THE STATE OF COLLABORATION

HOW READY ARE WE TO WORK TOGETHER?

collaborate
foundation

ABOUT THE COLLABORATE FOUNDATION

The Collaborate Foundation is an independent thought leadership centre that focuses on improving social and economic outcomes through the delivery of services to the public, regardless of sector, funding or affiliation. The Foundation exists to foster cross-sector collaboration and to support the best collaborative practices in government, business and civil society in their efforts to improve community well-being. The Foundation is associated with, and supported in part by contributions from, Collaborate CIC, a social consultancy that helps services to the public to collaborate in order to tackle complex social challenges.

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FOREWORD

This study builds on work previously undertaken by Collaborate CIC to establish a framework for collaboration amongst organisations - across all sectors - that serve the public. The purpose in this study was to validate that framework, if we could, and to use it as a means of examining the state of collaboration in the UK.

In 2015, Collaborate CIC, bringing together lessons from its work with local, national and international agencies that are trying to work differently and collaboratively with multi-sector partners, published Collaboration Readiness, a report that proposed an Index of successful collaboration. The Index comprises six categories of readiness that are required to survive and thrive in this more complex operating environment: Collaborative Behaviours, Citizens, Systems, Services, Places and Markets.

For each of the six categories, measurable indicators were suggested that would form the basis of The State of Collaboration research.

Much is being said today by political leaders of all colours, in the name of both economy and effectiveness, about the need for closer working – indeed, in some cases, for "integration" – of different organisations that share common outcome objectives, such as community and personal well-being, learning and community safety. Our aim in this study was to use the Collaborate Readiness Index to ascertain the extent to which people in those organisations were indeed ready and the extent to which they do have the commitment, skills and support to work together to deliver integrated services and improve outcomes for citizens.

Our findings confirm that where collaboration between agencies is successful, the categories of the Collaboration Readiness Index do comprise of key elements of the new ways of working together to produce better outcomes. However, it also indicates that the State of Collaboration in the UK is far from "ready" to fulfil the political demands for integration. There is a need for managerial and political commitment to collaborate with others, including a meaningful engagement of citizens; for greater skills and greater understanding of the multi-sector provision of service; and for leadership support of the people on the ground who are actually trying to make a difference.

> We have a long way to go. We hope that this report can help guide us through the journey.
>
> Greg Parston, Chair, Collaborate Foundation

1.0 CREATING THE 'STATE OF COLLABORATION'

Since the 1980s, the debate about the future of public service provision, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, has often focused on the ideological division between continued public provision and privatisation of social services, where the options most often discussed are either more state management or more market solutions. Delivering public goods has traditionally been regarded as the responsibility of the state and it is this notion that has formed the bedrocks of various 'social contracts' over the past 300 years. However, the scope of public services and how they are best delivered is an area of near constant contestation. Today, in times of austerity and in a complex political and social environment, numerous agenda compete, deepening divisions and frequently making solutions and compromise harder to find. We have witnessed many organisations and places simply 'surviving' on their own delivery platforms, with little positive impact on improved outcomes for citizens.

In this context, organisations that serve the public need to think and act creatively in order to provide better and more sustainable services. Some of the most effective new ways of working require putting collaboration at the heart of reform strategies and as a core skill set of public service practitioners and political leaders. These innovative reforms of services to the public are not possible today without mustering the resources of often very different and sometimes competing agencies. We argue that a profound shift in thinking and practice which a new cross-sector ecosystem of services to the public would require, is both an art and a science.

1.1 THE PUBLIC SERVICE CONTEXT

Our hypothesis – in line with our sister organisation Collaborate CIC – is that progressive change within services to the public is best achieved through value-based collaboration. We believe that collaborative models of commissioning and delivery offer a better chance to improve outcomes for society – particularly when this collaboration involves the public.

Currently, public services are struggling with a combination of rising and increasingly complex demand. The Office of Budget Responsibility, for example, estimates significant increases in public spending – especially in health – by 2030 simply as a result of demographic change.[1] At the same time, the Lankelly Chase Foundation have shown that this demand will increase in complexity – an average of 15 out of every 1,000 adults experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD).[2] This combination of drivers presents profound fiscal challenges and operational challenges to those aiming to provide integrated support that addresses the wider determinants of health and well-being.

Nearly a decade of austerity has prompted some public services to collaborate with other agencies in the pursuit of cost savings and delivery innovation, for example within back office services or in-service co-location and joint commissioning. In other areas, however, austerity has undermined service integrity. Compounding this is a widely held mistrust – or at least suspicion - of non-public sector provision. The recent collapses of Kids Company and of Carillion, for example, the on-going disquiet about the cost of private finance initiatives (PFI) and the steady stream of outsourcing scandals have undermined the concept of public-private partnership as a way of capitalising services to the public.

Nonetheless, there is on-going recognition of the need for tri-sector leadership around some of our most complex social problems and bold thinking about the changing role of government in shaping a more socially collaborative market. A recent King's Fund report, for example, sets out very well the need for a more integrated service offer as a route to fiscal sustainability and better health and social care outcomes for the public. Yet, despite recent attempts – such as Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) – at driving this, the report argues that "the biggest risk to integrated care is organisational protectionism, rather than privatisation, linked to a history of competitive behaviours and sometimes poor relationships between the leaders who need to collaborate to make a reality of integrated care".[3]

1.2 THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

In order to reimagine a different, collaborative version of support and delivery of services to the public that produce better social outcomes, understanding the current state of collaboration is also crucial. In initiating this study on the State of Collaboration we wanted to expose the size of the gap between the political and organisational rhetoric and what is actually happening on the ground and to identify what kinds of support are needed for the key determinants of successful collaboration and for the individuals, organisations and systems trying to make that happen. We are, of course, acutely aware that there are some notable examples of good collaborative service models already in practice in the United Kingdom. With that in mind, we decided to examine cross-sector service providers across the UK and take the temperature on the importance and prevalence of collaborative and collective working.

DEFINITION: COLLABORATION

For the purpose of the survey, we defined collaboration as two or more organisations working together to achieve an agreed goal. This could be two public sector organisations or could be the public sector working with the private or third sector or with the public to achieve a common outcome. In addition to this, collaboration is also a way to build on cross-sectors strengths, share knowledge, pool resources, share accountability and aligned incentives.

DEFINITION: SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC

We use the terminology 'services to the public' rather than public services deliberately, to reflect the approach we believe is necessary to tackle complexity and the multi-layered problems faced by society. In keeping with this term, we consider all sectors' role in providing services to the public, as well as the role of the citizen.

We set out to survey those professionals who provide services to the public from the private, public and third sector in order to determine today's State of Collaboration, from their perspectives. We wanted to know:

> To what extent do public service providers see the need for collaboration as a means to improve service outcomes, and how ready are they to do it in practice?
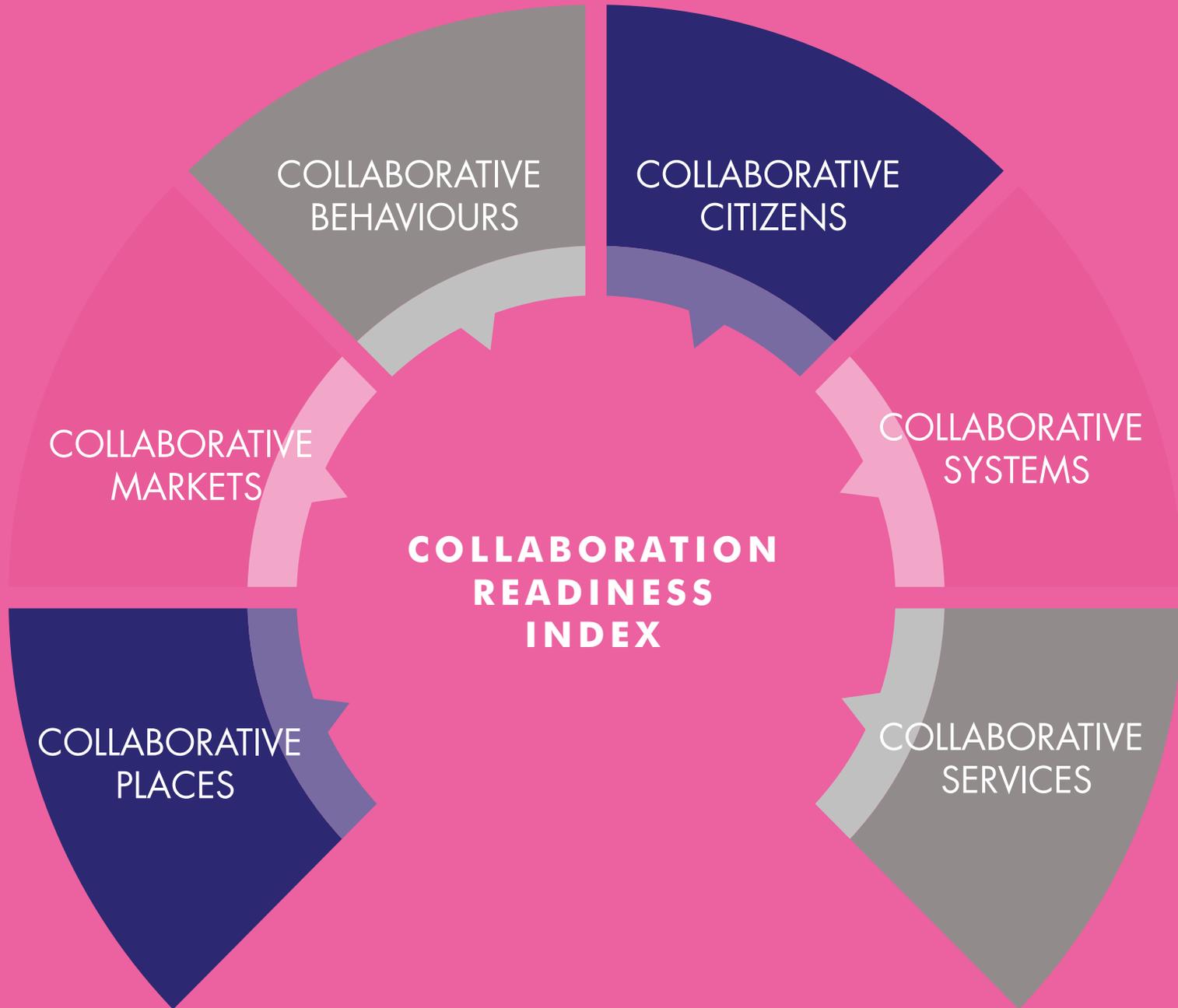
> What can we say about the 'state of collaboration' in the UK's public services today, and from whom can we learn?

To address these questions, desk research was conducted, and a survey questionnaire was prepared with the assistance of Traverse, a research and consultancy organisation. The structure of the survey was based in large part on the six categories of collaboration proposed in Collaborate CIC's 2015 report Collaboration Readiness,[4] along with their associated metrics. The categories of the Collaborate Readiness Index are Collaborative Behaviours, Citizens, Systems, Services, Places and Markets (these are shown on the accompanying diagram on page 10). The aim of the Index is to guide organisations, which are delivering services to the public, and the individuals that work in them, in building their readiness to collaborate. One expressed goal of the study was to test the validity of the Index and its possible use as a global assessment tool.

Traverse also conducted in depth interviews with six senior leaders – most of them chief executives - across the public, private and voluntary sectors to inform the shape of the survey. As a result, two additional categories were added to the survey: 'Urgency' (or sense of a "burning platform") that encourages organisations locally to work together; and the 'Requirements' from central government to collaborate.

For each of the categories included in the survey, respondents were asked, "How important do you think this factor is to successful collaboration in your geographic area?" and "To what extent is this factor prevalent in your organisation?". Respondents were asked to specify their responses on a four-point scale – "Not at all", "A little", "Somewhat" or "A great deal".

The survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix 3.

COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIOURS

COLLABORATIVE CITIZENS

COLLABORATIVE MARKETS

COLLABORATIVE SYSTEMS

COLLABORATION READINESS INDEX

COLLABORATIVE PLACES

COLLABORATIVE SERVICES

The survey was advertised widely through email invitations, with over 7,000 individuals being invited to participate, using a sample bought from a commercial provider, based on job title and industry sector. The online survey was sent out, along with up to two reminders, to chief executives, directors and senior managers with relevant job titles. Traverse also piloted a telephone methodology but found most people were not interested or had no time to take part. Five interviews were achieved in this manner.

The final response rate was very low across all three sectors. Only 115 working professionals in public, private and third sector organisations across the United Kingdom completed the online questionnaire. (See detailed information about the respondents in Appendix 2). If the response rate is an indication of the importance of collaboration in general amongst public service professionals, then it is troubling in itself.

It is difficult to know where collaborative relationships might sit in an organisation, therefore we do not know to what percentage of the sample the survey would have been irrelevant. From the responses received, however, we can conclude that the topic of collaboration clearly resonates strongly but with only a relatively small number of people. In this light, the survey should be considered to represent the views of those who are most interested in collaboration, rather than the all those involved in delivering services to the public.

2.0 WHAT WE FOUND

This section presents the survey findings. First, we present the findings of the broader survey questions, which asked about the respondents' and their organisations' collaborative work. Second, we present the findings in relation to the categories of the Collaboration Readiness Index.

2.1 ILL-PREPARED FOR COLLABORATION

> **"**
>
> We know we work much much better and we deliver greater results when people are collaborating.
>
> Chief Executive, Housing association
>
> **"**

The survey respondents are strong advocates of collaboration and are interested in what others are doing in this area. The majority of respondents (93%) say collaboration with other providers and organisations is important or critical for their own organisation's ability to deliver services to the public. Almost as many (89%) say collaborative projects are somewhat or very successful in achieving desired outcomes. In addition, 96% stated that collaborating with other organisations achieves better outcomes.

Many of those surveyed and interviewed mentioned a shared vision and a shared understanding of the problem as being at the heart of the collaboration, and that successful collaboration will "build a wide sphere of agreement". A few respondents listed pooling expertise, sharing resources, risks and reduced costs as the centre of a successful collaboration.

The nature of the collaborations seems to be spread across sectors and involve several organisations and staff at different levels. The respondents reported that their collaborative work involved stakeholders from local authorities (37%) and NHS Trusts (20%), as well as stakeholders from community associations, GP practices, CCGs, charities, police services, banks, educational organisations and private companies. We were also interested in the scope of the involvement and asked the respondents how many organisations were involved in the collaborative programme of work or project.

Q: To what extent, if at all, does your organisation value and incentivise staff to work collaboratively with other organisations

Q: To what extent, if at all, does your organisation provide you with the tools to do collaboration well?

