The Theory and Practice of Change Champions in Local Government in Northern Ireland

ADRIAN EUGENE KERR

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

(VOLUME 1 of 2 Volumes)

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

June 2011
DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 1st April 2011
Abstract

The Theory and Practice of Change Champions in Local Government in Northern Ireland

There is little empirical research on how change champions operate in practice; even less on how they operate in elected authorities, and no research to date on their role in the management of change in local government in Northern Ireland.

The initial aim of this research was therefore to examine; the roles, skills, resistance encountered, and the development needs of the change champions, in order to develop an improvement agenda and best practice recommendations. During the research process additional issues emerged about the culture of local government, its readiness for change and the particular problems faced by change champions operating in a political environment.

The research was conducted within an action research framework, utilising semi structured interviews and critical incident techniques, with a representative sample of change champions, including: elected members, chief executives, directors and HR managers.

The research conclusions add to existing theory on the dispersal of change agency by providing a unique examination of change champions operating in a previously unexplored area. What emerged from the research was a profile of the change champion, involved in role switching and various support building activities all underpinned by their strong belief and commitment to the change process. The various skills sets identified had a direct relationship with the situational roles, with emphasis placed on people skills and previous experience, with resistance factors reflecting the part time role of the champion and the political culture of local government. Development needs focused on targeted support for the individual champion with emphasis placed on group learning, mentoring and coaching.

The research also makes a unique contribution to practice by suggesting a number of improvement recommendations relating to the operation of change champions; to be implemented within an integrated three phase (inception, operation and development), action plan. A development strategy, consisting of general, targeted and personal development interventions is also recommended. The integrated action plan and related development strategy will be utilised to improve the effectiveness of the existing network of change champions operating within local government in Northern Ireland, and will serve as a ‘best practice’ benchmark for future planned change initiatives.
Volume 1

This Table details the overall thesis content, which is published in two volumes, with Volume 1 containing Chapters 1-9 (pps. 1-349) and Volume 2 containing the related Appendices (pps. 350 – 433)

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<td>LGTG</td>
<td>The Local Government Training Group</td>
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<td>LGSC</td>
<td>The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland</td>
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<td>NIHE</td>
<td>The Northern Ireland Housing Executive</td>
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<td>NILGA</td>
<td>The Northern Ireland Local Government Association</td>
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<td>SOLACE</td>
<td>The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives</td>
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<td>Steering Group</td>
<td>The Women’s Development Steering Group</td>
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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father and mother (Daniel and Sally), and to my aunts (Me-Me and Tess). They made me what I am.

I wish to acknowledge the great encouragement and understanding I have received, throughout my five year participation in the DBA programme, from all my friends and family and in particular from my wife Margaret, sister Loretto and daughter Lisa-Jane. They always had the confidence, particularly at times when I didn’t, that I would eventually complete the programme and finish the thesis.

I am grateful for the help and assistance from all the staff at the Business School and in particular my supervisors; Aidan Berry and Mark Hughes. They were always patient, tolerant and professional, and while our supervisory meetings were never lacking in challenge, they were tempered with humour and understanding.

I also wish to record my thanks to all the participants in this study, who gave of their time freely and demonstrated their commitment to improving local government, and the communities they strive to serve.

Finally, I wish to thank all at the Staff Commission. They tolerated my ongoing commitment to this study and helped make it possible. In particular Diana, Lisa, Janet and Anne, who nurtured the network of champions, helped arrange appointments, and advised and assisted with the final thesis layout and printing.

This thesis is the product of the goodwill and effort of so many people; all of which I am proud to have known, worked with, and counted as friends. They have made my learning journey possible and are the real change champions for local government in Northern Ireland.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the study and details the structure of the thesis by chapter. The study was undertaken by me as an action researcher (see Chapter 5, p.153), working in collaboration with others, to research the operation of a network of change champions, established to help solve a difficult change management problem in local government in Northern Ireland (NI). Following analysis of the research findings, an action plan was prepared, which included detailed improvement recommendations for the future operation of the network. This action plan is currently being implemented and provides a unique contribution to management practice, which will serve as a benchmark for future similar change initiatives. The study also adds to the body of knowledge on change agency, as it is of interest to other organisations seeking to implement a centrally driven change initiative, utilising a network of change champions, to lead and facilitate a planned change initiative, across a number of diverse organisations. The topics covered in this chapter are included by way of initial background to the study and are expanded and fully discussed in subsequent chapters as outlined in para. 1.5, p.11.

1.2 Background to this Study

1.2.1 My Management Role and Organisational Context

This study is set in the context of my management role as Chief Executive of The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission). I was appointed to this post in 1991, having been previously employed in the Education, Housing and Local Government sectors. My role equates to the role of a Chief Executive in a district council in NI, and is recognised as a key position created to ensure effective local government in N.I. While the origins and specific functions of the Commission are outlined in detail in Chapter 2, in summary; the Commission operates at a strategic level in local government in NI with statutory responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the 26 district councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in relation to a wide range of HR functions and in particular for
ensuring their compliance with all aspects of equality legislation and best practice in; recruitment and selection, training, human resource planning and terms and conditions of employment of local government officers. This places an obligation on the Commission to continually develop best practice in these areas, and my role is to lead the organisation as its head of paid service and accounting officer, and ensure the effective discharge of its statutory functions.

As the district councils are the lowest tier of government in NI, they are constantly under scrutiny at community level, and their procedures and practices are continually debated by opposing political parties, trade unions, the local/regional press, and the media in general. This means that the Commission, as a central body responsible for developing good practice in relation to a number of local government activities, as well as being accountable to the Minister for the Environment and the all party Scrutiny Committee at regional government level in Stormont, is also subject to a high level of public scrutiny and media focus. This public scrutiny is heightened when new initiatives are developed or when accusations are levelled that the local government workforce does not reflect the composition of the community it serves, or that high level appointments which are subject to Commission scrutiny and approval, have not been made on a fair and equal basis. The scrutiny of Commission recommended good practice is increased, and often personalised, due to the small community which is NI, where the relatively small population of approx 1.7M tends to relate to specific religious and political beliefs and have local knowledge of those involved in local government at both member and officer level.

1.2.2 The Change Management Problem to which this study relates

The Commission has a specific statutory duty to keep under review the equality policies and practices of district councils and to make recommendations to councils for improvement. Various attempts had been made over the years, (1980’s-early 90’s), to address the identified problem of the underrepresentation of women in local councils through various training and development initiatives, but the pace of change was slow and often met with
resistance from within the political system and by interest groups committed to protecting their current power bases and positions. My attempts to raise this issue in a male dominated and highly politicised environment, were similarly met with passive agreement to try to solve the problem, as the underrepresentation of women was seen as secondary to the need to ensure that the workforce adequately reflected the two main religious/political affiliations within NI and the implementation of ongoing central government led improvement initiatives. As Chief Executive of the Commission my concern to address this problem, as well as my duty to ensure that the Commission fulfilled its obligations in this respect, was heightened by my close cooperation with the Equality Commission in NI, Women’s Action groups, Trade Unions and Employment Tribunals, all of whom were anxious that I make a personal commitment to utilise my position within local government to bring about change.

Chapter 3, p.48 provides further details of how previous attempts to solve this problem were implemented, all of which led in 1995, to the initiation by the Commission of a specific ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative designed to increase the number of women in key positions across local government. An important part of the overall initiative was the establishment of a ‘network of change champions’, (as described in detail in Chapter 3, pps.50-53), to help address the problem at local level. The network consists of a group of 37 local government officer/member stakeholders nominated by their individual councils, political parties, and associations, to champion the ‘Women in Local Councils’ change initiative, and increase the involvement of women at senior level in local government in N.I.
1.3 Introducing the Brighton DBA Programme

As this thesis is prepared in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), it is also important to locate the study within the background and aim of the DBA.

Extracts from the Brighton Business School DBA Summary (2004/5) state:

The DBA is a part of a new development in British higher education, the development of professional doctorates in a range of different fields. They are intended to develop the capacity of participants to make a significant original contribution to professional practice.

The aim of the DBA is stated as:

This new DBA is to develop the capacity of participants to contribute to enhancing professional practice in the area of business.

Chapter 3, pps.56-61 of this thesis, provides details of my staged progress within the DBA programme and explains how the study of the change champions relates to the overall aims of the DBA programme. Specifically, this thesis is submitted at the final stage in the programme to evidence my ability to undertake:

’a still larger research project, lasting two years, which would normally be based on action research, aimed at bringing about an improvement in professional practice, and knowledge in the area of business’

(Ref: ‘The Brighton Doctorate of Business Administration Programme Overview’. p.6)

The two specific criteria for completion of the final stage of the programme require that the thesis provides an original contribution to knowledge in the field of management practice, and demonstrates my commitment to plan and manage my own learning and professional development. How these two criteria have been achieved is discussed in the following paras. 1.4.1-1.4.3.
1.4 The Aim of the Study

Since the establishment of a network of change champions was unique in the history of local government in N.I., and a considerable amount of resources were required to service and develop the network, and little was known about its potential effectiveness; this study was initially designed to examine how the change champions operated in practice by studying their **roles, skill requirements**, the **barriers they encountered** and their **development needs**, with a view to developing an improvement plan to increase their effectiveness.

The aim of the study is:

‘To discover how change champions implement their role in a major change programme in the local government environment in Northern Ireland’

The network of change champions consisted of individuals with considerable experience of managing and implementing change, gained over a long period of time, (see Appendix 1, p.350 for details of ‘Interviewee Personal Profiles’). The knowledge gained from the study was therefore not just confined to the role of participants in implementing the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative, but also provided an opportunity to draw on their previous knowledge of managing change in local government in NI and other public sector organisations.

Gaining access to this level of experienced change practitioners, who were committed to the change process and participated freely in the study, was a unique opportunity, and was only possible due to my central strategic role in local government in NI, and my continuing enthusiasm to research new and improved change implementation practices and reflect and learn from the experience.
1.4.1 Informing the Theory of Change Agency and Agents

The change champions are charged with the implementation of a centrally driven change initiative across the twenty six councils, operating at local level, and were given the ‘change champion’ title by the Commission to describe their change agency role in leading and facilitating the change process. This title was not meant to restrictive, but to locate their role as a group of individuals responsible for the dispersal of change agency, across the local government sector. The literature review, as detailed in Chapter 4, equates the role of the ‘change agent’ (Johnson et al, 2005; Burnes, 2009a) in directing/leading/facilitating change, with that of the ‘change champion’ (Ulrich, 1997; Buchanan and Badham, 1999), and locates the network of change champions in this research within the literature on change management and change agency. The summary comments at the conclusion of the literature review in Chapter 4, pps.131-132 pointed to the need for further research on how change agency operated in practice in differing organisation environments. This is best illustrated by Hartley et al, (1997, p.62) commenting on the roles played by change agents in practice:

‘There has been relatively little empirical research on the roles played by change agents. We still know very little about the role of internal change agents in organisations, in any systemic way’ (Ottaway, 1993; Porras and Robinson, 1992; Weisbord, 1988)

A further illustrative comment on the need for further research in the area of change agency in practice is provided by Caldwell (2006, p.18) who states:

‘Change agency theory has not come a long way over the past 50 years and this presents an unpalatable message for those who wish to further theory and practice. For those readers looking to the future however the challenge is to rethink the subject and relevant practice’

The contribution of this research to the existing body of knowledge on change agency and the additional insights it provides can be viewed from three perspectives, as described in detail in Chapter 9, pps.287-314. Firstly; it is unique, in that no other empirical research has been carried out on change agency and change agents operating across local government in N.I. Secondly, it demonstrates a contribution in supporting/contradicting what is
already known about change agency and agents in general by drawing comparisons between the research findings and the existing body of knowledge in relation to change agency definitions, the dispersal of change agency, change agents roles, skills, barriers to change, and development needs. Thirdly, it provides an added contribution to the overall body of knowledge in relation to change agency and agents in that it will be of interest to those seeking to implement change in a local government or public sector environment, as a comparative study with private sector organisations, and as an account of a ‘live’ change management project, designed to assist in problem solving and develop an improvement plan utilising an action research methodology framework.

1.4.2 Original Contribution to Management Practice

The provision of an original contribution to management practice has been successfully achieved by utilising the research findings firstly to evaluate existing practice, and secondly to generate suggested improvements. This process was implemented for each of the research headings of: roles, skills, barriers encountered, and development needs. This analysis resulted in a series of topic specific improvement recommendations which were considered as a whole, and used to inform the development of an integrated action plan designed to improve the effectiveness of the champions’ network. The preparation and content of the action plan is discussed fully in Chapter 9, pps.317-323, which also sets the proposed actions in the context of the work of the Commission to facilitate practical implementation. As the network is still in operation, work has already begun to implement the action plan on an ongoing basis over the next two year period. As well as improving the effectiveness of the existing champions’ network, the knowledge gained from the study will also be used to initiate similar champions’ networks to address future change initiatives, particularly in the context of the planned reorganisation of local government in NI in the coming years. Had the research not taken place, the Commission would not have a good practice action plan to guide its current and future change initiatives and to act as a reference document for other organisations wishing to initiate similar change agency initiatives.
1.4.3 Plan and Manage my own Learning and Professional Development

The conscious management of my own learning and development began initially in 1996 as detailed in Chapter 2, pps.36-41, with my participation in the University of Brighton Advanced Management Development Programme 1996-98, (AMDP). Throughout this programme I utilised the learning experience to implement two major change projects on behalf of the Commission and gain additional qualifications summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Research Methods</th>
<th>Qualifications Obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘The Establishment of a New Body to Represent the Interests of Local Government in Northern Ireland’</td>
<td>Action research model, and use of questionnaires to validate the report of the future search conference</td>
<td>MA in Change Management (1998)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation in this action learning centred programme and the initiation, implementation, and evaluation, of the two research projects helped ground my research skills, and provide an appreciation of the value of research and reflection in developing new management practice. Following completion of the programme in 1998, I continued to utilise this research and development experience in my organisation and when the DBA programme was initiated, this provided an opportunity for me to rethink my personal development plan and utilise a further learning opportunity to the benefit of my organisation and myself.
Chapter 3, p.56 details my participation in the DBA programme (2005-2010) and the completion of the two initial stages in the programme which enabled me to progress to this final stage. The completion of the two initial stages in the programme required me to plan and manage my own learning and development on a continuing basis and often involved, following reflection, a change in my original planned project work, or the reorganisation of my development plan to fit with the changing priorities of my organisation. In summary the two initial stages involved the completion of a problem based research project, a reflective report of the project and the learning experience, the preparation of a further practice based project report and a related draft article suitable for submission to a nominated journal, together with a further reflective report on the learning to date. Throughout this final stage of the programme, my research required revisiting prior learning and updating, testing methodologies with my supervisors and learning set members, and finally with ongoing support from my supervisors, planning my field research, scheduling and conducting the in-depth interviews, analysing the data, drawing and testing conclusions, placing the findings in the context of the organisation’s business planning process and developing a practical improvement plan. The research process and the preparation of this thesis required me, as well as managing my professional development at each stage in the process, to balance the needs of my organisation, staff, family and other commitments, to ensure that time scales were met and required outcomes successfully achieved. Participation in the DBA programme, together with my previous AMDP project based learning experience, provides me with the opportunity to practically demonstrate my ability to plan and manage my own learning and development over the last twelve years and to apply that learning to the changing needs of my organisation and for the benefit of local government in N.I.
1.5 Structure of the Thesis and Chapter Outlines

In order to provide ease of access to Appendices 1-11 the thesis is set out in a two volume format with the first volume containing the thesis Chapters 1-9 and related references (pps. 1-349) and the second volume containing the related Appendices (pps. 350-433). The thesis structure generally conforms to the traditional doctoral thesis structure, but it also differs in two particular ways: Firstly, throughout the thesis, as in Chapter 1, reference is made as to how this study fulfils the requirements of the DBA in relation to the choice of topic, methodology and my own development and learning needs. Secondly, in order to provide a fuller appreciation of the context of study, a more detailed account of the local government environment in NI is included, together with a detailed profile of my organisation and my role in developing its ongoing commitment to action research in order to develop best practice HR polices for implementation in the twenty six district councils.

Chapter 1: Introduction
This chapter provided a general introduction to the study; the organisation to which it relates and my role in the local government system, the aim of the study and how it fulfils the requirements of the DBA in relation to its contribution to practice and the body of knowledge on change agency and agents. The chapter also signposts discussion on the background topics in future chapters, and highlights that an improvement plan, prepared following analysis of the research findings, is currently being implemented both within the Commission and across the local government system.

