Start Children's Centres showed their awareness of their own autonomy from EYECS regarding behaviour codes and policies. For example, one of the staff in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield stated that:

> The city council has a very strict behaviour code about when people are coming into the centre, how we should behave. So the demands placed on the centre by parents and visitors can be difficult. We can get parents complain, but we do have the strict system. So if parents complain, we have to go through the council, we have a complaint policy, we have to respond to it within how many days. But in general, staff are well trained to look after the family when they come in. We get families are distressed in crisis, we support them. But a lot of them, you just learn from the job, you cannot have training for everything, you know, demands from parents, because we've got a team people. If we cannot help, we know who can, so we will signpost them to find the services we cannot provide.

In Manchester, street-level bureaucrats face a lot of situations in which they have different job priorities from the broader organisational ones and have the autonomy and discretion in dealing with imminent or urgent situations. Lower-level workers can withhold cooperation within their organisations by employing such personal strategies as not working or having negative attitudes with implications for work. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> The demands of job are immense, things like your emails; you get 100 emails to respond to. And the pressure from outside agencies wants to deliver services. But you haven't got the room, you are constantly struggling with the room, where you can put the people. The centre could be twice as bigger, because we've got so many things to do.

As interviews conducted in Manchester also showed, when street-level bureaucrats have deadlines for reports and other different things, they also face crises from families and children who turn up unannounced. The proper sequence and priority is to complete all the reports first, then deal with the issues from families and children. However, some of the managers place the children and families as their first priority and will accordingly adjust their priority, which is different from broader organisational ones. One of the staff in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester illustrated that:

> I know what the priority is with family, sometimes I don't think that is a real problem. You just start reallocating your workload. To me children and family come first, that is what we're here for. Because not everything fits in our policy or procedure, and sometimes you have to work outside of that. In my experience, as long as you reason for doing that, manager are quite supportive, even if it might not be best things at the end of the day, they will always listen to why you have done it differently. If it is about children and family, it made best outcome of it.

> I don't think everything come under the broader organisational ones. Our priority is children and family. Within that we have to go to what happened in the day. In that way, we might have something in, council might want something. But if something happened in the day, you think it is a priority, then you have to go for it, you still have to juggle it, in order to… you deal with what comes through the door; if parents come to the door, you have to deal with it.

It is shown above that street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester have relative autonomy and discretion from organisational authorities with different characteristics. The following looks at the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats regarding targets set up by their superiors in the implementation process of Sure Start.

6.2.5 *Autonomy of Street-Level Bureaucrats' Decision Making on Targets*

As argued in Chap. 4, monitoring through targets is one of the conditions of the traditional top-down approach to ensure the success of implementation. Rather than asking why street-level bureaucrats do not comply with targets set from a top-down perspective, the implementation network approach recognises the complexity of how street-level bureaucrats have autonomy in terms of copying with the targets in the implementation network.

Both street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield and Manchester receive different sets of targets (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2) from the higher authority and their performance will be measured and judged according to the league tables. In Manchester, some interviewed street-level bureaucrats have agreed that targets and objectives (see Table 7.2) are perceived to be helpful. For example, one of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester stated that:

> Yes, I find they are helpful. It is not a good target if you can reach it easily, because you've got stretched, it is something to aim at a target, not something we've got there. If your target is too low, and too easy to reach, you are not reaching the level which is difficult to reach.

In addition, some street-level bureaucrats see unclear targets (see Table 7.2) as a way of raising awareness for parents and perceive it in a positive way. For example, one of the street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> I think it just raised a kind of awareness for parents. Working with health service because they also have health networks, they have somebody who works out of Burgnade centre who support the adult to keep themselves health and fit. So it is just linking with people and raising everybody's awareness and doing eating-five, fruit and vegetables a day, doing our cookery session. It is all working together. It is not me as an individual to have a target, it is cross the Sure Start area, and we are trying to meet it.

In the contrast, in Sheffield, none of the interviewed managers from Sure Start Children's Centres perceived the targets (see Table 7.1) in a helpful manner as those in Manchester did. For example, one of the managers stated that 'we wouldn't say targets actually have helped a lot to improve the services. Sometimes, we just have to get on with them' (personal interview).

However, there is a similarity that street-level bureaucrats interviewees in both Sheffield and Manchester argued that targets (Tables 7.1 and 7.2) could also be a source of tension for street-level bureaucrats, because they were often seen as not the right ones and not realistic or blurry, at least for a particular agency involved in the Sure Start policy. In Sheffield, interviewees in Sure Start Children's Centres express their concerns on some targets without figures, such as reduction in the number of smoking mothers during pregnancy and improving the access of early years provision for children with special education needs and disabilities (Table 7.1). These targets trigger tensions for street-level workers and are seen as unclear and inappropriate by interviewees. In Manchester, interviewees in Sure Start Children's Centres also show concerns over unclear and unrealistic targets, such as reducing smoking in pregnancy, reducing low birth weight and improving diet and nutrition (Table 7.2). One of the interviewees in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented that 'there are some targets that are difficult to measure and execute' (Personal interview). Prottas argues that 'ambiguity and contradiction are basic features in the organisation's expectations of street-level bureaucrat behavior' (Prottas 1978: 295).

In addition most interviews from street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester enunciated that unclear targets have contributed to the difficulties and tensions of implementing Sure Start policy. Hill argued that social programs that public service bureaucracies are charged with administering are almost invariably complex and controversial (Hill 1974). For instance, one of the street-level workers in Manchester commented that 'it has been a problem for us because performance indicators we have, for example to reduce number of obesity children, but we didn't have an actual figure' (personal interview). Furthermore, blurry or unclear targets (see Table 7.1) have made space and opportunities for street-level workers to make their own decisions on the frontline services to local service users, and one of the managers from Children's Centres in Sheffield argued that

> We have a certain amount of autonomy within the centre, because we expect to go in Children Centre, expect to see exactly the same. You would see many similarities, but I would expect that Children Centre to meet whatever they community needs. You should see there are differentiations between different communities, and we've got different targets, different areas and different people, in terms of autonomy, that gives your autonomy to deliver to your areas.

Street-level bureaucrats characteristically work in jobs with conflicting and ambiguous goals. Some targets also tend to have an idealised dimension that makes them difficult to achieve and confusing and complicated to approach. For example, in both Sheffield and Manchester, 'meeting the needs of the people who need the most in the community' is a contentious target and most street-level bureaucrats have to make their own judgments on who are the people most in need. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> The hardest bit is how many families with the ones who need it. That is the hardest bit; because in our patch, we will have families who would be classified as high-deprivation level than other families. But we are open to all, so being able to prove we are meeting the needs to the people who need the most is the hardest bit for us.

One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also commented that 'meeting the needs of the people who need the most in the community is a really tricky target, because sometimes it is hard to specify who are the people who need the most, and we have to make our own decisions under certain circumstances' (personal interview).

In Sheffield, some street-level workers are concerned that job performance in street-level bureaucracies is extremely difficult to measure. For example, as shown in Table 6.1, one of the targets-improvement in the reduction of smoking mothers during pregnancy—is difficult to measure for street-level bureaucrats. Prottas illustrates the two impediments of the definition problem (see Prottas 1978), and he argues that 'the behaviour of clients is not rule-bound and their demands are wholly unbureaucratic in form, and this injects an irreducible element of uncertainty into the job of the street-level bureaucrat and the agency's expectations of them cannot help but reflect that uncertainty' (Prottas 1978: 295–296). The many implications of this statement include the facts that these agencies are not self-corrective, and the definition of adequate performance is highly politicized. Difficulty in evaluating performance may be characteristic of bureaucracies generally but it is particularly endemic in the work of street-level bureaucrats. Target ambiguity affects performance of the street-level bureaucrats. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield illustrated that:

> It is difficult to measure it. If you go on the website, there is actually not a specific number of children, it is just generally people having their level of consciousness being raised. They know about the obese children, and don't actually think anybody ever put the number down. If you look at the website, there aren't any numbers of children with obesity, it is just in general we think there are obese children. I mean we don't think at this time having any obese children in nursery, but the government says there are obese children, where are they? The schools may have one or two obese children, but actually nobody actually writes it down, where do you record it. I don't think school weighs the children, unless they are concerned about it. As parents, you will be furious if you weigh your own children, and think your children are obese children. You know, it is a grey area, obesity. That is why there aren't actually specific targets around it. We know there are obese children, but where are they. And I mean I could not say to you, this area is more than other areas. We know there are some unhealthy children, we know children have unhealthy diet, and we know school have stopped doing proper cooking lessons.

Table 6.1 Sheffield local area agreement

Objectives and targets
Once the flexibilities outlined above have been agreed we will commit to achieving the objectives and targets outlined below
0–5 Early Years (including pregnancy)
Objectives
• Provide accessible family health services combined with family support and parental engagement at the earliest opportunity • Raise the attainment levels in early years settings and preparing pupils for school and addressing inequalities • Develop quality across all setting and integrating early education with childcare • Bring together funding streams for family support, education and childcare to deliver a fully integrated model for early years
Targets
• 100% of families with new babies are visited in the first 2 months of their baby's life • Increased numbers of mothers breastfeeding at birth, 6 weeks and 17 weeks • Improvement in the reduction of smoking mothers during pregnancy • A reduction in the annual turnover in Ofsted—registered childcare providers • Delivery of annual childcare targets and maintaining childcare stocks • Providing integrated early education and childcare places for under 4 and extending the Children Centre reach • Improving the qualifications and training of the early years workforce including an expansion in the number of leaders attaining qualifications of level 4 and above • Improving the access of early years provision for children with Special Education Needs and disabilities • Early Years improvement plans are in place in 100% of settings leading to improved attainment levels at Foundation Stage 1 and 2

Source Sheffield First Agreement, 2005–2008 from Sheffield First Partnership

Targets are in most cases the reflection of the interests of organisations and often are in conflict with the interests or priorities of street-level bureaucrats. Lipsky (1971) argues that street-level bureaucracies encounter conflict and ambiguity in the tensions between client-centred goals or targets and organisational goals or targets. The ability of street-level bureaucrats to treat people as individuals is significantly compromised by the needs of the organisation's goals. Street-level workers in Sheffield also expressed their concerns on the conflict between organisational goals—reaching more families—and their preferences and quality matters. As showed in Table 6.1, it can be seen that one of the targets and goals of the organization is to visit 100% of families with new babies in their first 2 months of their baby's life. However, based on the interviews, street-level workers in Sheffield express the concern of possibly missing families with new-born babies. For example, one of the street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield commented:

> In terms of targets, there is also a real tension between targets and the number of people you reach. Government agenda is about reaching vulnerable families, which obviously takes a lot of time. It is about quality and quantity. If you are delivering to family it is actually life-changing, you know if you have two families got life-changing that would outweigh the numbers of families.

In Manchester, some of the street-level bureaucrats regard targets as a political consequence and initially had a negative response to those targets, which may cause their morale to be low and cause them not to be fully committed to the targets set by the organisations. Based on the interviews, street-level workers in Manchester consider targets such as helping children out of poverty as political rhetoric and political consequence. Under these circumstances, they would use their autonomy and discretion to adjust the implementation process towards their own preferences and priorities. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> They are part of government own political agendas. But having said that I have to believe that you cannot really argue helping children out of poverty, reducing number of young girls from pregnancy. You could not really disagree it. And another political organisation could have their own views. It might take different views.

As shown in Table 6.2, street-level bureaucrats receive some targets which are unclear, unrealistic or challenging. Based on interviews in Manchester, it is

Table 6.2 Aims and targets in manchester

Targets
> Reducing smoking in pregnancy > Reducing low birth weight > Preventing accidents > Reducing the mortality rates of children under a year > Increasing breast feeding rates > Improving diet and nutrition > Reducing levels of childhood obesity > Improving the identification of and support for adult mental illness > Increasing the early identification of children with special needs > Improving child and adolescent mental health > Reducing teenage pregnancy rates > Increasing access to services, choice and user satisfaction > Reducing health inequalities
Aim
• Increase the availability of childcare for all children, and work with parents to be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children—particularly those who are disadvantaged—so that they can flourish at home and at school, enabling their parents to work and contributing to the ending of child poverty
We will achieve by 2005–06 in fully operational programmes
• An increase in the proportion of young children aged 0–5 with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age • A 6 percentage point reduction in the proportion of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy • An increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage, and an increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age 2 years; and • A 12% reduction in the proportion of young children living in households where no one is working

Source Sure Start Children's Centres Implementation Update No. 5 Manchester

commonly recognized that targets set from higher authorities are unclear (e.g. reducing levels of childhood obesity), some of them lack figures, and some of them are unrealistic (e.g. an increase in the proportion of young children aged 0–5 with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age). One of the street-level workers in Manchester commented that 'at the moment, we know globally what are the overall targets, and there are not specific targets now. And if the local authority walks in the centre tomorrow, I would be struggling to prove to them the effectiveness of the centre' (personal interview). Street-level workers set their own targets under the broad guidelines in which they enjoy a large amount of autonomy to adjust their behaviour to fit their own needs. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> Now I've got targets which are set by me. The broad Children Centre targets aren't in place yet. We have filled in the self-evaluation form. We are tied to the service district. The local authority divides the city up. Each service district has some city-wide targets to reach with some things to reach the attainment.

Last but not the least, in Manchester street-level bureaucrats in different organisations treat the targets differently. When supposedly collaborating agency partners did not share objectives, or at least not with comparable enthusiasm, staff in mainstream services tend to be wary about committing time and effort to work they did not see as contribution directly to their own organisation's targets. For example, based on the interviews, it can be seen that street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start Children's Centres encounter difficulties in attaining data to help reach the targets of reducing people smoking by 12% in Manchester. In addition, organisational boundaries also contributed to the difficulties of street-level bureaucrats' policy delivery process towards the local clients. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Manchester commented:

> We used to work around government targets next year; we will come to every child matters, five outcomes, and previous targets with Children Centres got very specific numbers. For instance, we were asked to reduce the people smoking by 12%, and 6% increasing for breastfeeding, but we could never get the databases either from NHS or PCT. We don't know how many people are smoking out there. You know if you don't know how many people were smoking, how could you know the improvements? So you never know what it was. We have no baseline data and fine it is really difficult. Then how can you make sure that you are reaching your targets? It was simply difficult to do. Also numbers are difficult and trouble to get other agencies to work. Quite a lot of times, for the evaluation time, what we do is more qualitative than quantitative, because it is quite hard for qualitative study other than our own records, but the baseline before that is difficult.

As shown above, street-level bureaucrats do not always comply with their agency's objectives, which are normally made by people in the top positions. On the contrary, they exercise a decision-making role within the process of implementation. To a large extent, this is also complicated by the capacity of street-level bureaucrats to resist organisational pressures by mobilizing their own resources. Based on the interview material, it can be seen that unclear targets undermine the implementation capacity of street-level bureaucrats in the service delivery process. the analysis above highlights how street-level bureaucrats respond to the unclear targets and

recognises the discretion and autonomy of street-level bureaucrats in the implementation process. The implementation network approach also recognises target as an institutional conditions interactively affects street-level bureaucrats.

6.2.6 *Street-Level Bureaucrats as Implementers in Sure Start*

Implementation is a longstanding theme in policy literature and a universal challenge for policy makers and practitioners who are responsible for designing and delivering services for children and families in the community. Services can only foster positive outcomes if they are actually used and implemented. For example, the first principle of Sure Start policy, as highlighted on the Sure Start website, stipulates that 'every family should get access to a range of services that will deliver better outcomes for both children and parents, meeting their needs and stretching their aspirations' (Sure Start 2008). If, in the implementation process, street-level bureaucrats fail to facilitate parents' and children's access to services, Sure Start won't have any impact on target groups. Therefore, street-level bureaucrats play key roles as implementers in putting the policy into the practice.

As the implementation network approach highlighted in Chap. 4, street-level bureaucrats influence the implementation process of Sure Start policy not only as decision-makers, but more importantly act as implementers and determine how Sure Start policy made in the decision stage is translated on the ground. There is a similarity in both Sheffield and Manchester in that a lack of resources has become an inexorable factor influencing the behaviour of street-level workers as implementers. One of the workers in Sheffield commented that 'we are very constrained by the fact that you have very limited resources which is the key factor. So your ability to do anything is limited because you don't have any resources to spend' (personal interview). One of the street-level bureaucrats in Manchester also commented that a 'shortage of staff and money has been a big constraint for us to provide the services to the people in this community' (personal interview).

According to Lipsky (1971) and Prottas (1978), street-level bureaucrats always work with inadequate resources in circumstances where the demand will always increase to meet the supply of services, as shown above in both Sheffield and Manchester. Thus they can never be free from significant constraints. In Sheffield, within these constraints they have broad discretion with respect to the utilisation of resources. For example, one of the street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> We have noted there has been a reduction in our funding, and we have to deliver more Children Centres, while our resources are spread further. So obviously less people get it, so the services we might be able to deliver universally would now be targeted at the more need. And I don't necessarily think that is wrong. I do think that in an ideal world you can put a lot of resources in and we would be able to deliver a great service to everybody. But as long as we are getting the people that need the most, I think that is the most important thing.

In Manchester, within this limited boundary they have broad discretion and autonomy with respect to the utilization of resources in the implementation process. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented: 'As we continue to grow, we are becoming more autonomous now, as I said before, delivering service locally, not just general across in Manchester, we tailor it to what's needed in that area' (personal interview). The following section looks at that how street-level bureaucrats deal with their relations with clients, relations among themselves and targets as implementers in Sure Start.

6.2.7 Relations with Clients

As described in implementation network approach in Chap. 4, clients in street-level bureaucracies are non-voluntary, which results from street-level bureaucracies often supplying essential services that service users cannot obtain from elsewhere. Especially in the implementation process, street-level bureaucrats usually have nothing to lose, such as job loss, by failing to satisfy clients through a range of ways. The implementation network approach recognises that street-level bureaucrat exercises controls on the existing and potential service users by distributing benefits and sanctions, instructing clients on how to behave or using their own routines.