27%

43%

30%

24%

30%

46%
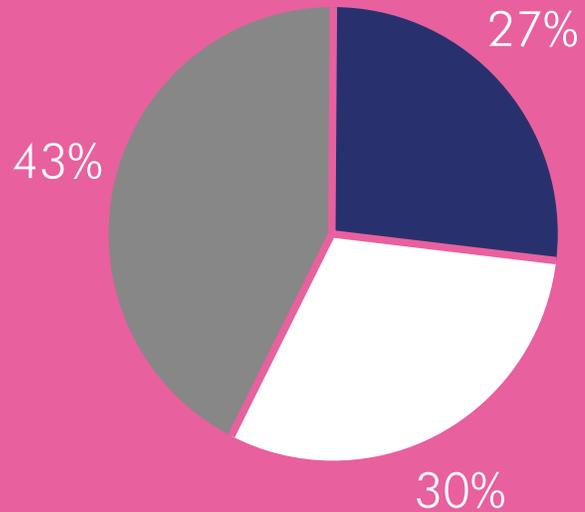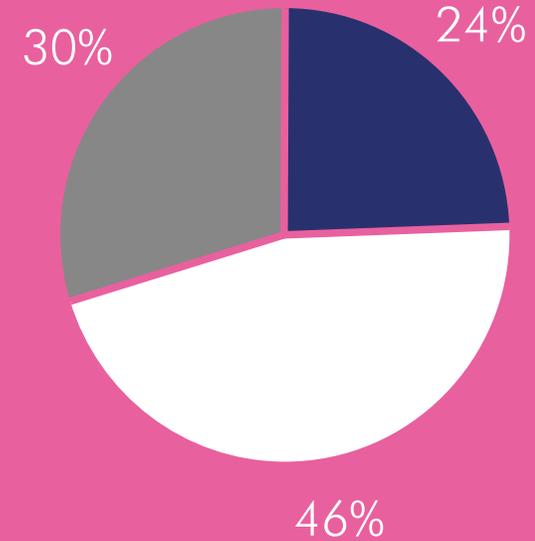
A Little/Not at all   Somewhat   A great deal

Nearly half of the respondents (48%) said that four or more organisations were involved in a collaborative programme. In addition, close to half (49%) also stated that the majority of the collaborative work comes from the middle management level – suggesting that collaboration does not necessarily merely happen in the ivory tower of top management but is actually conducted in the middle of the organisations.

Yet, despite the high involvement in collaborative initiatives, the survey data suggests that many people feel that they and/or their organisations are ill-prepared to collaborate. Close to one in four (24%) respondents said that their organisations lack or do not provide the right tools to do collaboration well. Over a quarter (27%) said that their organisations do not value and incentivise staff to work collaboratively with other organisations. It seems likely that those organisations that chose not to respond to the survey are less likely to value and incentivise collaboration.

Respondents hold different roles in their organisations, with about half (49%) being chief executives or deputy chief executives and the remainder being directors, division heads and managers. Chief executives and deputy chief executives are more likely to say that their organisations do value collaboration and do provide incentives to staff to collaborate, compared to any other role group we surveyed. Chief executives and deputy chief executives are also more likely to state that their organisations provide the tools to do collaboration well. However, we are unable to generalise from this difference to say there is a disconnect between perceptions, as the respondents in different roles do not necessarily come from the same organisation.
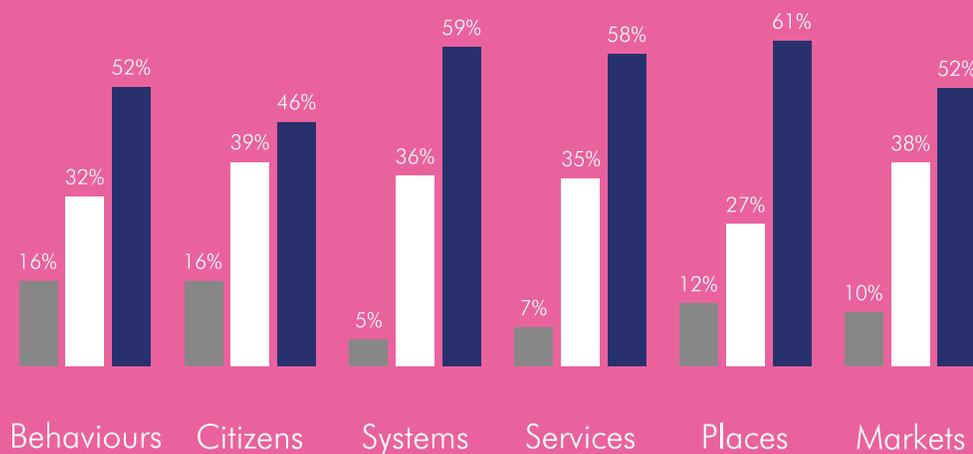
2.2 COLLABORATION READINESS INDEX

For each of the six Collaborative Readiness Index categories, respondents were asked two questions:

1. *How important do you think this factor is to successful collaboration in your geographic area?*

2. *To what extent is this factor prevalent in your organisation?*

Responses to all six categories are represented graphically below. A discussion of each of the six categories follows.

Importance of readiness categories

Behaviours: 16%, 32%, 52%
Citizens: 16%, 39%, 46%
Systems: 5%, 36%, 59%
Services: 7%, 35%, 58%
Places: 12%, 27%, 61%
Markets: 10%, 38%, 52%

Prevalence of readiness categories

Behaviours: 28%, 42%, 30%
Citizens: 20%, 51%, 29%
Systems: 13%, 42%, 45%
Services: 16%, 41%, 43%
Places: 17%, 41%, 42%
Markets: 18%, 42%, 40%
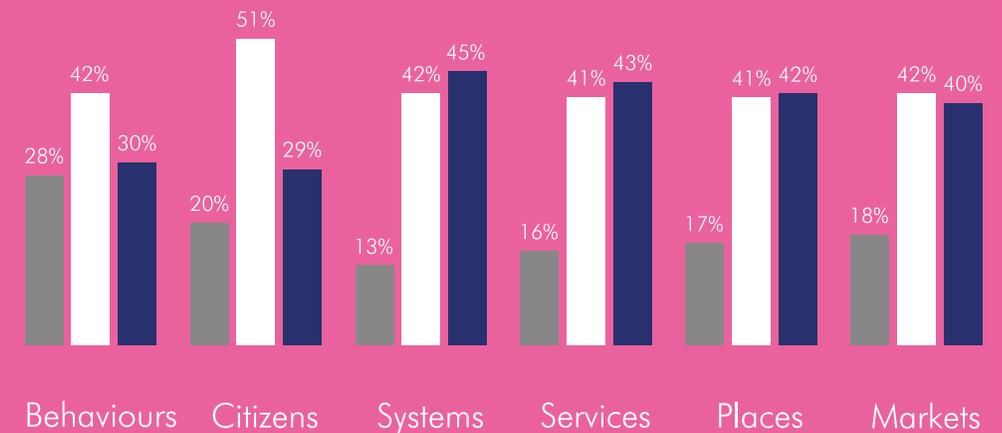
Legend:
- A Little/Not at all
- Somewhat
- A great deal

COLLABORATION
READINESS
INDEX

COLLABORATIVE
BEHAVIOURS

COLLABORATIVE
CITIZENS

COLLABORATIVE
MARKETS

COLLABORATIVE
SYSTEMS

COLLABORATIVE
PLACES

COLLABORATIVE
SERVICES
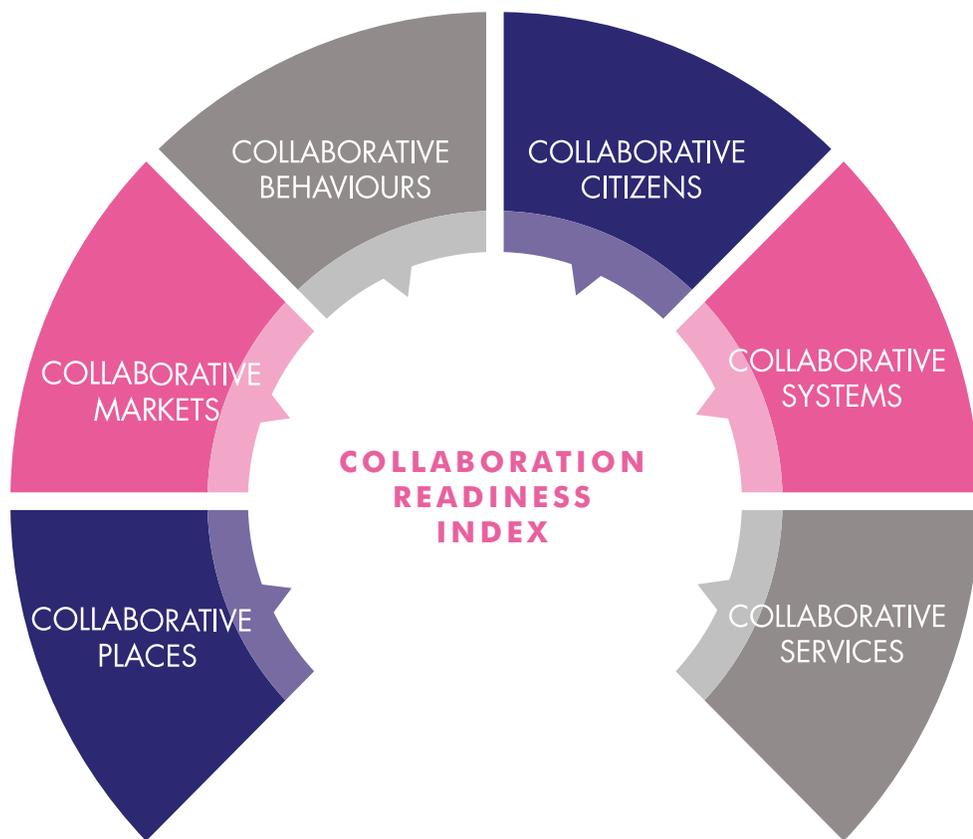
COLLABORATIVE BEHAVIOURS
The organisation has in place development of
practices and incentives to break down sector silos

