



Transformation and re-organisation: what's in store for local government in Wales?

Collaboration in Welsh Local Government –

**Tick in the box or sound business
practice?**

*Miles Punter
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Aims...

- Why so many local authorities in Wales have chosen collaboration as the best model of organisation for the continued operation or improvement of their services.
- If there is any empirical evidence to support the benefits of collaborative working amongst local authorities in Wales
- What the nature and magnitude of such benefits are and who do they affect.
- Whether such benefits could have been obtained by other forms of organisation or simply by the individual local authorities concerned improving themselves as single service providers.
- If resources for the governance arrangements required for collaboration or any loss of local control can outweigh the benefits obtained.
- If any particular services are better suited to the collaborative model of service delivery.

Collaboration....

“an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective.”

(Audit Commission 2005:4)

terms ‘partnership’ and ‘collaboration’ were taken as being interchangeable

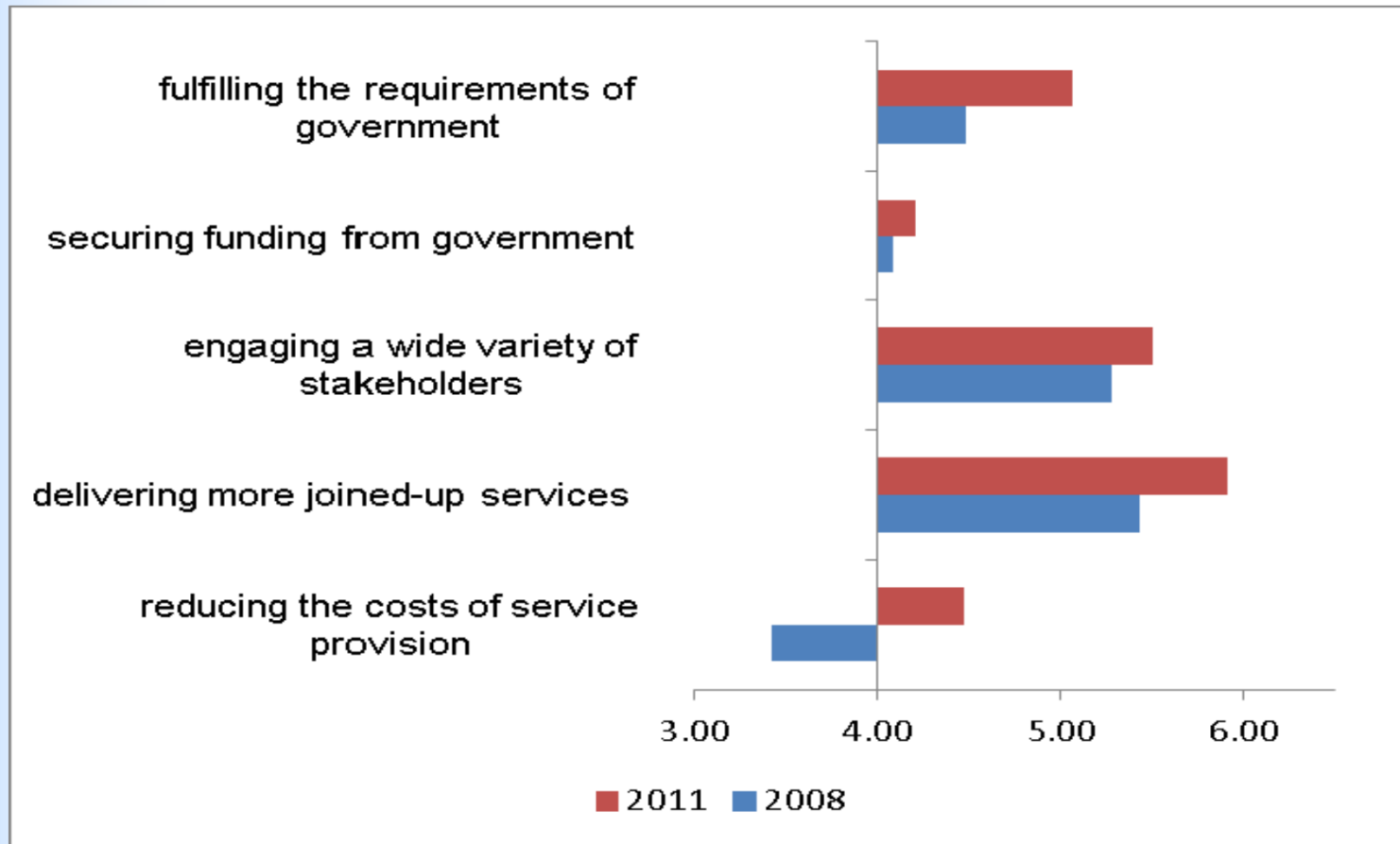
Evidence Sources

- Current literature
- Academic studies
- Regional collaboration compendium
- Williams' commission evidence
- Case study
- Questionnaires