In the first place, street-level bureaucrats could ration services by limiting the access of clients to the services. This may be due to the insufficiency of resources where street-level bureaucrats encounter restraints to providing services to clients, or they may intentionally fix the amount or level of goods and services in relation to other goods and services. The report 'Early Years: Progress in Developing High Quality Childcare and Early Education Accessible to All' identified a risk that the number of skilled and qualified early years staff may not grow fast enough to meet the needs of the expanding sector (NAO 2004). Based on the interviews from Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that street-level workers in Sure Start often face the constraints of time and resources in delivering services to clients, and they intend to take various means to ration services in both cities. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield commented:

> The main difficult is shortage of the staff, they can only do what they can do, and there are so many children in this area, there is an absolute limitation on the number of children with number of staff. So for many children, your ability to increase provision is almost zero, we have to limit our services to only certain groups of people.

> There is a time constraint. I have to manage time effectively, time management it's an issue, resource is an issue, because we might not necessarily have the venue to deliver services, might not have people to deliver service, so I have to look creative ways to bridge that gap. I have to bring key partners on board to be with me to be able to solve problems we got, the funding limited, you apply for funding.

Time is also a considerably important resource for street-level bureaucrats. Time costs are often assessed by street-level bureaucrats and they can either expedite

services or delay services to clients. Goffman argues that 'the business of public service bureaucracies is to categorise clients, to provide service to a citizen a bureaucracy must first reduce that citizen and his or her demands into a simple and patterned package of processable attributes' (Goffman 1976: 79–109). a report '*Jobcentre Plus and Children's Centres*' from DWP argued: 'The simple pressures on time and responsibilities which staff in a range of organisations experience can also mitigate against partnership working on a more day-to-day basis and it is at this level that relationships can become more fully established' (Dench et al. 2008: 78). For example, in Manchester one of the street-level workers commented that 'we have a lot of families to support, and due to the time constraints, we sometimes have to signpost them to other organisations, or tell them that they would have to wait for us and we will be not going to be able to meet their needs right now' (personal interview). Furthermore, street-level workers in Sheffield also show their concerns on the time pressure of linking with different key partners. Once the Children's Centre is established and starts running, managers often face unprecedented pressures on liaising with key partners, the consultation process and the marketing of services offered in the centre, which is time-consuming. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> One is to get the centre established and running, and getting key partners in. The other big one is consultation and marketing of services. How do we actually get the people to know what we deliver, where it has been delivered. It is all taking time, because until you take partners on board, the actual partners starts delivering service, we cannot start to market it, we feel we got the services to start and Children Centre is running. At the moment we got the virtual centres. So plus but the actual building is not completed yet, but delivery of core offers is happening across the area. So it may be the library delivery and young children activity that parents get involved in, and that might be local forum free training to parents around working with young children or getting involved in playing with young children. So it is all happening; what we need to do for children's centre is to sit down. Let's us take what's happening, who is delivering it, where, what, what we need to look at, how to deliver, how to let parents know these services running.

Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester have to face a large number of human dimension issues. They often encounter difficulties or problems, as the nature of human dimension issues are to some extent unpredictable. Street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield experience the apathy of some parents towards the services. One of the health visitors in Sheffield commented:

> I think you have to accept that not everybody wants services. I think you have to work hard to present them in such a way they are attractive, and make people want them. Because there wasn't a Sure Start Local Programme in this area, parents are quite suspicious of are we something to do with benefits agency; are we something to do with housing. We went out to try to recruit parents to Sure Start to one of local primary schools nursery department. There were hundreds of people, and we got six parents to talk to us.

In Manchester, it can be seen that human dimension issues also give street-level bureaucrats a lot of autonomy in the implementation process. Within their roles, they choose to take the discretion based on their own level and what they can do.

Health visitors and family supporters are all proficient in this. One of the health visitors in Manchester illustrated:

> When we meet some families who are not willing to take services offered by us, we will come back and discuss with other people what has happened, and look at some barriers and how to publicize things and make sure all professionals are aware of what we are doing. Sometimes, we just feel that people are quite suspicious of who we are, and we will see what measures we will take to deal with all sorts of situations.

In Manchester it also has been found that sometimes when street-level bureaucrats face the difficulty of handling parents, they normally respond by employing some local people with sufficient local knowledge. For example, one of the Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester employs a receptionist in the centre who is capable of dealing with difficult parents with sufficient training (personal interview).

In Manchester, street-level bureaucrats can also give or withhold information to ration services towards local clients. Interestingly, Prottas argues that 'the bureaucracy and its non street-level employees have access to the internal facts—rules, formal categories, procedures, and so forth; the clients have access to the external information—facts about themselves, their demands, and so forth; only the street-level bureaucrats has routine access to both' (Prottas 1978: 293). Lower-level workers in Sure Start Children's Centres have the autonomy to choose to either spread the useful information to clients or withhold it in order to reduce service demands. A report of '*Jobcentre Plus and Children's Centres*' from DWP argued that: 'We did find some evidence that communication at a local level was not always happening effectively. For example, there were a few cases of Children's Centre staff saying that a certain service was going to be provided, while during a visit to the local Jobcentre Plus office we were told that there was no way in which these could be funded' (Dench et al. 2008: 79).

One of the street-level bureaucrats commented in Manchester that 'we do the utmost effort to provide information to local people. However, sometimes you just have to be careful when you have a huge amount of people expecting services from you' (personal interview). Based on interviews in Manchester, in some local areas, local residents are still confused as to what a Sure Start Children's Centre is and what it does. Under these circumstances, to what extent the employees in Manchester spread the information on the functions of the centres becomes key to reaching the target groups of Sure Start policy. While the client has limited resources in bargaining with the street-level bureaucrat, the street-level bureaucrat's control over information and their capacity to manipulate 'internal' bureaucratic alternatives gives them the upper hand in making decisions.

The following example reveals the impact of street-level bureaucrats in Manchester as information distributors in the Sure Start implementation process. One of the managers in the Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester illustrated:

> We just keep offering them some new and different. We phone them up when we get something different on board, and keep sending them leaflets. For example, this morning, I happened to see a woman with a pram, who I know for a long time. I just literally run to her and saying 'hi where you are going', it is her grandson, and her young son is a very young

> parent. And she is caring for her grandson. And I literally brought her here. She was like, I haven't got time, I said, yes you've got time. She came in with some warm baby bottle. She will come back now. She knows I am here. Sometimes it is as simple as that, as seen them walk past you, and talk to them and get them. Another time, other people will refer them, and school might phone up, or health visitors. It is like tuning in and developing the local knowledge.

In addition, some managers in the centres in Manchester have to coordinate five children centres at the same time, and try to bring themselves up to keep up to speed with all the centres activities. They often reallocate their resources or prioritize their preferences as means of simplifying their work cases, which gives them confidence to cope with local clients. For example one of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester stated:

> Things pop up. For example, we are working on the toddler groups; it is a matter of time is the most pressure resources. Sometimes I just cannot do this in this week, I will have to work with this family. If it is a question of working with the parents, they will always confirm I can put another professional off. I will never speak to the parents like that, because then they will never come back.

On the contrary, in Sheffield it emerged that street-level bureaucrats seek to simplify their tasks and narrow their range of perceptions in order to process the information they receive and develop responses to it. Lower-level workers develop routines to deal with the complexity of work tasks. In addition, the bureaucracy must depend on the street-level bureaucrats for almost all of its information about clients; therefore, it is reasonable for street-level bureaucrats to conceal the information of clients to keep it away from the inspection of agencies (Prottas 1978: 297). Health visitors, midwives, parental outreach workers and family supporters set up their own routines to cope with the difficult situations they encounter in the service delivery process. Street-level bureaucrats especially experience great pressure in trying to balance increased number with the issue of quality of service. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield commented:

> We cannot fulfill what we need and that is our trouble. For example this nursery has only 40 children equivalent, because we can only take 20 children at the moment. So in other words, we have not got space and staff to deliver services you like. Sometimes, we just have to be honest to the people, and tell them we cannot provide services to them, and also report back to our boss, and let them handle this issue which we can do nothing at the ground level.

Based on the interviews from Sheffield, being frank with local clients and pushing the responsibility back to the higher authority is often used by street-level bureaucrats to routinise their complex tasks in the implementation process. This routine provides street-level bureaucrats with a legitimate excuse for not dealing with the clients flexibly. Street-level bureaucrats also face an incredibly heavy workload and pressure due to increasing requests from local clients and their superiors. The next section looks at how the relations among street-level bureaucrats influence the implementation process of Sure Start at the local level.

6.2.8 Relations Among Street-Level Bureaucrats

The implementation network approach also recognises the implementation process involves many key actors with competing goals in the complicated government programmes that require a mixed layers and units of government participating who are affected by powerful factors beyond their control. The complex relation between different actors also includes the complex interactive process between street-level bureaucrats from different organisations or within the same organisations. As illustrated in Chap. 3, good inter-agency relationships are important to achieving success in establishing partnerships envisaged in the government guidance to Sure Start policy. Some Sure Start Children's Centres have created well-functioning local linkages, while others have not. Although a strategic commitment at the most senior level of each partner organisation proves to be a key factor in developing good relationships among agencies, at the implementation dimension, street-level bureaucrats in different agencies are considerably more significant in achieving good cooperation among agencies. In the first place, based on interviews from both Sheffield and Manchester, lack of resources cause difficulties and prevent street-level bureaucrats from working together. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Manchester commented:

> The main difficulty for us is the time and opportunity to be able to meet together and plan together, both strategically and operationally, to keep our service together, not duplicate service, and family centres. One set of advice for professionally, work holistically, rather than duplicating, or free family to us, now one don't need to work, it is all about playing our part, what children and parent want from us, not bombard them, we have 140 different families, they all want something different.

Especially in the health sector, in both Sheffield and Manchester there is a shortage of health visitors and midwives, and their capacity is too stretched to be able to deliver services in Sure Start Children's Centres. They have to deliver in two venues—both Children Centres and Baby Clinics, even though managers look at how they can make changes to address this. It is more cost-effective to run one service in Sure Start Children's Centres, rather than doing a drop-in clinic based in a GP centre. Shortage of staff in health services causes the difficulty of children centres providing health services to local people, especially to children under five, and cause tensions among street-level bureaucrats.

However, there is variance in both Sheffield and Manchester in terms of relations among street-level bureaucrats. The documents 'Jobcentre Plus and Children's Centres' and 'Delivering Health Services through Sure Start Children's Centres' from both DWP and DoH, show the important of good partnership between health and jobcentre plus employees with staff in Children's Centres (DCSF et al. 2006). However, Street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester have all experienced difficulties working with PCTs and Jobcentre Plus, but in different forms. In Sheffield, a lack of trust and respect among street-level bureaucrats influences the good partnership between street-level bureaucrats. The existence of trust is crucial to the task of information sharing, as is reaching out to the objectives

shared by different agencies or organisations. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield expressed the distrust or lack of confidence with health visitors or midwifery and commented:

> I think you just don't know what their job is, and you have to find out what they do in order to say you can come to our place and do your things. If you don't know what actually their role is, what kind of thing they can do in our community and how they go to work when a baby is just born. And sometimes I am just not confident in them because I find out that they are not highly committed to the jobs we have here in the centre, and seem to me they have got loads of work to do in their own department.

Not only do some staff in Children's Centres distrust health people, but also have a lack of trust with lower-level workers in Jobcentre Plus. Establishing trust is often difficult because staff trained in different professions operate according to varying codes of practice. One of the managers from Sure Start Children Centres in Sheffield commented:

> It could be better in early days, it is much more visual in Children Centre, it had somebody will come weekly and give advice for lone parents. It doesn't seem to be as good as it could be initially in early days, given that they set up entrance for Clayton. We have community care, have library based in here. We get lots more people than other Children Centre. We get up to 10,000 people in three months period. Reaching all people might not necessarily coming into contact with that, and also we have got childcare on site, they could liaise about getting people back to work and sorting out childcare at the same time.

In Manchester, in terms of information sharing between street-level bureaucrats, it can be seen that staff in the Centres encounter difficulties in obtaining data from PCT staff. Some managers in Sure Start Children's Centres are upset and dissatisfied with the way the PCT staff manage data. One of the managers in Manchester commented:

> Basically it is not enough data as an accurate baseline. Establishing Sure Start impact is extremely difficult. There are lots of reasons. For example, PCT data, they have the best data on all families, they give us some data, not all of it, then you have changed demographic, like here you have massive increased immigration which is positive and changing employment in terms of economy. So how much of that change you can measure. But how much that change is due to Sure Start or due to other thing is difficult to measure due to the inaccuracy of the data.

Some of the staff in the Centre levelled criticism that the services provided by employees of Jobcentre Plus is very marginal, especially on advice on getting parents to work. One of the street-level bureaucrats in Manchester commented that 'Yes, advice to parents on work, I am not sure how very successful it is. It is a much bigger issue, why people go to work, therefore they're not addressing the big issue, they just address some symptoms of the problem' (personal interview). Relations among street-level bureaucrats as implementers are key to the success of the implementation process. The following section looks at the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats as implementers in terms of dealing with targets.

6.2.9 *Autonomy of Street-Level Bureaucrats as Implementers on Targets*

The previous section has illustrated the autonomy of street-level workers as decision-makers when facing unclear or unrealistic targets (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2) set from above. The implementation network approach also highlights the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats as implementers in coping with targets. As implementers, they also have to face insufficient resources to reach unclear or unrealistic targets and conflicting targets. Actions taken by street-level bureaucrats as decision-makers will certainly influence the outcome of implementation and the way they actually deliver services to local clients.

In Manchester, it can be seen that ambiguous targets (Table 7.2) also limit street-level bureaucrats from taking clear steps to reaching targets. For example,—a target to increase the proportion of young children aged 0–5 with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age is a typical example of an ambiguous target that keeps street-level workers from taking clear action in attaining the target. In addition, some street-level bureaucrats in Manchester illustrated that there is no figure to work on, and they have no clues how to measure the improvement of their clients. For example, one of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> We can measure how much people come here, how many people we see to compare test via observation, exhibit this or that, before or after, exhibit that behaviour. We can measure the number of children of obesity when they to go reception or classes, or number of parents smoking, number of teenage mothers, do all of that. But it is difficult to measure the impact of to what extent Sure Start has contributed to the improvements of children, smoking parents and teenage mothers.

Especially on health data, Children Centres couldn't obtain the updated health data on time, which further contributed to the ambiguity of their targets. Some of the street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester are also considerably suspicious of the effectiveness and validity of targets from higher authorities.

For example, one of the lower-level workers in Manchester commented that 'in terms of number of reducing the child poverty by 2010, you get data, but in terms of other figures, I just don't know whether they would be good or bad thing. Sometimes, they would say you have failed if you don't achieve those figures. Performance management has always been an issue throughout this policy' (personal interview). In Manchester, in the more ethnically diversified areas, Children's Centres also have to employ interpreters to accompany health visitors, midwives and parental support workers. However, based on the interviews, lack of funding, such as a shortage of funding for interpreting services, has put a constraint on street-level bureaucrats in meeting their objectives of reaching out to the most needed families, including minority groups. One of the lower-level workers in the Sure Start Children's Centre in Manchester commented:

> There's some difficulty to certain extent, I think it is on very practical level in the area like this. For example, we do not have funding towards interpreting services. We have so many

> people in the community who do not speak English. It is impossible to do some of that commission service to non-English speakers.

In Sheffield, some of the street-level bureaucrats also expressed their concerns about the inappropriate targets, such as having 100% of families with new babies visited in the first 2 months of their baby's life (Table 7.1), and criticized them as being too unrealistic. One of the health visitors in Sheffield stated that 'we will see that family has attended this, this, and this, but in terms of outcomes, do we know it has made a difference to family, normally it takes years to come, and it is still too early for Sure Start to do the first evaluation, because it wouldn't be showing a great much difference now. It didn't show great difference, and it only will be showing difference after Sure Start six or seven years on' (personal interview).

6.3 Conclusion

The implementation network approach not only considers the roles of organisations but also emphasises the roles of street-level bureaucrats in the implementation process. This chapter has analysed the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start policy through interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, and their influences on the implementation process from two perspectives—bureaucrats as decision-makers and implementers. From the perspective of bottom up level analysis, street-level bureaucrats have an influential impact on the implementation process of Sure Start. They have a large amount of discretion and autonomy in both decision-making and implementation processes, which vary based on different circumstances.

Based on the interviews, it is evident that time and resource constraints affect the way street-level bureaucrats deliver at the ground level. In addition, targets also have a considerable influence on the decision-making and implementation processes of street-level bureaucrats. Positive attitudes and innovative approaches can maximize street-level bureaucrats' resources considerably. For instance, with regard to actively involving the local community in delivering activities, some the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres have been considerably creative and inventive in mobilising local people's resources to complement the insufficiencies of street-level bureaucrats. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres commented:

> This community we are working with has very little in the way of networks. So there are no community groups. There are resident groups, but all over the age of sixty. There is no other support of networks. So it is not a way of life for people to go to group to do the group activity. We have been modelling those over the last few years, putting members of staff to try set a group up to provide that network. That is three years down the line, just beginning to come around where we can identify a natural leader, and say why you don't run this groups. We will give you free room and resources. But you can do yourself. And they are willing to do. In some cases, we are giving them some training for them, and a credited training. So in most cases parents stay home with young children, so they are getting that credentials, and gradually they are building up their experiences.

On the contrary, street-level bureaucrats will also play a negative role in coping with pressures resulting from a shortage of time, constraints of funding, or the difficulty of inappropriate targets by rationing services to local clients or controlling clients as analysed above. In addition, though street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start as both decision-makers and implementers have autonomy and discretion to deliver the public service as noted above, it is important to recognise that their autonomy and discretion is partly derived from their own structured environment, involving limits such as time and resources, but also from where there is a lack of clear specificity in either targets or objectives. The interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, revealed the extent to which there is considerable variation from different actors regarding their perception of the extent to which Labour has devolved power to frontline staff in Sure Start policy. Some street-level bureaucrats felt they now had greater autonomy than before, but others felt their autonomy had not really changed, despite Labour's rhetoric of power devolution to frontline services Overall though, a clear consensus emerged across the interview material drawn from the street-level bureaucrats in this study under Labour greater central control had been imposed at the lower level by the employment of a large number of targets and objectives linked to funding streams.