The Behaviours category is about the extent to which cultures and behaviours align well across sectors and silos, and whether there is awareness of differences and of the actions required to manage these. Collaborative Behaviours provide an understanding of the extent to which collaborative practice is rewarded and if the 'right' conditions and incentives are in place.

"Changing behaviour and culture is hard and uncomfortable, and mistaking it for consensus can undermine the creative tension that characterises more profound partnerships" [5]

A large majority of respondents (82%) stated that it is somewhat important or very important for organisations to have in place development of practices and incentives to break down sector silos. Even though the prevalence levels related to these collaborative behaviours is relatively high (72%), it is the lowest level amongst all six categories, meaning that this important facilitator of collaboration is not present in over a quarter of organisations represented in the survey. This is a concerning finding, as we know that services to the public cannot be transformed without strong behavioural and cultural incentives pushing in the same direction as financial and operational models and we also recognise that those who responded to our survey are more predisposed to be positive about collaboration than the wider public, private and voluntary sector organisations delivering services to the public.

> " The notion that the citizen is only demanding, and does not supply, is completely out of time. The vast majority of our public services are provided by citizens themselves … Citizens must be seen as partners: not split on either side of a market equation "

Former Chief Executive, Health sector
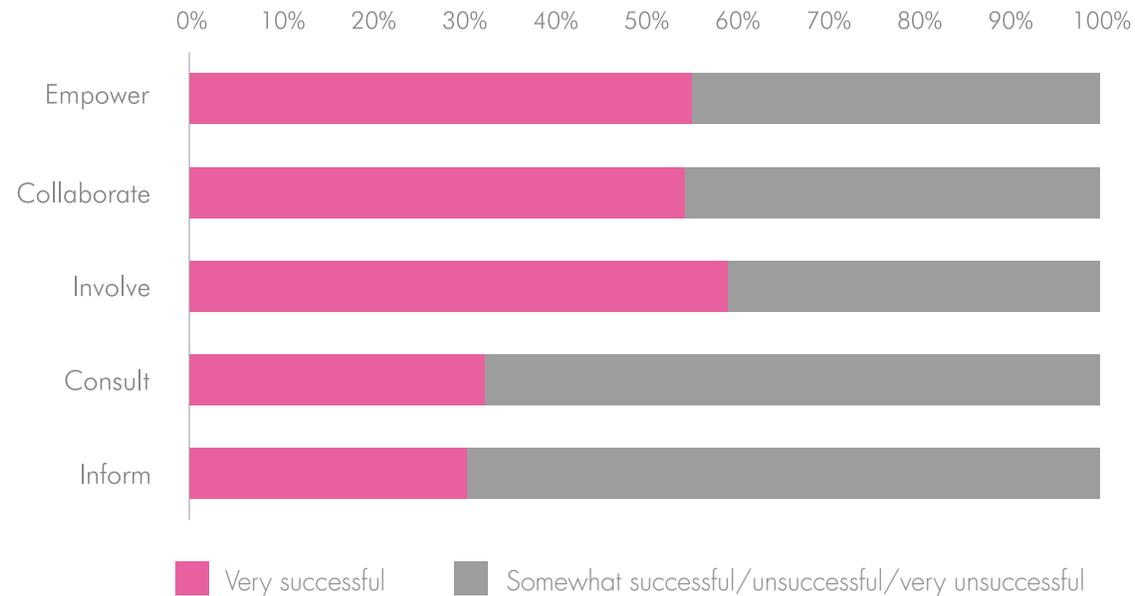
COLLABORATIVE CITIZENS
People that work to deliver public services are prepared to engage and share power with citizens.

This category focuses on how far organisations support and develop the skills and knowledge of staff to enable citizens to have greater influence and power over the services they receive.
More than four in five respondents (83%) say that it is somewhat important or very important to engage and share power with citizens in order to successfully collaborate. However, when asked if the Citizens category was prevalent in their organisations, one in five (20%) stated that there was no or a little engagement and/or power sharing with citizens.

Although many organisations and individuals have aspirations to move towards a more empowered citizen, it appears that some organisations that deliver services to the public have scope to significantly increase their levels of engagement with citizens as contributors to social outcomes.

Reported level of success mapped against stage of citizen engagement

Legend: Very successful · Somewhat successful/unsuccessful/very unsuccessful

Previous Collaborate CIC and NLGN research identified five levels of citizen engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower), stating that it is the top two steps that are "the most rewarding for the people involved".[6] The levels focus on building the individual and community resilience and capability required for transformation to collaborative service delivery and commissioning. Based on this scale, we asked the respondents to indicate the level of involvement of citizens in their collaborative work. The survey data shows that in general, citizens are most often engaged at the lower three steps (60%), i.e. they are informed, consulted or involved.

Yet, our research shows that where respondents reported successful collaboration projects they also have reported a higher level of citizen engagement. Those respondents who consider their collaborative work as being successful were more likely to rate their level of citizen engagement on the top three steps: invited to participate in decision-making (involve); working in partnership to develop the plan (collaborate); or having the opportunity to develop the plan themselves (empower). This response supports the argument that citizens are a crucial component and contributor to providing collaborative services to the public.

We also investigated the level of citizen involvement across the three sectors (see graph below). While exceeding the other two sectors in involving citizens, respondents who work in the public sector reported a lower level of collaboration and empowerment compared with individuals from the private and third sector.