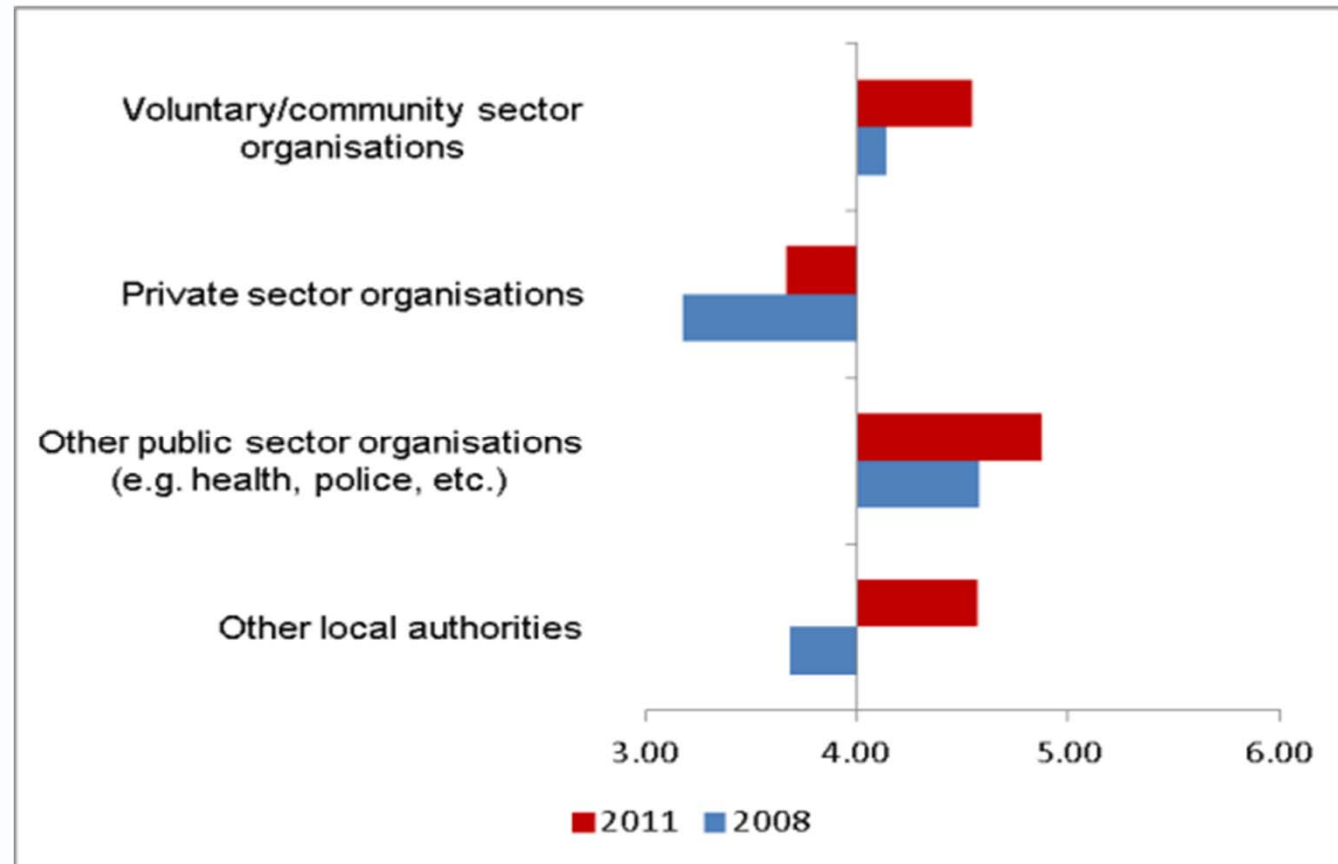
Current Literature

- Little empirical evidence of success
- Leadership, relationships and trust
- Courage to walk away
- Not a quick fix or panacea
- Just one method of organisation
- Don't do it unless you have to...
- Business case is key
- Finland and New Zealand
- Total Place Project - England