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Chapter 7
Context, Structure and Agency, Outcomes

In the previous chapters, the implementation process of Sure Start in Sheffield and Manchester has been analysed from both an organisational and street-level bureaucratic perspective. The implementation network approach not only explains the interactive process of institutional actors at the meso-level, but also considers the role of street-level bureaucrats both as decision-makers and implementers, and their influence on the implementation process at the micro-level. Analysis of the interactive process of institutions and street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start constitutes two important explanatory variables in the implementation network approach. However, it is essential to link institutional analysis with the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats and place them into one framework that considers the context, outcomes and the role of structure and agency.

The implementation network approach provides a holistic perspective that incorporates these factors into one framework. Based on the interviews and primary and secondary sources, the following part mainly focuses on the interactive relations of the network and considers the context, outcomes, and the role of structure and agency, and how these factors interact and influence the implementation process of Sure Start in Sheffield and Manchester. Drawing from the analysis in the last two chapters, this chapter will be divided into three parts. The first section focuses on how the context influences the way actors deliver Sure Start in both cities, encompassing both organisations and street-level workers; secondly, the relations between structure and agency is analysed highlighting the interactive relations between organisations and street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start policy in both cities; thirdly, how the policy outcomes affect the networks is considered in terms of its interactive relation with the implementation network.

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7.1 Networks and Context

Implementation network approach argues that a dialectical relationship has to be recognised between the network and the broader context within which it is located. In the first place, the implementation networks approach reflects exogenous structures, including elements of institutional, policy, political, economic and ideological changes. How do these factors influence the resources and interests of actors within the implementation network? Furthermore, the implementation network approach enables policy implementation to be seen in relation to a policy cycle to analyse how other policy stages, such as agenda setting, policy making and policy evaluation, influence it as political factors.

Secondly, network structure, network change and the policy outcome may be partially explained with reference to factors exogenous to the network, but these contextual factors are related to network structure and network interaction (Marsh and Toke 2003). In addition, the implementation network approach suggests that other networks are also a crucial part of the broader context within which a particular network is located. Overall, the implementation network approach recognises that exogenous changes can affect the resources, interests and relationships of the actors within networks. The following analyses how the 'joined-up strategy' under New Labour, institutional transformations and the rhetoric on devolving more power to frontline staff have an impact on the actors within the implementation network in terms of delivering Sure Start policy.

7.1.1 New Labour's Joined-Up Strategy on Delivering Sure Start

It was only under New Labour that a self-regulating form of joined-up government took shape, based on incentives to act in a cross-institutional way (Bochel and Duncan 2007: 130). Parker and Hartley emphasised the benefits of collaborative rather than competitive forms of procurement under the New Labour government elected in 1997 (Parker and Hartley 1997), while Entwistle and Martin implied that the turn to partnership marks an important departure in service delivery (Entwistle and Martin 2005). The Labour Government has stressed the importance of effective delivery, and 'multi-agency working' has been a core feature of its reform of public service delivery. Furthermore, in the White Paper on 'Modernising Government' (1999), the Labour government also flagged up 'delivery matters' as one of the top policy priorities.

'Joining up' as a new governing mode has had a clear impact on the implementation process of Sure Start policy, since it focuses on cross-cutting delivery, shared goals, institutional restructuring and collaboration arrangements. In the first place, the traditional political approach of a singular organisation delivering public

services has been transformed to multi-agency working and partnership arrangements. The objective of Sure Start is not merely the responsibility of a single department or organisation but needs collaboration from other departments. One of the senior officials from DCSF commented that 'DoH and DWP have dual responsibilities to help children to reach their own full potential, especially with the help of getting parents back to employment and copying with the health issues of children' (personal interview).

In addition, at the local level both in Sheffield and Manchester, Sure Start Children's Centres are multi-purpose centres that bring together childcare, early education, health and family support services. They are designed for use by families, parents and carers of children under five and may be based in schools, health centres, community centres or in their own building. Public, private and voluntary organisations work together, such as NCH and MCDT in Sheffield, or Barnado's and the Big Life company in Manchester, to provide a wide range of services from childcare to health visiting, employment advice, parenting advice and toy libraries for all young families, but with a particular emphasis on improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children.

The 'joined-up strategy', as mentioned above, has substantially transformed the way organisations and street-level bureaucrats deliver Sure Start services. A report by the European Commission illustrates that 'the innovative aspect and success of Sure Start lies in this joined-up approach' (European Commission 2007: 3). Through interview materials in both Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that local authority, health services, job centres, local communities, public agencies and voluntary and private sector organisations all work together to provide services that benefit children and their families in an integrated way. However, it is significant to be aware of the difficulties and obstacles caused by a joined-up approach to organisational collaboration and its influence on the actors within the implementation network[1].

The way of delivering Sure Start services has been transformed under New Labour's strategy of 'joined-up' governance, but it also brings new problems to the implementation process of Sure Start. Collaboration between departments is challenging, as one of the interviewees from the Social Exclusion Task Force in Whitehall commented. 'It is not just joined-up across the department, but within the department, with early years, there are some early year settings in private sector, some in voluntary. Getting a coherent approach across schools, private, non-profit organisations, nursery and voluntary organisations in terms of the way of their running things is very difficult. Even within the department, the complexity of the stakeholders in Sure Start policy was very difficult' (personal interview). Departmental views on how to run Sure Start are different. One of the officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force commented:

[1]See Chaps 5 and 6 for details on partnership obstacles from the perspective of organisations and street-level workers in both Sheffield and Manchester.

> There was a tension in the extent to which we dictated what should happen from the centre and the extent to which parents themselves have a role to play in running Sure Start programme and Children's Centres. We started from a strong view about local community control, and increasingly that cannot work it out, into local control you must do this, local control you must do that. There is really a tension which is not just joined-up horizontally across government but joined-up vertically in terms of what we wanted and what local community they want, what government should do. Those are real barriers we have.

DCSF, DoH and DWP co-publish statutory guidance in 'Raising Standards Improving Outcomes', and clearly indicate the need for the partnership of three departments. 'This guidance provides an overview of the existing and new duties that are key to how local authorities and their partners work together to promote early childhood services and improve outcomes' (DCSF et al. 2006: 3). However, Richards and Kavanagh demonstrate how 'departmentalism' is deeply rooted in Whitehall, despite the Labour government's attempts to shift to a more holistic approach (Kavanagh and Richards 2001). In terms of joined-up working with DWP and DoH in Sure Start, there are tensions in joining up not just in terms of what the key goals of the departments are, but in overcoming different departmental cultures. One of the senior officials from the Social Exclusion and Task Force commented:

> Culture is very inward looking. At the end of day, a good servant is to progress the key interests of your secretary of state. If a secretary of state cannot agree on key targets, and then your job is to serve your secretary of state, not the secretary of state from other departments. Therefore the natural inclination is to be departmental not joined up. We have made progress the way of joined-up government, but it is not very natural. You have to make a considerable effort to do it.

Another key challenge is about funding among different departments. There are different and complex funding streams (See Tables 7.1 and 7.2) at the different levels. The government document 'Wiring it up' made a number of recommendations designed to tackle weaknesses in handling policies and services that cut across responsibilities of more than one department, one of which is 'greater use of budgetary flexibilities, such as cross-departmental budgets and pooling of funds where appropriate' (Cabinet Office 2002). At the central level in Whitehall, joint planning and commissioning on Sure Start is supported by joint funding arrangements, such as aligned budgets. Formal joint funding arrangements are achieved through a pooled budget, a mechanism by which the partners in an agreement each bring money to form a discrete fund. 'Between 1999 and 2004, the government has invested £760 million in these local programmes, with spending in the latest year reaching half a billion pounds. Additional money is now going into developing Children's Centres, with £435 million committed over the three-year period from 2003 to 2006' (Moss 2004: 2). In Sure Start policy, DCSF (DfES) is the leading department in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres and receives funding from the Treasury specifically. However, Sure Start Children's Centre is a multi-functional centre that brings together employment, education, childcare and health to provide one-stop services. However, employment and health related services are provided by Jobcentre Plus and PCTs, which receive funding directly from DoH and DWP.

Table 7.1 Children and young people funding stream in Manchester

Funding stream	£k received/ projected 05/06	£k projected 06/07	£k projected 07/08	£k projected 08/09
Carer's grant	501	**	**	**
Child and adolescent mental health services	1397	1425	1454	**
Children's services	Various grants now rolled into Children's Services Grant	2292	2897	**
Education health partnership	86	**	**	**
Extended schools	560	Included in Sure Start Grant		
Key stage 3-behaviour and attendance	125	125	125	**
Key stage 3-central co-ordination	639	625	550	**
Neighbourhood renewal fund	3217	Allocation to be determined by MCC		
Neighbourhood renewal fund CFSC	1723	Allocation to be determined by MCC		
Neighbourhood renewal fund-youth service	658	Allocation to be determined by MCC		
Primary strategy central coordination	587	587	498	**
School travel advisers	54	**	**	**
Standards fund-local authority retained element of new amalgamated single grant	1219	**	**	**
New opportunities fund	216	**	**	**
New deal for communities	576	**	**	**
ERDF	194			
Children's fund	2966	2378		
Sure start revenue funding		**		

Source https://www.manchesterpct.nhs.uk/document_uploads/board_10_jan/lap_Appx3funding.pdf

At the local level, the Treasury has respective budgets for children, local authorities and PCTs, and they have to join these up locally. One of the senior officials from the central government commented that 'there would be a lot easier if they could be joined-up nationally' (personal interview). In terms of children and young people funding streams, there are Sure Start Revenue Funds, the Children's Fund, the Connexions Fund, Children Service Grants and Teenage Pregnancy Funding. Sure Start revenue funds support the delivery of district commissioning

Table 7.2 Children, young people and families' funding streams in Sheffield

Age range	Funding streams/ programmes (April 05)	Flexibilities/outcomes action 10
0–5 early years	Children's fund Teenage pregnancy Pathfinder Safeguarding CAMHS—LA and PCT YIP Futures Sure start Substance misuse Sure start plus Extended schools Healthy schools	To achieve our aim of developing integrated services for children aged 0–5 years through development of children's centres and locality services. These will provide integrated services which would involve multiple stakeholders. Pooling of funding streams, and the removal of current restrictions on the profiling of different funding streams, would provide the much-needed flexibility required to expand services and to build a qualitative framework at a faster pace Improving the quality of services offered to parents and children at the earliest opportunity plays a significant role in improving the attainment levels of our youngest children. LAA will support and facilitate a process of identifying resources available to the city and how their use can be maximised Long term plans and commitments could be made to sustain, support and expand the childcare stock

Source Sheffield First Agreement, 2005–2008 from Sheffield First Partnership

arrangements (See Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3a, b) where resources will be allocated to support the core offer and ensure that outcome-focused delivery to the under fives population is a priority. In Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that there is a similarity in both local authorities, which receive a wide range of different and complicated funding streams from different central departments in the Whitehall. From Tables 7.2 and 7.3a, b, it is clear that in Sheffield all funding streams are from different departments, such as DfES, the Home Office, DoH and ODPM. In addition, we can also see differences between the two cities. Although they both have a large number of different funding streams, some of the funding streams in both cities is from different sources. In Manchester Key Stage 3-Behaviour and Attendance and Key Stage 3-Central Co-ordination are two funding streams that are not present in Sheffield local authority (See Table 7.1).

7.1.2 Institutional Restructuring

With the greater emphasis on 'joined-up government', the Labour Government triggered changes in the way that departments and ministers share responsibilities for delivering Sure Start policy, and also set up a series of new institutional arrangements. Institutional change is another important factor that affects the implementation process of Sure Start policy. It changed the main actors involved in delivering Sure Start policy, and has had an implication on the relationships of different actors in the implementation network in Sheffield and Manchester. For instance, DfES has been divided into two

Table 7.3 Corporate overview: Sheffield first agreement, 2005

(a) Funding streams (1)		
Funding streams pooled from 1/4/2005		
LAA block	Central department	Funding stream
SSCF	ODPM	NRF
SSCF	ODPM	Liverability
SSCF	ODPM	Single Community Programme
SSCF	Home Office	ASB Fund
SSCF	Home Office	Basic Command Unit Fund
SSCF	Home Office	Trailblazer
SSCF	Home Office	Trailblazer Plus
SSCF	Home Office	HO Policing Standards Unit
SSCF	Home Office	Children's Fund
CYP	DfES	Teenage Pregnancy
CYP	DfES/DoH	Pathfinder (Children's Trust)
CYP	DfES	Safeguarding
CYP	DfES	YISP
CYP	DfES	Futures
CYP	DfES	Sure Start
CYP	DfES	Sure Start Plus
CYP	DfES	Extended Schools
CYP	DfES/DoH	Healthy Schools
CYP	DfES/HO	Substance Misuse
(b) Funding streams (2)		
Funding streams aligned from 1/4/2005		
LAA block	Central department	Funding stream
CYP	DfES	Connexions
CYP	DfES	Positive activities for young people

Source http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/768338

departments under the Brown government in 2007—DCSF and DIUS. 'The stated purpose of the DCSF is to make this the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up and, for the first time, put children, young people and their families have a voice at the heart of government' (DCSF 2007a, b, c), One of the senior officials from DCSF commented that

> The new department is just changing a name, which was to raise the reputation of the government. This is the department for children, family and schools. Partly, it is a big department closely linked with the prime minister, partly, because it got dual responsibility with the DWP and DoH, that is the main joined-up much more we have ever done. We got new joined-up child poverty unit between two departments, and we got new joined boards, new PSA jointly. So there is much stronger partnership working which results in more money being given to children, so the priority around children centre has been improved because of that.

Even though it is claimed by the interviewees that DCSF as a new department does strengthen the position of children, families and young people in Whitehall and the policy is more focused on them, there are some arguments that there has been less joining up since the establishment of DCSF. One of the senior officials commented:

> What happens since the beginning, there has been less joined-up, because some key areas have been pulled into the DCSF. Originally children's centre and early education service was managed separately, and everything was fragmented. DCSF became the child department, certainly it has closer relationships with DoH. But it is still difficult and as different as it was. It is still difficult and the barriers to joined up are the way different departments are facing their own targets. DfES's school targets were permanent and its main interest is in school interests, it is difficult to get attention on joined up targets. I think it has been changed now, because child poverty is within DCSF which it makes differs from what it was, DfES was an education department, but now a child department, the need to joined-up is less, because they absorbed everything.

In addition, in 2003, there was a radical change in the governance of children's services across Whitehall. A change occurred in the structural position of the Sure Start implementation network. A new post of Minister for Children was created, with Margaret Hodge as the first minister of Children's social care moved from the Department of Health to the DfES, and family policy was moved from the Home Office to the DfES. One of the senior officials in the central government illustrated that:

> Two big changes, the first is bringing together all children's policy into DfES, and appoint Margaret Hodge as the first minister of the Children, quite a big change. Until then, the Heath department was really seen as the leader of early years and Sure Start, appointment of Hodge kind of bring things together, and they could be different policy and social services, and they brought it over here, and that kind of really focuses on children as an issue. That minister realised that the children's development was right. That was a big impact.

The changing role of local authorities is also parts of institutional restructuring, and it plays an important part in influencing the implementation process. Hence, the following section focuses on the impact of the changing role of local authorities in the service delivery process of Sure Start.

7.1.3 The Changing Role of the Local Authority

By December 2004, there was a move by the government to make local authorities responsible for planning, establishing and funding these Children's Centres, rather than continuing with partnership arrangements where one partner took the lead without formal legalisation. Since April 2006, the DfES has paid a grant to local authorities to fund all Children's Centres, including all former Sure Start Local Programmes. Local authorities are now accountable for delivering Children's Centres and provide a range of services that go beyond the original remit of Sure

Start Local Programmes (Mulgan et al. 2008). As noted in the government's official paper—*Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance 2003*—the role of local authorities role has been considerably changed in the government's Sure Start agenda, which in turn results in changes in the implementation network, and local authorities taking a leading and strategic role in implementing Sure Start policy. Based on the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, it is evident that local authorities in both cities have taken strategic roles in developing Sure Start policy.

In 2003, Every Child Matters (QCA 2008) clearly changed the role of local authorities in the Sure Start implementation network, and made them indispensable players in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres. One of the senior officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force commented:

> Everything we said in Every Child Matters in 2003, you wanted a clear sense of responsibility for children. You couldn't have someone in local authority level who is responsible for the children except the 600 Sure Start children who lives in this particular neighbourhood. You need to join things up.

Local authorities have a strategic overview, giving different Centres different services on which they focus, rather than each centre providing uniform services. Some Centres merely employ one person, but others have one manager between two centres; some Centres have more needs in one area than another area. That is why local authorities have strategic overview to decide what services to provide, mandate joint commission services provided by PCT and administer a jointly pooled budget. Local authorities have the knowledge at the grassroots to tailor the resources to meet local needs. 'Initially, there were a lot of ministers who are suspicious of local authorities, and they want the funding to go from central government directly to the local level and they want to be intermediate to be voluntary sectors' (Personal interview). However, two factors - financial and organisational - have constrained this role. One of the senior officials commented that:

> In the end, one reason they don't have the capacity to manage that much money, it is a lot of money. Second reason, they don't have many voluntary organisations, and a more serious problem is if you don't let local authority have a role. How could you join up with the rest of the children world?

At the outset of Sure Start policy, the Labour government set up a series of Sure Start Local Programmes and also commissioned Birkbeck College to conduct Sure Start policy reviews (Hero 2001). The reviews were commissioned in early 2001 to undertake a multifaceted evaluation of Sure Start Local Programmes addressing 'the nature of the communities in which Sure Start Local Programmes were situated, the ways in which Sure Start Local Programmes were implemented; the impact of Sure Start Local Programmes on children, families and communities; and the cost-effectiveness of Sure Start Local Programmes' (Belsky et al. 2007: 16). However responding to the experience of the first four years, there was a big policy change from Sure Start Local Programmes to Children's Centres.

Through interviews in Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that this policy change has substantially influenced the implementation process of Sure Start in

both cities. In Sheffield, before the roll out of Sure Start Children's Centres, managers had to submit their delivery plan to the accountable bodies which run the Sure Start Local Programme. However after the policy change, one of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> Each year we would deliver delivery services report. However, Local authority didn't have a copy on that. But from 2006, we were asked to put the plan and report to local authority (Sheffield) as well, they became more interested what we're doing, achievement, strategy on how it changed.