Chapter 2: The NI Local Government System and The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland
This chapter is included to explain in greater detail the context of study, by providing an outline of the volatile local government environment in NI, to which it relates, and the role and responsibilities of the Commission which led to the creation of the network of champions and the sponsorship of this study. In order to explain the central strategic role of the Commission the chapter details
the origin of the Commission and how it evolved as part of the reform of local government in NI in the 1960s and 1970s. Comparisons are drawn between the reform of local government in NI and GB, and how, due to civil unrest in the late 1960’s, local government reorganisation in NI was politically driven, as opposed to efficiency driven in GB. This distinction explains the creation of the Commission with strong legal powers of direction in response to demands from the civil rights movement at a time of political upheaval in NI, and why a similar body was not created in other parts of the UK, when similar local government reforms were being implemented. As a consequence, the chapter explains the need for the Commission to utilise its directional powers to recommend best practice, based on rigorous investigation and research. In order to demonstrate how the Commission achieves this in practice and to demonstrate how I manage my own learning and development, this chapter also explains how I integrated action research as a methodology to help formulate new initiatives and solve emerging problems. Examples are provided of particular problems which have been addressed utilising an action research framework, and at the conclusion of the chapter this study is set in the context of the Commission’s ongoing equality obligations and the need to seek improved ways of implementing major change initiatives.

Chapter 3: The Research Project
Having explained the background and the context of the study, this chapter provides the detail of the change management problem to which the study relates by posing a number of questions relating to; how it was identified, the Commission’s initial response to the problem, and why it was necessary to examine new ways to address the problem. The reasons for the creation of the network of champions are also explained and its unique composition i.e. consisting of all political parties, elected members, representative bodies and senior officers, who were nominated by their respective organisations to help solve the problem. The chapter also describes how the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative was developed to encourage widespread participation and provide a platform to launch the change process and my role, as accounting officer, for ensuring the establishment and effectiveness of the network.
As with Chapter 1 and 2, which related the content to the aims of the DBA programme, this chapter details the research and development programme which I followed in the years 2006-2010, all of which related to how the change champions network operated in practice and resulted in the initiation of this in-depth study in June 2008. The chapter concludes with a summary Thesis Outline (Table 5, p.60), which details the four research questions;

- What roles did the change champions play in the change process?
- What skills did the champions utilise in the change process?
- What barriers to implementing change did the change champions encounter?
- What are the development/support needs of the change champions?

These four key questions were designed to capture the data on the roles, skills, barriers encountered and the development needs of the change champions and helped inform the qualitative methodology to be used, the data collection methods adopted, the main organisational categories for data analysis purposes and the analysis of findings and resultant recommendations.

Having clarified the management problem and the key research questions, the next chapter details the literature review which was undertaken to explore what was already known about the proposed research area and the potential contribution of the study to the existing body of knowledge.

**Chapter 4: Review of the Literature**

This chapter examines the domains of the literature relating to the study and in order to place it in context (as set out in Table 6, p.64), identifies the relevant key literature areas as: Introducing change across a number of organisations, utilising change champions/agents to introduce change, the roles, skills, barriers/resistance encountered and development needs of change agents. The examination of the literature begins with a broad examination of these areas beginning with a historical perspective on change management and the
competing disciplinary discourses on agency and change and the development of change agency, before discussing the specific area of; what is already known about the operation of change agents in practice and in particular those involved in change agency in a public service/local government environment.

In order to draw conclusions from the review, summary comment is made following discussion of each area, before reaching the overall conclusion as detailed in para. 1.4.1, p.7 that there is a need for further empirical research in this area and the value of this study as an addition to what is already known about change agency and agents in practice.

**Chapter 5: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodological research framework for the study beginning with an examination of the rational for undertaking the research, the various research choices, and why action research methodology is seen as the most appropriate for this type of research with me as researcher practitioner, and its particular relevance to the aims of the DBA programme. The chapter continues with an examination of my values and beliefs informing the research, my ontological and epistemological perspectives, my understanding of the ethical issues involved in introducing change and with the implementation of this action research study. The chapter concludes with an examination of the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches and why a qualitative research approach was chosen as the most appropriate to provide me with the opportunity to explore in depth the work of the change champions through the use of semi-structured interviews and critical incident techniques.
Chapter 6: The Research Process in Practice

This chapter describes how the research was conducted in practical terms and includes details of the information gathering process utilising two data sources; interview transcripts and my supplementary note taking, with the assistance of a pro forma ‘Change Champions 2008/09 Interview Structure, Checklist and Notes’ (see Appendix 6, p.379). The chapter also includes an appraisal of the methods employed, an explanation of the selection of participants, how the ethical issues in interviewing were dealt with, how interviews were conducted and the validity of the process. The lessons learned from the pilot interview, which included the need to plan additional time before the commencement and at the conclusion of the interview, the importance of confidentiality and focussing the interviewee on the research questions, and how this learning was utilised in further interviews is also detailed. The enthusiasm of interviewees, both in attempting to solve the particular change problem, and their commitment to an overall improvement agenda in local government was immediately apparent, and provided the opportunity to explore in detail their suggestions as to the role, skills, and development needs of the change champion. What had been originally planned as a focused study on how change champions operated in practice, broadened as the interviews progressed, to include suggestions on how the culture of their local government environment often facilitated or prevented change initiatives being implemented. Interviewees welcomed the opportunity to help redefine their role and to contribute to an overall improvement plan and in particular the opportunity to ‘tell their story’ in the hope that others might learn from their positive and negative experiences of implementing change in local government and other organisations. Overall the data collection process provided in depth insight into the topic (how change champions operated in practice), based on the interviewees own experience, supported by relevant examples and insights which were often highly personal and confidential to the interview process. This ‘personal contact’ was made possible by the action research nature of the research, with me as the ‘insider researcher’ seen as collaborating with the ‘researched’ to help solve a common problem and develop an improvement agenda.
Chapter 7: Data Analysis

This chapter provides details, and an analysis of the strengths and limitations, of the three stage process utilised to analyse the data from the interview transcripts and my field notes, namely: data reduction, data reduction/display and conclusion drawing/verification. The purpose of each of these concurrent and interwoven stages and how this analysis was conducted is fully described in para. 7.1, pps.203-208 and in summary:

**Stage one:** involved the preparation of an individual ‘extended contact summary sheet’ for each interviewee (see completed sample: Appendix 7, p.384) to verify and expand on the initial four main predetermined data organisation categories of; roles, skills, barriers encountered and development needs.

**Stage two:** involved the preparation of an overall data summary matrix which contained the subcategories identified by all interviewees, listed under the four main organisational categories. This enabled me to compare and contrast the ideas and suggestions from each interviewee and to cluster together similar ideas and subcategories as chunks of data representing emerging themes.

**Stage three:** involved the identification of the breadth and depth of the ideas and suggestions, testing my understanding of their meaning by revisiting and crosschecking transcripts and the common theme analysis, and drawing and testing conclusions. At the completion of stage three, display tables were prepared for each of the four main organisational categories (see Tables 23, 24, 26 and 27), listing sub-category headings, the language used by interviewees relating to the heading, a frequency analysis and relevant quotations from interview transcripts. These tables enabled the findings from the research to be displayed in summary as a prelude to more detailed discussion of the findings in the next chapter.
Chapter 8: Findings

In order to answer the four research questions, the findings are initially discussed in this chapter under the separate headings of roles, skills, barriers and development needs. The contribution of the research to knowledge and professional practice is initially discussed in relation to existing practice and any further suggested improvements. This discussion and evaluation enables specific topic based improvement recommendations to be suggested under each heading, and for the relevant literature, as detailed in the literature review (Chapter 4), to be signposted for more detailed discussion in the next chapter. What emerges from discussion of the findings in this chapter, when each topic is considered separately on an individual topic basis, is a total of twenty very relevant improvement recommendations. This discussion of the findings and resultant recommendations, while addressing the research questions, also identifies an implementation problem in practice, in that in some cases the recommendation in one topic area directly impacts on a recommendation in another different topic area, for example:

The recommendation to utilise the expertise of the present change champions, to help implement other change initiatives or coach and mentor other ‘novice’ change agents, impacts directly on their scarce time availability which was identified as a barrier to their current effective performance. This ‘scarce time’ barrier similarly applies to the recommendation to design and deliver a tailored development programme for each current champion.

Following the analysis of findings in this chapter it is suggested that, in order to demonstrate the practical application of the research findings, the topic based recommendations should not be treated separately but considered as a whole and set in the context of an integrated action plan which demonstrates their overall impact on improved practice. The preparation of this action plan is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to demonstrate the contribution of the research to the theory of change agency and agents, this chapter details the uniqueness of the study in the context of the dispersal of change agency within local government in N.I. The contribution of the research in supporting/contradicting what is already known about change agency is discussed in relation to; change agency definitions, the dispersal of change agency, the roles of the change agent, change agents and champions, the skills of the change agent, resistance to change, and development needs. The added contribution which the research has made to the overall body of knowledge is also discussed and it is noted that this research adds to the body of knowledge where there is an identified need for further research on how change agency operates in practice in differing organisation environments (see para. 1.4.1, p.7). It is asserted that the research makes a contribution to knowledge for those seeking to implement change in similar and comparative change environments; where change agency is dispersed across a range of organisations or in the case of the Commission where a central body, government department, agency or holding company requires comparative insight into how this might be facilitated in practice. The discussion of the value of the research is also emphasised as an additional insight into the implementation of a ‘live’ action research study in a highly political environment, it was informed by a group of champions who had gained their experience over time, and the resultant action plan will also be utilised to guide the implementation of further major change initiatives.

In order to demonstrate the contribution of the research to professional practice, this chapter also sets the topic based recommendations, as detailed in Chapter 8, in a practical action plan format designed to contribute to improved practice in implementing change. The chapter describes the Commission’s three phase (Inception, Operational, Development) implementation model, which is utilised when dispersing change agency across local government and sets the various recommendations arising from the research within this implementation model (see Table 32, p.318). The implementation model is supplemented by additional development recommendations, to address the
cultural issues arising from the research, which should be considered at all three stages of implementation. This matching of recommendations to the phased model demonstrates the relevance of the recommendations to the work of the Commission and the improvement of practice across local government. Commentary is also provided on how the recommendations can be implemented during each phase and the need to consider the potential impact of recommendations implemented at the inception phase on other recommendations implemented during the operational and development phases. In order to further clarify implementation issues, a model change champion development framework (see Table 33, p.324) is recommended for change champions, detailing three levels of capacity building interventions; general development opportunities for all champions, targeted training aimed at specific categories of champion (elected member, common interest groups, officer groupings etc.) and personal topic based seminars targeted at individual champions and linked to their personal development planning. What emerges in this chapter is the development of a clear action plan, based on the research findings, which can be utilised to improve the work of the change champions’ network and set in the context of the Commission’s responsibility for ensuring best practice across local government in N.I.

Having identified the contribution of study in relation to both theory and practice, the limitations of the study are also discussed and the need for further research suggested by the study findings. The end note in this chapter summarises the developments which have taken place, during the three year duration of the study, in local government. In particular the success of the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative is highlighted as evidenced by the increase in women applicants for senior posts and appointment to chief executive positions, the showcasing of the initiative by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister and their desire to see it replicated in other parts of the public service, and the integration of the initiative and the work of the champions in local government strategic and business plans. The current austerity measures and the planned reform of local government are also highlighted and the
usefulness of the research findings in assisting the design of a human resource strategy to be developed by the Commission in 2011.

Having provided some initial background to the study, it is important to explain in greater detail the history and role of my organisation and its central strategic position in local government in N.I. This detail is provided in Chapter 2.
CHAPTER 2: THE NI LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION FOR NI

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2.3 The Commission’s “Recommending Role”  28
2.4 The Commission's Obligation to Research and Develop Best Practice  28
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   2.5.1 1991-1994 – Developing Strategic Partnerships  29
   2.5.2 1994-1997 – Addressing the Wider Local Government Change Agenda  30
   2.5.3 1994-1997 – Addressing the Specific NI Local Government Change Agenda  32
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   2.5.5 1998-2010 – Action Research in Practice  41
As the aim of this study was to discover how the network of change champions, initiated by the Commission, operated in practice, with the objective of developing an improvement plan, it is important to place the work of the change champions in the context of the environment in which they operate. This chapter locates the work of the network of change champions in the context of the local government system in NI, and describes how the Commission developed as a central strategic organisation within the local government system in N.I. Comparator type organisations exist in Southern Ireland where the Public Appointments Commission has similar appointment powers and the Local Government Management Services Board performs the majority of the Commissions other functions. Other comparators can be found in Canada and in the Eastern European emerging economies. As with the Commission, each comparator organisation was created at a particular time in the development of the Country or State to demonstrate the government's commitment to fairness and equity at the tier of government closest to the community it serves.

It is therefore important to explain the origin of the Commission in relation to the history of the current local government system in NI, how its functions and powers were determined, and how it developed over the years which led to the establishment of the network of change champions to address the underrepresentation of women at local government level. In order to illustrate my own professional development, in conjunction with the development of my organisation, this chapter also provides examples of how I integrated action research as a methodology to help formulate new Commission initiatives and solve emerging problems.
This chapter explains:

- (2.1) - The origins of the Commission in the context of a changing local government system in NI, (1969-73) during a time when local government in the UK was facing greater demands for efficiency and local government in NI was also at the forefront of the civil rights protests and demands for political change.

- (2.2) - The functions of the Commission are detailed to provide an understanding of its central role in policy development across local government.

- (2.3) - The Commission's 'recommending role' as laid down in statute is explained to emphasise the organisation's influence across local government and at individual council level.

- (2.4) - The strategic development of the Commission 1991-2010 is detailed on a time line basis to demonstrate its strategic development over the years, which took place in line with my own learning and research experience, and how under my guidance, the organisation became committed to utilising action research to develop its policies and statutory recommendations.

2.1 The Origins of The Local Government Staff Commission 1969-73

The Commission was established as part of the reorganisation of local government which took place in Northern Ireland in 1972/73.

Prior to 1973, the system of local government in Northern Ireland had many similarities with the British system. The number of local authorities (73) in Northern Ireland was large in relation to the small area of population (1.3m), with two all-purpose county boroughs in Belfast and Londonderry, together with a two-tier system with six counties as the upper tier. Nine boroughs, 24 urban, and 31 rural district councils covered the remainder of the region. John (1993)
emphasises that apart from the Belfast Corporation, local authorities had limited financial resources and central government tended to control most matters. With the Unionists forming the majority of the population, and owing to careful drawing of council boundaries, the Unionists controlled most local councils and the Catholic/Nationalist parties were excluded from decision-making.

In an initial attempt to hasten reform of local government in Northern Ireland two White Papers, (Cmd 517 and Cmd 530) were introduced by central government in 1967 and 1969, neither of which resulted in action being taken.

These White Papers were in line with similar moves towards reform in Great Britain, (Redcliff-Maud, 1969 and the Wheatley, 1969 reports) and were motivated primarily by efficiency within the local government system as explained by Stoker (1988, p.12) as follows:

The ideological climate of the period was heavily infused with a commitment to efficiency, planning and technological progress.

However, Knox (1990, p.35) places this motivation in the Northern Ireland political context in the following terms:

Whilst the intentions of the Stormont Government in Northern Ireland reflected this emphasis, civil disturbances overtook the pace of the reform plans. Local government became the focus of criticism in the civil rights protests of 1968 which, inter alia, demanded the removal of gerrymandered boundaries and the introduction of ‘one man one vote’ in local elections.

During 1969 violence and civil unrest increased, and the British and Northern Ireland governments were under considerable pressure to reform, not only local government, but the public service in general, together with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its part-time reserve force. It was in this environment of forced change that the reorganisation of local government commenced. In order to expedite the pace of reform, various meetings were held in October 1969, between the British Home secretary, Mr James Callaghan, and the Minister of State Home Office, Lord Stonham and the Northern Ireland Cabinet.
These meetings resulted in the issue of a *Joint Communiqué* (Cmnd 4178, Oct. 1969) detailing proposed reforms. This communiqué contained wide-ranging proposals including the following:

- the reform of policing in Northern Ireland
- measures to assist trade and industry in an effort to negate the effects of recent disturbances
- the establishment of a Community Relations Council
- the intention to establish *The Local Government Staff Commission*, to assist local authorities in the selection of candidates for appointment to senior and prescribed posts, together with the new post of Commissioner for Complaints
- the establishment of a new single central Housing Authority for the whole Northern Ireland to be known as the ‘Northern Ireland Housing Executive’, thus removing this important function from the control of local councils.

The creation of the Local Government Staff Commission was therefore an integral part of the reform of local government, based on the diminution to powers of local councils and greater regulatory control.

The joint communiqué (para. 28) also detailed the intention to establish a review body to advise on: Proposals for reshaping local administration and to advise on the most efficient distribution of the relevant functions under the Parliament and Government of Northern Ireland. This review body was constituted on 17th December 1969, and in June 1970, Patrick A. Macrory produced his report (Cmnd.546). This report is generally referred to as the “Macrory Report” and in summary divided the delivery of local government services into two categories:

**Regional** - services to be provided by single administrative units, responsible to the Northern Ireland Government at Stormont. These included education, public libraries, personal health, welfare and child care, food composition, standards and labelling, tourism, public road passenger transport and Fire etc.