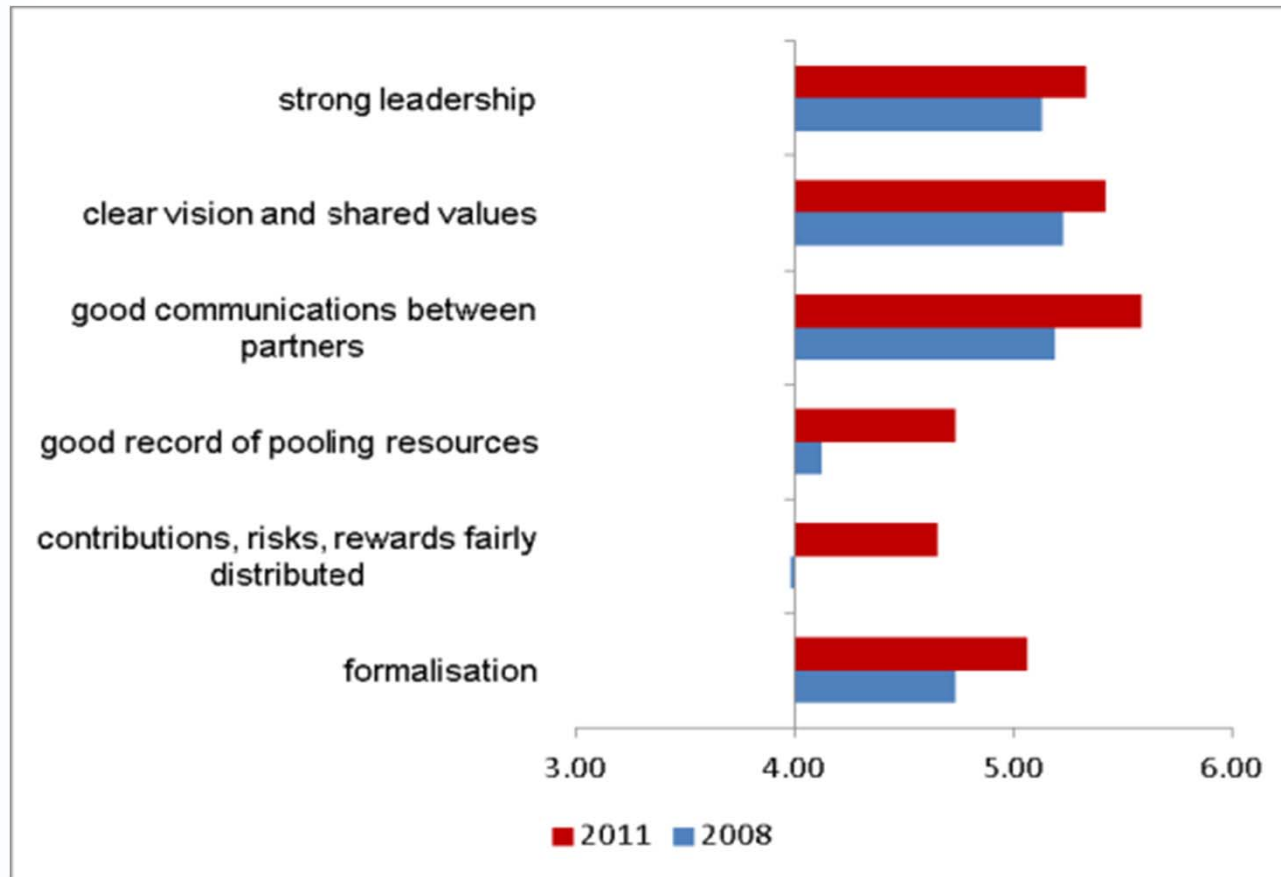
Collaboration focus (Martin et al (2013))



Partner shift (Martin et al (2013))



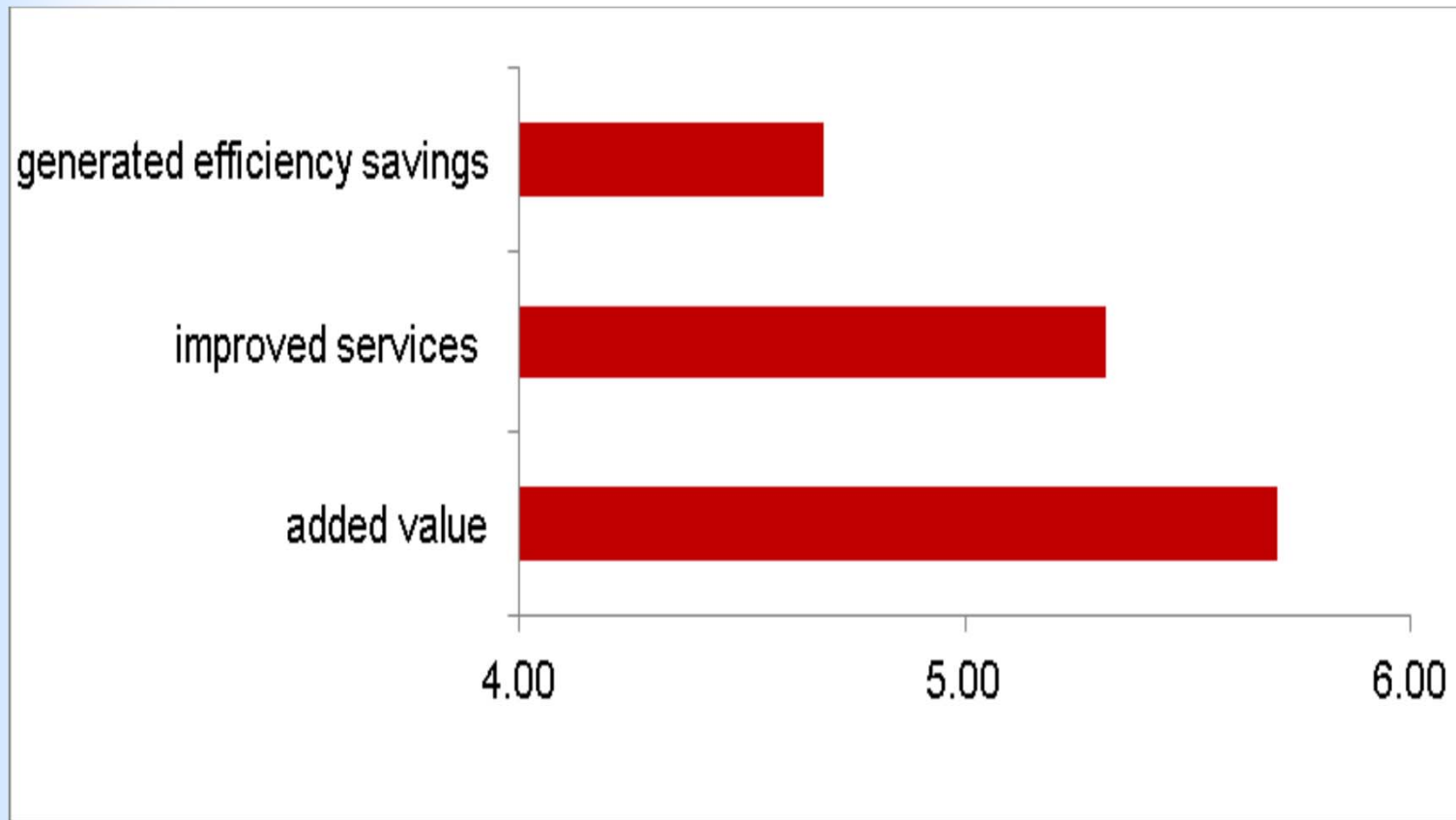
Partner characteristics (Martin et al (2013))