Level of citizen engagement by sector
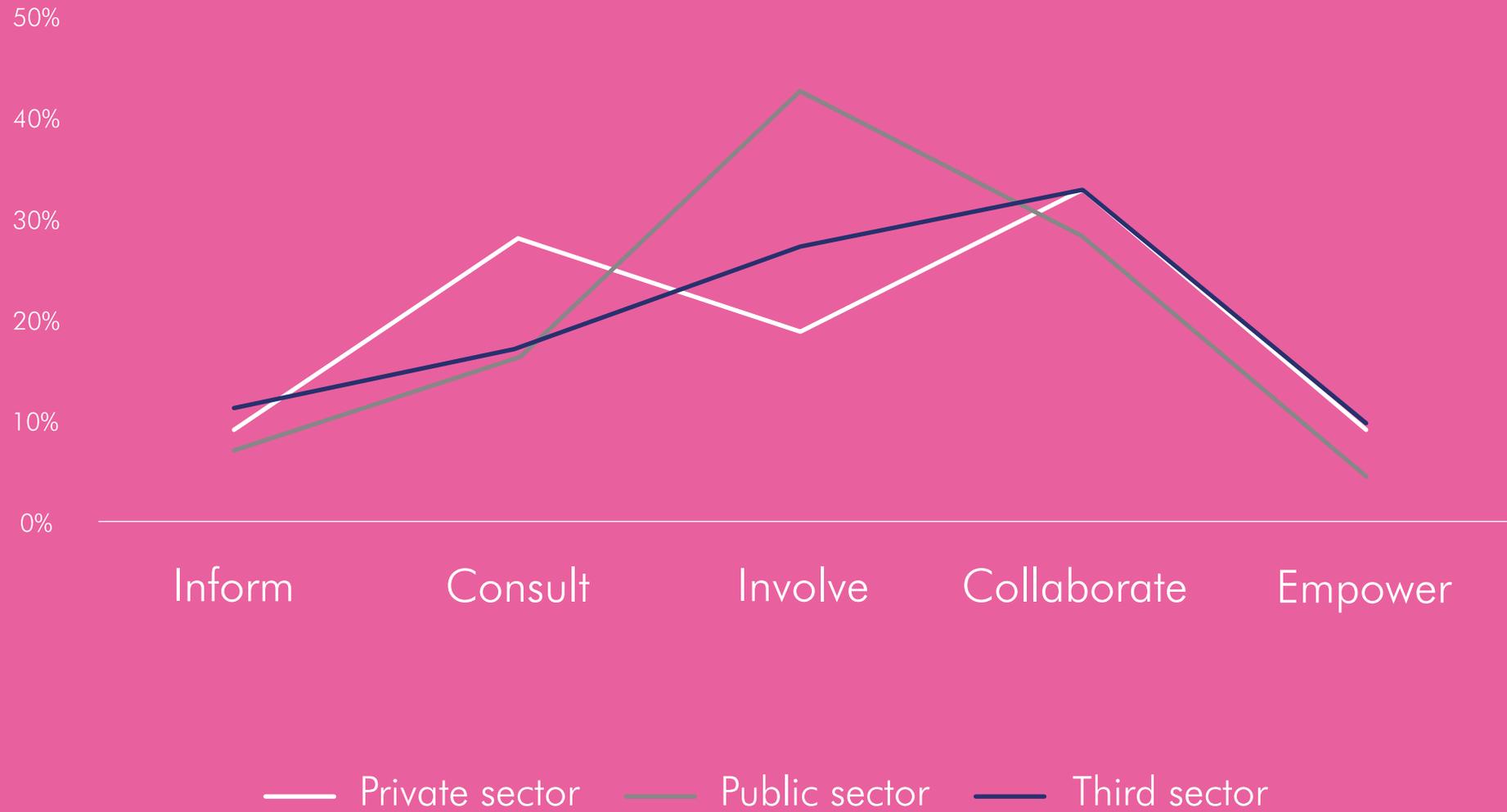
COLLABORATIVE SYSTEMS
The organisation has a considered approach to risk-management and an ability to learn from failure in order to improve performance

This category is about how well collaboration is supported by and aligns with the wider system. In particular, it addresses how well organisations build learning and resilience.

"… collaborative systems are not fixed, but ecosystems that are flexible and interdependent. It follows that the people that lead them need to be adaptive, entrepreneurial and attuned to managing different cultures of public, private and social sector."[7]

Even though the notion of whole-system working can be viewed as quite abstract, nearly all of our respondents (95%) felt that being able to manage risk and learn from mistakes is at least somewhat important to collaborative activities. Also, the majority are confident that their organisations have this capacity with nearly nine in ten (87%) saying that the Systems category were at least somewhat prevalent.

COLLABORATIVE PLACES
The organisation actively develops deeper insights about community relationships, service structure and trends, beyond its own prescribed or statutory remits

The Place category addresses the understanding of the local context in which the particular services to the public operates. Here we seek to build a picture of whether communities' needs and insights are valued and taken into consideration when shaping and defining the services in the place. Any transformation agenda across sectors needs to be pursued together with shared connection to the assets of a place.

A majority of respondents (88%) believe that it is somewhat important or very important for organisations to develop insights beyond their own remit but close to a fifth (18%) of respondents reported little or no prevalence within their organisation for developing wider insights into their communities and local places from the organisations they work in. Even though resources within the public sphere are being squeezed, there is still, to some extent, a lack of a collective, place-based approach to deal with local issues.
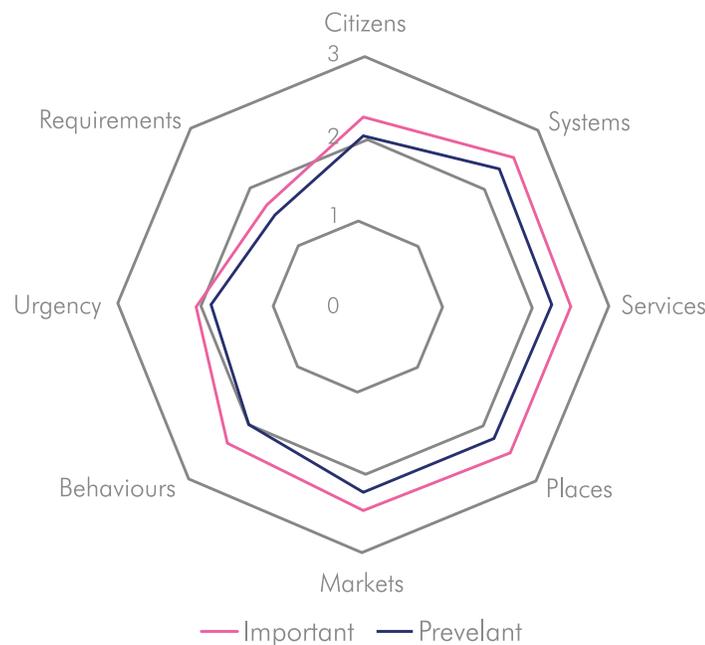
COLLABORATIVE SERVICES
The organisation understands and actively seeks to manage demand in order to ensure appropriate service delivery

Collaborative service is about operational delivery, and, in our survey, we focused on the importance and prevalence of demand management capability to shape that delivery.

"Public services have an uneasy relationship with demand… Officials talk about managing demand "down" – finding ways to reduce the burden on already stretched services."[8]

Demand management is seen as very important by respondents (91%) rate it as somewhat or very important) and over four in five respondents (84%) stated that these conditions are in place in their organisations. Understanding and actively managing demand to ensure appropriate service delivery is not an end in itself, yet it is encouraging that a majority of respondents believe that their organisation understands and manages the demand and supply side of service effectively.

COLLABORATIVE MARKETS
The organisation actively works with other organisations to explore new ways of working

This category relates to how well providers work with others to innovate, develop new delivery models and shape the wider market in which they operate. To work in new ways, organisations need the ability to effectively use the wider community assets (financial and non-financial) at their disposal.

Exploring new cross-sector ways of working is felt to be key in providing services to the public (90%) believe it is at least somewhat important) and is prevalent in a majority of the organisations (82%). However, there is almost a fifth (18%) of respondents who feel that their organisation is not actively working with other organisations to innovate.

2.3 ASSESSING THE VALUE OF THE INDEX

Spider chart with categories: Citizens, Systems, Services, Places, Markets, Behaviours, Urgency, Requirements. Legend: — Important (pink), — Prevelant (dark blue). Scale 0 to 3.

We believe that the categories of the Collaborate Readiness Index are aspects of successful collaboration that people and organisations need to understand, assess and develop. This study was our first attempt to quantify the importance and prevalence of the categories, and in doing that, to empirically test the value of the Index.

As mentioned, those surveyed were asked how important they felt each category was to successful collaboration and to what extent the categories were prevalent in their organisation. Converting the range of responses numerically, from "Not at all" equalling 0 to "A great deal" equalling 3, the average importance score for all six categories was 2.42 (when adding the additional factors of Urgency and Requirements the average importance score was 2.28).

The average prevalence score across all six categories of the Index was 2.18 and when adding the additional factors of Urgency and Requirements the average importance score was 2.06. We believe that this result, presented in the spider chart on the left, affirms the importance and relevance of the six collaborative categories of the Collaborative Readiness Index. Indeed, the lowest average scores are for the two additional categories, Urgency and Requirements, which were added on the basis of Traverse's qualitative interviews. It is of some interest to note that central government requirements to collaborate is not perceived to be an important driver.

As noted earlier, the survey was completed predominantly by people with an interest in collaboration, many of whom had examples of successful projects. As such, we can be confident that their assessment of which factors are important to collaboration will be well-informed.