**District** - services to be administered by 26 borough or district councils; ceremonial, executive, representative and consultative functions e.g. powers such as; licensing and building regulation, together with the provision of street cleaning, refuge collection and disposal, burial grounds and crematoria, public parks, recreation facilities and other localised responsibilities.
Mackintosh, (1971) commenting on the report, saw the outcome as predictable and being influenced by the Wheatley Commission on Scottish local government, with its broad classification of regional and district services. A key distinction however, was the recommendation to establish ‘The Local Government Staff Commission’ as a body with strong regulatory powers in relation to the management of human resource matters in the new local government structure. This recommendation was accepted by Government and the Commission was established as a statutory Executive Non-Departmental Public Body, under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The Commission’s powers were later extended under the Housing Orders 1976 and 1981 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1992.

2.2 The Functions of The Local Government Staff Commission

In general, the terms of reference for the Commission are to exercise:

> General oversight of matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers of councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and of making recommendations to councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on such matters.

[Summarised from The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 as amended by the Housing Orders (NI) 1976 and 1981]

These powers extend across the twenty seven local government organisations, namely the twenty six district councils in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is the single public sector housing authority for Northern Ireland. These organisations collectively employ approx. 15,000 staff directly affected by Commission decisions, and have a combined budget of £1.15 billion per annum, (2009 figures).

In addition to the above general powers, the Commission has also been given specific statutory functions under the above legislative framework. These functions and how they have been implemented in practice are set out in Table 1 as follows:
### Table 1  Specific Statutory Functions of the Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Method of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate senior appointments</td>
<td>Establish advisory panels for chief executives and senior/director posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure equality and fairness</td>
<td>Establish a statutory code of procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower planning</td>
<td>Assess probable future requirements for recruitment of officers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ensure Co-operation and best practice in the public service | Promote co-operation between councils, NIHE government departments and educational institutions  
                                                                          | Develop a code of conduct for officers                                                  |
| Develop and/or provide training for officers  | Establish a training commissioning group                                                 |
| Negotiate terms and conditions of employment for officers | Establish effective negotiating machinery and provide independent facilitation          |
The above statutory powers demonstrate the extent of the Commission’s involvement in organisation development (OD) and human resource (HR) management in local government in NI, and provide a framework for the Commission to play a lead role in the continuing development of local government, through the dissemination of best practice and the development of people. In order to ensure that the local government community implement the Commission’s directions a “recommending role” is also detailed in statute.

2.3 The Commission’s “Recommending Role”

While it might appear from the legislation that the Commission has a passive recommending and monitoring role in relation to the exercise of its functions, with councils having the ability to accept or reject such recommendations, this is not the case, in that the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 compels a council to comply with Commission recommendations within such time as the Commission requires. The Act does however provide an appeal mechanism to the Minister for the Environment, if a council does not wish to comply, and provides for the Minister to make a final determination. Since its inception in 1973, the Commission has issued statutory recommendations on a continuing basis in respect of all its functions. These have been implemented by all councils and no ministerial determinations have been sought or issued to date.

2.4 The Commission’s Obligation to Research and Develop Best Practice

The existence of such a compelling recommending power, where the Commission’s client base is bound to accept such recommendations, places a number of important obligations on the Commission. The first obligation relates to the involvement of those affected by the recommendation in its formulation and piloting. This involvement helps foster ownership and enables the Commission to test understanding and practical implementation. The second obligation relates to the duty to recommend ‘best practice procedures’ and is of vital importance. When the Commission instructs its client base to implement new procedures, these procedures must be based on properly researched best
practice. This places a continuing obligation on the Commission to research best practice, and to ensure that prior to its recommendation to councils, that such best practice is evidence based. The purpose of the Commission, as detailed earlier, is based on the provision of a professional approach to organisation development (OD) and human resource (HR) management and should its statutory recommendations not be properly researched and piloted, the reputation of the Commission would suffer, and potentially bring its continuing existence into question. The Commission, under my guidance, has therefore had to develop over the years as a professional organisation and has implemented a strategic approach to its operation, to encourage the support and confidence of its client base as outlined in the following section, (2.5).

2.5 The Strategic Development of the Commission 1991-2010

2.5.1 1991-1994 – Developing Strategic Partnerships

I joined the Commission as Chief Executive in 1991, following an organisation review which stressed that there was a need to appoint a Chief Executive, at the same level as district council chief executives, to change the organisation from its procedurally driven culture to a strategic organisation at the forefront of human resource management, organisational development and change in local government in Northern Ireland. This change journey has been the driving force behind my work as Chief Executive, together with Commission Members and staff for the last two decades. It began in 1992 with the preparation of a Strategic and Business Plan to place the Commission at the centre of local government in Northern Ireland, through the development of strategic partnerships with other stakeholder organisations, both within local government and the wider public service. In the years 1992-1994, partnerships were formed at local and central government levels within Northern Ireland, with counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, UK local government associations, universities and trade unions, to work jointly to bring about more effective local government and increase the professionalism of officers employed in local government organisations. This strategy was updated on an annual basis and the partnering culture, implicit in the delivery of key objectives and related
outputs, proved to be successful with the following notable exception, as detailed in the next section.

2.5.2 1994-1997 – Addressing the Wider Local Government Change Agenda

While the Commission had been successful at facilitating change through the partnering model, it was noted that the major decision making bodies in local government only came together through Commission driven initiatives, and all other policies were developed singly by the organisations concerned, with little joint discussion or resultant joint ownership. This meant that the Commission had to deal with 26 individual councils in attempting to broker agreements on change within the local government system.

In its SWOT analysis in 1994, prior to the development of the 1995 strategy and business plan, the Commission concluded that the lack of a unified voice in local government was an impediment to change and that the fragmented decision making process within local government required improvement if the local government system was to face the many challenges ahead. These challenges were detailed in Kerr, (1997 1998) and related to the changing nature of local government across the UK; the new and emerging functions; the emergence of an involvement culture where citizens expected to be consulted by government agencies; and increasing demands for openness and accountability.

A literature review conducted as part of my part-time studies for the Postgraduate Diploma in Management Research, (the first stage of the Advanced Management Development Programme at the Business School of the University of Brighton), made particular reference to the following new or emerging challenges; summarised in Table 2 as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Outworking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in service provision</td>
<td>International thinking on the management of public services (Osborne and Gabler, 1992)</td>
<td>The emergence of the <em>enabling authority</em> based on <em>steering rather than rowing</em></td>
<td>Conservative govt. introduces <em>compulsory competitive tendering</em> and new public innovation ethos promoted by the Labour govt. following May’97 elections (Hambleton and Hoggett, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in structure</td>
<td>Required to reflect the changes in the organisation’s functions</td>
<td>Changes in patterns of delivery</td>
<td>Move from the all purpose authority to one of diversity in terms of structure; roles; creation of cost centres; management buy-outs (Lawton and Rose, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Increased expectations in response to govt. policies</td>
<td>Development of a consultative local authority model</td>
<td>Need for a “renaissance of local government” and the use of citizens’ juries, citizen panels and new forms of public meetings (Taylor, 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local/central govt. relations</td>
<td>Need to build trust and partnerships with central govt. as with the developing wider European models (Stewart &amp; Stoker, 1995)</td>
<td>Strengthening local democracy</td>
<td>Local govt. to come forward with suggestions for improvement rather than waiting for central govt. to legislate (Clarke, 1997)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the above UK wide local government change challenges, the fragmented system of local government in NI had a specific change agenda to address, which made the implementation of the general change challenges even more difficult, as detailed in the next section.

2.5.3 1994-1997 – Addressing the Specific NI Local Government Change Agenda

- Introduction of Direct Rule

While general change challenges had been identified at international and national level, local government in Northern Ireland in the mid-90’s also faced other particular local change challenges, the history of which are described by McChesney and Knox (1988) as steeped in political tensions. The notion that the regional boards and agencies created at reorganisation would be responsible to the Northern Ireland regional government (Stormont), was short-lived with its abolition in 1972. The responsibility for democratic control over regional services and public administration in Northern Ireland was consequently taken over and administered through direct rule ministers from Westminster. Attempts to restore some form of upper tier at regional level resulted in the collapse of the power-sharing Executive in 1974 and the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1986. Consequently local councils were left as the only forum, apart from the House of Commons, through which democratically elected representatives in Northern Ireland could express their views.

Knox (1990, pps.35-55) described local government in Northern Ireland; as evolving from the turmoil of the early 70’s, dependent on the existence of the regional government of Stormont, which had now been removed, to underpin the Macrory recommendations. This abolition had embittered Unionists which in their view effectively destroyed local democratic institutions. The representative role envisaged for councils was limited to the nomination of representatives to the five Education and Library Boards, the Northern Ireland Fire Authority on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The consultative role provided councils
with the right to be consulted on planning matters and roads but with no decision-making powers. In the absence of an accepted 26 district council forum, the Association of Local Authorities Northern Ireland (ALANI), which was predominantly Unionist and did not have the two city councils (Belfast and Derry) in membership, could only be consulted by government, or the Commission, as part of a wider consultation process, which included consultation at individual council level. ALANI had made constant pleas to government for greater council powers over the years, but these demands had been rendered obsolete by two major issues which caused upheaval in the council chambers in the province, especially in the eighteen Unionist controlled councils. These major issues are described below and had major impact on the history and development of local government in Northern Ireland in the last twenty five year period.

- **May 1985 Elections**
The arrival of 59 Sinn Fein Councillors in the council chambers, following the May 1985 elections is described by Mc Chesney and Knox (1985) as the first of two major upheavals in 1985. Previously Sinn Fein had made no effort to contest elections and only had three councillors in local government. (In the May 1985 elections a total of 566 councillors were returned for the whole of Northern Ireland with Sinn Fein increasing their representation to 10.42%. The other nationalist party, the social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) obtained 101 seats). The two main Unionist groupings, the Ulster Unionists (UU), with 190 councillors, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) with 142 councillors, were very concerned at the prospect of having to sit and do business with what they termed ‘the political wing of the IRA’. Knox, (1987) makes reference to a statement by Sammy Wilson, the then Lord Mayor of Belfast and the DUP member behind the motion passed by Belfast City Council to have no dealings with Sinn Fein, and to effectively boycott them from council business, in the following terms: ‘Those who think the council is disruptive now, can expect far more disruption after May 1985, with the presence of half a battalion of IRA men in it’. What followed was a series of boycotts, refusing to acknowledge the presence of Sinn Fein, preventing them from speaking,
refusing to sit with them and keeping them out of council committees. The culmination of this anti Sinn Fein protest was spearheaded by Craigavon council when it adjourned all council business in protest in September 1985 and other Unionist controlled councils did likewise.

- **November 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement**
  The second major problem, which added to the poor image of councils as effective service providers, followed the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985. Unionists, who had directed their efforts to make life difficult for Sinn Fein, now turned their protest against central government for what they saw as a sell-out to Dublin. Not surprisingly protests spilled onto the floor of council chambers. John (1993) provided examples of how the Anglo-Irish agreement intensified disputes in the councils, with Unionist controlled councils refusing to set a rate and prompting central government to intervene using new powers to control councils. He also reported on his 1991 research study which concluded the following:
  - There was no set pattern of government: some councils being driven by political conflict, and others with some cooperation. Some were dynamic in using their powers when others were content to run the existing services.
  - The confusion about central and local government responsibility was undermining public confidence in local representatives who were approached to help in central government matters.
  - While some councils wished to see planning powers returned to local level, other nationalist councillors would not support the return of powers without safeguards against misuse.
  - Many councillors were dissatisfied with the operation of the central boards which administer some services.
  - Any return of functions may need to be conditional on individual councils adopting power-sharing arrangements.

Kerr (1997) in a literature review on local government in Northern Ireland, while accepting the findings of the John research, noted that the findings were based on data which was then six years old, and it could therefore not be assumed that the findings accurately reflected the state of local government in 1996. It was also noted that other authors Wilson and Game, (1994) while tending to be more descriptive of local government in Northern Ireland, offered little comment on the disruption in council chambers, and Conway et al, (1992) provided an indication that councils could move away from the political issues.
of the 1980s, to a more customer focused approach in the provision of services. Results from the Conway research, which was conducted in Omagh District Council, (a predominantly Nationalist Council), provided positive feedback, in that the council was seen as caring, easy to contact, did not treat people unfairly, and had its priorities more or less correct. On the negative side the research showed that the council did not have a high profile, did not always listen to grassroots’ opinion, and did not keep residents well-informed.

- **The Changing Environment; Responsiveness to Change**
  Further comment that councils may be emerging from the political turmoil of the 1980s and therefore more open to change, was provided by Knox, (1993) where he argued that compulsory competitive tendering should not be introduced in local government, and emphasised the high standard of leisure facilities and management expertise provided by councils compared to their counterparts in Great Britain. Further encouragement was also provided by Knox and Hughes (1994) when evaluating the reasoning behind the government’s recent decision to locate the community relations function within councils, they referred to their unimpressive record to date in this area, but emphasised that responsibility for community relations put consensus firmly on the policy agenda of councils, and was symbolically important in making progress on the wider political front.

The Commission was also optimistic that change could be introduced within local government following analysis of power-sharing practices in a number of councils. Research showed that in 12 of the 26 councils ‘responsibility sharing practices’ were taking place, these included; rotation of the chair and vice chair posts, rotation of committee chairs, proportionate distribution of committee members, and sharing representation on external bodies. Other positive indicators included the formation of ‘Local Partnership Boards’ in each council area, consisting of one third council representation with the other two thirds being nominated by the voluntary and business sector’s. These Partnership Boards were created to initiate projects to enhance community reconciliation and were each given a share of the £240m peace and reconciliation funding provided by the European Union.
It was also noted that Cebulla (1996) made reference to the new role provided to councils in 1992 to promote local economic development and the power to spend up to 2p in the pound on the rateable value of the district, on suitable projects and that this spending cap had been increased, at the request of councils, to 5p in 1995. Cebulla, because of the success of this initiative, urged councils to become more involved in this important role and particularly Belfast City Council to assert authority and lead by example in this new area of responsibly. These increasingly positive indicators encouraged the Commission to seek support to form an acceptable umbrella organisation to represent local government, to disseminate and encourage best practice in responsibility sharing and service delivery, and provide a single point of contact for central government and the Commission in seeking to bring about change. It was also felt that the establishment of such a body would help overcome the weaknesses identified in 1994/95 SWOT analysis where the Commission had identified the fragmented local government system as a major weakness. It was therefore decided to initiate formal discussions on how the establishment of such a body might be achieved.

2.5.4 1996-1998 – Management Research in Practice

Following detailed analysis and discussion with central government, The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), and a comparative study of local government associations elsewhere in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, the Commission concluded that a strong local government association in Northern Ireland could become the authoritative ‘voice of local government’ and the force for improvement and change in service delivery. It was agreed that I should undertake a research project to establish such a body, which would effectively replace the current Association of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland (ALANI). This research would form two purposes, firstly it would inform Commission strategy and decision-making in this important area, and secondly it would fulfil the criteria for submission of a research report for
the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Research for which I was currently studying.

The title of the study was determined as:

‘Developing a Unified Vision for Local Government in Northern Ireland, Involving Key Stakeholders’

This title set a challenging agenda and terms of reference framework. Due to its origins, the Commission was seen as an ‘honest broker’, but what the Commission was attempting to achieve was outside its statutory remit and the outcome of the study could not be covered by its recommending powers. It was therefore vital to obtain the commitment of all those concerned and attempt to reach consensus on a way forward. The research study involved the use of focus groups to set the parameters for the study, the facilitation of a future search conference to determine a strategy to create a new local government association, and the production of a report detailing conference findings and suggested way forward. The report of the future search conference, which was attended by all stakeholders, provided a mandate for the Commission to continue to work towards the creation of a unified, representative organisation for local government. From an organisational perspective the Commission's future strategy in this important area would be driven by the outcome of the research. From a personal development perspective, as required under the Advanced Management Development Programme at the University, I had demonstrated my ability to integrate management research within the organisation and was awarded the Post Graduate Diploma in Business Research.

The next stage in the process involved the implementation of the proposals emanating from the future search conference. In 1997, a further research project was determined with the following title - ‘The Establishment of a New Body to Represent the Interests of Local Government in Northern Ireland’.
From an organisational perspective this research would enable the Commission to turn the strategic recommendations emanating from the research to date into action. From a personal perspective the continuing research would enable me to continue with my studies, as the final requirement for completion of the Advanced Management Development Programme at the University, leading to the award of the degree of MA Change Management.