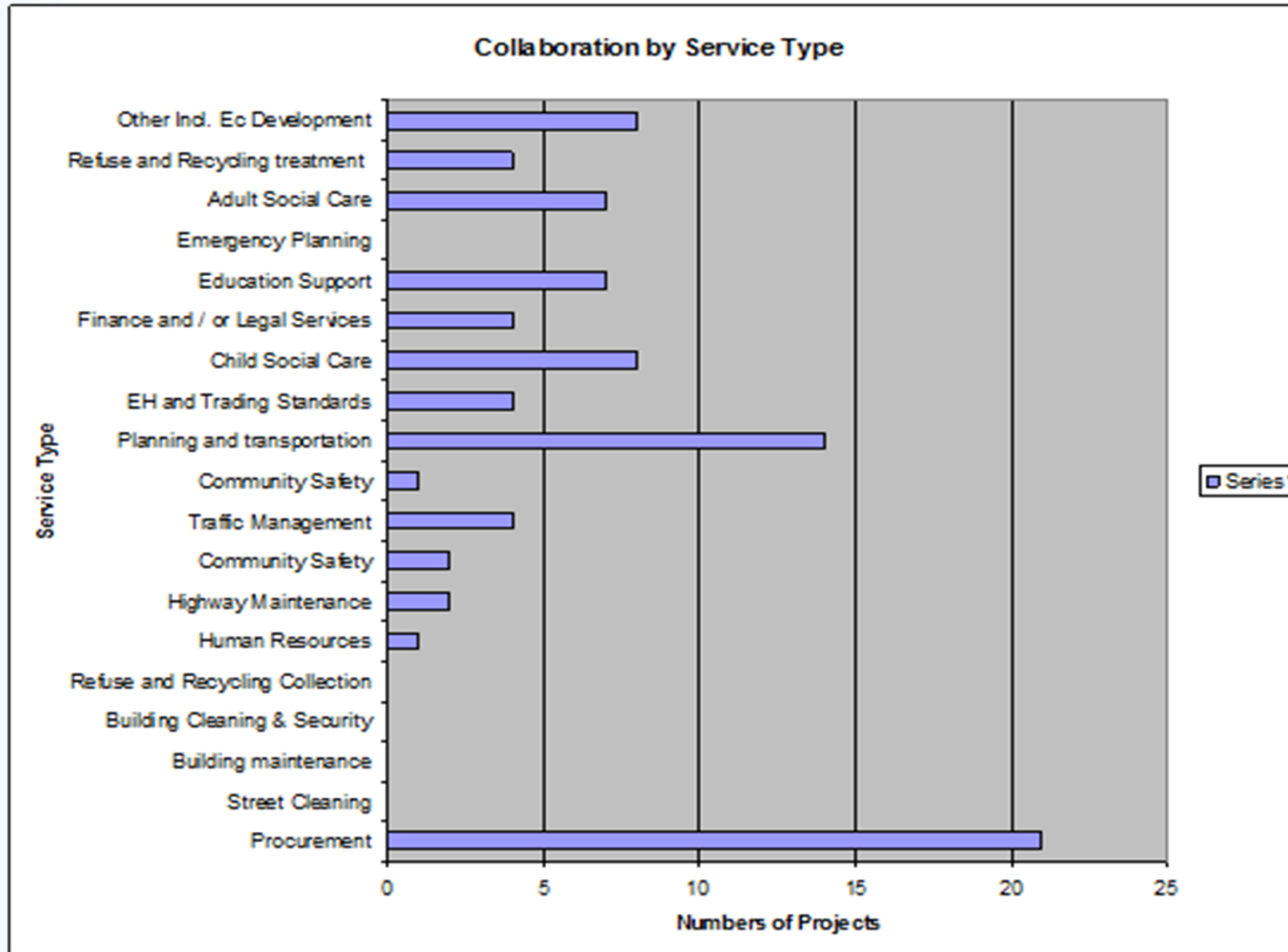


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The collaboration has..... (Martin et al (2013))