While these survey findings affirm the value of the categories proposed in the Index, the bias in the sample means that it would be wrong to assume that all organisations follow a similar pattern for prevalence of the factors. Consequently, we believe that the actual state of readiness is likely to be overstated by this data. To achieve a more accurate measure, the same factors could be used in a survey designed to have a more general appeal.

When we examine the category data more closely (see the scatter plot on the following page), we can discern a positive relationship between the prevalence of the categories and the importance of them based on the average score. The Systems category received the highest average score for both importance and prevalence, indicating that a sustainable approach to risk management and extractions of learning are present and are considered important to successful collaboration.
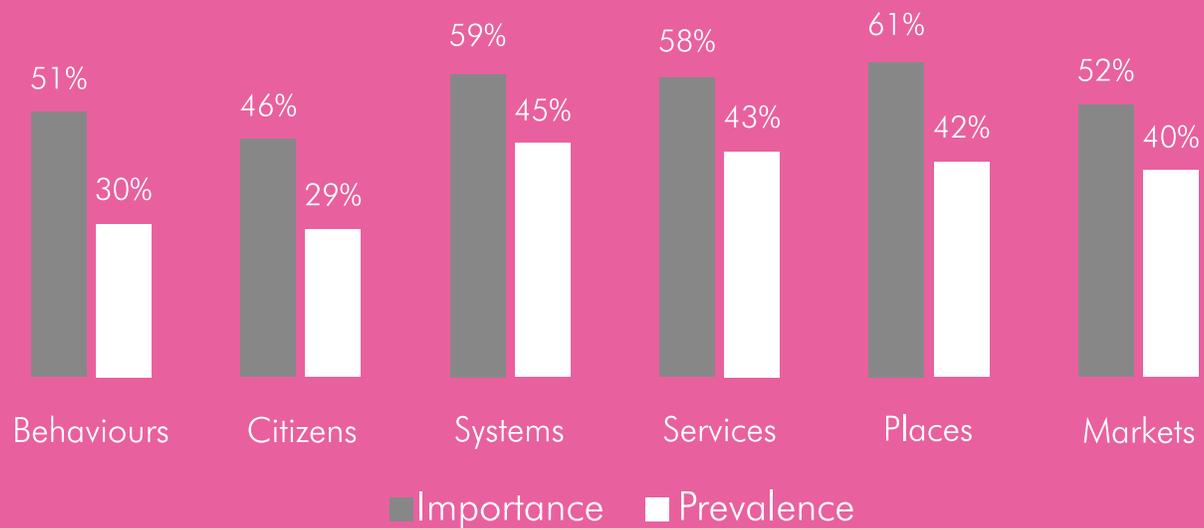
We can also observe a gap between importance and prevalence in all six Index categories, as shown in the graph to the right (comprising the 'a great deal' responses from the survey). The largest gap (21%) relates to Behaviours, followed closely by Places. Well worth noting are the lower scores for the Behaviours and Citizens categories. This is reflected both in the average score and in the 'a great deal' responses. The low score for Behaviours reflects not only our findings regarding organisations' lack of tools and incentives for collaborative work, but also speak to the fact that collaborative behaviours and culture are deeply ingrained and are not built or changed overnight.

Perhaps more worrying is however the fact that respondents rated Collaborative Citizens as being the least important. This is despite the fact that, as described earlier, those respondents who consider their collaborative work as being successful were more likely to report higher levels of citizen engagement than those who did not. We cannot extract from the data why the Citizens category is rated as the least significant out of the six categories. However, we know from the earlier Collaborative Citizen study[9] that the value of citizens as a key asset in improving social outcomes is sometime poorly understood and that, to many, citizens often appear difficult to engage with on an effective and sustainable level. We will discuss this further in the next section.

Relationship between the prevalence and importance of the readiness categories

Prevalence (y-axis): 1.90 – 2.40
Importance (x-axis): 2.15 – 2.55

- Systems
- Services
- Markets
- Places
- Citizens
- Behaviours

Importance and prevalence of readiness categories

Category	Importance	Prevalence
Behaviours	51%	30%
Citizens	46%	29%
Systems	59%	45%
Services	58%	43%
Places	61%	42%
Markets	52%	40%

■ Importance □ Prevalence

3.0 THE STATE OF COLLABORATION
– SHIFTING FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY

> " The difficulty lies not in the new ideas, but in the old ones that ramify, for those of us brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds. "
>
> John Maynard Keynes

Calls for greater collaboration as a route to improved social outcomes echo against a challenging backdrop: persistent austerity, rising demand, poor social mobility, entrenched poverty, and an uncertain geo-political future. These pressures undoubtedly divert attention and effort from exploring new ways of tackling wicked issues and often reinforce silo working. However, we argue that in fact the only way we will address any of these challenges is by fundamentally rethinking the way we work and organise services to the public.

This is why it was encouraging to observe that 93% of respondents view collaboration as important or critical to their organisation's ability to deliver services to the public, and the vast majority (96%) stated that collaborating with other organisations achieves better outcomes. The State of Collaboration research gives us confidence that efforts spent on promoting collaboration have not been futile, but that we still have some way to go to genuinely shift from rhetoric to reality.

It is, in fact, relatively easy to find pockets of collaboration and social innovation that are transforming the way services to the local public are delivered. These include, as examples, the police force in the West Midlands[10] reconceiving their role as a critical player in early intervention, as well as areas up and down the country considering the value of Integrated Care Systems.[11] There are also larger policy drivers and commitments on a national and global scale. For example, national initiatives in the UK, such as NHS, STPs and devolution to combined authorities are both seeking to address the challenge of rise in demand and the complexity of entrenched social issues.

The devolution deals are partly based on the analysis that more control over local funding and services will enable a more systemic response to local problems, and a collaborative approach to economic growth and public service reform. The STPs, on the other hand, require local areas to think about how to shift investment away from acute and reactive settings and towards more community-based solutions. Both initiatives certainly open up for new ways of organising relationships between citizens and services.

On a global scale, we saw a move to a more cross-sectoral approach when the United Nations in 2015 gave the private sector the opportunity to provide input and help elaborate the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of course, this requires the private sector to share responsibility, in collaboration with all other actors in society, to achieve these goals. This shift accommodates a new way of approaching the scope and complexity of the economic and social transformation that is needed for achieving the global development goals, an approach that acknowledges that no one sector is able to manage the transformation alone. The work ahead will require new and maybe surprising alliances not only on the basis of shared resources but on shared values as well. It certainly remains to be seen if the aims of the UN to build 'strong, inclusive and integrated partnerships'[12] will be achieved.

These examples highlight the need for policymakers, in the long term, to purposely encourage collaboration to achieve greater impact by addressing the barriers to delivering improved services to the public. If we are to scale and sustain new ways of working, we must recognise that some of the inroads have already been made – we do not need to start from a blank sheet. Instead we must see places, organisations and individuals begin to truly invest in learning from others and considering how such models could be adapted and applied to different contexts.

In addition to the importance of learning from others and building on exciting work, this research has identified two critical steps that need to be taken if we are to realise the potential of collaboration:

1. We need to grow capability of the workforce to work in new ways.

2. We need to realise the role and value of citizens.

3.1 GROWING THE CAPABILITY TO WORK IN NEW WAYS

The data tells a story of disconnect: between those who believe organisations can achieve better social outcomes through collaboration and the culture and practices that underpin the organisations in which they work. While respondents overwhelmingly support collaboration as important for improving services to the public, 24% reported that their organisations provide little or no tools to enable them to collaborate and 27% reported a similar lack of incentives to facilitate collaboration. This creates a challenge as to how we shift from rhetoric to reality. If the cultural and organisational dynamics are inhibiting new ways of working, then we are relying heavily on the fact that people will have the tenacity and energy to work in spite of the system.

The option is to do something: to build the capabilities of those in the system.