Having examined the methodology for the study, the research was seen as mainly management research as it conformed to the three main criteria as outlined by Easterby-Smith et al, (2001), namely that it was largely eclectic, dealing with managers who are powerful and busy people and with thought and action. The research methodology used throughout the project was based on the action research model, which started from the view that research should lead to change and therefore change should be incorporated into the research process itself (see Chapter 5, p.140, for a detailed explanation of action research). Having examined the literature around change management, it was decided to follow the practical change model as detailed by Clarke, (1994), as this staged approach was particularly relevant to the development of the new representative organisation. A summary of the staged approach model, the action taken and the outcomes at each stage are detailed in Table 3 as follows:
Table 3 Implementing a Staged Model Approach to Change (1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Action Taken</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Research external &amp; internal market for change</td>
<td>Covered as part of the previous (1996/7) research</td>
<td>Agreed meeting schedule and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Anticipate resistance</td>
<td>Covered as part of the previous (1996/7) research</td>
<td>Resistance factors identified and evaluated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Develop a shared vision, stage (1) - 1997</td>
<td>Covered as part of the previous (1996/7) research</td>
<td>Report from Future Search conference but validated only by conference participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Develop a shared vision, stage (2) – 1998 to gain whole system ownership and build on initial progress</td>
<td>Circulate report to all councillors and chief executives in NI detailing; common ground, shared vision and action plan and seek views utilising a structured questionnaire</td>
<td>Increased ownership of the change recommendations emanating from the Future Search conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organise a series of focus groups with key stakeholders (SOLACE/ALANI) to test consensus and ownership of the change</td>
<td>Updated and shared consensus on the way forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Action Taken</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Mobilise commitment</td>
<td>Further meetings with key stakeholder organisations to discuss updated common ground</td>
<td>Increased ownership of the suggested changes and agreement on a joint communications strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings with key influencers; political party leaders, central government officials and the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Agreement to ‘sign up’ to the new body and to integrate it into the local/central consultative arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Prepare a change plan</td>
<td>Prepare a draft change plan including areas of responsibility and a draft constitution for the new body. Circulate for comment to all stakeholders via the agreed joint communications system and agree revisions</td>
<td>An agreed time bound change plan which brought a note of realism to the change process with those affected beginning to take ownership and speak of ‘their’ new organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Reinforce the change</td>
<td>The Commission facilitated the establishment of the new body, the appointment of a Chief Executive, its inaugural meeting, and signed a memorandum of cooperation to ensure ongoing assistance with the change process</td>
<td>With ongoing support from councils and central govt. the body continues to function and develop, and plays a key consultative and representative role on the Strategic Leadership Board established to reorganise local govt. in NI in the years ahead</td>
</tr>
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</table>
From an organisational perspective the research fulfilled the Commission’s objective to put in place a body representative of local government, with whom they could do business. From a personal perspective the research was submitted in thesis format to the University and approved by the exam board for the award of my Masters degree in change management. This success also encouraged the Commission to utilise management research practices to evaluate strategy options and determine best practice recommendations on a continuing basis as explained below.

2.5.5 1998-2010 – Action Research in Practice

The following background is provided to illustrate how the practice of action research developed within the Commission and its applicability within the organisation’s operating environment. The framework for the Commission’s operation is set out in the Corporate and Business Plan on an annual basis, (Local Government Staff Commission for NI Corporate Plan 2009/2011 & Business Plan 2010) which clarifies the Commission’s current Statement of Purpose as; ‘The Commission aims to be the strategic organisation for the development of human resource management and the promotion of excellence through people in the delivery of local government services in Northern Ireland’.

To achieve this overall objective the work is currently divided into seven Key Performance Areas:

- Local Government Reform/Modernisation Agenda
- Recruitment and Selection
- Equality and Diversity
- Learning and Development
- Employee Relations
- Organisation Design and Development
- Corporate Governance

Each key performance area is expanded in the business plan, with related objectives and year on year targets. In line with the Statement of Purpose, if excellence is to be achieved through people and a continuous improvement agenda advanced, the Commission recognises that it is necessary to develop good practice models and recommendations, (as set out in para. 2.4) based on
management research. Over the last number of years with my guidance the Commission has developed its key recommendations within an action research framework. As Chief Executive of the Commission, I, and my staff, operate on an ongoing basis as insider researchers within the organisation. This means that, as well as being a member of the organisation, I undertake an explicit research role, in addition to the normal functional Chief Executive role for which I have responsibility.

This dual role is often neglected in the research literature, as identified by Coghlan and Brannick (2005) who refer to the neglected subject of the ‘insider researcher’, where typically action research is presented in terms of situations where an action researcher, external to the organisation, enters the organisation in some sort of temporary facilitative role, works with the members of the organisation for the duration of the project and then leaves. They emphasise that what is less common is the presentation of action research from within organisations, conducted by action researchers who are permanent members of the organisation. Coghlan and Brannick (2005, preface1), similarly recognise that within the last decade; the practice of insider action research has burgeoned. This growth they attribute to two factors, firstly: ‘The consolidation of doctoral action research in universities around the world has contributed considerably to the legitimisation of insider action research by practitioners in all sectors of organisational life- for example; business, healthcare, nursing, education, social and community work’. This comment is particularly relevant to the development of action research within the Commission, which has been encouraged by my studies as a university student over the last number of years. The second growth factor, the authors attribute to the increased understanding and conceptualisation of the insider action researcher. They see action research, as the name suggests, as an approach to research which aims at both taking action and creating knowledge or theory about the action. The outcomes are both *an action* and a *research outcome*. This contrasts with traditional research approaches, which aim at creating knowledge only.
Stringer (1999 p.9), in charting the history and varying definitions of action research, makes reference to community-based action research being related to action research models that sought to apply the tools of anthropology and other disciplines to the practical resolution of social problems (e.g., Goodenough, 1963; Lewin, 1946). This historical context is of particular relevance to the work of the Commission, in that the organisation was initially created to attempt to solve social problems, and the action research term and methodology as described by Lewin, (1946), was developed through his involvement with many organisations, institutions and individuals who came for help in the field of group relations. This involvement model is similarly consistent with the Commission’s objective to develop good practice recommendations through the involvement of its client base and related stakeholders, in a highly politicised environment. The Commission’s policy over the years of initiating change following discussion of the problem and suggested actions with its stakeholders is consistent with, Burnes (2004) description of how Lewin conceived action research as a two-pronged process. Firstly, emphasising that change required action, and was directed at achieving this, and secondly, recognising that the successful action is based on analysing the situation correctly; identifying all the possible alternative solutions and choosing the one most appropriate to the situation in hand (Bennett, 1983).

To be successful, there also has to be a ‘felt need’, described as the individuals or groups’ realisations that change is necessary. Lewin (1946, p.206), states that; Action Research then ‘proceeds in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the action’. It is this iterative process whereby research leads to action and action leads to evaluation, and further research, that has been adopted by the Commission to develop good practice models as the basis for its statutory recommendations. In addition to the two specific examples cited earlier in this chapter, the Commission has utilised this action research methodology to develop further statutory recommendations including:
• The Development of the Commission’s ‘Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection’
This Code has been continually updated on the basis of defining the recruitment problems in conjunction with client organisations, developing new recruitment practices, recommending the new practices, monitoring their effectiveness, and updating the recommendations as required.

• Guidance on the Staffing Implications of Reorganisation and Change
This guidance was originally issued to cope with the demands of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, which resulted in the need for functions and staff to be split on a client (employer organisation) and contractor (provider of services) basis. It has subsequently been re-evaluated to provide for individual council restructuring and improvement initiatives, and will be further evaluated to provide for the reorganisation and change associated with the planned reorganisation of local government in Northern Ireland in future years.

• Human Resource Standards
In conjunction with stakeholders, the Commission developed a set of standards which detailed the operating arrangements for a human resource department within a council and the indicators which should be met to evidence performance. These standards have been updated in line with the experience of their application in practice and will be further refined and supplemented to provide for clear guidance on the transfer of staff and the filling of new posts in the new council structure in future years.
• **Equality Initiatives**

Many successful initiatives have been introduced by the Commission over the years to address inequality issues in relation to the religious composition of the local government workforce. This was mainly due to the obligations placed on employers by the increasing equality legislation relating to unfair discrimination on the grounds of religious or political belief, the results of relevant Industrial Tribunal decisions and the highly political environment where councils in NI are often perceived as ‘nationalist/catholic’ or ‘unionist/protestant’ institutions. The equality agenda in relation to women and men has been addressed to a lesser extent, and the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative, explained in the next Chapter 3, p.50, was specifically designed to progress the Commission’s general duty to keep under review all aspects of equality in local government and to bring about a major change at an accelerated pace and act as an example for further work in this area.

While the above examples detail the ongoing work of the Commission in its various areas of operation, the establishment of the network of champions, to which this study relates, was an integral part of the overall ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative and seen by the Commission and its key stakeholders as an important catalyst in bringing about change. This study therefore plays an important role in advancing the Commission’s equality agenda and provides an example of how change may be effectively introduced across the full range of the Commission’s statutory obligations.

In order to place the study of the champions’ network in context, this chapter examined the origins and role of my organisation and its unique position within the local government structure in NI as a facilitator and intermediary, promoting equality, fairness and equal opportunities across the sector. Although the organisation partly gains its legitimacy as a ‘recommending’ body from statute, its greatest legitimacy is gained from its independence, and the respect which it has gained over the years for the actions it takes in implementing its important oversight and development role. The chapter also explained how I as Chief Executive simultaneously developed over the years and utilised action research
to address key problems and update previous recommendations. The discussion of action research and the example projects as detailed in this chapter were provided as background, in the context of my development over the years. A more detailed history, development and examination of action research as a justifiable research method and its relevance to the DBA programme is detailed in Chapter 5, pps.143-151.

Having provided the context for the study, the next chapter details how the problem to which this study relates was identified, the steps taken to address the problem and the establishment of the network of champions to implement the change process in practice.
## CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH PROJECT

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As outlined in Chapter 2, this project is set in the context of the Commission’s equality agenda but with wider implications for its ongoing policy development. In order to provide the detail of the change management problem to which this research relates; this chapter begins by posing a series of questions on how the problem was identified and the steps taken to address it. The chapter also describes the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative and the establishment of the network of change champions and the business need to research how it worked in practice. In line with the aims of the DBA programme, in order to demonstrate my own learning and development this chapter also details the research and development which I followed in the years 2006-2010, which related to how the change champions operated in practice and resulted in the initiation of this study in June 2008.

3.1 The Problem Identified and Action Taken

3.1.1 How was the problem identified?

Analysis of staffing statistics obtained by the Commission from councils over the years identified that there was a problem with regard to equal opportunity in that women were underrepresented in local government in general and in senior staffing grades in particular.

3.1.2 How did the Commission initially respond to the problem?

In 1995, in line with its statutory obligation to develop policies to overcome such underrepresentation, the Commission established a working group to consider the position of female staff in district councils. The working group recommended that a positive action programme should be developed to address the gender imbalance and that initially an attitude survey should be undertaken of the 182 middle range female employees and their male comparators, to seek their views on how this imbalance could be addressed. The results of the survey, which recorded a response rate of 71%, were incorporated in a Commission Agenda Paper considered at the March 1995
Commission meeting (SC/13.3.95/3). Following analysis of the responses to the questionnaires, a series of recommendations were made in relation to the introduction of family friendly policies, equal opportunity awareness training, promotion/career opportunities, the introduction of a women’s development programme and the determination of qualifications for posts. This report was the initial driver for change and the recommendations contained therein became the benchmarks against which progress to secure equality for females have been measured. The problems associated with equality of opportunity became a continuing agenda item at Commission meetings and the subject of numerous initiatives, with equality reports, relevant case law, equality initiatives and reports from related working groups and sub groups continually under consideration.

3.1.3 How successful were the initiatives implemented to date and why was there a need to initiate further new policies?

While the Commission recognised that progress was being made on a continuing basis, the pace of change was slow, and while it was accepted that the policies recommended in 1995 were now imbedded across local government, it was clear that nothing new had been introduced and initial momentum had now been lost. In 2001, in order to refresh the initiative, the Commission established a Women’s Development Steering Group consisting of a key stakeholder representatives from trade unions, the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), women senior officers, male chief executives, public/private sector NGO’s, women councillors and Commission staff. This Steering Group was given the remit to examine the success factors to date, develop an improvement agenda, and recommend a strategy to revive the 1995 initiative. The Steering Group examined the success of the initiative to date and made recommendations to the Commission for improvement which were immediately implemented. The Group also agreed to commission further research, (River Group Report, 2004), to help inform decision making. This research detailed further policy recommendations for consideration by the Steering Group and at a meeting of the group held in 2005 the report was considered in detail and a
revised action plan was agreed, (Women’s Development Steering Group: June, 2005). This action plan detailed a twin track approach to implement the change, firstly, the group agreed to provide a series of new development initiatives for women and secondly to establish a network of champions to encourage ownership of the initiative across the local government sector as a whole.

3.1.4 What was so different about the establishment of the network of champions?

The establishment of a network of change champions was a departure from the operational model generally utilised by the Commission where recommendations were issued to councils simply recommending new policy initiatives, with no emphasis or specific guidance as to who should facilitate the change process. Similarly, local government in Northern Ireland had never before voluntarily banded together as a community to address a change problem. The fact that officers and members were involved as change champions on an equal basis was also a new dimension, as officers and members were often perceived as advancing differing agendas, in the operation of local government.

3.1.5 What is the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative?

To communicate this new approach, a year-long awareness raising initiative, branded “Women in Local Councils – Making a Difference”, was initiated by the Commission in 2005 and all district councils signed a certificate of commitment to support the initiative (Local Government Staff Commission website link, (2010a): ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative). The initiative was originally planned to extend for one year but has subsequently been extended for a further period, and is now in its sixth year of operation (as at Feb.’11).

A high profile launch, and related media coverage of the initiative, resulted in raising expectations and it was expected that the champions, in particular,
would play a key role in implementing the change and could utilise their detailed knowledge of local government and related networks to influence the change process. The following section describes the establishment of the network in detail, and the initiation of this research to investigate how the change champions implemented their new role and what resistance they encountered at local level.

3.2 Establishment of a Network of Champions

The establishment of a network of champions, to initiate and implement a change programme across local government, was seen as a means of involving key stakeholders across the local government sector. This was announced at a ministerial re-launch of the initiative in January 2006 and received support from all 26 district councils.

3.2.1 What size is the champions’ network, who is involved, and what was seen as its primary objective?

The network includes a total of thirty seven champions, representative of the local government sector in Northern Ireland, and its composition is summarised in Table 4 as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion by Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Nominating Body</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Council Champions</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>The 26 local councils</td>
<td>11 Chief Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 HR Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Member Champions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)</td>
<td>Cross section of political parties reflecting the composition of the NILGA Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party Nominees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Each of the major NI political parties</td>
<td>1 councillor from the;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ulster Unionist Party (UU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sinn Fein (SF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Democratic &amp; Labour Party (SDLP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alliance (AL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors’ Representative Champion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The National Association of Councillors (NAC)</td>
<td>UU councillor, but alternating as determined by the NAC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The network therefore represents all the key stakeholders involved in local government in NI namely; elected members (councillors), council officers, the representative body for local government (NILGA), and the councillors’ Association. The Steering Group, through discussion with nominated champions, determined the summary objective for the operation of the champions’ network as: ‘To maximise awareness regarding the change issues,
develop appropriate supporting projects, and to demonstrate a genuine commitment to the full participation of women in local government at every level’. This objective was seen as a working definition, to provide guidance on the role of the change champion and was determined by the group in a management context, to address a particular change problem within local government. In summary, by November 2005, the steering group had determined a change agenda, developed a series of activities and initiatives to heighten awareness and commitment and decided to establish a network of champions to act as the local change agents.

In the exercise of my strategic management function within local government, I was given responsibility for the implementation of the initiative. While the capacity building and support mechanisms determined by the Steering Committee to assist the change process could be benchmarked against existing best practice in both the public and private sector, and replicated on a pilot basis, the operation of a network of champions represented a new management practice, which had not been tried before. The Commission were therefore investing financially by supporting the development needs of the change champions and seeding related local council initiatives, without any knowledge of how the champions might perform in practice. A table of events detailing how the network was developed and support provided to change champions on an ongoing basis from 2006 to 2009 is included in Appendix 2, p.368 (Change Champions, Schedule of Supporting Activities - 2006-2009). These events included a range of capacity building workshops, conferences, and best practice examples from other organisations, benchmarking case studies and networking opportunities. Some events were aimed at all champions, while others were organised specifically at the request of councillor champions who were concerned at how they might expand the change process across their political parties and representative organisations.
As Accounting Officer, I have ultimate responsibility for the effective use of Commission resources and while fully committed to supporting the initiative, have a duty to ensure that resources are targeted where they can be most effective. I therefore initiated a four year research programme which began with an initial research project to determine how the champions perceived their role and their initial development needs, and concluded with the major research project which is described in Chapters 6 and 7 of this report and includes detailed analysis of how the change champions operated in practice and how the research will contribute to the management decision process in the Commission and local government in the years ahead.

3.3 The Research and Development Programme 2006-2010

Having carried out a literature review, as detailed in Chapter 4, it was evidenced that the literature on change agency in general, and how change agents operated in practice was scarce. Commenting on what is known about the roles played by change agents in practice and with particular reference to local government where this study is located, Hartley et al, (1997, p.62) state:

> there is very little literature on change agents and change processes in public service organisations, and the contribution of internal change agents in elected local authorities is unexplored.