Regional collaboration compendium



Compendium data

- 95 projects
- 69 list effectiveness or efficiency gains
- 72.6% of all projects
- Williams' commission omission
- Procurement
- Regional services
- Shared responsibilities – Social care
- Education
- Regeneration



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Williams Commission.....

“rather than overcoming the complexity of relationships, boundaries and responsibilities we described earlier (sic), collaboration has in some cases added considerably to it by creating a further set of processes to be followed and relationships to be managed.” (Williams 2014:65)

Williams Commission.....Martin et al (2013:62)

- **INCLUDED.....**“the picture of Welsh partnership working provided by our surveys and case studies is predominantly one of networking and information exchange rather than resource sharing and cost saving. More crudely expressed, partnerships still seems to be largely ‘talking shops’ rather than ‘one stop shops’.”
- **NOT INCLUDED.....**“this does not mean that they [collaborations] are not adding value and improving services. We are clear that networking and information exchange do improve services.”
- **NOT INCLUDED...** “the evidence from our research suggests that during the period we studied, partnership working in Wales has been focused and differentiated, that councils are adapting partnerships over time in ways that are appropriate to the much more challenging financial environment they now face, and that collaboration is positively (albeit in some cases only weakly) correlated with perceptions of improved performance.”

Williams Commission – Has collaboration led to improved services?

- 18 responses
- 12 positive
- 2 negative
- 4 neutral
- 4 complaints lack of direction
- 1 drive to collaborate counterproductive

Specifically commissioned research – Dr Tom Entwistle, Cardiff Business School, considers the barriers to collaboration and looks at possible mergers into larger organisations to address some of these...

- “this delivers less and costs more than its advocates suggest.”
- “where local government produces a range of different services, each with its own unique production characteristics, no single size of government will be able to produce all services at the minimum possible cost for each service.” Dollery et al (2006:274)
- noting the work of other academics such as Ling (2002), accepts that the important goals of public policy cannot always be delivered through the separate activities of a single organisation, he suggests however that creating larger organisations is not the answer, favouring instead the “obvious solution” as he calls it, “to encourage public agencies to enter into collaborative arrangements of one form or another.” (Entwistle 2013:3)
- NOT INCLUDED IN THE FINAL REPORT...



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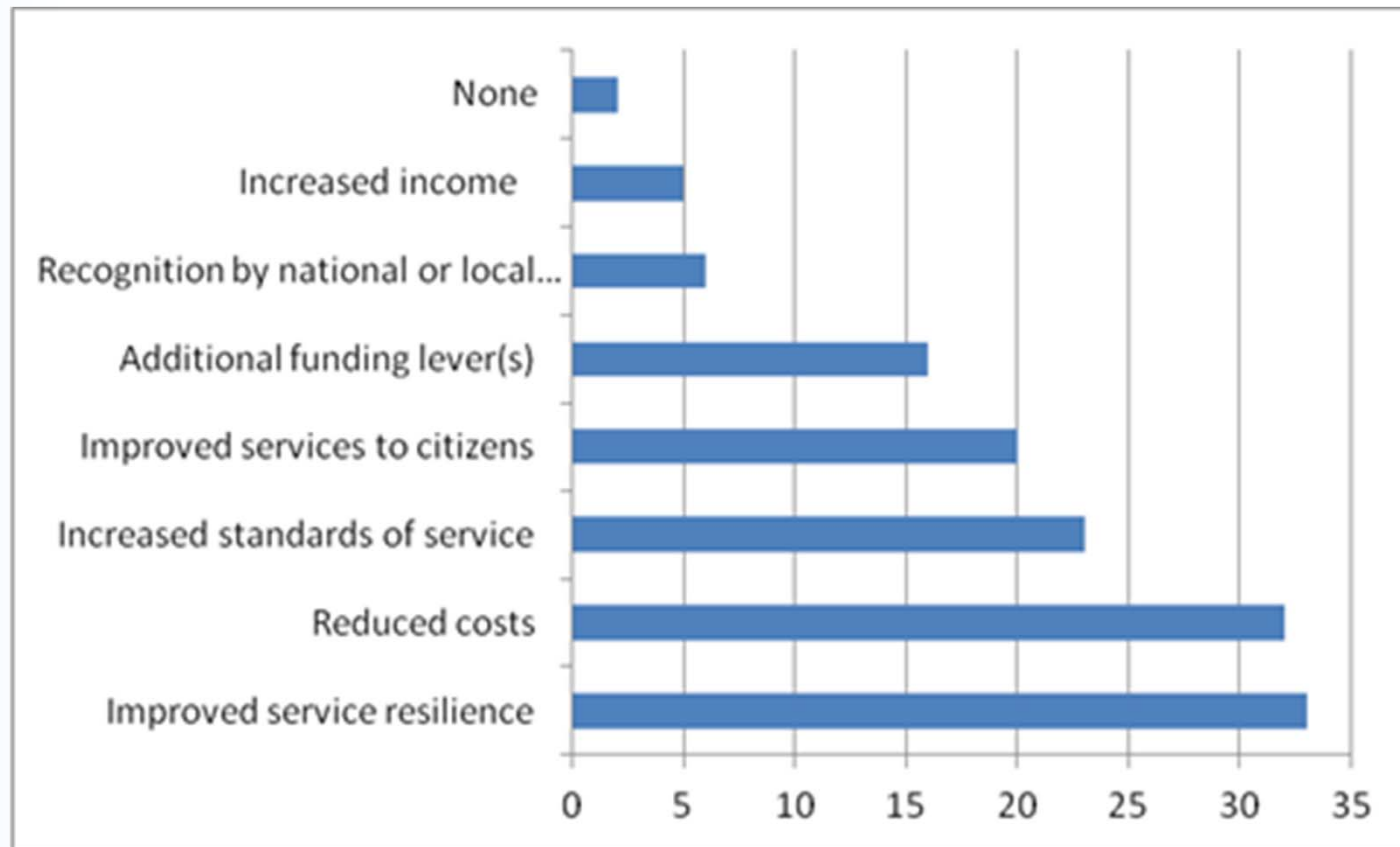
Case Study: Prosiect Gwyrdd