In Manchester, interviews also indicate that this policy change affects the way in which funding is allocated. One of the senior officials in Manchester illustrated:

> Do you make a building, do you make sure it has a childcare, that was the big difference, the programme is about geographic areas, and what service were able in that areas, the children centre is about building, what services is in the building. The key service meant to be providing the same. The big difference is to make it universal, and we want children centre everywhere. The big change also is to give local authority more control on how to disperse the money. Because up to then, the money could be only spent on the designated programmes areas, where from 2003, there is more autonomy for the local authority to decide how much they can spend.

it was noted that before 2003 Sure Start was mainly run by the Sure Start Local Programme. However after 2003, Sure Start Children Centres were set up to replace old services. This transition process is still taking place now, and is also makes a difference to disadvantaged families by converting it into a watered down universal service. prior to the establishment of Sure Start Children's Centre, Sure Start Local Programmes targets the most disadvantaged communities rather than providing services in each community in England. The net result now will be less funding in disadvantaged areas and more in areas of comparative affluence. This contextual factor has also influenced the delivery process of Sure Start. The transition process did not happen overnight, and it needs consistent efforts by different agencies and organisations to push it through. Even though there has been government guidance, local authorities are still slow to implement the change of Sure Start Local Programmes into Children's Centres. The Local Programmes have different accountable bodies (PCTs, voluntary, private and independent organisations) and the staff in Sure Start Local Programmes are also employed by different agencies. The slow progress of transition also has been reflected in both Sheffield and Manchester. One of the managers from a Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented that 'it has been the case that the local authority (EYECS) is very slow in implementation of any strategy to sort of overcoming barriers rather than looking at solutions, which are the problems' (personal interview). One of the managers from a Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester also commented that 'though local authority (Sure Start Unit) is pushing through the transformation from local programmes to Children's Centres, it has been a long-term process with all sorts of difficulties and problems' (personal interview).

7.1.4 New Labour's Rhetoric on Devolving More Power to the Frontline Staff

Richards and Smith (2005) argue on the one hand that New Labour emphasise the significance of frontline staff in delivering public services through the devolution of more power to street-level bureaucrats; on the other hand, they argue that the Labour government also attempts to control the behaviour of lower-level workers in order to increase the power of the central government through a variety of means, such as targets (Richards and Smith 2005). First and foremost, some senior officials in the central government describe the way the Labour government delivers public services are based on asymmetric relations between the centre and non-state actors and frontline staff. One of the officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force observed:

> The managers who had huge amount of independence would be unhappy, because they think you are taking away the community control, and in some sense, that is true. We are moving from neighbourhood to town hall, moving from Whitehall to town hall. So from central who are devolving control from neighbourhood, we are absorbing control, there was a lot of dissatisfactions. I think, if you want to embed it as a part of the system, then you need to give it to local authority. There is a danger of losing parents participation and dangers of losing a sense of community. I think you have to guard against the risk, that is just my sense.

In addition, more than two thirds of managers interviewed in Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester thought that they are considerably constrained by limited budgets and resources, even though they feel they have some autonomy. Furthermore, they argued that their autonomy is also hindered by the framework set by local authorities and the central government. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> Obviously the framework set by local authority, central government, we have discretion that how you act at local level, but you are very constrained by the fact that you have very limited resources, is the key factor, so your ability to do anything is limited, because you don't have any resources to spend.

One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield also commented that 'our money is from local authority and the central government. Though we are allowed to make our own decisions on dealing with daily issues in the community, we are very much restrained by local authority and the central government as they hold the most resources we need' (personal interview).

Overall, it emerges that exogenous changes affect the resources, interests and relationships of the actors within networks, and also constitute a very important part of explaining the implementation process of Sure Start policy. However, the implementation network approach also contends that these changes do not have an effect independent of the structure of the network. All such exogenous change is mediated through the understanding of agents and interpreted in the context of the structures, rules and interpersonal relationships within the network (Marsh and Smith 2000). The following section analyses how agents interpret the structures.

7.2 Structure and Agency

Structural factors condition the context within which political events, outcomes and effects occur; in contrast, agential factors emphasise the conduct of the actors directly involved (Hay 2002: 95–96). By explaining a strategic-relational approach (Jessop 1996), Marsh and Smith develop the dialectical relations between structure and agency, and their contribution is to recognise that networks are strategically selective and, whilst actors make choices, they do so within a network that privileges particular outcomes (Marsh and Smith 2000: 13).

The implementation network approach stresses that policy networks are structures that both constrain and facilitate agents. They are structures that define the roles the actors play, shape the issues which are discussed and how they are dealt with, have distinct sets of rules and contain organisational imperatives (Marsh and Smith 2000). It also involves the institutionalisations of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour in the network. For example, DCSF, DWP, the Treasury and Number 10 all have their own structures, rules and resources conditioning the behaviour of actors within them, and they also influence inter-organisational relations through the interaction of actors, and favour certain strategies over others as a means to realise a given set of intentions or preferences (Hay 2002: 129).

What this approach emphasises is the interactive relations between context and network, and context is also considered to be a part of structure, which influences changes in the network. Giddens (1984) defines structure as 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social system' (Giddens 1984: 377). Obviously, organisational regulations and rules function as tools to affect the behaviour of both officials in the central government and street-level bureaucrats at the local level in the delivery of services. It sets out the context in which public service delivery takes place. Based on the evidence in this study, there are examples demonstrating those organisational rules and regulations strategically influencing the distributions of resources available to the actors within the structure, how the structure of policy delivery is shaped and sometimes how the culture of organisations in which actors work changes.

At the central government level, organisational arrangements define the roles of officials in negotiating resources in Sure Start. For example, the Treasury sets the rules for allocating funding to actors involved in delivering Sure Start policy, and a joined-up board between DCSF, DWP and DoH work out their plans to achieve the best for all of them. At the local level, local authorities in both Sheffield and Manchester set out frameworks and distribute funding to Sure Start Children's Centres across the cities, which affects the behaviours of street-level bureaucrats in terms of delivering services to local clients. One of the officials in Sheffield commented:

> It is quite clear how we expect people to behave. I manage and model the behaviour. So your workers actually see what their manager are modelled to do. We are very clear, what do we expect from our employees. They are very clear about boundaries, about

> confidentiality. And if we feel that our staff have regular monthly supervision and anything if we feel that they are stepping over that, that would be dealt with within supervision and all we will also have the appraisals. We would set targets for the Centre in the plan for the year and they would go down to the personal level so each person would know what they deliver, what is their role within that and that would also be reviewed within supervision. We would set targets from that and then we would set for year's appraisal.

The previous section has demonstrated the transformation process from Sure Start Local Programmes to Children's Centres in a broad context, and how this process influences the implementation networks. The following section adds to the analysis of how the transformation process of Sure Start Local Programmes to Sure Start Children's Centres influences the way street-level workers deliver services. It is commonly agreed in both Sheffield and Manchester that the transformation process has caused the staff of Sure Start confusion over their identities and difficulties of communication. One of the officials from EYECS in Sheffield commented:

> Now I look at solutions to get over problems. We have very little communication with strategies people in local authority, and local Sure Start programme managers' role were very little sort of defined regarding what local Sure Start programme managers are doing. They have very little recognition on the role involved which is something completely different. Local authorities haven't recognised that change of that, and you may turn up in a meeting, where you introduced Sure Start Local Programme manager. But actually be told actually you're a children centre manager, there is no communication to let you know that call yourself a children centre manager. There has been difficulties mainly down to communication and strategy in Sheffield. They are all very poor, and local authority are operating different systems.

In Manchester, interviewees also express their concerns over a conflict of identity and communication problems as a result of the transformation process from Sure Start Local Programmes to Sure Start Children's Centres. One of the officials from the Sure Start Unit in Manchester stated that 'there is a big difference across the nation about how children centres should be run and how to merge local Sure Start programme into the children centre. The staff feels very uncomfortable, nervous about their job roles with no strategic guidance. It has been the case that we don't know what's happening, until you get on with it and find solution' (personal interview).

Consequently, while the outcome of this particular strategic intervention from the government gives rise to unpredictable effects on the policy deliverers of Sure Start, the distribution of outcomes over a longer time exhibits the influence of structural changes. in terms of budget, since local authorities in both Sheffield and Manchester have taken on the strategic and leading role in delivering Sure Start, the budget now goes to the local authority in both cities. The rules of distributing funding have been changed and the structure itself, which uses strategic selectivity, throws up a series of systematic outcomes. DCSF document 'About the Payment' illustrates that 'we have split remaining funding broadly equally between the other two blocks, but how to allocate actual spending between these broad purposes is a matter for local authority decision (DCSF 2007a, b, c: 1). Based on the interview materials in Manchester, managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester are constrained by changing rules and are not able to determine the flow of funding

as they previously were able to. One of the managers in a Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> The other thing is the budget goes to the local authority, we've got a lot of autonomy required in that area previously. But what we've got do this year is because we have to pay for some services, such as speech. We haven't had the autonomy to ask them to do the certain things in this area, because they have been given certain targets to work with in two sets of area. So we have to pay 6000 lb for these services, and we haven't added any services delivered in this area. There are now called city-wide services (CWS), there are things we are feeling quite protective (we feel), because we had good services and the money we were paying, but actually we can not get any service at all. We are actually paying considerable money, but actually not having any control over service in those areas, although the money is still coming out the budget and that has been allocated to the Sure Start areas. That is quite a key thing in the last years, the money we still have to pay for the services, but actually we are not getting them in this area.

The crucial point is that network structures and external contexts jointly produce a particular policy outcome that strategically influences the actors within the implementation network of Sure Start. In Sheffield, it also can be seen that managers in the Children's Centres were given directives as well, and there has been no negotiation as to why and what services they can get out of them. The evidence in the study in Sheffield suggests that new structural arrangements have reduced the power of frontline staff in allocating their own funding. One of the managers from a Sure Start Children's Centre in Sheffield commented:

> Our speech and language service was working well for us in this area, but other services we would contribute to, we would actually set up an agreement, we would stop paying for that service, because we didn't feel we've got the local authority to use our services in the areas, but we have to continue paying for a considerable sum of money for the service, so there has been no sort of evaluation of the services either. It is just being a blanket, you know you need to contribute x amount of pounds, because that is a service we are having in the citywide services, so it is like core services we got to have.

In addition, street-level bureaucrats have autonomy and discretion as they strive to meet unclear or unrealistic targets.[2] However, targets and regulations from the central government also act as structural factors that shape the behaviour of the actors, which in turn affects resources distribution among service users, shapes the attitudes and behaviour of actors and also routinises their decision-making process. In order to meet the targets from the central government, frontline service deliverers in Manchester ration services to the people who fits more within the target group. One of the workers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> Because we have some places for working parents, 30 places in daycare, 25 working parents, the rest five in children in need, children in the community. But sometimes we would like to help children more and bring children in, but we cannot we have to meet targets, and have to bring working parents' children in. We know they're never going to get a place, and we know we've got to meet targets. The target is that income coming in from the working parents.

[2]See analysis in Chap. 6

In Sheffield, street-level bureaucrats feel pressure from the time-scale of their targets, under which street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield feel uncertain on what they can actually achieve and what is expected from the targets. One of the workers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> I think the time scale feels unrealistic. Sometimes you have to wait quite a few years to see the difference, because whatever reason, government want to see, we have to set targets, we have to work towards those targets, but we might not necessarily achieve this, because you might not see result what you have done until a few years.

In addition, it is clear that in 2000 targets were set by the Treasury (another round of targets in 2002, then in 2004). The interview revealed that at each spending review, the targets were changed. There have been difficulties in matching targets and spending reviews, due to confusing and conflicting reviews undertaken by the Treasury. This can be illustrated in the evidence from Sheffield which largely influences the behaviours of frontline staff in delivering Sure Start policy. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> So keeping in track where we were going on them were very difficult. There were initially set including things reducing number of low birth weight babies. In fact, there is very little in Sure Start we can do about low birth weight baby, so we have to drop some targets, because it didn't make any sense. And there were other targets S&P (smoke & pregnancy), which makes a lot of sense but hard to account. There is a refinement, so every time when spending review come along, we find the targets and try to reduce the number, and try to make the targets accountable in order to collect the data. And we have learned enormous amount and the targets exist now in terms of indicators. It is much fewer, but much more sensible in terms of reducing the gap and outcomes between the poor children and the rich is a really sensible one measured by early foundation stage. But we have reduced the number and make them countable and make them much more focused. That is a good thing. I do think it is a good thing to have the target, and I think it give a coherent and common set of aims.

In terms of meeting the demands of local clients in both Sheffield and Manchester, some of the Children's Centres have a long waiting list and the ratio of staff to children is high. There is strict regulation from Ofsted, which has a system to check that registered childcare providers continue to meet certain specified requirements. In the case of those on the Early Years Register, inspections also evaluate and report on the quality and standards of early years' service provision. Childminders care for at least one individual child for a total of more than two hours in any day. This is not necessarily a continuous period of time. For example if you provide care for the same child aged under eight for an hour before and an hour and a half after school then registration is due; however, if you provide care for one child aged under eight for an hour before school and provide care for a different child aged under eight for an hour and a half after school then registration is not required (Ofsted 2008a, b, c, d, e).

Interviews in Manchester show the impact of Ofsted regulations on the behaviour of street-level workers in Sure Start policy. Even though parents would like to extend their work or want extra days, the Centres are unable to accommodate them due to the regulations from Ofsted, which often results in the incapability to meet

the demands of local parents. One of the managers in Manchester commented that 'as a result of Ofsted regulations on child ages, we have struggled to provide sufficient staff to fit all the needs from local parents' (personal interview).

In addition, as mentioned in the previous section, institutional restructuring is one of the contextual factors influencing the implementation process of Sure Start. Herein, institutional restructuring is taken as a structural factor in Sure Start that also has a big impact on the benefits of children and lone parents, especially under the circumstance of multi-agency working. In Manchester, the structural changes mentioned above has actually led to the behaviour of opting out clients served before the structural changes. One of the mangers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> The only difficulty is that I find very frustrating is every person from around is welcome to register the Sure Start and join in the activity, while working with Advanced Education Service (AES), they have a criteria to meet. If they are not resident for three years in this county, not married, not asylum seekers, not refugees, it means that they might not be able to get on course for free like other people. That is very frustrating, because we're trying to support families. Local councils set this criteria, this frustrating, even as far as we look at the family learning, and empowering parents how their children learn, so that they can have confidence to go in when their children go into schools, they understand, and have confidence to speak with teachers. It means, these parents who cannot access MAE courses, their children still go to schools, the children's are in the school, but parents not allowed to go to courses. We're not able to give them support like other parents.

After 2003 several local programmes merged and formed the basis of Children Centres. This structural change influenced the actors in Sure Start Children Centres. In Manchester, those staff became part of Sure Start Children's Centres. However there is a geographical difference between the community before and after the amalgamation of services under the Sure Start Children Centres. Some managers from Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester argued that those children centres based on previous Local Programmes have more funding than those newly built centres.

In addition, the conception and branding of Sure Start has changed since 2007, when the target groups were extended to cover the ages from three years old to sixteen years old and seventeen years old with disabilities. This change partly derives from institutional transformation. Based on the interviews of senior officials from both DCSF and the Social Exclusion Task Force, there is a common recognition that the brand of Sure Start should be most focused on Sure Start Children's Centres and the target group should focus on children from birth to five years old. However there is still confusion among people working with Sure Start policy. One of the senior officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force commented:

> What happened in recent years we integrated what was Sure Start initially very focused Local Programmes in very poorer areas, and area-based initiatives. It moved into wider programmes for everything to do with child care policy for England. It created changes what the brand meant, some people feel hurt when losing that clear focus, I think the way to make the thing stick and sustainable. We don't have special brand for schools, I want early years service as normal, we don't need a special brand for GP, or hospital or school, they thought it was the wrong thing to do. I want early years schools as normal as other things.

> Part of the landscape every citizen can expect. We started from zero bases, we started from several programmes; one is about integrated approach in poor areas. One about childcare and working parents, the third is on early education and child development. We brought three together.

Hay argues that 'agency refers to action, and it can be defined as the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously to attempt to realise the intentions' (Hay 2002: 94–95). Implementation network approach argues that agential actors do make strategic calculations shaped by their interpretation of the structural context. Therefore, individuals can be seen as agential actor who have the capacity to consciously realise their intentions. Secondly, organisations have their own goals and intentions, they employ their abilities and resources to attain them and in this respect, organisations can be also taken as 'agency'. In terms of organisations as agency, it can be seen that local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, PCTs and other voluntary, private and independent actors employ their resources and abilities to attain their own goals and targets, and they negotiate with each other over resource distribution, as well as with DCSF, DWP and DoH. The interaction process among them in Sure Start policy has been comprehensively analysed. The following section focuses on individuals as agents and how they strategically reach their intentions.

For example, ministers play a significant role in shaping the relationships among different departments and they have resources and authority to change the balance of actors in the implementation network. This is reflected in interviews about Sure Start policy. One of the senior officials from the Social Exclusion Task Force commented:

> The ministers will resist control from Treasury and No. 10, because they want to run their own departments. Local government resists control from Whitehall, because they want to run their own local government. And everybody wants to be involved in decision-making except when it comes to the substance and importance, and then they want everything to tell them to do, which is just life. No one wants to be told and Ministers would have a combination of their own ideology what they want politics to achieve, what their department want to achieve, and make sure their departments to deliver.

Three points are important here: first, the interests and preferences of members of a network may not be defined merely or perhaps even mainly, in terms of that membership. Second, the constraints on, or opportunities for, an agent's action that result from network structures do not happen automatically; they depend on the agent's discursive construction of those constraints or opportunities. Third, network members have skills that affect their capacity to use opportunities or negotiate constraints (Marsh and Smith 2000).

Different actors in similar circumstances will construct their interests and preferences differently. In a similar manner, the same actors will review, revise and reform their perceived interests and preferences over time. Based on the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, in Sure Start policy, members in the network may not only affiliate with one organisational preference or interest. Instead, some of the staff belong to other independent organizations and are temporarily transferred to

Sure Start Children's Centres. From time to time these organisations may have conflicting interests with each other, which in turn leads to changes in network structure that influence the process of service delivery. However, there are variance in both cities. In Manchester, Sure Start Children's Centres bring in staff from different departments, such as Health, Education and Jobcentre Plus, and they are managed separately, especially regarding the allocation of funding. For example, one of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> You see, each department comes in and works in this centre. It is professionally managed by their own department, even down to the teacher, that come to this building, has done the professional development done by the education department. From the autonomy point of view, you are always working with people to be managed separately. In my budget, I am told I am managing the budget, but actually I don't manage the budget. It is all done by other people in other departments.