Para. 4.5, p.131 of the literature review ‘The Need for Further Research’ places further emphasis on this lack of adequate research to enable guidance or benchmarking on the operation of the champions network to take place by noting the following quotation from Doyle (2002, p.480) who comments on the literature on change theory and practice in the following terms:

> The evidence suggests that with one or two exceptions, existing change theory and practice are aligned behind a set of unchallenged assumptions about the nature of contemporary organisational change and the way it should be managed.
Similarly Caldwell (2006, p x, 18), in the preface of his recent comprehensive review of agency and change, emphasises that: ‘The history of the concept of agency in organisational change theory over the past fifty years makes dismal reading’, and goes on to state that:

\[\text{Change agency theory has not come a long way over the past 50 years and this presents an unpalatable message for those who wish to further theory and practice. For those readers looking to the future however the challenge is to rethink the subject and relevant practice.}\]

While the literature review identified a need for further research in this area, it also provided a clearer understanding of the various theories which were advanced regarding the; roles, skills, the resistance which they might encounter, and development needs of change agents. While not specifically relevant to local government, or providing a commonly agreed insight as to how change agents operated in practice, the review of the literature initially supported the rationale for the dispersal of change agents throughout the organisation, (in this case the local government system in Northern Ireland), as multiple actors, playing differing roles in implementing change and supporting the change process. As detailed in (para. 1.4.1, p.7) the review of the literature also equated the role of the ‘change agent’ with that of the ‘change champion’ as leading/directing/facilitating the change process.

Having provided a summary of the literature review to the steering group for the change initiative, it was decided to move forward by conducting a series of workshops and capacity building exercises to enable members of the champions' network to initially identify their own role and bring forward ideas on development needs.
3.3.1 How does the study of the champions’ network relate to the overall aims of the DBA programme?

The establishment of the network of champions in 2005 coincided with my enrolment on the part time DBA programme in the University. This new programme covered a combination of attendance at workshops (block based study), and monthly study days (action learning sets and symposia). Progression within the program was on a staged basis and required the completion of various assignments and practice based research projects, set out as follows:

Summary extract from The Brighton Doctorate of Business Administration Programme Overview, p 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 (a) (duration 9 months)</th>
<th>Stage 1 (b) (duration 15 months)</th>
<th>Stage 2 (duration 24 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of a problem-based research project.</td>
<td>Completion of a practice-based research project.</td>
<td>Completion of thesis research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprising: A report of the research. A reflective report of the project and the learning from the project.</td>
<td>Comprising: A draft article in a format suitable for submission to nominated journal. A draft article format suitable for submission to nominated professional journal. A review of learning.</td>
<td>The third assignment is to undertake a still larger research project, lasting two years, which would normally be based on action research aimed at bringing about an improvement in professional practice, and knowledge in the area of business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated in the last section, from a professional perspective, I needed to fully understand the work of the network of champions and appraise their future role in implementing change in local government and the initial literature review had identified a lack of empirical research in this area. It was therefore concluded
that the study of how the change champions operated in practice could
demonstrate my capacity to plan and carry out a research project and lead to
an original contribution to knowledge in the field of management practice. This
study, in line with the learning outcomes of the DBA, when adequately
documented, could also illustrate my capacity to apply research findings in
terms of professional practice within my organisation and communicate the
results to both professional practitioners and academics. It would also provide
a continuation of the research undertaken in the earlier stages of the DBA
programme outlined as follows;

**DBA – Stages 1(a) and 1(b) (Research and Communicating Results)**

My research and development programme, within the framework of the DBA,
began with the submission of evidence that I had achieved the learning
outcomes of stage 1(a) during the first five months of the programme, and I was
granted advanced standing and proceeded to stage 1(b). This stage required
the completion of a practice-based research report, which demonstrated the
work undertaken with the champions’ network in its initial stages and first year
of operation. The research involved me, as practitioner and researcher,
working in close collaboration with the network of 37 champions to identify their
role, responsibilities and how they might operate in practice. The research
involved:

- A series of independently facilitated workshops, which resulted in initial role
definition and identification of potential barriers to the change process at
  local level.

- Focus groups were used to discuss potential training and capacity building
  interventions.
A questionnaire was circulated to all members of the network, to refine the data collected through the workshops, and to test the steering group's perception that the initiative was becoming successful. The questionnaire also gathered data on potential support systems which could be introduced to assist the champions in implementing the change process.

The data from the workshops, focus groups, and the questionnaires was also presented to a group of stakeholders termed ‘informed observers’ who were not directly involved in the change process, but interested in, or affected by its outcome. The resulting discussion assisted in validating the data collected to date and provided further input into the data collection process.

The findings from the research were presented at a further change champions’ workshop and at a steering group meeting. On the basis of the findings, the steering group introduced a number of individual and group training initiatives, created opportunities for champions to share information and network, and developed an action plan to engage a wider public service audience in the initiative and to secure internal support at local level. A programme was also designed to create local steering and stakeholder groupings to assist individual champions at local level and to develop a local change action plan. From a professional and managerial perspective, the research had assisted in the decision making process and on the basis of the perceived success of the change champions to date in implementing their initial role, the decision was taken to extend the initiative for a further period and to secure funding at central level to facilitate and encourage the initiative on an ongoing basis. From my personal development perspective and within the framework of the DBA, in July 2007, having fulfilled the requirements of stage 1(b), I progressed to stage 2 of the programme.
DBA – Stage 2 (Thesis Research: improvement in professional practice, and knowledge in the area of business)

Further discussion with the Steering Group and the Commission resulted in the need for further research. The main management perspective was that the stage 1(b) research had concentrated on the initial roles performed by the champions and that this was conducted at an early stage in their role formation and identification of development needs. What was now required was an in depth study, with a representative sample of champions, to determine how they operated over a longer period of time, with the initiative now in place for a three year period. There was also a need to research the resistance they encountered and this research would be more relevant in year two and three of the initiative when a wider range of examples and experiences could be explored. While the research was set within the framework of the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative, due to the other major changes facing local government in NI, including the reform of local government initially planned for 2011, it was agreed that learning from the experiences of the champions should not be restricted to their experiences in this initiative, but that their role as change agents in other change processes, if available, should also be explored. As a business case, the Commission in particular were interested in developing good practice models in change agency, and utilising the learning from the research which had the potential to be applied to other change challenges.

A thesis outline was submitted to the Thesis Panel at the university, and approval was received in January 2008 to commence the study. Brief summary extracts from the thesis outline are detailed in Table 5 as follows:
Table 5  Summary Thesis Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim of the Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The aim of the research is to discover how change champions implement their role in a major change programme in the local government environment in Northern Ireland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution to Knowledge and Practical Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This would provide a contribution to knowledge of practice in implementing change in this highly political environment. The practical outcome will be the application of the knowledge gained to future major change initiatives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The study will gather and analyse data to assist in addressing the following questions:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- What roles did the change champions play in the change process?
- What skills did the champions utilise in the change process?
- What barriers to implementing change did the change champions encounter?
- What are the development/support needs of the change champions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology - a qualitative approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The intended study will be based on individuals’ accounts of their own experience as change champions in practice and a qualitative approach is seen as the most appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analysis and Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The data obtained throughout the study will be discussed under the four key research questions in a research report, to provide the overall findings of the study as follows:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Role** – the roles carried out by the change champions, how they were initially perceived and what happened in practice.
- **Skills** – the skills utilised by the change champions in implementing change.
- **Barriers to achievement** – the barriers which prevented the champions from carrying out their various roles and how they felt these barriers could be overcome.
- **Support systems** – support systems and development needs identified by the champions, and where these were introduced as part of an improvement agenda, how they worked in practice, and their perceived effectiveness.
This Stage 2 research commenced in June 2008, under the terms of reference (Table 5, p.60) and the remainder of this report details the research process and outcomes. Before undertaking this research, the literature review prepared in 2007/8 in relation to the establishment of the network of champions was updated to ensure that the research was informed by the most recent literature, particularly in relation to change agency; the role of change agents and their development needs. This literature review is detailed in the next chapter and confirmed the need to continue with the research and provide useful information to the Commission on which to base future policy recommendations for implementation in local government in N.I.
CHAPTER 4: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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4.1 **Domains of the Literature**

As set out in the Chapter 1, the primary purpose of this research project is to improve professional practice in the introduction of change management initiatives in local government in Northern Ireland (NI). The change process is unique, in that this is the first attempt to introduce a change process across the twenty six local authorities in NI, utilising a network of change champions. There is no existing research of a similar nature in Northern Ireland to benchmark the change process against, or to provide guidance on the ‘best’ implementation model, therefore in order to inform the research process and locate the study within this existing body of knowledge, it is important to examine the context of the study and the related relevant key literature areas.

The following Table 6 details the major themes to be examined in the literature review and the chapter structure. The chapter begins with a review of the literature which sets the study in the context of the development of change management and change agency and draws compassion between the terms ‘change agent’ and ‘change champion’. Having examined this general context, the review examines what is known specifically about the key areas of enquiry as detailed in the research questions relating to the roles, skills, resistance encountered and the development needs of the change champions. Each section of the literature review is followed by a ‘summary comment’ paragraph to draw attention to particular learning points and provide a link to the next section of the review. The literature review concludes with the identified need for further research in the general area of change agency and how change agents operate in practice.
Table 6  Major Themes of the Literature Review and Chapter Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Themes</th>
<th>Relevant Literature and Chapter Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducing change across a number of organisations</td>
<td>4.2 Development of change management – A historical perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3 Development of change agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3.3 Difficulties in dispersing change agency in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilising Change Champions/Agents to introduce change</td>
<td>4.4.1 Comparisons between champions and agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The roles of the Change Agents</td>
<td>4.4.2 The roles of the change agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The planned change perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The emergent change perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The skills of the Change Agents</td>
<td>4.4.3 Examination of the skill sets and competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>4.4.4 Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Definition and sources of resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The management of resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The positive perspective on resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development needs of the Change Agents</td>
<td>4.4.5 Development needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development strategies – situational context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development methodologies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Development of Change Management – A Historical Perspective

An examination of the literature on the probable origins of change management identifies that there is no clear consensus as to its origin, and also differing views on its development as a concept. From the perspective of this research it is not critical to define or support a particular view, but rather to gain an appreciation of what is meant by ‘change management’ and how the theory was developed. This assists the understanding of the context in which those involved in implementing change in this research (the change champions), are expected to operate. This section of the literature review therefore initially examines the introduction of change management.

4.2.1 Introducing Change Management

Burnes (2004), examines the theory and practice of how organisations developed and changed and the development of change management models to accommodate the accelerated change process. He describes the difficulty of charting the origins of change management and defining its core concepts by stating that change management is not a distinct discipline with rigid and clearly defined boundaries, but rather that it draws on a number of social science disciplines and traditions and that this is complicated further by the fact that the social sciences themselves are interwoven. In conclusion he asserts that change management has emerged over the years as the means of delivering or reacting to organisational change. Similar deductions are made by Senior and Fleming (2006) and Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) who conclude that change management emerged as a reaction to the changing needs of the organisation, which in turn changed in response to the changing environment.

A further historical explanation lies in the development of change management theory which can be traced back to the work of theorists and researchers concerned with organisational efficiency. Hughes (2006, pps.15-22) in a chapter reviewing the history of change management refers to the individual, group, and open systems schools as highlighted by Burnes (2004, p.262) as a starting point for beginning to understand the range of approaches to change
management and that the acknowledgement of schools of thought begins to
differentiate theorists and competing explanations of change management.
The implication being that one school of thought is not superior to another but
that theorists believe that change management is best understood and
explained in a certain way. By way of example he cites the work of Kurt Lewin
(1951) in terms of his belief in change being best achieved through groups and
describes how different approaches to change reflect different academic
disciplines and the parallel which exists between approaches to management
and organisational behaviour in general, and change management in particular.
He also describes Hamlin’s (2001, p.44) typical overview of the mainstream
theoretical perspectives to understanding organisations and summarises the
specification of change strategies arising out of each perspective as follows:

- **Structural functionalism**: change structure and functions in order to reduce
  conflict
- **Human relations**: facilitate change to more readily meet needs of individuals
- **Psychodynamic**: facilitate the individual to realise the implications of
defensive behaviour
- **Systems theory**: change will have systematic effects on other parts of the
  organisation making up the whole
- **Contingency theory**: change the contingencies within the system to develop
  the most appropriate management system and structure
- **Action frame of reference**: change the rules which inform behaviour so as to
  change and transform the meaning of the organisation for the individual
- **Cultural, ethnographic and metaphorical**: change the meaning of the symbols
  within the culture of the organisation

He states that theorists are often associated with a particular approach, for
example, Mayo (1933), with the human relations approach and Fayol (1916),
whose work is described as typifying the values and aspirations of classical
theorists and a further example of early theorising informing contemporary
explanations of change management. Similarly Stickland (1998, p.29) in his
cataloguing of approaches to change suggests that up to the 1960’s the
scientific – rational view of change, the human relations view of change and the
contingency view of change shaped thinking.
This summary of change management describes the development of approaches to understanding change management, the related theoretical perspectives on understanding organisations, and provides examples of how theorists can be associated with differing approaches. A further perspective on the development of change management is as an evolution of organisation development, (OD).

4.2.2 Change Management and Organisation Development (OD)

Burke (2002, pps.34-36) in charting the history of organisation change, describes the emergence of OD as a change technique based on applied behavioural science and reliant on an action research approach. He describes it as steeped in the theoretical tradition of applied social psychology, especially the work of Kurt Lewin, and adds that the methodological model for OD is action research. This is explained as a technique to manage change whereby an organisational problem is analysed through data collection, (the research element), discussion of the data and what steps should be taken to help solve the problem, (analysis and planned implementation), and taking the steps necessary to implement, (the intervention).

Burke (2002, pps.106-107) builds on this comparison where he describes Lewin’s (1958) three phase model for change where phase one is: Unfreezing the system; by creating a sense of urgency about the need for change, or educating managers to behave differently. Lewin’s point being that the system will not move or change in any meaningful way unless and until an unfrozen condition has been achieved. This is followed by the second phase; movement, or changing the organisation by for example; moving operations in a new direction, utilising different technologies or implementing new ways of operating. Once change, or movement is underway, the third phase; refreeze, must be initiated. The change cannot be allowed to dissipate or drift away. The new, changed condition or state therefore needs to be reinforced, with a process and infrastructure in place to maintain the new system.
In commenting on the pioneering work of Kurt Lewin, Hayes (2007, p.17) while emphasising the need for *unfreezing* in both incremental and transformational change, emphasises that in the case of constantly adapting organisations (of the type identified by Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997) which are operating in high-velocity environments; that the issue may not be one of overcoming inertia and *unfreezing* the organisation, but redirecting the continuous process of change that is already underway.

Hayes (2007, pps.17-18) refers to Weick and Quinn’s (1999) suggestion that the appropriate change sequence required to redirect this kind of continuous change starts with *freezing*, in order to take stock and highlight what is happening, then moving on to *rebalancing*; which is a process that involves reinterpreting history and re-sequencing patterns so that they unfold with fewer blockages, followed by *unfreezing* to resume improvisation, translation and learning in ways that are more mindful of sequencing, more resilient to anomalies, and more flexible in their execution. Hendry (1996, p.624) on the other hand, testifies to Lewin’s lasting contribution to change management where he notes that: ‘scratch any account of creating and managing change and the idea that change is a three stage process which necessarily begins with a process of *unfreezing* will not be far below the surface’.

Other process models of change can be viewed as elaborations of Lewin’s basic model including; Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958), Egan (1996), Beckhard and Harris (1987). Similarly Mabey & Mayon-White (1993, p.120) describe Schein’s approach to managing change through process consultation as firmly Lewinian (Schein 1961, 1979, 1987). The underlying assumption of process consultation being that managers often do not know what is wrong in the organisation and need help to diagnose what their problems are and what changes need to be made.
While the above examples are illustrative of the historical development of change management from a theoretical perspective, and place the work of Lewin as a key influence in the understanding of change management. A further explanation is also advanced which relates the origins of change management with the development of management consultancy.

4.2.3 Change Management and the Development of Management Consultancy

Burke (2002, p.40) describes the development of management consultancy, tracing its origins to Jethro, in the Old Testament (The father-in-law of Moses: who advised on a system of delegation and the design of a support system for Moses, which could be described as one of the first pyramidal organisations). He also describes Frederick Taylor as one of the first management consultants of modern times and James O. McKinsey as the first, at least in the United States, to establish a professional service firm devoted to management consultancy. With reference to the book by Rasiel (1999), “The McKinsey Way”, Burke (2002, pps.40-42) describes the strict problem solving process adopted by consultants to: Firstly; gather as much factual information about the client organisation’s problem as possible utilising interviews, company records, etc. and exploring whether the presented problem is a symptom of some other problem. Secondly; after an analysis of the facts, determining an initial hypothesis to be tested with the client. Thirdly; to be highly structured by limiting the recommendations for solving the problem to what can be realistically achieved, proposing a limited number of recommended actions and establishing milestones that can be met with targets that are achievable. Burke (2002, p.42) draws the conclusion that most management consulting firms conduct their business similarly and that today the major firms include as part of their practice, what they refer to as change management, and that change management continues to evolve within management consultancy to meet clients’ needs e.g. changing business strategy, organisational design and structure, based on applied behavioural science, particularly organisational psychology. This emergence of change management in major consulting firms is similarly supported by Worren et al, (1999) reporting on studies undertaken.
with major consulting firms from the 1980s through to 1996 who describe the emergence of change management as a ‘service offering of major consulting firms’. They conclude from their studies that comparison between traditional OD and change management, as defined by major consulting firms, suggests that change management represents a new approach, with differences between the underlying theory and analytical framework, the role of the change agent, and the preferred intervention strategies. The inference from the Worren et al, (1999) research appears to be that change management is a creation primarily of consulting firms rather than academics.