Collaborative ways of working entail not only putting in place a programme of collaboration but also putting it together in the right way – internally and externally. It is about leveraging people and resources, in all parts of society, in a proactive and sometime bespoke way. Rather than stitching together something quickly, it requires consideration and strategic thinking, for example addressing knowledge gaps for long-term benefits.[13] It requires the training and development needed by people on the ground – including citizens – who will make successful collaboration happen.
This requires time and space – an investment that will pay its return with improved outcomes.

Collaboration "ready" organisations that work towards improving social outcomes also chose to build trusting relationships, embed openness and accountability, and address complex problems from a variety of perspectives and approaches. This shift should not be viewed as a mechanical process, but as an open and humble way of working with others that allows for exploration, for unpacking and improving the way in which we work together.

3.2 REALISING THE VALUE OF CITIZENS

The 2014 Collaborative Citizen report signalled a movement to mobilise the citizen in the delivery of quality services to the public.[14] That research showed clear support from citizens for the idea of public services collaborating across silos to improve outcomes. Respondents regarded partnership working as important way of improving quality, cost effectiveness and accountability. Data from a national survey suggested that very few people felt that they received a personalised service (15%) and that they were are able to influence the services they receive (13%). However, one third of peopled surveyed suggested they would work with public service providers to improve the situation. Yet, in 2016, research by NLGN and Collaborate CIC indicated that public service provision had not moved beyond consulting of citizens.[15]

Indeed, when we look at the findings from our survey regarding the five steps of engagement, it is evident that although organisations do incorporate input from citizens and service users in the design of a collaborative activities (with over two thirds stating that citizens are involved), we remain a significant way off from empowering citizens (the highest step), where decision making responsibilities are devolved to those who are accessing support. Not engaging citizens as collaborative partners is, in effect, a waste of valuable and knowledgeable resources.

There are several means by which people can be more empowered and there are many ways in which citizens can work jointly with providers of public services – some examples include: participatory budgeting, collaborative governance, partnerships, and citizen co-production of services to the public. However, engagement of citizens can easily be dismissed as too time-consuming, resource heavy and expensive. Often, engagement efforts become tokenistic, operational and poorly facilitated.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that citizens are too often treated as merely objects of policy and recipients of services, rather than as active participants in changes that will directly affect their lives. What seems to not have been realised is that citizens are a key untapped asset in the production of community well-being. Citizens hold local knowledge, diverse expertise, as well as willingness to invest their time and resources to improve their own quality of life and into helping others. Citizen engagement is more easily dismissed or underplayed when this value is poorly understood.

Today we are witnessing a wave of well-organised citizen-driven movements that to some extent look and feel different from the rapid development of political and social movements of the 60s and 70s. This is a new wave of groups of people who are responding to a lack of 'something' and that are growing strong and influential by utilising digital platforms. Social and political movements, such as Hope not Hate, the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, Women's March, Occupy, Podemos, #metoo, Black Thrive and recently #MarchForOurLives, involve citizens on local, national and global levels and they are organising outside traditional and formal institutions.

As social activism is continuing to grow and thrive, it is not an option for providers of services to the public to ignore this shift in citizen concern and engagement. If we are truly willing to collaborate for better social outcomes, then service providers must recast their relationships with citizens and ensure that they are involved in a genuine and meaningful way from the outset.

This shift towards a more nuanced relationship between citizens and service providers requires gathering and sharing insights into the needs, wants, assets and aspirations of communities, with citizens themselves leading this process.

Creating the right conditions and methodologies to do this should be the next step which the public sector should lead, learning from "collaborate ready" practice in places across the UK and as diverse as Oldham, Wigan, West Midlands Combined Authority and Sutton's Citizen Commissioners group.

Taking a more strategic and collaborative approach to building in people's voice requires stakeholders to develop and/or build on place-based public service provision informed by local population needs and geared towards identifying and strengthening community capacity. Creating knowledge and skills across all sectors would facilitate better and more sustainable engagement between providers and citizens.

4.0 CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

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- Respondents working in public services want to collaborate – but the enabling environment is not yet there. It is critical that leaders do more to create it.

- Collaborative citizens are a severely under-utilised resource – but we still do not know how to engage citizens in meaningful co-production in the way we currently commission and deliver services to the public.

- Collaboration for better public outcomes will fail unless we do more to get the incentives right. Incentives drive behaviour. Our data shows the gap between ambition and reality.

This new research presents some important insights into the factors needed for successful collaboration – there is a sense that collaboration should not only be done out of necessity to deliver certain services, but for better outcomes for citizens. However, even though we have identified a group of managers and leaders in the public, private and voluntary sectors who are advocates for collaboration, people and places are still not fully equipped to deliver collaborative practice to the scale required to see fundamental improvements in social outcomes. The desire and interest in collaboration can only take us so far. We need to ensure that organisations and the public are ready to support and facilitate collaborative work. One way to do this is by working with integrity on the determining factors of the Collaborative Readiness Index – factors that this study demonstrates are of key importance to working better together.

This opens up an important new agenda for research, as well as practice. The previous case for competition between public service providers stood on the foundation of silos, transaction cost economics and output focus. A collaborative model does not fit on that traditional foundation. The six collaborative readiness categories go some way in quantifying the basis for a new model of working together and certainly suggest a new avenue for research. Our hope is that we can revisit the categories of collaboration regularly, and help foster, as well as mark progress.

Cross-sector collaboration is not easy, but it is what is needed to achieve the urgent and audacious goals we face in all sectors that are providing services to the public. By continuing to measure the State of Collaboration we hope to help keep moving the dial for communities, neighbourhoods, families and individuals. We are looking forward to tracking collaborative cross-sector successes and we will continue to advocate and promote good collaborative practices, because it is impossible to imagine how we can sustain effective services to the public without it.

APPENDIX 1 – TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE READINESS

In order to explore the implications of our State of Collaborations research for service managers and professionals, we gathered a group of leaders from public, charitable and private sector organisations in a seminar to discuss the findings. We asked them to suggest ways of tackling some of the organisational weaknesses and obstacles that stand in the way of more effective and widespread collaborations. This is a brief note of their roundtable discussion and their collective recommendations. A list of participants appears at the end of this note.

As a group, participants at the seminar believed that collaboration is essential in tackling complicated social issues that cannot be resolved by any one organisation – regardless of sector – working alone. This accords with the study's findings that highlight that people working in organisations that serve the public across different sectors believe that collaboration is an important route to better outcomes.

Despite that recognition, however, the State of Collaboration had found that survey respondents do not believe that they are being supported or incentivised to collaborate by their organisations and leaders. Nor do they feel that they are equipped with the tools they need to collaborate well with others. Seminar participants agreed that there is a great distance to travel before working in collaboration is an effective part of the day-to-day practice. They discussed the difficult task of changing deep-rooted organisational cultures and behaviours and overcoming suspicions that people in different sectors have of each other's motives and performance. This extends not only to frontline workers but also to political leaders both locally and nationally. There was some consideration given to the difficulties that different organisations and politicians can have in finding common ground – figuratively and literally – with others. This can undermine collaboration.

Participants also discussed at length the study finding that, even amongst advocates of collaboration, engagement of citizens – seen by some as crucial to successful collaborations – was generally limited to relatively low levels, seldom approaching the level of co-production and citizen empowerment. There was an important recognition that meaningful public engagement and co-production may result in ends that managers, professionals and politicians may not have considered or even desire.

One of the key reflections that came out from the discussion is that collaboration does not just happen on its own – it has to be deliberately supported by building skills and fostering collaborative behaviours, as well as by putting in place the organisational infrastructure to enable it.

In response to these concerns, participant identified four clear set of action that are needed if the state of collaboration is to improve:

Develop collaborative leadership	Align around place	Develop the skills and knowledge of collaborative citizens	Challenge rules and tolerate mistakes

Leadership

Participants agreed on the necessity of strong leadership commitment to create the enabling environment in which staff can work across organisational boundaries. They cited the need for leaders to deliberately invest time and money in development of skills and behaviours for collaboration.

At the same time, relationships between organisations and their people must be constant, repeated and ongoing. This can be modelled by leaders but has to be enabled and owned throughout the organisation. In that regard, participants noted that the premise for collaboration must also be defined and co-produced: "What does it means for us as an organisation, as staff or as citizens?".