In Sheffield, in terms of street-level bureaucrats working in Sure Start Children's Centres, managers in the Centres are not directly involved in managing all of the staff. Most workers in the Centres are managed by their own employers, such as PCT, Jobcentre Plus and other voluntary and private actors at the local level. One of the managers of Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> The people that I manage is that I manage the deputy here who manage a family support team and manage the administrative side of it and I manage the outreach staff and the parents' involvement staff. They are the people I manage and I coordinate the rest of the services. A lot of other staff, they are managed by their own employer and I am not having a big say regarding what they do in the centre.

Hay (2002) argues that actors are presumed to be strategic and capable of devising and revising means of realising their intentions. Agents interpret the structure strategically and allow them to negotiate opportunities and adapt to constraints. For instance, even though a government paper—Sure Start Local Guidance—claims that the central government has given more controlling capacity to local authorities since 2003, some people in the Sure Start implementation network feels that the opposite has occurred. For example, through interviews in Manchester and Sheffield, it can be seen that some managers in the Sure Start Children's Centres feel that prior to 2003, they actually experienced more local authority control than they have since 2003. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centre in Manchester commented:

> After 2003, it moved to privatisation of local authority child care, for example, in Huddersfield, local authority tried to privatise child care, the point is: 2003 Act gave local authority a strategic role for ensuring sufficiency, sufficient child care, but say it could be all sorts of childcare, provision by local authority voluntary section, but before that, local authority had provided themselves via children services, early years, division of city council. So it will be the same thing in Sheffield, there was already substantial childcare provided directly by local authority, the key change after 2003, there is a shift away from direct provision of local authority childcare to simply ensuring sufficiency in terms of market.

In Sheffield, interview materials provide a similar conclusion; some managers feel that they have less discretion and autonomy to deliver services at the local level,

contradicting what is stated in the official document. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres commented:

> We have a partnership board that had stakeholders, parents on that partnership board and set targets and we would decide how we reach those targets. Yeah…what is in place now is that you are commissioned to deliver a service, which is different. So we get a budget to deliver a set service, we decide how we deliver that service. But I do think there is a difference, yeah…because if I wanted to do something different, it would be hard because I might fail and not able to reach my target.

New Labour strengthened the centre's power by increasing the Prime Minister's power, establishing a Special Advisor and Task Force, setting up targets and new institutions, creating an asymmetric relation between political control and administrative autonomy in public service reform (See Fig. 2.1). In the first place, it is clear that actors in the Sure Start policy community have a large amount of resources and power and have shared interests and ideologies in excluding outside groups in Sure Start policy. Secondly, based on the evidence in Manchester, the increasing role of local authorities has contributed to granting more power to channelling and controlling the behaviour of frontline staff as argued above. Thirdly, drawn from interviews in Sheffield, it can be seen that frontline staff has been conditioned by the targets set by the higher authority, which further limits their flexibility and autonomy.

Marsh and Smith (2000) argue that agency matters in interpreting and explaining constraints or opportunities in a structural context (Marsh and Smith 2000). It is important to note that there are two types of strategic action—intuitive, routine or habitual action and explicitly strategic action (Hay 2002: 132). Intuitive action contains the inherently strategic moment. Service deliverers can refuse to provide further services when they have a lunch break or are off work, which is manifested in 'practical consciousness'. Explicitly strategic action contains calculations and attempts to map the contours of the context, and to realise intentions and objectives. In order to reach the targets set by the central government, service deliverers intentionally exclude service users who cannot help them to attain objectives.

Strategic actions yield effects, both intended and unintended. Individuals are knowledgeable and reflexive, and they routinely monitor the consequences of their actions (Hay and Wincott 1998: 956), and take strategic actions in dealing with structural constraints. Based on the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, when faced with different structural obstacles, the way in which service deliverers respond to them has a big impact on the implementation process. If service deliverers have a more enthusiastic attitude, they can to a large extent surmount disadvantageous situations, dispatch resources more effectively and deliver necessary services in a more creative way. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield illustrated:

> The geography is difficult; we have to deliver service out there, that give us difficulties of space, resources. At the moment, it is quite clearly focused on childcare and education. We don't have capacity in terms of professional development, and to take them out of site, and deliver the service. Not yet, we cannot do that. Within the centre, we have changed things around to accommodate the services, we are putting more pressure to track children's

> progress. That create a lot of workload for the staff, then they have to do quite comprehensive records for children, and increase the workload. We have to keep people motivated and let them see a little bit we are managing them to progress on.

As shown above, it is clear that a positive response to structural obstacles has a direct effects on the structured context within which it takes place, and this helps to strengthen effective public service delivery. In addition, there is strategic learning on the part of the actors involved—'as they revise their perceptions of what is feasible, possible and indeed desirable in the light of their assessments of their own ability to realise prior goals, as they assimilate new information, and as they reorient future strategies in the light of such 'empirical' and mediated knowledge of the context as a structured terrain of opportunity and constraint' (Hay and Wincott 1998: 956). Another example in Manchester is that before 2003 there was a Children Centre that was just a day nursery school. Through the staff's thorough efforts in building relationships with other people, organisations and especially with the community, the Children Centre currently is providing other core services of Sure Start. As the managers in Manchester commented:

> But what we did have is a good track record of working with the community. That is the basis we use. I think, at the end of day, the Sure Start is all about the relationship with the people. It is how you work with people to support the community. And whether it is paid work, voluntary work, it is about how you work together. We build up that relationship we developed for nearly 20 years with the community. And look to see how this meets the Sure Start core offer, how does this meet Sure Start targets. Because as the head of a Sure Start centre, we are already doing it. When we look at the core offer, we were already providing that because we knew it is a good practice. It wasn't a revelation of how to work; it is how the good early years practice is always worked.

Based on the interviews in Manchester, under some circumstances staff encounter the situation of parents apathy in participating in Sure Start Children's Centres' activities. In addition, they (staff in the Centres) also have few networks in the local community to support the Children's Centre. Within this structural constraint, service deliverers can use their skills to enhance their capacities to make full use of opportunities and resources in reaching more parents. In some communities, Sure Start service deliverers struggle to acquire assistances from other community groups, and have almost no community networks in the local areas. Especially, there is cultural inertia in communities where parents with young children are not accustomed to attending group activities. Under such circumstances, the extent to which service deliverers take the initiative and utilise strategies to interpret structural factors and overcome structural constraints largely influences the quality of public service delivery. One of the managers in Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> We have been modelling those over the last few years, putting members of staff to try set a group up to provide that network. That is three years down the line, just beginning to come around where we can identify a natural leader, and say why you don't run this groups. We will give you free room and resources. But you can do it yourself. And they are willing to do it. And in some cases, we are giving them some training for them, and accredited training. So in most cases, they are getting that accreditation, and gradually they are

> building up their experiences. At that time, they cannot work full time, because they have got little ones. And they don't earn enough to be able to provide the day care. So it just is helping them to meet the needs of employment, and give them the skills and value their skills. And see what they can do.

The Sheffield interviews reveal that service deliverers' negative responses to structural constraints also affect the implementation process. For example, when the staff in Sure Start Children's Centres faces difficult decision with a human dimension, a negative response will solve these difficulties by turning to rules and regulations, rather than solving the issue in a creative way. One of the managers in the Sure Start Children's Centres in Sheffield commented:

> Facing a different human dimension during the process, the staff in Children's Centres tends to obey the city council strict behaviour code about when people coming into the centre, how they should behave. So the demands placed on the Centre by parents and visitors, can be difficult. They can get parents complain, but they do have the strict system, so if parents complain, they will divert it to go through the council, which have a complaint policy. They get families that are distressed, in crisis, they support them, but a lot of them, they just learn from the job, because they cannot have training for everything. You know, demands from parents, if they think they cannot help, they will signpost them to find the services we cannot provide.

Last but not the least, service deliverers strategically make decisions on how they form partnerships with other organisations and agencies. They can work with them in a positive and a negative way. On some occasions, Sure Start Children's Centres have to work closely with key partners according to guidance from the government. Working with all partners in different geographical areas is vital to providing core services listed on the basic menu of each Children's Centre. However, managers in the Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester take different strategies and views with their partners. It is widely recognised that partnerships can be challenging and require commitment both by those developing Sure Start at a strategic level and those working directly with children and families (Myers et al. 2003). For example, drawing from interview materials in both cities, the evidence shows that 'some midwifes embrace the partnership with Children's Centres, but some health visitors decline to support collaboration' (personal interview).

7.3 Network and Outcomes

The implementation network approach recognises the importance of interactive relations between network and outcome, arguing not only that networks affect policy outcomes, but policy outcomes affect the shape of the implementation network directly. Marsh and Smith (2000) argued that outcomes affect networks in the following three ways: 'First, a particular policy outcome may lead to a change in the membership of the network or to the balance of resources within it. Secondly, policy outcomes may have an effect on the broader social structure which weakens the position of a particular interest in relation to a given network. Thirdly, policy outcomes can affect agents' (Marsh and Smith 2000: 6).

Policy outcomes result from the interactive process within the policy network. There have been departmental changes in Whitehall since 2007 which have led to changes in the actors in the policy community. DCSF has taken charge of delivering Sure Start policy since 2007. In addition, actors in the policy community made a decision to grant local authorities more power in delivering Sure Start policy, which as a policy outcome has had a considerable influence on the balance of power. in both Sheffield and Manchester, EYECS and the Sure Start Unit have both become directly involved in the delivery of Sure Start policy with the power to distribute funding at the local level. In Sheffield, NCH and MCDT are no longer accountable for delivering Sure Start local programmes, but Barnardo's and the Big Life Company in Manchester are.

In terms of the Sure Start policy network, there are two types of networks in Sure Start policy—a Sure Start policy community and a Sure Start issue network. Both of them create different policy outcomes in the implementation process, with a break of the power balance and redistribution of resources in the policy network. However, it needs to be made clear that there is not an ultimate Sure Start policy outcome, since Sure Start is still an ongoing policy and will continue to be implemented until the end of 2020.

In the Sure Start implementation network, DWP is more concerned with employment (DWP 2007). There are implementation issues about getting women into work, getting welfare benefits into the Children's Centre and getting people to understand the benefits of employment are some sort of policy outcomes DWP pursues. This affects the relationship of DWP with DCSF and DoH. On one hand, it partly strengthens the ties with DCSF and DoH, since DWP contributes to reaching the targets and objectives of DCSF and DoH and this helps to form a close connection. On the other hand, the frontline staff in the Children's Centres are still resistant to the employment agenda, because they want people to come to their courses instead of going off to employment. One of the senior officials in Social Exclusion Task Force illustrates:

> I still think, the frontline staff are still resistant to the employment agenda, because they want people to come to their courses. They run therapy group, there is a …… you know….. When you go into the centre, the mothers love what you are doing, it is wonderful, I did this course, and I did that course. The staff are happy to keep mother in there, why they want to get them into jobs.

In addition, the policy outcomes of organisational restructuring in other departments has also influenced the distribution of resources in the process of joined-up working. Sir Nigel Crisp (2005), former Chief Executive of the NHS and Permanent Secretary of the DoH, has set a programme for restructuring primary care trusts. 'Planned changes include: a reduction in the number of PCTs by about half by October 2006; PCTs to become simply commissioners of services; a 15% reduction in PCT management and administrative costs; and faster roll-out of practice-based commissioning, to be complete by December 2006' (Benison 2005). DoH, as a key stakeholder in Sure Start, greatly changed the organisation structure of the PCT, which has caused difficulties in joined-up delivery at the local level that is reflected in both Sheffield and Manchester.

Through interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, the reorganisation of PCTs has contributed to difficulties in partnerships at the local level. In Manchester, the restructuring of the PCT has had a big impact on partnership arrangements at the local level. Manchester has undergone major reorganisations of PCT since 2007. There were three different PCTs in north, central and south Manchester under the Sure Start Local Programmes. One of the senior officals in Manchester local authority stated that 'you know in terms of how different personnel, different managers do the different parts of the work. That has brought us a bit of problems' (personal interview). In Sheffield, PCT reorganisations have resulted in difficulties of information sharing. One of the senior officials in Sheffield commented that 'the development of PCT organisation took place from 2003–2007, that had a bad impact. It become difficult to join up at the local level, they have their own setting up new structure. It is quite hard for local authority to work with' (personal interview).

However, in Sheffield it also can be seen that institutional change has had a positive impact on the implementation process. For example, in Sheffield the development of extended schools has provided education and other activities, such as health services and parenting advice from the school site. Rather than being embedded in the centres, the extended schools start building these services on the school site, which is a big and positive change in ensuring that it can provide services to all children.

Furthermore, the childcare integrated into Sure Start policy has been another policy outcome that affects the role and function of local authorities in the Sure Start implementation network. The Government's 'Ten Year Childcare Strategy, Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children', was published on 2 December 2004 and repositions the role and function of local authorities that now are 'joining up access to services for families, addressing affordability and sustainability, raising quality and brokering and partnership working' (DCSF 2009). In both Sheffield and Manchester, the local authority no longer has to provide and deliver childcare directly, and instead functions as a monitoring body to oversee the sufficient delivery of childcare by private providers or any other organisations that offer it. One of the managers in the Sure Start Children's Centres in Manchester commented:

> The childcare is being integrated into Sure Start. We don't have to provide child care, there is a sufficient requirement under the local authority, under Sure Start under 2006, basically that is a measure design to take, so local authority no longer has to deliver child care directly. All they have to do is to oversee there is enough child care by private providers or whoever in their areas. So it is debatable how helpful and successful this is.

One of the senior officials from Sheffield EYECS commented that 'our aspirations for parents to be able to access childcare through children's centres and schools. We need to strengthen our relations with the maintained sector whilst keep existing strong links with private and voluntary groups who provide childcare services for us' (personal interview).

The central government made a decision to integrate the Sure Start Local Programme, Early Excellence Centre and Neighbourhood Nursery into Sure Start Children's Centres, and this policy outcome not only changed the structure of the Sure Start policy network, but has had a big impact on the staff of the Sure Start Children's Centres. Prior to the establishment of Sure Start Children's Centres, the services provided by Sure Start Local Programmes were geographically bound. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres commented that 'it was very hard to say to parents, we cannot provide the services and they know if they live the other side of the street, they could get the services from the Sure Start Local Programme' (Personal interview). However since the advent of Children's Centres, resources for children and families are now distributed more equally. This means that some people who had local programmes before now feel they are losing resources they used to have, and people who previously did not have Sure Start Local Programmes are now gaining benefits from these shared resources. One of the managers from Sure Start Children's Centres commented that 'from our point of view, it is very good, we didn't have local programme, but we did have a lot of parents in need. So it has been great. People are welcoming it. I know in the area where there were local programme, they see they have lost something they had (personal interview).

The implementation network approach has been unpacked from two dimensions—the Meso and Micro level—that were employed to analyse the implementation process of Sure Start in both Sheffield and Manchester. Chapter 5 examined the organisational variables and Chap. 6 primarily focused on the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start. However, the implementation network approach not only recognises the significance of organisations and street-level bureaucrats in the implementation process of Sure Start, but this approach analyses three interactive relations—network and context, structure and agency, and network and outcomes.

In the first place, the implementation network approach considers contextual changes under the New Labour government, such as the 'joined-up strategy', institutional transformations, rhetoric on devolving more power to frontline staff and the changing role of local authorities. This work concludes that contextual factors contribute to understand the implementation process of Sure Start in both cities. A 'joined-up' strategy substantially transforms the way organisations and street-level bureaucrats deliver Sure Start services in both Sheffield and Manchester. In addition, it also contributes to the tensions among actors in the implementation process of Sure Start. Institutional restructuring changes the main actors and governance structures in delivering children's services, such as the establishment of DCSF since 2007. In addition, the changing role of local authorities since 2004 significantly influences the implementation process in both Sheffield and Manchester, and local authorities have now gained more resources and power over Sure Start delivery. Furthermore, evidence in both cities reveals that frontline staff in Sure Start are considerably constrained by limited budgets and resources.

Secondly, interactive relations between structure and agency link the two important variables—organisations and street-level bureaucrats–in explaining the implementation process of Sure Start. This part of the chapter firstly revealed that

organisational regulations and rules function as tools in affecting the behaviour of officials at both central government and street levels in delivering Sure Start policy by strategically redistributing resources. Then, it argued that both organisations and individuals can be seen as agents making strategic calculations shaped by their interpretation of the structural context. Thirdly, the implementation network approach also takes policy outcomes into account to analyse how these outcomes have an impact on the actors within the implementation network. However, Sure Start is an ongoing policy that has not yet collected all the relevant data regarding policy outcomes, and interviewees have been cautious in answering questions on policy outcomes.

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Chapter 8
Theoretical Contribution and Core Research Findings

The notion that policy implementation is the result of an interactive process between many actors—including governmental agencies, private actors and street-level bureaucrats—has become commonly recognised among political scientists. However, the search for adequate concepts and theories to analyse the complexities of the policy implementation process has not yet resulted in a common resolution. Based on well-developed literature on policy implementation and policy networks, this thesis has attempted to incorporate implementation and policy network theories into a new theoretical framework—the implementation network approach—to explain the implementation process. The overarching goal of this thesis has been to explore the service delivery process of Sure Start policy after 2003 in both Sheffield and Manchester through using the implementation network approach. Drawing on interview materials and other primary and secondary, this thesis attempts to reveal the interactive processes at play among organisations and street-level bureaucrats involved in Sure Start policy in both cities. It also embeds the implementation process in an examination of interactive relations among context and networks, structure and agency, and outcomes and networks that provides a holistic perspective to study implementation process. Overall, this thesis has filled in two lacunae in the academic current literature, which will be illustrated in the following section.

8.1 New Perspective on Policy Implementation of Sure Start

Since the emergence of literature on policy implementation at the start of 1970s, the debate has been ongoing between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to the concept. However, both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' researchers gloss over the intricate process of implementation within the changing paradigm of governance.