This view has been challenged by Farias and Johnston, (2000, p.377) who submit that OD professionals ‘understood and adopted a holistic and integrated perspective on organisational change long before the large consulting firms did so’, and comment that, the books written by major consulting firms on change management approaches are written to sell services to clients, not to propagate scientific truths, and as such are a questionable basis on which to base a new discipline. This point is similarly supported by Hornstein, (2001, p.224) who also recognises that change management, as practiced by consultancy firms in a competitive market, may not be compatible with ‘the luxury of conducting studies of efficacy, prior to declaring a favourite approach to change management’ and that consulting firms may create ‘an approach, and package it in such a way that is attractive to clients’, in order to be viable in a volatile market place. He concludes that such an approach to change management may be speculative and unsupported by research but that this is not a cause for concern and makes an additional interesting point in that what consultancy firms’ term change management as opposed to academics or OD practitioners may be different and have different validity in the provision of services to their respective client base.

How consultancy companies actually relate to, and involve their clients, while acting in a change management consultancy role, is described by Werr et al, (1997, pps.288-306), who places emphasis on the involvement of the client through mixed client-consultant project teams in a joint learning environment
where the learning is twofold; the client learning from the consultant’s experience and the consultant learning from the client and building methodologies to be utilised in future assignments. This learned experience is similarly emphasised by Heller, (1998) and Carr et al, (1996) in texts based on their consultancy experience, and designed to provide managers with guidance on how to initiate and bring about change and gain commitment from those involved.

In conclusion, while there are differing opinions on the role of management consultancies in the development of change management theory, there is no doubt that they have, and will, (due to the market demand), continue to claim to play an important role in the ongoing development of change management and its practical implementation in organisations.

**Summary Comment – Development of Change Management:**

As stated earlier, there is no clear consensus on the origins of the development of change management, but discussion of the various approaches help understand the context for introducing change across a number of organisations and the different meanings placed on the term ‘change management’ by various authors. As this research is concerned with the dispersal of change by various individuals, it is also important to understand what is known about the concept of change agency, which is discussed in the next section of this review.

**4.3 Development of Change Agency**

The development of change agency is examined in this section from three perspectives, namely; a review of the competing disciplinary discourses on agency and change, an understanding of the development of change agency in practice and the difficulties in dispensing change agency in practice.
4.3.1 Review of the Competing Disciplinary Discourses on Agency and Change

Caldwell, (2006, p. ix, 5-13) in a comprehensive review of agency and change, examines the history of the concept of change agency over the past fifty years and describes the move from the position of optimism that organisation change could be managed as a rational and planned process; to the acceptance that we now operate in workplaces characterised by new forms of flexibility, hyper-complexity and chaos where the consequences of change interventions have become fundamentally problematic. He presents a selective interdisciplinary definition of the competing disciplinary discourses on agency and change in organisations. Those of particular relevance to this research include:

**Rationalist:** those discourses which give priority to intentional agency, concepts of planned change, and the possibilities of strategic action.

Caldwell, (2006, pps.5-13), cites the vast range of rationalist discourses of intentional and teleological agency in the social sciences, from rational choice models of economic action to cognitive theories of instrumental behaviour. The most influential, in the field of organisational change theory and change agency as having their origins in the work of Kurt Lewin (1947, 1999).

**Contextualist:** discourses which focus on processes of “emergent” change and the bounded nature of strategic change and strategic choices in organisations.

Here human agency is embedded in emergent processes of organisational change and are not predetermined by internal structural contingencies or external environmental factors, but rather are the outcome of non-linear, multi-level and incremental transition processes, open to choice by human agents who operate within contexts of “bounded choice” defined by competing group interests, organisation policies and power. Links are made between Simon’s, (1947) critique of “objective rationality”, Child’s, (1972) call for “strategic choice” in understanding organisational contingencies, and Mintzberg, (1994) on
“strategy and craft”. Caldwell, (2006, p.6), concludes that the most recent influential exponent of the contextualist approach is Pettigrew, (1987, 1997) where he explores the context, content, and processes of change together with their interconnectedness through time. Thus Pettigrew appeared to create a new strategic change – strategic choice variant of contextualist analysis that can be characterised as *incrementalism with transitions*, an approach which sought pragmatically to accommodate both continuity and discontinuity in organisational change processes.

**Dispersalist:** discourses which focus predominantly on non-linear complex systems of self-organisation and learning processes in organisations which allow for new forms of “sense making” agency, “distributed leadership”, and “communities of practice” to emerge. It places agency as a decentred or distributed team or group activity of self-organising learning, operating outside conventional hierarchical structures or control systems which allows organisations to cope with innovation, as well as the challenges of increasing organisation complexity, risk and chaos. Caldwell, (2006, p.7), points to the enormous and increasing variety of dispersalist discourses, from notions of organisational learning and “sense-making” agency to complexity theories of agent-based interactions in “complex adaptive systems” (Anderson 1999, Weick 1995), stating that at the heart of these discourses is the idea of leadership and agency, organisational change and development as decentred or distributed team processes. In recognising that these are not new ideas, Caldwell confirms that their significance has grown enormously over the past two decades (Gronn 2002) due to a number of factors, including; the growing emphasis on project and cross-functional teams as mechanisms to achieve greater horizontal coordination across organisational divisions, units, and work processes; the shift towards information-intensive and network organisations with “distributed intelligence” creating new opportunities for knowledge creation and innovation at multiple levels. (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

Against this background, Castells (2000) provides a powerful and often positive overview of the tensions between hierarchies and networks, centralising and
decentralising control in the emergence of new network organisations and societies. It is also worth noting, in this context, that others have viewed the restructuring of management control negatively, as with Grey (1999, p.579).

In a summary comment on the various discourse types on agency and change, Caldwell points out that they are not “pure types” as they assume a multiplicity of forms, some of which may overlap with apparently competing discourses, and that his review of the discourses is deliberately interdisciplinary and cannot hope to encompass all the various paradigms and traditions of research and practice within each set of discourses. He goes on to explore a definition for the scope of “change agency” which is very relevant to this research as it sets the context for the operation of the change agents/champions in practice and relates the earlier section of the literature review on the development of “change management”. Having examined the various definitions, Caldwell (2006, p.11) states that:

“Ultimately change agency is a synthetic category of creative human action. Its true ontological and epistemological centre of gravity lies in the enactments of practice that never fully conform to the intentional models of rationalism or the purely self-referential limitations of reflexivity and embodiment within constructionist discourses.”

He concludes that ‘one theoretical lesson is not to separate organisational change and agency’ and refers to Van de Ven (1987), setting out the conditions for a robust theory of organisational change where he demonstrates just how difficult it is to achieve this ambition but stating that such a theory must simultaneously demonstrate:

a) How structure and individual purposive action are linked at micro and macro levels of analysis
b) How change is produced both by internal functioning of the structure and by the external purposive action of individuals
c) Stability and instability
d) How time can be included as a key historical metric.

Summarised by Chia (1999, p.213)
Caldwell (2006, p.12), having examined the various discourses, does not arrive at a consensus theory of change agency but appears to favour the Van de Ven (1987) ‘conditions for a robust theory’ which he refers to as: ‘an admirably inclusive set of requirements, as it appears to avoid many familiar traps.’

**Summary Comment – Development of Change Agency:**

Caldwell’s analysis is relevant to this research, in that it provides an understanding of the context in which the change champions are required to work. Their role in making the change happen is based on a rationalist approach where the change is planned within a strategic framework. Yet how the champions implement the role in practice and the change actions which emerge are set in an emergent contextualist framework where the champions’ actions are not predetermined, but will be the result of how they utilise interest groups, policies and power within their individual organisations to implement the overall change objective. Since the network of champions is based on self-organising and learning process which is planned to encourage “sense making” agency, “distributed leadership”, and “communities of practice” to emerge, it has placed change agency outside the normal centralised change structures and permits individual innovation and could similarly be described within dispersalist theoretical context with agency being dispersed across twenty six organisations by thirty seven individual champions/agents. This mix of types of change agency supports the comment by Caldwell (2006, p.8) where he points out that they are not ‘pure types’ as they can assume a multiplicity of forms, some of which may overlap with apparently competing discourses.

While Caldwell’s (2006) approach placed emphasis on explaining the theory of change agency, the following section examines the development of change agency in practice.
4.3.2 The Development of Change Agency in Practice

Central to this research is the behavioural and human factors which contribute to how change agency is implemented in practice, and how teams and individuals contribute to the change process in what for example: Daft, (1997, p.389) describes as a ‘new venture team’ with responsibility for developing and initiating major innovations or the ‘change agent’ described by Senior & Fleming (2006, p.361) as the facilitator of the change process from either inside or outside the organisation. The literature describing the specific role of the change agent(s) will be considered in detail in the next section of this review (The Role of Champions and Agents), but in order to provide a clearer understanding of the concept of change agency, it is important to consider further examples of the dispersal of change agency and the potential disadvantages.

Hayes (2007, p.37) describes change agency in practical terms and places the ‘agent’ central to the process. He refers to ‘the ability of a manager or other agent of change to affect the way an organisation responds to change’ and describes two approaches to the study of change as referred to by Wilson (1992) as ‘Determinism’ and ‘Voluntarism’. The deterministic view being that the ability of a manager to influence change is limited because the main determining factors lie outside the organisation and the realms of strategic choice for managers. The voluntarist view rejects this notion and argues that managers are the principle decision makers who determine the fate of the organisation. This approach emphasises that one of the key factors which determine the effectiveness of the organisation is the quality of strategic choices made by members of the ‘dominant coalition’ and recognises the role of human agency, in that managers can intervene to affect change in ways that will either promote or undermine organisational effectiveness.

In a further insight into change agency, Buchanan and Storey’s (1997, p.133) study of Role taking and role switching in organisation change, reviews the literature which, while perhaps recognising a pluralist stance, in the abstract
often treats the change agent as a singular, identifiable and highly influential individual, (Ohmae 1992; Tichy and Devanna 1986; Buchanan and Boddy 1992; Hunsaker and Cook 1986). They contrast this with the literature on ‘multiple drivers’ and the differing roles of change drivers in implementing change as identified by; Williams et al, (1993, p.112) which describes;

- The three roles which change agents play as; initiator, co-ordinator and facilitator;
- Hammer and Champy (1993) work on business process re-engineering and identification of five differing ‘driving roles’ consisting of a leader, process owner, re-engineering team, steering committee and re-engineering tsar; and
- Davenport’s (1993) identification of five major change drivers; the advocate, the targets, the sponsor, the agents and the process owner etc.

In support of the influence of many individuals/’actors’ in implementing the change agency process, Buchanan and Storey (1997, p.133) state that; ‘Most commentators now accept a pluralist notion of organisational change agency, rather than a focus on a single change agent. This departs from notions of a singular, multi-talented individual with a set of near-universal competences’.

The term “actors” in the dispersal of change agency is similarly used by De Caluwe and Vermaak (2003, pps.83-85) to describe the ‘necessary roles in the change process’, with individuals playing a series of seven roles that can be distinguished during the course of the change process, ranging from change initiator(s), to the change objects/change victims. In a continuing thorough examination of the literature on the pluralist perspective of organisational change and the plurality of actors engaged in the process Buchanan and Storey (1997, p.133), introduce the notion of ‘four pluralities’, namely:

- The plurality of organisation actors – recipients, spectators, victims, opponents, subversives, enemies, fence-sitters, allies, the voiceless
• The plurality of change drivers – *initiator, co-ordinator, project manager, facilitator, advocate, sponsor, (re-engineering) tsar, process owner, deliverer-implementer, steering group members, task force participants*

• The plurality of change phases – *waves of action concerning: conception, developing concern, planning and acting, transition, operating, stabilising*

• The plurality of roles which change drivers perform – *visionary, catalyst, analyst, influencer, coalition builder, lobbyist, planner, reviewer, wheeler-dealer, political fixer, resistance-blocker.*

Buchanan and Storey (1997, p.142), conclude from their research that an adequate explanation of organisation change must be alert to the multiplicity of players involved in the process and that multiple players adopt, define, capture, and switch roles in the change process. The role taking and switching etc. depend in part, on the type of change, the timing of the process, and individual perceptions of what constitutes effective interventions in the pursuit of individual and corporate goals. The multiple players also adopt and change behaviour styles and role taking and switching dependent on the type and timing of the change and the perceptions of what will work. They also assert; that adequate understanding of change processes lies in the interplay of multiple agents of change in the organisation and their shifting interactions; that interplay is not always harmonious and effective, and an adequate perspective must allow for and explain discord, conflict and error and that change processes do not move smoothly and predictably from phase to phase but are characterised instead by alterations in pace and by back-tracking.

**Summary Comment – Development of Change Agency in Practice:**

This review, not only confirms the dispersal of change agency in organisations, but also introduces the additional perspective that the roles of the actors/drivers change over time, dependent on the change variables, and that the notion of a single change agent with responsibility for initiating and managing the change process to a defined timetable in a consistent manner is over-simplistic, and does not recognise that those involved in implementing change, construct their own lines of action over time not necessarily in harmony with the other players
in the organisation around them. The next section examines the difficulties in the dispersal of change agency in greater detail.

4.3.3 Difficulties in the Dispersal of Change Agency in Practice

While supporting the concept of change agency, other authors have identified potential difficulties in the dispersal of change agency, and assert that the role of the change agent, while providing a catalyst role to the advantage of the change process, can also present difficulties. Buchanan and Badham (1999) in counteracting the notion that change can be managed by a single change agent, also assert that the management of change will not be achieved simply by the utilising of a number of change agents who will act in unison with a combined vision and purpose. Similarly, Doyle (2001, p.321), reporting on the results of a research project involving a team of researchers working in close collaboration with a ‘forum’ of some 30 public and private sector organisations, notes that the singular mandated change agent has now been juxtaposed with the notion that ‘everyone is/can be a change agent’ and states that organisations in response to high velocity radical change have introduced more flexible and empowering structures with the dispersal of change agency to a more diverse ‘cast of characters’. He acknowledges that; while this dispersal strategy is designed to foster ownership and delivery of the change process, the empowerment of the cast of characters with their own interpretation of change and personal perspective means that change agency may not be dispersed uniformly across an organisation when it comprises diverse groups and subcultures. Doyle concludes that; due to the extent of ambiguity and inconsistency that surrounds the perceptions, motives and degree of control with respect to the dispersal of change agency, the possibility exists that rather than improve the overall efficacy of the change process, the dispersal of change agency may serve to destabilise it.

Buchanan and Badham (1999, p.23) in their review of the literature on change agency in the context of the power and political dimensions of organisation change, make reference to Hutton’s (1994) definition of change agency as ‘the cast of characters’ often playing differing roles and each making differing
demands on the behavioural repertoire, and Buchanan and Storey’s (1997) argument that the notion of a singular change agent is unhelpful as change normally involves a plurality of actors and players. Buchanan and Badham (1999, p.24) also introduce the term ‘change driver’ as one of the change agency roles played by individuals in promoting or subverting a range of change initiatives and assert that all the roles played by the ‘cast of characters’ potentially have a political dimension. They provide a comprehensive account of how the cast of characters deal with politics and power in organisations, utilising them to their advantage, for various reasons; including the pursuit of their own agendas, as well as driving the organisation change agenda.

They conclude that it is important to emphasise:

‘the substantive, unavoidable and necessary shaping role of power and politics in change. We are dealing with skilful behaviour that can have positive as well as negative outcomes for the individuals and organisations involved. We are dealing with a range of political styles, from coercion at one extreme to a considerable variety of less aggressive methods. We are faced with the need to represent the goals and behaviours of others in a manner that promotes the legitimacy of one and the unacceptability of the other. We are faced with the need continually to slide back and forth across the line between illusion and reality’.

(Buchanan and Badham, 1999, p.72)

This conclusion illustrates the difficulty faced by all those involved in the change process, in that they are not free agents but face the constraints of politics and power in seeking to implement organisation change. If this is true for each individual, then, when change agency is dispersed throughout the organisation, the cast of characters, with their own interpretation of the change process can add to the lack of control, and the possible destabilising of the change as opposed to assisting its implementation (Doyle 2001).

Burnes (2009), in reviewing this topical issue of power and politics as an influencing factor for those implementing change, introduces the further dimension of ethics to be considered in the change process and how those implementing change may need to rethink their attitude and approach to the change process. He asserts that the self-interest and market supremacy of the
last twenty five years now seems to be waning and that we now appear to be entering a new era whose creed might be summed up as: ‘ethical behaviour, for want of a better word is good’ (Burnes 2009, p.375). In examining the difficulty in achieving this cultural shift, which cannot be achieved by imposition, trickery or manipulation, he emphasises that: ‘Instead it requires people to change of their own volition. Therefore if the new era of ethical behaviours is to become a reality, we need an approach to change which is itself ethically based’. While arguing for a return to Lewinian values based on planned change, ethical values and emphasis on democratic participation, he states that despite the plethora of new approaches to change, emergent change has taken over the mantle of planned change as a dominant approach (Mintzberg & Westley, 1992; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Pettigrew et.al., 2001; By, 2005; Caldwell, 2006; Burnes, 2009a). Burnes (2009, p.372), concludes that the emergent perspective is less dependent on detailed plans and projections, than on reaching an understanding of the intricacy of the issues concerned, including the central role played by power and politics in initiating and managing change and in identifying the range of available options (Pettigrew, 1997). Proponents of the emergent perspective therefore see the “change agent” as the prime mover, the person who makes the change happen – and their ability to understand and wield power as core skills (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Dawson, 2003: 25; Buchanan & Boddy, 1992).