- Major waste procurement project
- Conception 2005... Cardiff and Newport
- Collective problem
- Joint benefits
- Relationships
- WG support
- 25 year £1.1b contract
- 5% to 8% recycling improvements
- 5 Councils
- Savings of £1m per annum for the Vale of Glamorgan alone
- Excellence in leadership and governance



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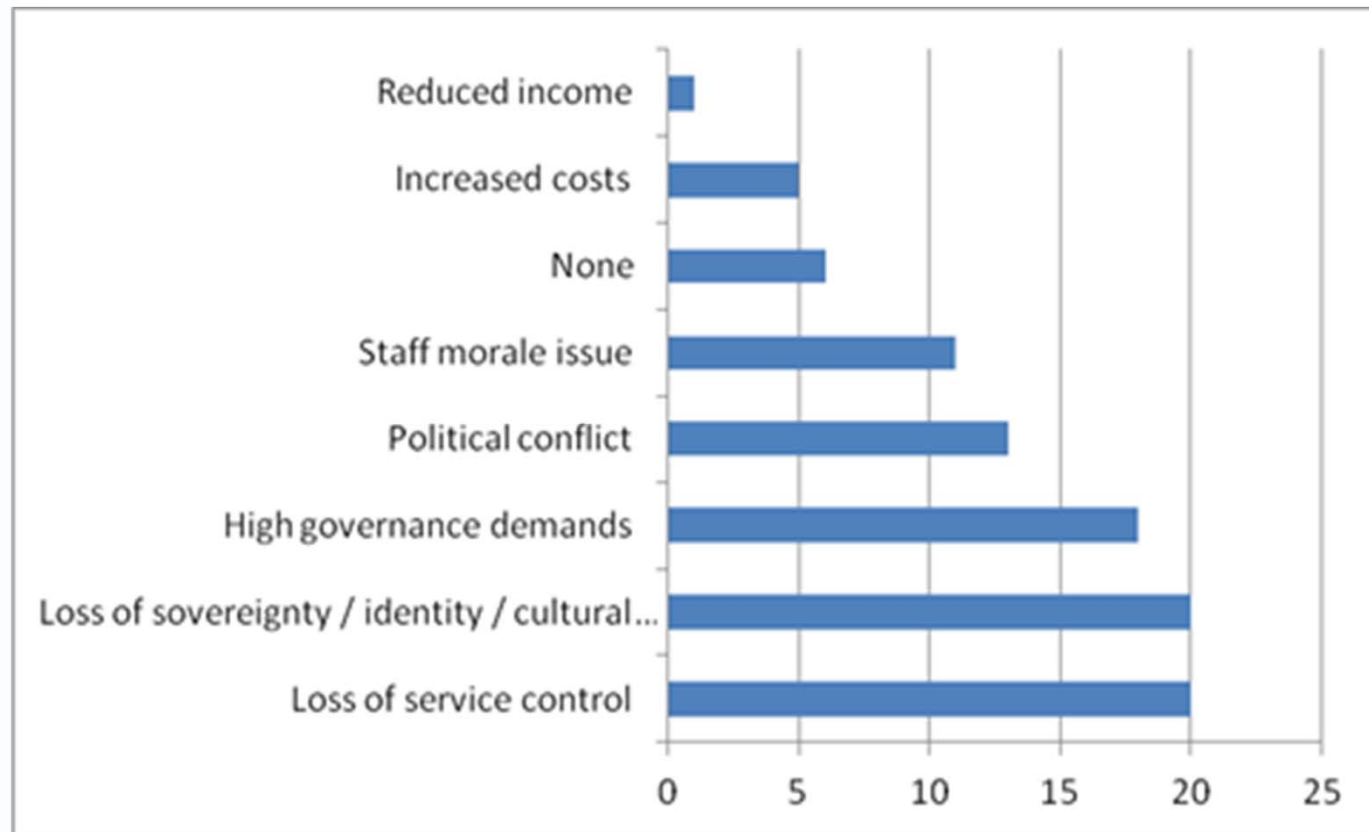
Benefits from collaboration.....