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The top-down perspective is apparently in the stages model, and involves making a clear distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Nakamura and Smallwood 1980). Van Meter and Van Horn define policy implementation as 'those actions by public and private individuals that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions' (van Meter and Van Horn 1975: 445). The top-down approach sought to identify a number of legal and political mechanisms for affecting the preferences and constraining the behaviour of street level bureaucrats and target groups both in the initial policy decision and then subsequently over time (Hogwood and Gunn 1984; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983; Cairney 2009).

Conversely, the bottom-up approach involves two contexts: firstly the management skills and cultures of the organisations involved in implementing public policy; and secondly, it sees the implementation process as involving negotiation and consensus-building, stressing that 'street-level' implementers have discretion in how they apply policy. A bottom-up approach recognises the complexity of the implementation process and argues that the: 'top-down model may not be appropriate used in situations where there is no dominant policy or agency, but rather a multitude of governmental directives and actors, none of them pre-eminent' (Sabatier 1986: 30; Hjern 1982).

In the UK public service delivery has become more complicated than ever before evolving in response to the ideas associated with 'Third Way' approach and their commitment to 'joined-up government', which brings together public, private and voluntary actors in the process of public service delivery. Under these circumstances, traditional 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches struggle to capture the complexity of explaining the implementation process in full. Some literature (Scharpf and O'Toole, see Hill and Hupe 2002, pp. 59, 69) has recognised the complexity of the implementation process and the plurality of separate actors with different interests, goals, objectives and strategies in implementation (Hill and Hupe 2002). For example, Sabatier's work represents an important attempt to bring the various theoretical threads together by establishing the framework of the 'advocacy coalition approach' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 65), which 'sets out a more comprehensive and testable theory of the policy process that brings together a number of approaches and frameworks in to a better theory which may serve to predict policy change' (Parsons 1995: 195) by 'adopting the bottom-uppers' unit of analysis—a whole variety of public and private actors involved with a policy problem—as well as their concerns with understanding the perspectives and strategies of all major categories of actors' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 65). However, Hill and Hupe (2002) argue that this approach is much closer to the bottom-up perspective, because the 'advocacy coalition' is comprised of actors from all levels. In addition, the main focus of advocacy coalitions is still limited to the interactive process between organisations and neglects factors such as the role of individual actors at the grassroots and the broader context and relations between structure and agency. O'Toole's work on implementation in networks redresses some of these problems, 'working with the much more specific objective of trying to model inter-organisational processes, and particularly the empirical work' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 69).

Drawing from both top-down and bottom-up literatures on network and implementation studies, the INA attempts to take a nuanced approach approaches to studying the policy implementation arena, concerning itself with question of what is happening across a particular policy field and why, rather than asking the standard top-down question of whether: '… implementers comply with the prescribed procedures, timetables and restrictions' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 61). In addition, the implementation network approach seeks to address the perennial challenged associated with policy studies concerning the artificial separation of policy stages based on the imposition of typologies depicting agenda setting, decision-making and policy evaluation stage. The implementation network approach recognises the weaknesses of the 'stage heuristic' (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), and attempts to emphasise the interactive nature of the various elements [and actors] in the policy cycle. Nevertheless, in applying the INA, the INA accepts there is a degree of utility in disaggregating the policy process in order to explore the interactive dynamics of the network. the 'stage heuristic' offers a useful tool to analyse actors' main roles and behaviours in the policy process. The implementation network approach draws on this approach when being applied to empirical settings and in so doing, allows for an element of a division of policy stages to assist in identifying the various actors involved in the network and frame their various roles. It is clear that there are an array of actors, such as DCSF, DWP, No. 10, Treasury and DoH, who are involved mainly in the implementation network that negotiate resource exchanges in the decision-making process. They therefore, in turn have an impact on the implementation process of Sure Start. Jobcentre Plus, local authorities and PCTs are also actors in the implementation network that carry out the decisions made in the policy-making stage representing the interests of policy community in the implementation network.

Furthermore, the approach also recognises the implementation process involves many important actors with different goals working within a context of increasingly large and complex government programs that require participation from numerous layers and units of government and who are affected by powerful factors beyond their control. The implementation network approach adds to the richness of implementation research by attempting to integrate the top-down and bottom-up approaches. It not only considers the interactive processes of different organisations at the implementation stage, but also the roles of street-level bureaucrats by recognising their discretion and autonomy in the implementation process. In so doing, the study offers an exploration addressing the potential rhetorical gap between Labour's claims of embracing a programme of reform concerned with devolving more power to frontline staff in the service delivery process but in practice continuing to pursue a strategy of top-down state-centric control by its useful of targets, budgets and audit. Finally, the implementation network approach incorporates broader factors in analysing the implementation process, such as interactive relations between network and context, structure and agency, and network and outcomes.

More importantly, the implementation network approach addresses issues concerning the characteristics of policy networks and makes the approach more

explanatory in terms of explaining the implementation process. In the first place, the approach avoids the metaphorical critiques by including explanatory variables and analysing how organisations and individuals interact in the implementation network approach. policy community and issue networks co-exist in Sure Start policy. This recognition helps in understanding the complicated actions of organisations and how the relations among them influence the implementation process. In addition, anther explanatory variable in the implementation network approach is the characteristics of street-level bureaucrats' behaviour in the implementation process. Chapter 6 has demonstrated that their discretion and autonomy matters in the service provision process.

Secondly, the approach avoids the insularity of macro, meso or micro level analysis, by integrating all levels through embedding interactive relations of structure-agency, network and context, and network and outcomes. This offers an approach that recognises and unpacks the complexity involved in the implementation process. The implementation network approach considers structural context as an overall background and analyses its impact on the membership's power and resource distribution in the implementation network. Cairney (1999: Ph.D. thesis, Chap. 2, p. 22) argues that: 'structures have no demonstrable means of formulating or acting on decisions, and It is therefore difficult to describe structures as "constraining" and "facilitating" state and interest group action, as this implies some notion of action'. However, it is clear throughout the interviews that structural changes do affect the resources and power distribution of actors, and influence the nature of interaction in the implementation network. For example, under the context of 'joined-up government' and 'service delivery matters', the Labour Government has strengthened its central controlling capacity through a variety of institutional means, which to some extent change the weight of actors of Sure Start in the implementation network. The implementation network approach also analyses the organisational relations between central and local government, and the relations between government and other private and voluntary actors from a holistic point of view. In addition, the implementation network approach stresses the key role of street-level bureaucrats in the implementation process, and analyses their behaviours from a holistic perspective through demonstrating their autonomy and discretion in the implementation process.

Thirdly, the implementation network approach recognises that power is fluid and should be understood not only in terms of organisational relation connections, but also in the hands of frontline deliverers. 'By focusing on aggregate social structures, and structural properties of networks, one is able to detect features of social phenomena which do not exist at the level of the individual actor' (Cairney 1999, Chap. 2). Furthermore, it also recognises that power of discretion and autonomy from frontline deliveres. Finally, the implementation network approach has dynamic elements, identifying the ongoing importance of contextual effects on power relations, such as the effects of policy outcomes on actors in the implementation network. In addition, some actors may have been "lucky", or "systematically advantaged" (Dowding et al. 1995: 270).

Sure Start policy

Sure Start policy, as one of the most important policy initiatives of Labour's government, has been seen as a key policy to tackling the problems of social exclusion and the poverty of children and young people. Sure Start has been one of the flagship policies under the New Labour government, and Sure Start Children's Centres have been the vehicle for reducing the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged children under five and the wider child population. Sure Start also reflects Labour's belief in 'multi-agency working'. In addition, Principles of Sure Start mentioned also reflected the 'mixed-approach' for improving the children's services that not only emphasis the 'customer-focused services' but highlights the significance of 'inspection and quality assurance' in the service provision. In Sure Start policy, the Labour government also conceives empowering frontline staff as the best vehicle to provide the standard services.

A research team at Birkbeck College conducted an extensive wide series of research and reports on Sure Start Local Programmes, with the DfES funding studies on the impact of early intervention on social exclusion and child poverty. The resultant output by Belsky et al. (2007) '*The National Evaluation of Sure Start*' primarily focuses on the impact of Sure Start Local Programmes. The National Audit Office published a report on Sure Start Children's Centres to identify what the government has achieved and what needs to be improved (NAO 2006a, b, c). However, within the academic literatures there is almost no research published on the impact of Sure Start Children's Centres and what is actually going on in the implementation process. In addition, the thesis also has great value in terms of comparative politics and policy learning. Sheffield and Manchester have been chosen as two comparative cases to explore the implementation network approach and can be seen as one of the first attempts to research the implementation process of Sure Start policy and to what extent Labour's rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline is carried out in the actual public service delivery process in a comparative context. This thesis has made contributions to this gap mainly by analysing the implementation process of Sure Start policy after 2003, when the government attempted to integrate all services into Children's Centres.

8.2 Context Matters

> On 8 June 2001, a few hours after he (Tony Blair) had won the landslide election victory that gave him a second term, Tony Blair told the British people that he interpreted the election result as a 'mandate for reform…an instruction to deliver' (Barber 2007: 43).

The analysis offered in Chap. 2 explored the way in which reforms introduced during the course of the Blair and Brown Administration have affected the way that Whitehall operates in terms of its relations with other actors in the reform of public service delivery. New Labour continues to employ state-centric approach on improving the public service delivery by changing the balance of resources between

the centre and departments and the centre and locality through establishment of PMDU, and setting up monitory tools such as PSA (Richards 2008). The New Labour government has emphasised the importance of service delivery and Blair in particular placed key interest in pushing forward the agenda and reform of public service delivery. There are two main contextual themes associated with the Labour government's approach—joined-up government and delivery matters—both of which strategically influence public service delivery. 'Joined-up government was seen in many ways as a panacea, intended to reassert central control over a system perceived to be fragmenting' (Richards 2008). In the first place, multi-agency working has been a characteristic of delivering Sure Start policy, involving cross-departmental collaborations both horizontally and vertically to deal with the issue of social exclusion and poverty. There are many actors from both central and local levels that are in partnership regarding the delivery of Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester. At the central level, DCSF (DfES), DWP, DoH and the Treasury are closely linked in terms of reaching the policy objective of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and actively interacted with local actors in both Sheffield and Manchester. At the local level, local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit), Jobcentre Plus, PCTs and other voluntary, private and independent actors form partnerships in delivering Sure Start Children's Centres in both cities.

In Labour's second term, a much greater emphasis was placed on delivery. There are a number of cases of institutional restructuring revolving around the core idea of providing better service delivery to the public, including the changing role of local authorities. Institutional reforms change the position of actors in the implementation network and also redistribute the resources and power they have. For example, the interviewees reveal that the changing role of local authorities since 2004 has significantly affected the way in which Sure Start policy is delivered; local authorities now also take a strategic and leading role in allocating funding and delivering Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester.

Labour's delivery strategy is based on a 'mixed-approach'. On one hand, New Labour demonstrated its willingness to devolve more power to non-state actors and front-line bureaucrats, but on the other hand, it has also strengthened the centre's power through a wide range of means, such as audit and targets (Richards 2009). Through the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that the central government holds considerable resources, including power over legislation, reallocating resources, and significant advantages over finances, institutions and information, which give it substantial control over frontline staff.

However the central government has devolved some power to the frontline staff based on the belief that 'frontline staff knows the best'. As the interviews revealed, it can be seen that some frontline staff in both Sheffield and Manchester has experienced the benefits of more autonomy and discretion in dealing with local issues. This autonomy and discretion has emanated from either the policies of central government or the head of Sure Start policy at the local level. However, compared to the power of the central government, the relationship between the centre and non-state actors is still largely asymmetric, and the central government has employed a variety of indirect measures to control the behaviour of frontline

staff. Interviews of street-level workers in both Sheffield and Manchester show that their behaviour is considerably restrained by targets and limited budgets and resources, which are largely controlled by the central government.

The autonomy and discretion of frontline workers is comparatively weaker than the control from central government. The central government obviously sets the frameworks, procedures and targets that regulate the behaviour of frontline staff at the local level. Hence, it is clear that New Labour's 'mixed-approach' strategy on reforming public services is reflected in the implementation process of Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester. In addition, Labour's rhetoric of devolving more power to frontline staff in the reform of public service delivery certainly contradicts with the findings through interviews which concludes that the Labour government attempts to control the service process via an array of means, such as PSA, as mentioned in the thesis. Finally, Chap. 7 illustrated that contextual factors matter in studying the implementation process of Sure Start in Sheffield and Manchester, especially on how they affect the service delivery of Sure Start children's centres.

8.3 'Policy Network'—An Explanatory Variable

The British literature has shown little interest in implementation per se. However, implicit in much that has been written about this subject is a specific suggestion that the discontinuity between policy formation and implementation, which is perceived as problematic by top-down theorists, is largely eliminated through the continuity of the relationship that exists between the government and its specific partners in a policy network (Hill and Hupe 2002: 61). The incorporation of policy network theory is the second characteristic of the implementation network approach, giving the framework an explanatory power in analysing the interactive process of organisations in the implementation process. there are largely differentiated accounts of what the core elements of policy network theory are, and the framework of the implementation network approach takes Rhodes and Marsh's meso-level network theory approach to attempt to analyse the behaviour of different organisational participants in Sure Start policy in both Sheffield and Manchester.

There are two types of policy networks in Sure Start policy. For a policy community to exist, three factors should be clearly present: stability of membership, limited permeability to new members and strong resource dependencies. In the thesis, DCSF (DfES), DWP, DoH, the Treasury, No. 10 and local authorities (EYECS in Sheffield and the Sure Start Unit in Manchester) have constituted policy communities and exhibit the above three factors. Particularly, the implementation network approach recognises the usefulness of 'stage heuristic' model to identify roles of actors in Sure Start. In the policy community, DCSF (DfES), DWP, DoH, the Treasury, No. 10 are considered to be actors making decisions in the policy formulation stage in the implementation network which in turn influences other actors in the implementation process. Local authorities, PCT and Jobcentre Plus are

actors involved in the implementation process mainly in the policy community. All those involved in the Sure Start policy community in both Sheffield and Manchester have a common target of reducing child poverty by 2020. DCSF, DWP, DoH, local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit), Number 10 and the Treasury argue for the need to deliver the best start in life for every child across the UK and recognise the significance of bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support.

Based on the five principles of the power-dependence model, policy network theory enables us to understand how the policy communities in Sure Start exclude other groups with different interests from the implementation process. The members of the Sure Start policy communities in Sheffield and Manchester prove relatively loyal to their partners when they as a community interact with actors outside the community, and they displayed a certain degree of trust in each other's actions and intentions. When they interact with non-community actors, there is a strong sense of distrust towards them. Much of the loyalty between partners is based on a belief that it is their responsibility to support the government's grand strategy of ending child poverty by 2020. Crucially, mutual dependency relationships exist between all the main actors in the policy communities in both Sheffield and Manchester. The Treasury holds the funding for delivering Sure Start and other actors need financial support from it; The Treasury is heavily reliant on the services and partnerships between different government departments to attain their targets, according to which the funding is redistributed. DCSF needs the partnership with DWP and DoH to make Sure Start Children's Centres work; DWP needs assistance from Sure Start to provide childcare for children in order to help parents back to work; DoH needs DCSF to reach the targets related to the health of children; local authorities in both Sheffield and Manchester need the empowered authority from central government to implement Sure Start policy. In addition, Sure Start is a joined-up policy in which collaboration and resource pooling is embedded. DCSF seeks help from DWP, DoH and other key actors. Actors in the communities in Sheffield and Manchester can be categorised into two spheres—No. 10, the Treasury, DCSF, DWP and DoH are in the decision-making circle, and local authorities (EYECS and Sure Start unit), Jobcentre Plus and PCTs are in the implementation circle of the communities.

However, it is misleading if 'policy community' is seen to imply that the actors within it are consistent in their relationships with each other. Within the policy communities in both cities, there exists ideological and institutional contestation, which not only affects the unity of the policy communities, but also influences the service delivery of Sure Start policy. There are two types of contestation in the Sure Start policy communities—ideological and institutional—which are analysed regarding their influence on the implementation process in both Sheffield and Manchester. Chapter 5 describes the internal relationship among those actors and their internal differences ideologically and institutionally in detail. In the process of delivering Sure Start, each organisation has its own organisational aims and targets and have different funding streams that are ring-fenced. The Treasury attempts to

control the allocation of funding; DCSF attends closely to childcare, and the running of Sure Start children's centres; DWP is more concerned with getting lone parents back to work and reducing the unemployment rate; and DoH, as one of the key funding stakeholders, is inclined to constrain its limited resources towards Sure Start.

Sure Start policy communities in both cities dominates the process of policy making and implementation of Sure Start policy. However there is not only one 'network' in Sure Start policy. Marsh and Rhodes's Policy Networks model characterises the issue net work as a 'large number of participants with a limited degree of interdependence; stability and continuity are at a premium, and the structure tends to be atomistic' (Rhodes 1990: 14). In both Sheffield and Manchester, Sure Start Children's Centres are in partnership with a large number of voluntary, independent and private actors, and the partners vary largely in the delivery of this policy area in different children's centres.

In the Sure Start issue networks, Sure Start Children's Centre is the only main actor existing in the issue network, and acts to link different services into the Children's Centres. In the Sure Start Children's Centres, there are a large number of voluntary, independent and private actors coming in and out of the issue network in both Sheffield and Manchester. There is very limited stability and continuity in the Sure Start issue network. For example, childcare service providers vary based on the different needs of each Children's Centre in both Sheffield and Manchester. However, they don't share the same goal with other actors, resulting in a loose network structure and an ad hoc approach in how these actors interact, characterised by a highly permeable and fluid membership group with weak dependency relationships in this policy area. Furthermore, the relationship between actors in the issue network in both cities is at times consultative because the issue network is short-lived, unlike the policy community.

Based on the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, without tight structures and stable membership, actors in the issue networks are hard to coordinate, since they do not share permanent objectives with each other, and they are not able to have a holistic view on the service delivery process. Secondly, due to the loose structure of the issue networks, there are often difficulties of information sharing, which in turn cause the duplication of services and a waste of resources. Thirdly, actors in the issue networks have little ability to influence the decisions made in the policy communities, and though they contribute resources to the implementation of Sure Start, which in turn has an impact on the delivery of programmes, the lack of commitment to the aim of Sure Start leads to difficulties in collaboration. Last but not the least; the thesis reveals the interaction between policy communities and issue networks. Based on the interviews, it can be seen that decisions made in the policy communities in both Sheffield and Manchester have an impact on the behaviour of actors in the issue network through actors involved in the implementation sphere of the policy community, such as local authorities, PCTs and Jobcentre Plus.