Burnes (2009, p.373) concludes that the role of the change agent which emanates from the emergent perspective is of a highly skilled, political operator who has in-depth knowledge of change processes and tools and the personal qualities to use them both in the open and especially behind the scenes. He emphasises that the role description does not appear to contain any mention of ethics or morality but rather the reverse. He perceives the role of the change agent in the emergent context to ‘get the job done, come what may,’ and concludes that if Lewin’s view of change can be summarised as ‘the end reflects the means then the summary of the emergent view would be ‘the end justifies the means’. This is a particularly interesting point, in that the change agents in this research, although implementing a programme of planned
change, have freedom to implement the change process in differing ways, perhaps from a differing ethical and moral standpoint, in a changing and dynamic environment, across differing organisations.

Summary Comment – Dispersal of Change Agency:

The notion of change agency and its dispersal throughout the organisation by multiple actors has been widely examined in the literature and according to Burnes (2004, p.995) can also be traced back to Lewin, who he claims argued that effective change could not take place unless there was a ‘felt need’ by all those concerned; and that Lewin did not see one group or individual as driving or dominating the change process but saw everyone as playing a full and equal part (Lewin, 1947). He believed that only by gaining the commitment of all those concerned, through their full involvement in the change process would change be successful. (Bargal et.al, 1992; Dickens and Watkins, 1999; French and Bell, 1984).

While this examination of the literature provides a general overview and understanding of the complexity of change agency, since those responsible for driving the change process in this study were given the management term of ‘champion’, as opposed to the more academic term often used in the literature of ‘agent’, it is important to fully consider the general roles identified in the literature for agents/champions and whether the terms, for the purpose of this study are interchangeable.

4.4 Comparisons: Change Champions/Agents

The change agents with responsibility for implementing the change in this research have been labelled with the management term of change champions, not to limit their role in the dispersal of change agency but as a working title to provide a broad brief to enable them to make the change happen within their own sphere of influence. The titles champion and agent are part of the change agency terminology, and are often interchangeable, together with other titles,
most of which are used to illustrate the actions of an individual who is actively involved with others in bringing about change.

In a historical review of the term change agent, Ottaway, (1983, pps.362-363) states that Lippitt Watson and Westley, (1958, p.10) are generally credited with offering the first definition of the change agent, as the term adopted by the National Training Laboratory, in what is probably the first book on change agents. The definition is set in a planned change context in the following terms: ‘the planned change that originates in a decision to make a deliberate effort to improve the system and to obtain the help of an outside agent in making this improvement. We call this outside agent a change agent’. A further definition was advanced by Bennis, (1964, p.306), which conceptualised change agents as: ‘professional men, who for the most part, have been trained and hold doctorates in the behavioural sciences’. He saw change agents as a heterogeneous group including researchers, trainers, consultants, counsellors, teachers, and in some cases a line manager. In a further clarification of the change agent, Bennis, Benne, and Chin, (1969) add to the Lippitt et al, (1958) definition by saying that the change agent can be from inside or outside the organisation and Beckhard, (1969, p.101) developed a further definition at a generic level, stating that: ‘change agent’ refers to those people, either inside or outside organisation who are providing technical, specialist or consulting assistance in the management of the change effort’. This generic definition relates to the more recent definition by Burnes (2004, p.597), who defines change agents as: ‘those people responsible for directing, organising and facilitating change in organisations’ and Senior, (1997, p.273) who discusses the change agent in terms of a facilitator of change, who may come from outside the organisation or from a different part of the organisation. The Johnson et al, (2005, p.519) definition of change agent similarly favours the generic (involvement in change agency definition), by defining the change agent as ‘the individual or group that helps effect strategic change in an organisation’.
By comparison, a similar role has also been articulated for the role of the change champion where Ulrich (1997, p.152) examines the change challenges facing organisations in their quest to remain competitive in an expanding technological and global environment and places, Human Resource, (HR) champions at the core of this competitive change process equating their role to change agents, building the firm’s capacity to handle change, making sure that change initiatives are defined, developed and delivered. Similarly, Buchanan and Badham, (1999) in examining Hutton’s (1994) ‘cast of characters’ in change agency, relate the different categories of ‘champion’, (ranging from advocate to activist), to the role of ‘change agents’ both internal and external, stating that they often play a number of different roles, each making different demands on the behaviour repertoire. The authors also introduce the further term of ‘change driver,’ recognising that it is only one of the change agency roles that individuals can assume in the course of implementing change.

De Caluwe and Vermaak, (2003, p.84) describe the role of the champion as one actor in a panel of actors, sharing responsibility for drawing up and coordinating the intervention plan and gradually involving more people in the change process. They perceive the change agent as possibly the most important factor in effecting change and assert that they can come from both inside or outside the organisation and make reference to Lippitt et al’s (1958) assertion that a change agent should adopt a suitable ‘helping role’ e.g. expert, process consultant, teacher, discussion partner, etc. In support of the principle that the term change agent is a generic title for those involved in making change happen, including champions, De Caluwe and Vermaak, (2003, p.255) state that:

‘The change agent can come from anywhere. This is also the reason why we deliberately did not include the term change agent when we distinguished a set of actors in the change process . . . because each of the actors involved can assume that position. It is nobody’s prerogative in particular’.
Summary Comment – Change Champions/Agents:

Due to the use of the often interchangeable terms of change champion and change agent, and the fact that the prime movers in dispensing change are more often referred to in the literature as ‘change agents’ as opposed to more managerial term of ‘champions’, it is therefore proposed to examine the roles, skills, and development needs of those charged with bringing about the major change in this research in local government in Northern Ireland in the context of available literature on change agents. The next section therefore examines the roles ascribed to change agents in greater detail.

4.4.1 The Roles of the Change Agent

Having examined what is already known about the general context themes relating to the study of change management and change agency, and drawn comparison between the terms change agent and change champion, this section of the review examines what is already known about the role of the change agent in order to inform the research question:

What roles did the change champions play in the change process?

There is general acceptance that clarification of the role of the change agent is not a simple matter and that the roles accepted and played by individual change agents are many and varied. Caldwell (2003, p.131) notes that:

‘we have seen eulogies of the ‘heroic’ change leader capable of transforming organisations, calls for line managers and functional specialists to become change agents, and the growth of internal and external management consultants as ‘catalysts’ for change. However, rather than clarifying the role and competencies of the change agent, these developments appear to have made the picture more confused’.

Burnes, (2004, pps.309-310), provides a general context for dealing with the role(s) of the change agent where he stresses that:
'whether we are dealing with change at an individual, group or organisational level, regardless if we perceive change as incremental, punctuated, or continuous, or whether we view it from a planned or emergent perspective, change has to be managed, and someone has to take responsibility for ensuring the change takes place. This person may be a team leader, facilitator, coach, or a director, but is generally an individual who bears the responsibility of being the change agent'.

He examines the implications for the change agent in terms of the planned and emergent change perspectives, where the planned approach to change provides a blueprint for the behaviour and attributes of change agents, who in turn are supported by a host of tools and techniques for analysing organisations and managing change (Cummings and Worley, 1997). In planned change: the role is perceived as being mainly an ‘up front public performance’ activity and working with a transparent agenda to help those involved to identify the options and make their own choices (French and Bell, 1995).

A comprehensive examination and literature review of the roles performed by change agents was carried out by Ottaway (1983, pps.368-376) where he reviews the work of what he describes as the most extensive change agent studies undertaken by Jones, (1969), Rogers, (1969, 1971), and Tichy, (1974, 1974 (a), 1975); and Slocum, (1978) and Ganesh, (1978). From his examination of the research dealing with change agents, and his own experience as being a change agent and selecting change agents to work on various assignments, Ottaway developed and refined a Change Agent Taxonomy, which sets out the roles and actions undertaken by change agents under 3 key headings and is underpinned by seven key assumptions as summarised in Table 7 as follows:
Table 7  Summarised Taxonomy of Change Agents’ Roles and Underlying Assumptions (Ottaway, 1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Generators</th>
<th>Change Implementors</th>
<th>Change Adopters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key change agents</td>
<td>External implementors</td>
<td>Early Adopters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrators</td>
<td>External/internal implementors</td>
<td>Maintainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrons</td>
<td>Internal implementors</td>
<td>Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defenders</td>
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</table>

Seven assumptions behind the taxonomy

1. Everyone is a change agent and a person can be involved in a variety of change processes at any one time.

2. The change agents at the beginning of the process (Generators) are clearly focussed, least in number, and benefit least from the change, whereas the agents near the end of the process ( Adopters) are least clearly focused, more in number, and benefit most from the change.

3. All change agents (10 categories) are required in every change process, and unless all change agents have contributed, the new state of norms will not come into existence. This suggests identifiable phases of change which taken together make up the total process.

4. The roles of change agents are listed in chronological order; beginning with change generators developing with change implementors and completing with change adopters. The principle here is that change does not just happen. If it were not for change generators then the system would be in equilibrium and it is argued that change will often fail because the change agents are confused about their role e.g. change implementors often try to implement change before there is a felt need.

5. All change agents are equal value with their importance relative only to the circumstances.

6. The change agent can function in only one category in a change process. The most dysfunctional result of not applying this principle is that the change agent may be discredited. The greatest risk is present when the change agent moves from Generator, particularly demonstrator, to implementor. Where there is movement from one category to another, it is usually over a long period of time.

7. Common values are shared by all the change agents in a particular change process. This common value aspect is particularly important in a voluntary change setting since the agent in this setting cannot say they are behaving in a particular way because they are forced to.
Ottaway also relates the taxonomy to the work of various authors and Lewin’s three phase planned change paradigm where Generators are involved in *unfreezing roles*, the implementors in the *mover role* and the adopters in *refreezing roles*. This taxonomy defines clear roles for the change agent, to be performed in a sequential manner at the initiation of the change generator, and relates to the *blueprint approach* in the planned change process which provides for the behaviour of the change agent, supported by a host of tools and techniques for analysing organisations and managing change (Cummings and Worley, 1997).

By comparison, the *emergent approach*; while stressing the issue of process, also takes the view that change is not a specialist activity driven by an expert but an important part of every manager’s role, (Clarke, 1997). From an emergent change perspective the change agent is not a neutral facilitator, but an active manager of the change process with their own agenda which they seek to promote or impose by managing and shaping the perceptions of those concerned (Pettigrew, 2000; Weick, 2000). Buchanan and Boddy, (1992, p.123) also see the change agent’s task to construct the broad and detailed timing and sequencing of events with the desired outcomes in mind, which does not necessarily involve following, even loosely, a predetermined set of stages. They emphasise that the social construction of the process of change is a creative activity which involves the innovative and opportunistic exploitation of other dimensions of the organisational context.

In a further perspective on the role of the change agent, French et al, (2005, pps.208-210) set the role of the change agent in an *organisation development context* through the use of survey-guided development and see the change agent as a transducer; (i.e. an energy link between scientific knowledge regarding principles of organisation functioning and the particular organisation or group with which they are working). The change agent, of necessity, is therefore involved in both the diagnostic and therapeutic phases of the change process. The authors see the change agent as guiding a *model* of organisation functioning and *working towards* its realisation. The change agent is an *active*
advocate of goal orientated behaviour, helping the client group to evaluate progress towards the goals, with a wide range of knowledge and skills. While this definition is set in the context of an external change agent, it could equally be applied to internal change agents with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience.

In an attempt to categorise the various roles ascribed to change agents, Caldwell (2003, p.140) reviews the literature on the development of the change agent’s role as; change leader, managers as change agents, management consultants as change agents, and the emergence of change teams, and develops a fourfold classification model. For the purpose of this classification, he describes the change agent in broad terms as an internal or external individual or team responsible for initiating, sponsoring, managing or implementing a specific change initiative, project or complete change programme. Utilising this definition he specifies the four models that encompass most of the research on change agency as set out in Table 8 as follows:
Table 8  Models of Change Agency: a Fourfold Classification (Caldwell, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Models</th>
<th>Management Models</th>
<th>Consultancy Models</th>
<th>Team Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovator (Kirton, 1980)</td>
<td>Adaptor (Kirton, 1980)</td>
<td>Action researcher (Lewin, 1951a)</td>
<td>T-Group (Lewin, 1951a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate entrepreneur (Kanter, 1984)</td>
<td>Empowerer (Lawler, 1986)</td>
<td>Facilitator (Tichy, 1974)</td>
<td>Composite group (Trist and Bamforth, 1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change leader (Kotter, 1996)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition team (Kanter, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change champion (Ulrich, 1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pilot group (Senge, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Caldwell, (2003, p.140) explains the roles of the change agents under the various models in the following terms:

‘Leadership Models: Change agents are identified as leaders or senior executives at the very top of the organization who envision, initiate or sponsor strategic change of a far reaching or transformational nature.

Management Models: Change agents are conceived as middle level managers and functional specialists who adapt, carry forward or build support for strategic change within business units or key functions.

Consultancy Models: Change agents are conceived as external or internal consultants who operate at a strategic, operational, task or process level within an organization, providing advice, expertise, project management, change programme coordination, or process skills in facilitating change.

Team Models: Change agents are conceived as teams that may operate at a strategic, operational, task or process level within an organization and may include managers, functional specialists and employees at all levels, as well as internal and external consultant’.

He concludes that there is no universal model of change agency or a single type of change agent with a fixed set of competencies and that within each of the four models, a variety of change agency roles or types can be explored. The research challenge is to empirically clarify these multiple roles and the classification may also serve a broader purpose to steer discussion of change agency away from one-dimensional models or generic types (Caldwell, 2001).

In another attempt to provide a framework for the analysis of various change agency roles and the role the agent might play, based on their perception of the change process, De Caluwe and Vermaak, (2003) have written a comprehensive text ‘as a guide for organisation change agents’ and state that the book is written for anyone taking responsibility in whatever form for directing change. They devote a full chapter to the roles and styles of the change agent depending on the situation. Having examined the roles, as set out in model form by various authors, as detailed in Table 9 as follows:
De Caluwe and Vermaak, (2003, p.256) conclude that;

‘each model incorporates an expert/teacher role whereby the change agent provides the necessary knowledge and solutions. Each model also includes a facilitating role aimed at improving communication between people and enhancing trust and safety. Zwart as well as Drukker and Verhaaren present another role that is more aimed at assisting personal growth. The remaining roles that are distinguished are the catalytic agent and the programming role’.

Placing further reference on the situational nature of the roles played by change agents, reference is also made to Quinn’s, (1988) model which includes as many as eight roles and eight styles, which are distinguished one from another dependent on the degree of control/flexibility on one hand, and by the degree of internal/external or long/short-term focus on the other. The roles include: **Innovator, Broker, Director, Producer, Coordinator, Group Facilitator, Mentor and Monitor**. Quinn, (1988) while again reinforcing the themes of facilitating and communication also relates change agent’s behaviour to the normative model they have in their mind (e.g. those who favour the open systems model assume an ‘innovator or broker’ role), and emphasises the importance of the
change agent’s implicit or explicit belief system influencing the roles they will perform and the manner of implementation. This interconnectedness is endorsed by De Caluwe and Vermaak, (2003, p.259) who develop a model of role identification based on the variants of: intention, role/style and focus; the interaction of which determine the most appropriate action to be taken in various change situations and conclude that individuals involved in the change process will behave in a certain manner based on their perception of the change process and their understanding of change.

In a further examination of the role of the change agent, Paton and McCalman (2008, pps.21, 228, 230) see the change agent as the problem owner, facilitator, project manager or team leader. As with the earlier discussion in (para. 4.4, p.81), on the interchangeability of title given to the change champion/agent, they state that the terminology; (title of the change agent) is unimportant but that the role which they actually carry out is not, and has a significant bearing on the results that can be expected from the change process. They set the role of the change agent, whether from inside or outside the organisation in an OD context as the facilitator of the change in the particular area where it is needed. In contrasting the views as to whether the change agent should be external or internal to the organisation, reference is made to Schein’s (1988) reasons for using an external change agent, which are set in a process consultation model based on building a cooperative facilitator/client/manager relationship; with the client/manager providing the organisation knowledge and the facilitator providing the problem diagnostic input and suggesting remedies. Margulies and Raia (1978) note that this relationship is based on a range of assumptions and beliefs including that:

- managers often do not know what is wrong and need specialist help in diagnosing what their problems actually are.
- they do not know what help to seek and consequently need help in this regard.
• consultants do not know about the culture of the organisation. Therefore it is necessary to work jointly with those organisation members who do know.
• since the decision is the client’s, it is important that the client learns to see the problem clearly, to share the diagnosis, and to be involved in generating solutions.