Reasons for collaboration.....

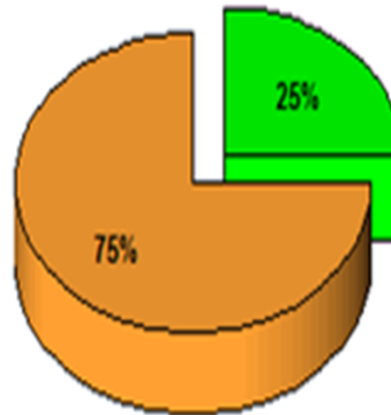


Negative impacts of collaboration.....



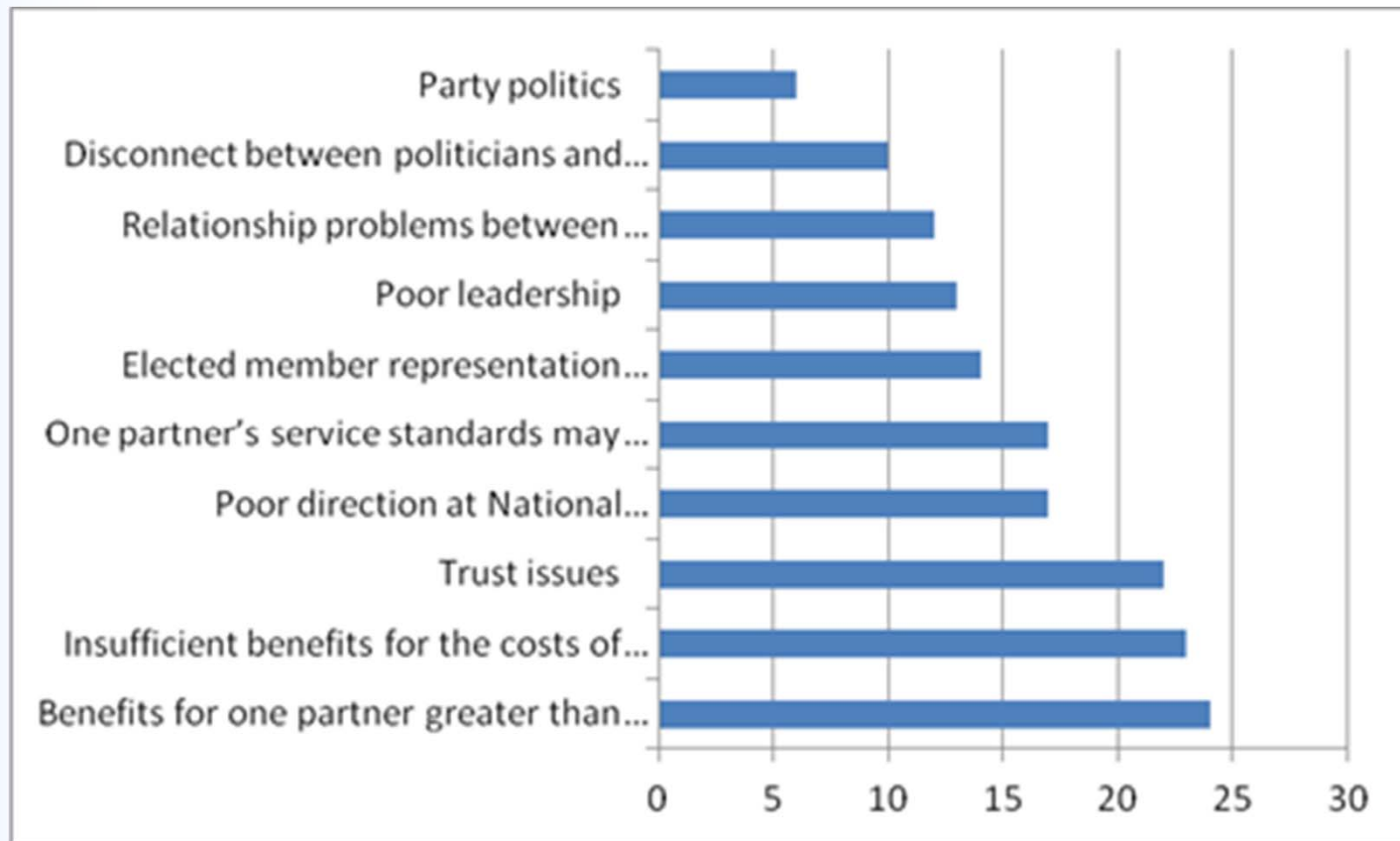
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Overall, do you feel that similar or improved benefits could have been gained by better targeted changes to services and without joint working?