Place

Many of the participants could point to people and organisations across the country that are working together to make change happen, where collaboration across sectors and with citizens is embedded in policy and ways of working.

One of the findings from our research was that the Readiness Index category Places – developing deep insights about community relationships, service structures and trends, beyond one's own organisation – was seen as the most important (though not the most prevalent) to successful collaboration. Participants strongly agreed but also noted that this can often be difficult, especially were statutory authority amalgamations and partnerships encompassed large geographical areas that extended beyond those with which citizens and even professionals can readily affiliate. Building common identification and vision around place was regarded as an important prerequisite to successful collaboration.

Citizens

The participants also agreed that a key feature of collaborative work must involve empowering citizens to develop their own readiness to be part of the solution. This was discussed as particularly important in these days of popular reliance on social media news and of misinformation. Citizens need to be given facts and real power and to see the impact of their involvement or they will quickly disengage. Yet it is difficult for service organisations to do this without being seen to be patronising or self-serving.

Engaging citizens means finding ways to involve people in a mature conversation about the outcomes they are seeking and the choices about how those outcomes can be achieved. This not only means involving 'lived experience' in the way we think about service delivery, but also fundamentally embedding a citizen-centred approach in partnerships which serve the public.

Challenge and tolerance

Seminar participants discussed the need for building trusted relationships within and across organisations and, in order to do so, creating an authorising environment that allows people to explore new ways of working. For leaders, this can mean challenging convention and even "breaking the rules", not just to provide room and opportunity for exploration and innovation but also to model the kinds of open-mindedness that collaboration requires.

Creating an environment that allows people to act differently, however, also means recognising that exploration and innovation can sometime result in mistakes. Of course, mistakes in public service provision can be harmful, so care has to be taken to mitigate unintended effects while, at the same time, tolerating errors and learning from them. The focus must be on developing a shared understanding of risk and accountability.

LIST OF SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Anna Randle
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Carla Ross
Research & Evidence Lead, *Public Engagement, Wellcome Trust*

Edward Knowles
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Greg Parston
Chair, *Collaborate Foundation*

Henry Kippin
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Jim Minton
Chief Executive, *Toybee Hall*

Kristina Glenn
Director, *Cripplegate Foundation*

Niall Bolger
Chief Executive, *London Borough of Sutton*

Perry Burton
Head of London Audit, *Grant Thornton UK LLP*

Piali Das Gupta
Head of policy, *SOLACE*

Sarah Billiald
Chief Executive, *First Community Health & Care*

Stephen Bediako
Chair and Founder, *The Social Innovation Partnership*

Stephen Dorrell
Chair, *NHS Confederation*

Victor Adebowale
Chief Executive, *Turning Point and* Chair, *Collaborate CIC*

APPENDIX 2 – SURVEY SAMPLE

The survey was sent out to individuals within local authority departments, to public and private sector professionals as well as to members of the voluntary and community sector. The survey was in field between December 2017 and February 2018, with over 7000 online invitations. In total there were 115 respondents. The following provides an overview of the survey sample.

Professional Role

Chief Executive (47%)
Director (18%)
Division Head (17%)
Assistant Director (6%)
Deputy Chief Executive (2%)
Other (10%)

Sector

Third Sector (44%)
Public Sector (37%)
Private Sector (19%)

Geographical spread
(several options allowed)

London (47%)
South East England (38%)
West Midlands (35%)
East Midlands (30%)
East of England (30%)
South West England (27%)
North West England (25%)
North East England (23%)
Wales (23%)
Yorkshire and The Humber (23%)
Scotland (20%)
Northern Ireland (17%)

Area of work
(several options allowed)

Healthcare and Social Care (50%)
Education (30%)
Housing (17%)
Transportation and infrastructure (13%)
Environmental services (10%)
Emergency services (9%)
Criminal Justice and Policing (6%)
Urban planning (4%)
Others specified: some respondents describe combinations of the above, a few mention construction, youth services, sport and leisure, financial services or advice services.

APPENDIX 3 – STATE OF COLLABORATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Experience of collaboration in your current organisation and role.

By collaboration we mean two or more organisations working together to achieve an agreed goal. This could be two public sector organisations or could be the public sector working with the private or third sector or with the public to achieve an outcome.

A specific example…

1. In the past 12 months, can you think of an example of a time you have worked in collaboration to achieve one of your organisation's objectives?

   Yes – continue to Q2
   No – go to Q7

2. Please briefly describe the project or programme of work.

3. Which of these organisations were stakeholders and/or involved in the programme of work or project?

   - Local authority
   - Community associations
   - Private housing developer
   - Private care provider
   - GP practice
   - CCG
   - NHS Trust
   - Other

4. How many organisations were involved in this programme of work or project?

   a) 2   **b)** 3   **c)** 4   **d)** 5 or more

5. Where did most of the staff involved in the programme of work or project come from?

   a) Frontline (e.g. care workers)
   b) Middle management (e.g. service coordinators)
   c) Strategic (e.g. Group Directors)
   d) Other

6. Based on progress so far, how successful has programme of work or project been in achieving its desired outcomes?

   a) Very successful
   b) Somewhat successful
   c) Somewhat unsuccessful
   d) Very unsuccessful
   e) Too early to say

More generally…

7. In general, to what extent (if at all) is collaboration with other providers and organisations important in your/your organisation's ability to deliver services to the public?

a) Not important
b) Somewhat important
c) Minor importance
d) Important
e) Critical

8. Why do you say that?

9. On balance, which of these statements reflects your view best?

a) Collaborating with other organisations achieves better outcomes
b) My organisation working alone achieves better outcomes

Involvement - Please answer the following questions with your and your organisation's experience with collaborative work in mind.

[RATE THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ON THE SCALE OF PARTICIPATION]

10. Please indicate the typical level of involvement of the public and service users in collaborative activities you have been involved in.

- INFORM (told of what is planned)
- CONSULT (asked their response to what is planned)
- INVOLVE (invited to participate in deciding what to do)
- COLLABORATE (working in partnership to develop a plan)
- EMPOWER (opportunity to develop the plan themselves)
- Not applicable

11. To what extent, if at all, does your organisation value and incentivise staff to work collaboratively with other organisations?

a) Not at all
b) A little
c) Somewhat
d) A great deal

12. To what extent, if at all, does your organisation provide you with the tools to do collaboration well?

a) Not at all
b) A little
c) Somewhat
d) A great deal

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR COLLABORATION

The following attributes have been identified as being important to successful collaboration.

Please answer the following questions about a) the importance of these factors to successful collaboration in the main geographical area or region in which your organisation operates and b) the extent to which the factor is prevalent in your own organisation. Please keep your experience of working collaboratively in mind as you answer them.

Statement	13. How important do you think this factor is to successful collaboration in your geographic area?	14. To what extent is this factor prevalent in your organisation?
Citizens People that work to deliver public services are prepared to engage and share power with citizens.		
Systems The organisation has a considered approach to risk-management and an ability to learn from failure in order to improve performance.	**a)** Not at all **b)** A little **c)** Somewhat **d)** A great deal **e)** Not applicable	**a)** Not at all **b)** A little **c)** Somewhat **d)** A great deal **e)** Not applicable
Services The organisation understands and actively seeks to manage demand in order to ensure appropriate service delivery.		
Places The organisation actively develops deeper insights about community relationships, service structures and trends, beyond its own prescribed or statutory remits.		
Markets The organisation actively works with other agencies to explore new ways of working.		
Urgency There is a sense of a 'burning platform' or urgency which encourages organisations locally to work together.		

15. What is your role?

16. What sector does your organisation work in?

17. What area does your organisation work in? (please select ALL applicable)

18. What area of the UK does your organisation work in? (select all that apply)

19. The results of this survey will be compiled into a report with the intention of sharing lessons learnt about the state of collaboration across public service provision in the UK.

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TRAVERSE

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FOOTNOTES

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