8.4 Street-Level Bureaucrats in Sure Start

For policy makers, micro-level analysis provides a basic understanding of human behaviour that helps to guide the selection of a governance strategy. Regarding policy implementation, Lipsky (1980) and Prottas (1978) also emphasise the role of micro-level analysis, which in this research is the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats and how they make an impact on the implementation process. The implementation network approach recognises the importance of human behaviour, especially in frontline workers and their influence on the implementation process. Street-level bureaucrats, as frontline workers in service delivery, face an ongoing duality between being responsive to their clients' needs and ensuring policies are properly implemented (Wong 2007: 1). As Lipsky argues, the dilemmas posed to street-level bureaucrats force them to adopt reactionary strategies in order to cope with the challenges of job-strategies range from rationing resources to screening and routinizing clients (Lipsky 1980).

The governmental paper—*Leading From the Frontline* claimed that: 'the starting point for all our public services should be that customers' needs and aspirations should genuinely and demonstrably be the basis for designing and then delivering the services they receive' (Cabinet Office 2003). The Labour government argued that the optimum solution to satisfy customers' needs is to free up the autonomy of frontline service deliverers. In Sure Start policy, based on the interviews undertaken for this research in both Sheffield and Manchester, it can be seen that street-level bureaucrats play an important part in the implementation process of Sure Start, especially for families with young children who are negative or lack confidence in using Sure Start Children's Centres in both Sheffield and Manchester. Managers in Children's Centres, health visitors, family supporters, childminders and staff in Jobcentre Plus and PCT are the first contact points for service users and also a direct service provider to the clients. Through the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, it is evident that street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start policy have discretion and autonomy in making decisions and delivering services. However, there are varieties as how discretion and autonomy is used by street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester. For example, street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield and Manchester take different measures to deal with the difficulties of collaborating with Jobcentre Plus.

The concept of discretion and autonomy is relative and largely depends on the job descriptions of street-level bureaucrats. Based on interview materials in both cities, certain characteristics of the jobs of street-level bureaucrats make it difficult to reduce discretion and autonomy. They are responsible for complex tasks where elaboration of rules, guidelines, or 'instructions' cannot cover all possibilities. Those street-level bureaucrats involved in Sure Start in both cities will always encounter issues with human dimensions or situations without clarified guidance and rules, and from these circumstances they gain the power and opportunity for decision-making.

Street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start have the power to make decisions in the following situations, which have been shown to be significant in influencing the implementation process of Sure Start in both Sheffield and Manchester:

- street-level workers tend to work in situations that are too complicated to predict and at most times, it is extremely difficult to work in a programmatic format set by their superiors;
- The work of street-level bureaucrats will not necessarily conform to what is expected by the organisational authority and there is always an implementation gap between directives and the response to them;
- Street-level bureaucrats encounter situations in which they have different job priorities from the broader organisational ones;
- Street-level bureaucrats receive unclear or hard-to-attain targets and their job performance is exceedingly difficult to measure.

In terms of relative autonomy from organisational authorities, in Sheffield, managers interviewed in Sure Start Children's Centres showed their awareness of their own autonomy from EYECS regarding behaviour codes and policies. In Manchester, Lower-level workers withhold cooperation within their organisations by employing such personal strategies as not working or having negative attitudes with implications for work. In addition, some of the managers in Manchester place the children and families as their first priority instead of meeting deadlines for submitting a report for the organizations. With reference to the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats' decision making on targets, street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester share a consensus that targets could also be a source of tension for street-level bureaucrats, because they were often seen as not the right ones and not realistic or blurry, at least for a particular agency involved in the Sure Start policy. In Sheffield, some street-level workers are concerned that job performance in street-level bureaucracies is extremely difficult to measure. In Manchester, some of the street-level bureaucrats regard targets as a political consequence and initially had a negative response to those targets, which may cause their morale to be low and cause them not to be fully committed to the targets set by the organisations.

In addition, street-level bureaucrats not only act as decision-makers influencing the implementation process of Sure Start policy, but more significantly they act as implementers and determine how the Sure Start policy is translated on the ground. Chapter 6 analyses the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in Sure Start as implementers in both Sheffield and Manchester from three perspectives—relations with clients, relations among street-level workers and their autonomy regarding targets.

Street-level bureaucrats always work with inadequate resources in circumstances where the demand will always increase to meet the supply of services. Prottas argues that 'by manipulating the information available to the organizations about its clients, the street-level bureaucrat can limit the agency's ability to influence their own behavior' (Prottas 1978: 1). Street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester have the power to give or withhold information that is used to ration

services towards local clients. Based on the interviews from Sheffield, being honest to local clients and pushing the responsibility back to the higher authority is often used by street-level bureaucrats to routinise their complex tasks in the implementation process. Some managers in the centres in Manchester have to coordinate five children centres at the same time, and try to bring themselves up to speed with all the centres. They often reallocate their resources or prioritize their preferences as means of simplifying their work cases, which gives them confidence to cope with local clients.

Street-level workers as implementers also encounter the same type of human dimension issues as decision-makers. Street-level bureaucrats in Sheffield experience the apathy of some parents towards the services. In Manchester, health visitors and family supporters choose to take the discretion based on their own level and what they can do. In Manchester it also has been found that sometimes when street-level bureaucrats face the difficulty of handling parents, they normally respond b employing some local people with sufficient local knowledge. On the contrary, in Sheffield it has been found that street-level bureaucrats seek to simplify their tasks and narrow their range of perceptions in order to process the information they receive and develop responses to it. Through the interviews in both Sheffield and Manchester, it was shown that once a Sure Start Children's Centre is established and starts running, managers often face unprecedented pressures on liaising with key partners, developing a consultation process and marketing services offered in the Centre, all of which are time-consuming. In Manchester, it also has been found that sometimes when street-level bureaucrats face the difficulty of handling parents, they normally respond by employing some local people with rich experiences.

Street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester operate within the context of joined-up institutional arrangements, even though a strategic commitment at the most senior level of each partner organisation proves to be a key factor in developing good relationships among agencies. Without good collaboration among street-level bureaucrats in different agencies, it would be hard to develop good cooperation among agencies. Therefore relations between street-level bureaucrats are also considered to be a significant element in the process of public service delivery. There are similarities and varieties in terms of relations among street-level workers in both Sheffield and Manchester. In the first place, based on interviews from both Sheffield and Manchester, lack of resources cause difficulties and prevent street-level bureaucrats from working together. Especially in the health sector, in both Sheffield and Manchester there is a shortage of health visitors and midwives, and their capacity is too stretched to be able to deliver services in Sure Start Children's Centres. However, there is variance in both Sheffield and Manchester in terms of relations among street-level bureaucrats, and street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester have all experienced difficulties working with PCTs and Jobcentre Plus, but in different forms. In Sheffield, a lack of trust and respect among street-level bureaucrats influences the good partnership between street-level bureaucrats. The existence of trust is crucial to the task of information sharing, as is reaching out to the objectives shared by different agencies

or organisations. Not only does some staff in Children's Centres distrust health people, but also have a lack of trust with lower-level workers in Jobcentre Plus. In Manchester, in terms of information sharing between street-level bureaucrats, it can be seen that staff in the Centres encounter difficulties in obtaining data from PCT staff.

Last but not the least, the perception of street-level workers on targets is different, and from the interviews in both cities, it can be seen that some street-level bureaucrats feel the targets set by the central government are not realistic or clear. In Manchester, it can be seen that ambiguous targets limit street-level bureaucrats from taking clear steps to reaching targets. In addition, some street-level bureaucrats in Manchester illustrated that there is no figure to work on, and they have no clues how to measure the improvement of their clients. In Sheffield, some of the street-level bureaucrats also expressed their concerns about the inappropriate targets, such as having 100% of families with new babies visited in the first 2 months of their baby's life, and criticized them as being too unrealistic. However, there is a consensus among street-level bureaucrats in both Sheffield and Manchester that the Labour Government's continued to pursue a traditional British model of state-centric by its employment of targets and objectives directly linked to the funding allocation in the service delivery process.

8.5 Towards an Interactive Relation Between Structure and Agency, Network and Context, and Network and Outcomes

The implementation network approach analyses the interactive relations between context and network, structure and agency, and networks and outcomes, which offers a perspective to unpack the complexity involved in the implementation process. Traditionally, as argued above, the study of the implementation process has been embedded either in a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' approach. As argued above, synthesizers of policy implementation study take network analysis into consideration in analysing the implementation process and recognize the importance of the interactive process of actors in the policy networks. Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan offer a particularly cogent exposition of the importance of issues about the management of networks in implementation (Hill and Hupe 2002: 77). The idea that policy processes are in general an interplay between various actors and not centrally governed by government is now broadly accepted (Rhodes 1997). March and Olsen argue that 'during a game, actors operate within the established resource distribution and set of rules, and they select strategies based on their perceptions of the nature of the problem, their desired solutions and those of the other actors' (March and Olsen 1984). Although they attempt to study policy implementation beyond a top-down or bottom-up approach, they fail to provide a holistically

theoretical framework to explain the implementation process in a way that integrates meso and micro level analysis through a dialectical approach.

Implementation network approach embeds policy implementation in the policy cycle and appreciates the impacts on the implementation process of other policy stages such as agenda setting, policy formation, decision making, policy evaluation and policy feedback. It incorporates exogenous factors in the implementation network, encompassing elements of institutional, policy, political, economic and ideological changes, which influence the change of resources and interests of actors in implementation networks. The fact is that context matters showing how exogenous elements affect the implementation process, such as New Labour's joined-up approach to public service delivery and institutional transformations. For example, based on interview materials, primary and secondary materials, it can be seen that in both Sheffield and Manchester that local authority, health services, job centres, local communities, public agencies and voluntary and private sector organisations all work together to provide services that benefit children and their families in an integrated way. However, in terms of multi-agency working, it also has difficulties on cooperation among actors both at the central level and local level in Sheffield and Manchester, as it encounters different culture and funding streams as they work together. In addition, interviewees in both Sheffield and Manchester also come to a conclusion that the changing role of local authorities changed the way of Sure Start policy being delivered in both cities.

Secondly, Implementation network approach stresses the interactive relations between structure and agency and recognises that, in strategic action, the orientation of actors towards an environment itself is strategically selective. Structures define the roles the actors play, shape the issues which are discussed and how they are dealt with, have distinct sets of rules, and contain organisational imperatives. They also involve institutions of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour (Hay 2002). For example, DCSF, DWP, the Treasury and Number 10 all have their own structures, rules and resources that restrain the actions of actors within them and also influence inter-organisational relations through the interaction of actors. At the local level, local authorities in both Sheffield and Manchester set out frameworks and distribute funding to Sure Start Children's Centres across the cities, which affects the behaviours of street-level bureaucrats in terms of delivering services to local clients. It is commonly agreed in both Sheffield and Manchester that the transformation process of Sure Start local programmes to Sure Start Children's Centres has caused the staff of Sure Start confusion over their identities and difficulties of communication. Furthermore, the evidence in the study in Sheffield and Manchester also suggests that new structural arrangements have reduced the power of frontline staff in allocating their own funding. In addition, interview materials in both Sheffield and Manchester show that targets and regulations from the central government also act as structural factors that shape the behaviour of the actors, which in turn affects resources distribution among service users, shapes the attitudes and behaviour of actors and also routinises their decision-making process.

In addition, agents also make strategic calculations shaped by their interpretation of that structural context. Based on interview materials in Sheffield and Manchester,

it can be seen that in Sure Start policy, members in the network not only have an organisational preference or interest, but some of the staff belong to another independent organisations and temporarily transfer to Sure Start Children's Centres. This means individual actors may from time to time have contradictory interests in the Sure Start network, which causes a change of network structure and influences the process of service delivery. Based on these interviews, it can be seen that agents interpret the structure strategically, which in turn affects negotiation opportunities and constraints. At times staff in both Sheffield and Manchester encounters circumstances in which parents are rarely involved in Sure Start Children's Centre activities, and have few networks in the local community to support the Children's Centre. Within these structural constraints, staff in Children's Centre in both Sheffield and Manchester can use their skills to enhance their capacity to make full use of opportunities and resources to reach out to more parents. In addition, regarding partnerships with other organisations, staff in Children's Centres in both cities chooses different strategies in cooperating with other members in other organizations.

In the third place, the implementation network approach also recognises the importance of interactive relations between networks and outcome, arguing that not only networks affect policy outcomes, but policy outcomes have an impact on the shape of the policy network directly. The thesis only partially analyses the influence of outcomes on networks and the implementation process in Sheffield and Manchester, due to a shortage of interview materials. In addition, Sure Start policy is still being implemented and it is too early to make a judgement about the policy outcomes.

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Appendix A
List of Interviews

Interviews in London

Jonathan Portes (2008), Director for Children and Poverty Directorate, Chief Economist for Work, Department of Work and Pension, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT, 22/01/2008

Kevin Woods (2008), Assistant Director, Early Years, Extended Schools and Special Needs Group, Department of Children, Schools and Families, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT, 13/02/2008

Naomi Eisenstadt (2008), Director of Social Exclusion and Task Force, fourth floor of Admiralty Arch, The Mall, London, SW1A 2WH, 26/02/2008

Rebecca Endean (2008), Director of Children and Poverty, Department of Work and Pension, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam St, London WC2N 6HT, 13/02/2008

Interviews in Sheffield

Amanda Boughton-Brown (2008), Head of the Sure Start Children's Centre, Burngreave Children's Centre, 19 Spital Street, Sheffield, S3 9LB, 08/03/2008

Angela Briggs (2008), Head of the Sure Start Children's Centre, Shiregreen Children's Centre, 551 Bellhouse Road, Shiregreen, Sheffield, S5 0ER, 13/02/2008

Carole Adams (2008), Head of the Sure Start Children's Centre, Chancet Wood Children's Centre, Chancet Wood Drive, Sheffield, S8 7TR, 22/01/2008

Dawn Walton (2008), Senior Manager of Local Delivery Service in Early Years Education and Childcare Service, Floor 3, Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2SH, 31/03/2008

Debbie Crofts (2008), Service Delivery Manager in Early Years Education and Childcare Service, Sheffield City Council, 08/03/2008

Gill Peacock (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Broomhall Children's Centre, Broomhall Road, Sheffield, S10 2DN, 22/01/2008

Gail Norman (2008), Sure Start Family Resource Team Leader, First Start Children's Centre, 146 Hucklow Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S5 6HH, 15/01/2008

Jo Hardman (2008), Parent Involvement Worker, First Start Children's Centre, 146 Hucklow Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S5 6HH, 15/01/2008

Julia Thorpe (2008), employee in Sure Start Children's Centres, First Start Children's Centre, 146 Hucklow Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S5 6HH, 15/01/2008

Vick Cooper (2008), Information & Monitoring Officer, Firth Park & Shiregreen Sure Start, 441 Firth Park Road, Sheffield, S5 6HH, 31/03/2008

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Interviews in Manchester

Benthan Gaillers (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Ardwick Sure Start Children's Centres, Medlock School, Wadeson Road, Manchester, M13 9SU, 11/04/2008

Catherine Larkin (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Baguley Hall Primary School, Ackworth Drive, Baguley, Wythenshawe, Manchester, M23 1LB, 10/04/2008

Ian Tideswell (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Newton Heath Children's Centre, Great Newton Street, Newton Heath, Manchester, M40 1WT, 07/05/2008

Rachel Redford (2008), Employee in Sure Start Children's Centre, Burnage Sure Start Children's Centre, Broadhill Road, Burnage, Manchester, M19 1AG, 07/05/2008

Sue Grange (2008), Employee in Sure Start Children's Centre, Burnage Sure Start Children's Centre, Broadhill Road, Burnage, Manchester, M19 1AG, 07/05/2008

Sue Maitland (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Wilbraham Children's Centre, Wilbraham Primary School, Platt Lane, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 7FB 26/02/2008

Karen Cam, Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Clayton Sure Start Children's Centre, Manchester Early Years Service, 101 North Road, Clayton, Manchester, M11 4NE, 28/04/2008

Wendy Burton, Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Burnage Sure Start Children's Centre Broadhill Road, Burnage, Manchester, M19 1AG, 17/04/2008

Pam Tideswell, (2008), Head of Manchester Sure Start Unit, Children's Services,Ground floor, R&D block, Fujitsu Tower, Wenlock Way Gorton, M12 5DH, 19/05/2008

Bill Jeferry, (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centres, Northenden Sure Start Children's Centre, Manchester, 28/05/2008

Gerri Ross (2008), Head of Sure Start Children's Centre, Old Moat Children's Centre, Old Moat Lane, Withington, Manchester, M20 1DE, 03/06/2008

Stuard Calton (2008), Friends of Levenshulme, 6 Kersh Avenue, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 2SW 02/09/2008

One unattributable interview, from an agency delivering Sure Start policy, 14/04/2008

Four unattributable interviews, from employees in a Sure Start Children's Centre in Manchester, 03/04/2008

Appendix B
Sample Interview Questions 1

Questions to the local authority in Sheffield

Mapping out local actors:

1. What is the role of the local authority in the implementation of Sure Start?
2. What resources do the local authority have to help to attain the objectives of Sure Start?
   (Resources: constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political or informational)
3. What actors in the centre are the local authority working with in Sure Start, in terms of Early Education, Childcare, Family Support and Health, Employment? What is the relationship between the local authority and DoH,

   local authority and DWP
   local authority and Treasury
   local authority and No 10 (strategy unit and delivery unit)
   (Any other actors in the centre?)

   What actors at the local level are the local authority working with in Sure Start?

Local authority with other actors:

4. The Labour government initially emphasised 'joined-up government' and then 'delivery matters'. Under this context what are the challenges for achieving a strategy in this policy area?
5. What particular issues do you encounter when the local authorityauthority works together with other central and local actors in order to realise the objectives of Sure Start?

Targets:

6. Who sets the targets for the local authority on Sure Start implementation? Where did they come from?
7. Under the context of Public Service Agreements, to what extent has the PSA enhanced the ability for the local authority to reach its overall objectives of Sure Start?

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How do you view PSA as a central controlling mechanism (Can I have some documents on the specific targets set up by PSA for the local authority regarding Sure Start?)