Yes No

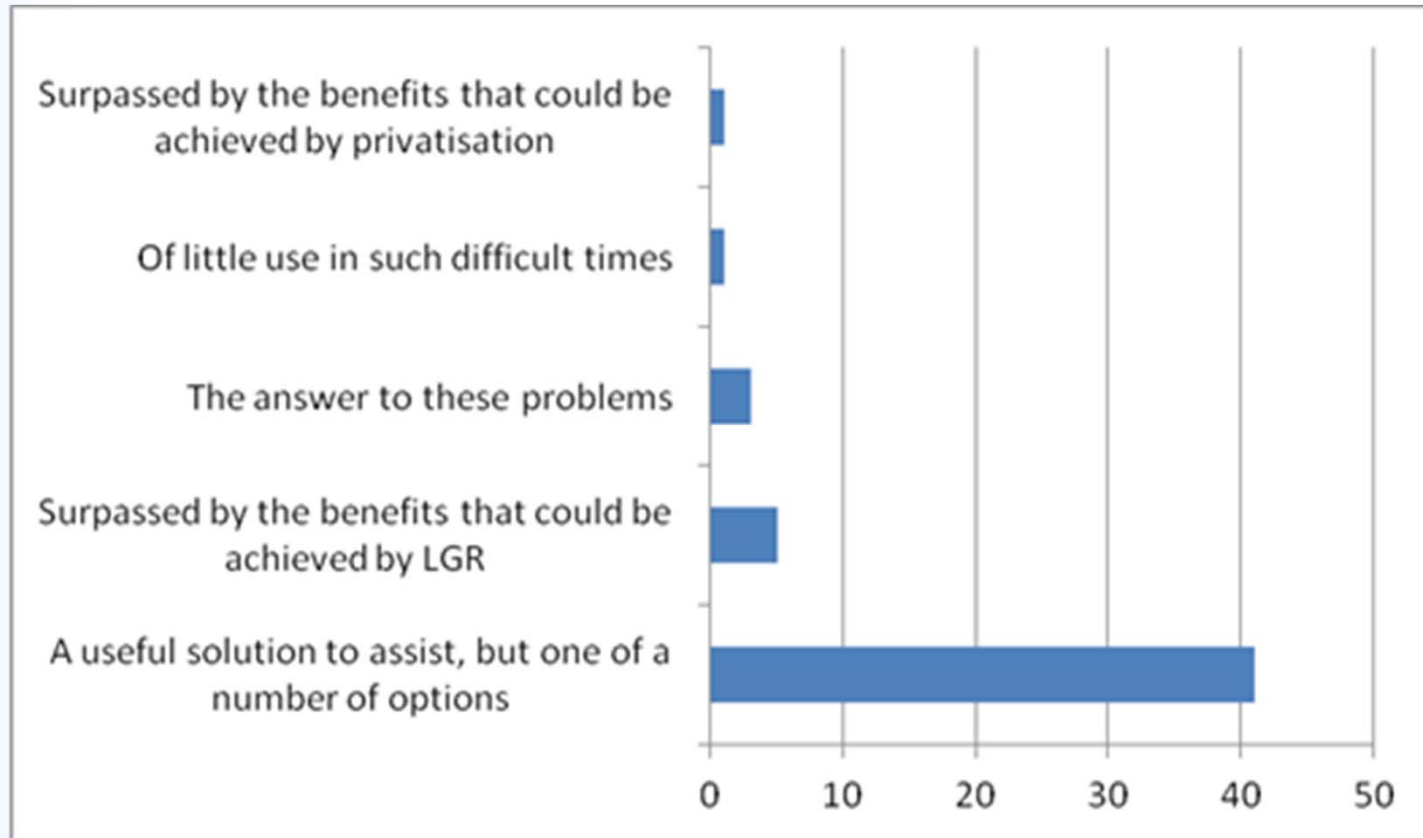
Barriers to collaboration.....





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Faced with forthcoming financial challenges is collaboration.....



Main findings

- Working in collaboration will not meet all financial challenges
- Just one in a number of models of organisation
- Can build resilience when resources reduce
- Relationships and trust are key
- Examine the single authority provided service first
- Host Council required
- Align operational and political goals
- Early lessons have been learnt and more time is needed
- Strategic direction and support from Government could be improved
- Less interference and control, more financial support and encouragement
- Some evidence now of savings and service improvements
- Propensity towards 'wicked' issues
- More work required on the potential for costs savings through collaboration before any re-organisation is considered



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