8. Does the local authority set any targets for local actors? What are they? Who is supervised by the local authority?
   What is the relationship between the local authority and those monitored by the local authority?
9. Do different PSA targets set for different departments (including the local authority) in relation to Sure Start create issues or unforeseen consequences?

Context influencing Sure Start:

10. What other factors influenced the implementation of Sure Start or influenced the way the local authority implemented Sure Start? (Redistribution of local authority resources, or interests.)
11. How have changes to the Sure Start Programmes affected the nature of implementation?
    …the relationship between 'Sure Start Local Programmes', 'Early Excellence Centre', 'Neighbourhood Nursery' and 'Sure Start Children's Centre'?
12. How have the policy changes from central government towards the local authority affected the implementation of Sure Start?

Sure Start:

13. Overall, can you assess the strengths and weaknesses of Sure Start?
14. What is the role of Sure Start's children's centres?

Outcomes Influencing Networks:

15. Up to now, are there any unexpected outcomes that have changed the way of DCSF working with other key actors?
16. Are there any things I haven't addressed that you think are important to my research?

Appendix C
Sample Interview Questions 2

Questionnaire for Department of Children, Schools and Family

Mapping out actors:

1. What is the role of DCSF in the implementation of Sure Start?
2. What resources do DCSF have to help to attain the objectives of Sure Start? (Resources: constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political or informational.)
3. What actors in the centre are DCSF working with in Sure Start?
   What is the relationship between DCSF and DoH,

   DCSF and DWP
   DCSF and Treasury
   DCSF and No 10 (strategy unit and delivery unit)
   (Any other actors in the centre?)

   What actors at the local level are DCSF working with in Sure Start?

   DCSF and the local authority?
   DCSF and other local actors?

4. The Labour government initially emphasised 'joined-up government' and then 'delivery matters'. Under this context what are the challenges for achieving a strategy in this policy area? What is the relationship between DCSF and the Delivery Unit? Strategy Unit?
5. What particular issues have you encountered when DCSF works together with other departments (actors) in order to realise the objectives of Sure Start?
6. Departmentalism (different departments have different priorities and their own departmental interests.
   How is this related to the diversity of departmental values? (culture difference between different departments)

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Targets:

7. Who sets the targets for the DCSF on Sure Start implementation? Where did they come from?
8. Under the context of Public Service Agreements, to what extent has PSA enhanced the ability for the department to reach its overall objectives in Sure Start?
   How do you view PSA as a central controlling mechanism (Can I have some documents on the specific targets set up by PSA for DCSF regarding Sure Start)?
9. Does DCSF set any targets for local actors? What are they? Who is supervised by DCSF?
   What is the relationship between DCSF and those monitored by DCSF?
10. What is the relationship between each department over each target?
11. Do different PSA targets set for different departments in relation to Sure Start create issues or unforeseen consequences?
12. Clearly there's always going to be a degree of horse-trading in terms of establishing those targets, if I can put it in a sort of crude way. In those sorts of debates, is there a general undertaking where it would be the department that has the strength of argument in terms of the target, or the Delivery Unit, or the practitioners (BMA or whoever)? I mean, who carries the clout there?
13. Are there particular cases, or particular ministers, or particular times, when there can be resistance to that degree of central control?

Context influencing Sure Start:

14. How do institutional changes impact the implementation of Sure Start?
15. What other factors influenced the implementation of Sure Start? Or influenced the way of DCSF implementing Sure Start? (redistribution of DCSF resources, or interests)
16. How have changes to Sure Start Programmes affected the nature of implementation?
    What is the relationship between 'Sure Start Local Programmes', 'Early Excellence Centre', 'Neighbourhood Nursery' and 'Sure Start Children's Centre'?

Sure Start:

17. Overall, can you assess the strengths and weaknesses of Sure Start?
18. What is the role of Sure Start's children's centres?

Outcomes Influencing Networks:

19. Up to now, are there any unexpected outcomes that have changed the way DCSF works with other key actors?
20. Are there any things I haven't addressed that you think are important to my research?

Appendix D
Sample Interview Questions 3

Questionnaire for Department of Health (DoH)

Mapping out actors:

1. What is the role of DoH in the implementation of Sure Start?
2. What resources do DoH have to help to attain the objectives of Sure Start? (Resources: constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political or informational.)
3. What actors in the centre are DoH working with in Sure Start?
   The relationship between DoH and DCSF,

   DoH and DWP
   DoH and Treasury
   DoH and No. 10 (strategy unit and delivery unit)
   (Any other actors in the centre?)

   What actors at the local level are DoH working with in Sure Start?

   DoH and local authority
   DoH and other local actors

4. The Labour government initially emphasised 'joined-up government' and then 'delivery matters'. Under this context what are the challenges for achieving a strategy in this policy area?
5. What particular issues do you encounter when DoH work together with other departments (actors) in order to realise the objectives of Sure Start?
6. Departmentalism (different departments have different priorities and their own departmental interests.
   How is this related to the diversity of departmental values? (culture difference between different departments)

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Targets:

7. Who sets the targets for the DoH on Sure Start implementation? Where did they come from?
8. Under the context of Public Service Agreements, to what extent has PSA enhanced the ability for the department to reach its overall objectives of Sure Start?
   How do you view PSA as a central controlling mechanism (Can I have some documents on the specific targets set up by PSA for DoH regarding Sure Start)?
9. Does DoH set any targets for local actors? What are they? Who is supervised by DoH?
   What is the relationship between DoH and those monitored by DoH?
10. What is the relationship between each department over each target?
11. Do different PSA targets set for different departments in relation to Sure Start create issues or unforeseen consequences?

Context influencing Sure Start:

12. How do institutional changes impact the implementation of Sure Start?
13. What other factors influenced the implementation of Sure Start? Or influenced the way of DoH implementing Sure Start? (redistribution of DoH resources, or interests)
14. How have changes to Sure Start Programmes affected the nature of implementation?
    What is the relationship between 'Sure Start Local Programmes', 'Early Excellence Centre', 'Neighbourhood Nursery' and 'Sure Start Children's Centre'?

Sure Start:

15. Overall, can you assess the strengths and weaknesses of Sure Start?
16. What is the role of Sure Start's children's centres?

Outcomes Influencing Networks:

17. Up to now, are there any unexpected outcomes that have changed the way of DoH working with other key actors?
18. Are there any things I haven't addressed that you think are important to my research?

Appendix E
Sample Interview Questions 4

Questionnaire for Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

Mapping out actors:

1. What is the role of DWP in the implementation of Sure Start?
2. What resources do DWP have to help to attain the objectives of Sure Start? (Resources: constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political or informational.)
3. What actors in the centre are DWP working with in Sure Start?
   The relationship between DWP and DoH,

   DWP and DCSF
   DWP and Treasury
   DWP and No. 10 (strategy unit and delivery unit)
   (Any other actors in the centre?)

   What actors at the local level are DWP working with in Sure Start?

   DWP and the local authority?
   DWP and other local actors?

4. The Labour government initially emphasised 'joined-up government' and then 'delivery matters'. Under this context what are the challenges for achieving a strategy in this policy area?
5. What particular issues do you encounter when DWP work together with other departments (actors) in order to realise the objectives of Sure Start?
6. Departmentalism (different departments have different priorities and their own departmental interests.
   How is this related to the diversity of departmental values? (culture difference between different departments)

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Targets:

7. Who sets the targets for the DWP on Sure Start implementation? Where did they come from?
8. Under the context of Public Service Agreements, to what extent did PSA enhance the ability for the department to reach its overall objectives of Sure Start?
   How do you view PSA as a central controlling mechanism (Can I have some documents on the specific targets set up by PSA for DWP regarding Sure Start)?
9. Does DWP set any targets for local actors? What are they? Who is supervised by DWP?
   What is the relationship between DWP and those monitored by DWP?
10. What is the relationship between each department over each target?
11. Do different PSA targets set for different departments in relation to Sure Start create issues or unforeseen consequences?

Context influencing Sure Start:

12. How does institutional change impact the implementation of Sure Start?
13. What other factors influenced the implementation of Sure Start? Or influenced the way of DWP implementing Sure Start? (redistribution of DWP resources, or interests)
14. How have changes to the Sure Start Programmes affected the nature of implementation?
    What is the relationship between 'Sure Start Local Programmes', 'Early Excellence Centre', 'Neighbourhood Nursery' and 'Sure Start Children's Centre'?

Sure Start:

15. Overall, can you assess the strengths and weaknesses of Sure Start?
16. What is the role of Sure Start's children's centres?

Outcomes Influencing Networks:

17. Up to now, are there any unexpected outcomes that have changed the way of DWP working with other key actors?
18. Are there any things I haven't addressed that you think are important to my research?

Appendix F
Sample Interview Questions 5

Questionnaire for Street-level Policy Deliverers

Sure Start:

1. What is your role in the implementation of Sure Start? What is your job responsibility?
2. What is your understanding of the Sure Start Programme?

Policy Deliverers as decision-makers:

3. Do you need any professional qualification to do the job? Did your job require any work experience before you applied to this job?
   If yes, to what extent did your qualification and your experience contribute to improving your job performance?
4. Do you feel comfortable working under the current organisation set-up? Do you feel any organisational rules or regulations are inappropriate, which have caused difficulties in your work?
   It you are encountering this, how do you normally deal with this?
5. Within your working environment, what is your autonomy in dealing with unpredictable things?
6. To what extent does the role of 'targets' condition the way you operate in your work?
   (Is your organisation normally inclined to be result-oriented without taking employees' preferences into account?)
   If it has, how do you normally deal with it?
7. Policy deliverers often work in situations that require responses to the human dimensions of situations, where they have to judge each different situation and circumstance or the situations are too complicated to reduce them to programmatic formats.

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Have you met any situation in which you have had to use your discretion to cope with the issue, without the clear guidance from organisational rules?

Policy Deliverers as Implementers:

8. What resources do you have available to meet the goals of your job? Are they adequate? If not, why?
9. Have you ever come across a situation in which you cannot meet the needs of your clients? How did you deal with it? (*Limit demand, maximize the utilization of available resources, and obtain client compliance over and above the procedures.*)
10. Have you come across a situation in which you have had to reallocate your resources in order to either compromise with your clients or prioritise some areas rather than other areas?
11. Have you come across a situation in which you and your manager have different job priorities? If yes, how do you normally cope with it?
12. How have targets shaped your activities?
13. When facing uncertainties, have you developed a certain pattern of routines and ways of dealing with them by making use of your autonomy?

Sure Start:

14. Overall, can you assess the strengths and weaknesses of Sure Start?
15. Are there any things I haven't addressed that you think are important to my research?

Appendix G
Sample Interview Questions 6

Questionnaire for Managers of Children's Centres in Sheffield and Manchester

Sure Start:

1. What is the role of Children's Centres in Sure Start policy?
2. What services are the Centres providing?
3. How many staffs are employed in your Centre? What are their responsibilities?

Mapping out actors:

4. What actors are Children's Centres working with in Sure Start in Sheffield? (Needs to be illustrated one by one by examples.)
   What is the relationship between Children's Centres and other key actors?
5. What particular issues or difficulties do you encounter when the Children's Centre works together with other local actors in order to realise the objectives of Sure Start?
6. What sorts of resources do the Children's Centre need to obtain from other actors to realise the targets of the Children's Centre?
7. How have changes to the Sure Start Programmes affected the nature of implementation of Sure Start?
   What is the relationship between 'Sure Start Local Programmes', 'Early Excellence Centre', 'Neighbourhood Nursery' and 'Sure Start Children's Centre'?

Targets:

7. What targets do you receive from the local authority or the centre? To what extent do you think these targets are actually enhancing the performance of the Centre's services?
8. New Labour's rhetoric is to give local actors and frontline staff more autonomy and discretion to suit their local needs. Do you feel that this is actually happening, or is the central government still holding the power by setting up all kinds of targets, instead of giving away power to local actors? (Can you give some examples)?
9. Can I have some documents in terms of targets?

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Policy deliverers:

10. Is there any circumstance where you feel that employees in the Centre are facing some constraints in providing services to the local clients? How are the employees dealing with the constraints and why? (Responsibility evasion, unclear targets, too much workload or something else.)
11. What autonomy and discretion do your employees have to cope with unexpected things in the process of providing services to clients? (Examples, especially where they are facing the human dimensions of situations.)
12. How do you normally manage to control or constrain employees' 'improper' behaviour and make them provide decent service to the customers?
13. In terms of accountability of policy deliverers to organisation, is there any circumstance where employees in the Centre cannot fulfil their responsibility to the organisation? Why?
14. In terms of accountability of policy deliverers to consumers, is there any circumstance where employees in the Centre cannot fulfil their responsibility to the clients? Why?

Sure Start:

15. Overall, can you assess the strengths and weaknesses of Sure Start?
16. Are there any things I haven't addressed that you think are important to my research?

Appendix H
Sample Interview Request Letter

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Politics at University of Sheffield. My research relates to an existing ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) project—'The Delivery Chain'. This project explores how policy is translated through the delivery chain from policymakers at the centre to service delivery agents. As part of this research, I am primarily focusing on the implementation process of the 'Sure Start' programme.

I am currently at the stage of data-collection for the research, which involves a series of interviews with key participants. You have been identified as an individual whose account of your experience and views of the Sure Start Programme would greatly benefit my research. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet and discuss your views on this subject. All interviews will be conducted under Chatham House rules and your anonymity will be guaranteed in this project.

I do hope that you will be able to make yourself available for an interview at a time and location of your choice.

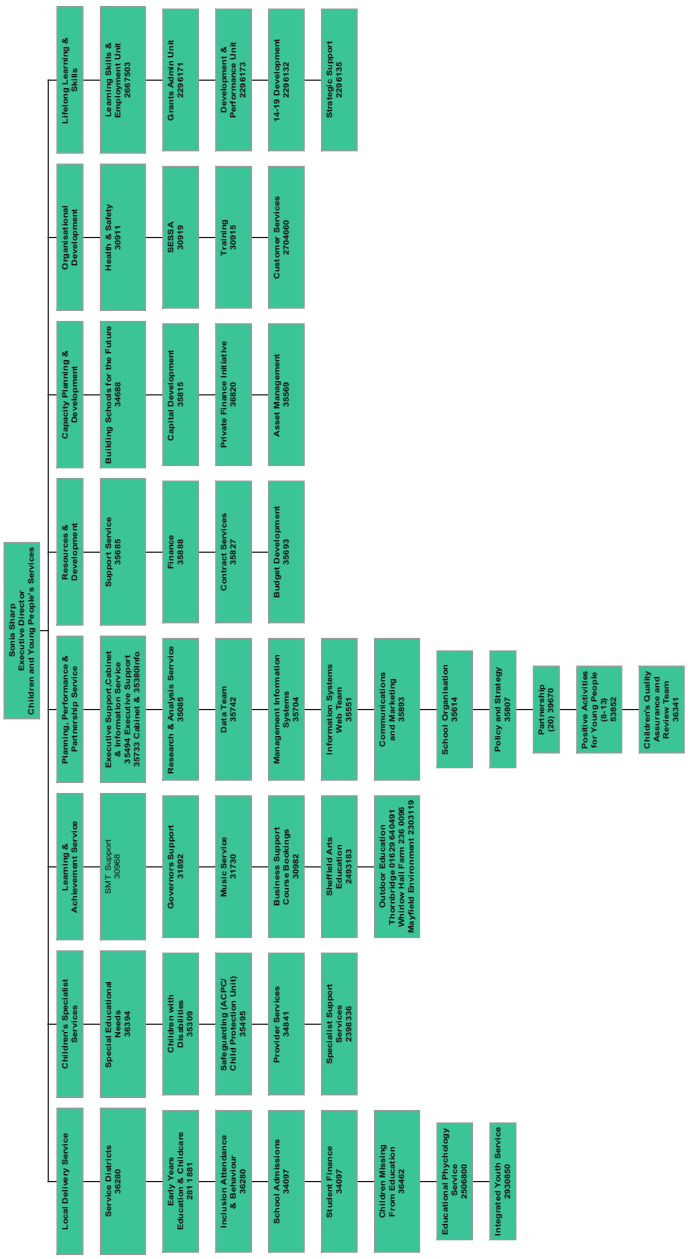
I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely
Xiongwei Song

X. Song, *Implementing Sure Start Policy*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1795-7

Appendix I
Enlarged Fig. 5.1

X. Song, *Implementing Sure Start Policy*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1795-7


Sonia Sharp
Executive Director
Children and Young People's Services
Local Delivery Service
Service Districts
36289
Early Years
Education & Childcare
2811481
Inclusion Attendance
& Behaviour
36280
School Admissions
36497
Student Finance
34097
Children Missing
From Education
36462
Educational Psychology
Service
2506800
Integrated Youth Service
2930850
Children's Specialist
Services
Special Educational
Needs
36394
Childen with
Disabilities
35369
Safeguarding (ACPC/
Child Protection Unit)
35495
Provider Services
34041
Specialist Support
Services
2398336
Learning &
Achievement Service
SNT Support
30980
Governors Support
31892
Music Service
31730
Business Support
Central Services
30982
Sheffield Arts
Education
2493183
Outdoor Education
Thornbridge 01629 640491
Whirlow Hall Farm 236 0096
Mayfield Environment 2303119
Planning Performance &
Partnership Service
Executive Support Cabinet
& Information Services
35494 Executive Support
35733 Cabinet & 35380Info
Research & Analysis Service
35085
Data Team
35742
Management Information
Systems
35704
Information Systems
Web Team
35551
Communications
and Marketing
35893
School Organisation
35814
Policy and Strategy
35807
Partnership
(20) 39670
Positive Activities
for Young People
(8-13)
53832
Children's Quality
Assurance and
Review Team
36341
Resources &
Development
Support Service
35835
Finance
35838
Contract Services
35827
Budget Development
35834
Capacity Planning &
Development
Building Schools for the Future
34888
Capital Development
35815
Private Finance Initiative
36820
Asset Management
35969
Organisational
Development
Health & Safety
30917
SESSA
30919
Training
30915
Customer Services
270600
Lifelong Learning &
Skills
Learning Skills &
Employment Unit
2607503
Grants Admin Unit
2296171
Development &
Performance Unit
2296173
14-19 Development
2296132
Strategic Support
2296135

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