Summarised from Margulies and Raia, (1978, p.111)

Paton and McCalman (2008, p.231) argue that this consultancy role, if external to the organisation, could be compared to a doctor/patient model of consultation. In looking at potential problems when this model is applied to an organisation setting, the individual may not open up to his doctor, and therefore not provide all the information required. The patient may not be fully involved in the diagnostic process and therefore may feel left out of the solution. Similarly the patient may not understand the proposed solution or the mechanisms for achieving it. They refer to Lippitt and Lippitt’s (1975), argument that the behaviour of the change agent in such circumstances, runs along a continuum of eight different roles depending on whether the change agent is being directive or non-directive.

Paton and McCalman (2008, p.232) conclude their evaluation of the change agent consultancy role by stating that:

‘Broadly speaking the change agent will tread a line between expert and process facilitator depending on their individual approach to the process, the skills and competencies they possess, the values and assumptions they make about change in the organisation and their personal characteristics... Early in the process the role of the change agent is that of information seeker. As the process develops and solutions emerge, the role of the change agent becomes one of being more directive in terms of moving the organisation through learning to the accomplishment of new procedures that solve the particular problem’.

This analysis of external change agent roles by Paton and McCalman appears to align with Caldwell’s (2003, p.140) consulting model classification and similarly which the emphasis De Caluwe and Vermaak, (2003) place on the facilitating role of the change agent. The only specific difference being that the external change agent has to manage the client relationship and place the
facilitating role emphasis within a process consultation framework and knowledge development for the client/managers.

Kudray and Kleiner (1997) support this partnering arrangement but suggest that in order to recognise the impact of change triggers early, every organisation should have an internal change agent who is typically a member of staff, who assists with the initiation and implementation of the change process. Paton and McCalman (2008, p.239) also outline the case for the use of the internal change agent and refer to the two key issues of; cost factors and access to information, stating that by comparison the costs associated with training an employee in the techniques of facilitation and OD are minimal when the alternative is the use of an outside consultancy firm over a long period of time. The internal change agent may also have the benefit of having access to information that the external consultant cannot hope to get, no matter how long the project runs. However, as Margulies and Raia (1978) point out, to be effective, the internal consultant is required to maintain the difficult marginal status between being internal and being objective. Paton and McCalman recognise that this is a particularly difficult situation for the internal change agent and list a number of factors which may hinder the internal change agents objectivity in carrying out their role including being:

- too close to see what the problem is
- part of the problem
- willing to confront issues when promotion and pay issues are forthcoming
- part of the power system being examined
- aware of the needs and demands of superiors.
- other factors which relate to the method of entry into projects and the nature of the voluntary relationship.

*Summarised from Paton and McCalman (2008, p.240)*

They also emphasise the need for the internal change agent to convince management and employees within a particular part of the organisation of their expertise in this area and display a willingness to help. In addition, the voluntary nature of the relationship between the change agent and the client is of vital importance, and the internal agent may not be given the opportunity to
pick and choose clients from within the organisation. Nor can they always expect to be free in their choice of the manner and mode of facilitation employed. Paton and McCalman stress that the internal change agent is constrained by their involvement and participation in the organisation and by their specified role which others may seek to exploit to their advantage and cite Margulies and Raia’s (1972, p.447) assertion that;

‘Organisations must learn to use external and internal consultants in more effective ways. Perhaps the best approach consists in the use of both. External consultants can bring objectivity, expertise and fresh approaches to organisational problem solving. Internal consultants provide knowledge and understanding of organisational processes, information about current issues, and continuity of effort . . . a collaborative relationship provides an opportunity to transfer the external consultant’s skills to the client system . . .since the capacity for organisation development must ultimately emerge from the organisation itself’.

By way of a conclusion, Paton and McCalman outline the four golden rules (Lippitt, 1959) which the change agent must observe in implementing their role as detailed in Table 10 as set out as follows:
Table 10  Golden Rules for Change Agents in Implementing their Role (Paton and McCalman, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rule 1</td>
<td>The nature of the relationship, must be seen as a voluntary one between the professional helper, (the change agent) and the part of the business classified as the help needing system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule 2</td>
<td>To action an organisation development process within any organisation the change agent has to help solve a current or potential problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule 3</td>
<td>The relationship is a temporary one and the change agent and organisation must accept the temporary nature of the assistance being provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule 4</td>
<td>The change agent must be an outsider who is not part of the hierarchical power system in which the client organisation is located.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These *golden rules* are essentially a specification for the role of the change agent in guiding the change process, but raise a number of unanswered questions particularly in relation to how the insider change agent manages the role on a part time basis, while still having to carry out their normal duties.

In practice, in some small organisations with limited resources to hire outside change agents, internal agents can be drawn from within their own departments and the challenge is to provide an environment where they can be perceived as objective and open minded. The notion that the internal change agent must be outside the hierarchical power structure is also not always the case, as explained by Caldwell, (2003, p.140) in the Leadership Model classification of change agency roles where change agents are identified as leaders or senior executives at the very top of the organisation. This assertion is also supported by Ulrich (1997, pps.187-188) who identifies those responsible for HR as change champions/agents, with responsibility for changing the organisation culture and leading by example from within their own function and by Schon, (1963, p.85) who sees champions for radical new initiatives as being drawn from within their organisations. Buchanan et al, (1999, p.26) drew a similar conclusion from their examination of managers from both public and private
sector organisations with significant responsibility for managing change as follows: ‘The evidence suggests that in many cases managers have change implementation responsibilities in addition to their regular duties and that few organisations seem to put managers into full-time or specialist change management roles’.

The review of the literature in this section to date, has examined the roles of the change agents in general. However, the following research papers on change agents’ roles require specific analysis, as they are particularly relevant to this research, in that they represent studies of change agency in practice, and are set in a public sector/local government environment.

Massey and Williams (2006) researched the change process that is required to support the introduction of the CANDO change initiative, which is a business improvement technique primarily associated with the manufacturing sector, into a health setting in the National Health Service (NHS). Their study examined the effectiveness of the CANDO, improvement tool through the eyes of the internal change agents and implementers in an NHS Trust within the UK. It also draws on the findings from earlier work conducted within health care, where the principle is developed that it is necessary to spread responsibility for change to a wide group (Esain, 2004; Massey and Williams, 2005). The change agents in most cases were volunteers occupying various roles within the Trust. The research conclusions provide various insights into the roles undertaken by the change agents and the conditions necessary for success as follows:

- When first launching the initiative, in order to put a firm foundation for the change process in place and demonstrate commitment, the team need to be released from their daily duties and adequate resources made available to either replace them or suspend their services for a short period of time.
- Ongoing activities/reviews need to be included in work schedules.
- Senior managers need to recognise the level of commitment that is required from all involved and support this with adequate resources.
• Change agents need to understand and empathise with the emotional impact and strain which the change programme can have on individuals in order to ensure buy in from those involved. This is an important role for the change agent which may require the project to progress at a slower pace than the change agents would like.

• There is a role for the change agent to challenge the pace of change but also to recognise the constraints that their team are working within.

• A transitional phase is required in which to engage all change implementors and to nurture the change agent to ensure sufficient support and recognition is provided across the organisation.

  *Summarised from Massey and Williams, (2006, pps.678-679)*

This research is relevant in that it highlights; the potential time pressure which part time internal change agents may be subjected to; the need to engage with all those involved in the change process, and to recognise the personal impact of the change on the individuals concerned.

In a further research project on the roles of internal change agents in the management of change in elected local authorities, Hartley et al, (1997) describe how, as part of a wider programme of research and development between the Local Government Centre and the Warwick University Local Authorities Research Consortium, they established a *learning laboratory* to research the roles of internal change agents in the management of change. Six officers from four local authorities were selected to take part in the research, each concerned with a major, organisation wide change initiative. The emphasis of the learning laboratory was on experimental learning, set in an action research methodology where participants had the opportunity to discuss their change agent roles with a facilitator, the researchers and the other participants. The results of the research are therefore set in the context of what the change agents learned about their role and the ways in which to manage organisational and cultural change. The findings do not include a list of potential roles or skill requirements for the change agent in local government, but rather provide insights into the complexity of the role in a local authority context and how the role is implemented in practice. The conclusions from the research are outlined in Table 11 as follows:
Table 11  The Complex Role of the Change Agent in Local Authorities  
(Hartley et al, (1997))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Lessons from the Local Government Change Agency Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The external context of the authority has a major impact on the role the change agent may take in initiating and progressing change (e.g. reorganisation of local government, central govt. financial stringency).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was a need to work with and through service departments and cross-departmental working groups in order to ensure that, as far as possible there was commitment to the change initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Due to the political uncertainty within the authority e.g. potential changes in political control, there were issues for change agents about how to keep the momentum for change going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was an easier role for change agents where elected members not only endorsed the change but were also leading it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The role and contribution of politicians in the change process must also be considered as well as that of managers which adds considerable complexity to the role of the change agent in local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The change agent must look to at least two sets of champions: the elected members and the managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The change agent in local government has a wider role, in that they may also have to look to other stakeholders in the change process to build consensus across a range of diverse departments, as well as diverse elected members and political parties e.g. in community needs assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The change agent has a role in managing the complexity of public service goals and the range of values attached to achieving those goals. This implies corporate level change, which of necessity is a long term organisational development task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was a necessity to align the change process with the authority’s corporate values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating networking and cross-departmental coalitions were seen as essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The analysis of the change agents’ learning and skill development should not be divorced from its organisational context (in this case the local authority organisation).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research in particular highlights the need to conduct the study of how the change agents in local government in Northern Ireland attempt to bring about change, as it illustrates the complex nature of the change process, the question of involvement of a range of stakeholders, and the value systems underpinning the local government sector and the challenge of long term cultural change.

Summary Comment – Change Agent Roles:

It can be seen from the analysis in this section that there are often conflicting views on the roles to be carried out by change agents, with a range of models defining many and varied roles to be performed. It is however possible to summarise a number of key points from the literature which will help clarify the framework for the operation of the change agents in this research.

- **The change champions are agents for change**
  The practitioner terminology of change champions was used when undertaking this research. This terminology is different from the academic literature which tends to use change agent terminology (Burnes, 2004; Cummings and Worley, 1997; Ottaway, 1983; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Caldwell, 2006; 2003). However the focus upon facilitating change in both the management and academic terminology is common throughout.

- **The change agents may assume differing roles**
  It is also important to note that since the network of champions consists of change agents from a wide range of levels, disciplines and backgrounds, that they will assume differing roles throughout the change process, at times influenced by their own priorities and agendas (Ottaway, 1983; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Pettigrew, 2000; Weick, 2000) and may also be creative, innovative and opportunistic in the manner in which they carry out their role (Doyle, 2001).
• **The change agents’ roles may be situational and influenced by individual’s perception of the change process**

Since the change being introduced is taking place over a long period of time, a further aspect to be considered is that the roles performed by the agents at any particular time may be situational based on a range of variables including the individual’s perception of the change process at that particular time (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Quinn, 1988; Paton and McCalman, 2008).

• **The change agents are involved in both planned and emergent change processes**

Role definition models for change agents are often based on either a planned or emergent approach to change (Cummings and Worley, 1997; Ottaway, 1983; Weick, 2000; Patton and McCalman, 2008) and as discussed earlier under ‘Development of Change Agency’ (Caldwell, 2006): the change agents in this research are involved in both planned and emergent change processes by introducing a planned change process at a central level, but operating within an emergent change situation at a local level. It is therefore not possible to place these change agents in an exclusive category in order to provide a comprehensive role framework.

• **The change agents are internal to the organisation - with potential conflicts of interests and power/involvement problems**

The change agents are also operating within their own organisations and although many writers acknowledge that change agents can be internal or external to the organisation, (Bennis, Benne, and Chin, 1969; Senior, 1997; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Clarke, 1994; Caldwell, 2003), others see the partnering arrangement with an external agent, through process consultation, of vital importance (Schein, 1988; Kudray and Kleiner, 1997; Margulies and Raia 1978). Paton and McClenman (2008) also advance the argument that the internal change agent must not be part of the problem, the system being examined, or the hierarchical power system of the client. The change agents in this research are not part of a process consultation arrangement with an external facilitator and are in many cases part of the hierarchical power system.
4.4.2 The Skills of the Change Agent

There is a clear link between the roles ascribed to change agents and the skills required for the job. For this reason the literature on skills of the change agent tends to be interwoven with the literature on roles and is often overlapping in terms of recommending roles, skills and attributes. As this research study is concerned with change agents who are currently operating across local government and defining their role, it is important to determine what skills may be required in order that they carry out that role effectively and to determine a suitable capacity building programme to assist them in this process. This section of the review therefore attempts to analyse the literature and extract the recommended skill sets attributed to successful change agents in the context of the second research question:

What skills did the champions utilise in the change process?

In examining the skills required of the change agent we are initially presented with an extensive long list of skills as detailed in the following examples. Cummings and Worley (1993) list eighty four skill requirements based on their literature review and studies in the world of Organisation Development (OD).

The skills are grouped under the main headings as detailed in Table 12 and are expanded to include related sets of sub-skills.
Table 12  Skill Requirements of the Change Agent
(Cummings and Worley, 1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core and Advanced Skills for the Future OD Practitioner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Main Headings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(each expanded with a total of 84 related skills/competencies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- General consulting skills, Intrapersonal skills, Interpersonal skills,
- Organisation behaviour/Organisation development and Interventionist skills,
- Research and evaluation knowledge and research design skills,
- Data collection and analysis, Presentational skills,
- Experience as a line manager/Major management knowledge areas,
- Collateral knowledge areas.

They put this list of eighty four skills in perspective by stating that only about fifty of the skills are regarded as being absolutely necessary for every OD practitioner. The other thirty five are just to give the experienced professionals that little bit extra, and that part-time change agents, (those who implement change as an add-on to their duties) may not require as many competencies. Doppler and Lauterburg (1996) similarly provide an extensive list of skills and competencies based around more detailed personal skill sets, knowledge and experience, under the following headings; Personal Characteristics, Special Skills – ability to create trust and openness etc., Specific Experience, Special Knowledge.

Paton and McCalman (2008, p.229) refer to Margulies and Raia’s (1972) assertion that there are three attributes that an individual needs to enable them to take on the facilitating/consulting role in the change process namely;
Personality, Analytical and Diagnostic Skills and Client Related Experience, defined as:

**Personality** - In order to build relationships, the change agent should have an awareness and sensitivity to social issues, feel comfortable and to get on well with people in order to understand their worries and fears, hopes and aspirations and have the ability to listen to others and show empathy. The change agent therefore needs a number of people orientated skills.

**Analytical and Diagnostic skills** - This enables change agents to solve problems by using techniques that are available to them to facilitate the change process.

**Client Related Experience** - In order to have credibility in the system, the ‘been there done that’ school of experience related to expertise is important.

Other authors/researchers similarly favour the development of a generic list of skills for change agents. Hutton (1994, pps.11-16) while recognising that there is no one person who is equally good at every aspect, or knows everything that might be useful in doing the job, stresses that there are some personal characteristics, some key areas of knowledge, and some skills and experience, which seem to be essential. Hutton also states that attitude is the key in that it influences the change agents credibility and acceptability to others, their ability to perform some key tasks, and to persist in the face of setbacks. De Caluwe and Vermaak (2003, p.259) agree that change agents need a lot of competencies if they are to implement the full spectrum of change strategies and set out the key requirements under the main headings of Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude, each of which have an expanded list of relevant skills and attributes. Steffen (2000) also develops a list of six key attributes ranging from visioning skills; described as the ability to imagine organisations in a different form, and portray abstract ideas clearly, to the practical skills of diplomacy, persuasion, acting as a catalyst and stamina.
Buchanan and Boddy (1992, p.27) in their comprehensive review of the expertise of the change agent, emphasise that the skills required of the change agent will be dependent upon a number of variables and the need to address three parallel agendas: the context agenda, the control agenda and the process agenda. They set the skills of the change agent in terms of Public Performance and Backstage Activity and the change agents need to:

“support the ‘public performance’ of rationally considered and logically phased and visibly participative change with ‘backstage activity’ in the recruitment and maintenance of support and in seeking and blocking resistance......‘backstaging’ is concerned with the exercise of power skills with intervening in political and cultural systems, with influencing and negotiating and selling and managing meaning”.

Buchanan and Boddy (1992, pps.92 & 124) suggest a model of expertise of the change agent which identifies five cluster headings and related competencies; summarised in Table 13 as follows:

**Table 13  Competency Framework for the Expertise of the Change Agent (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Setting</th>
<th>Role Specification</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Negotiation</th>
<th>Managing up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>Team building</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Selling</td>
<td>Political awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Negotiating</td>
<td>Influencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Tolerance of ambiguity</td>
<td>Personal motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Helicopter perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The competencies were drawn from a research study which sought to establish a competence based view of the attributes of the effective change agent and were derived from first-hand accounts of the practical experiences of change agents working through change management activities. The definition of competence, for the purpose of the study concerns actions and behaviours identified by change agents as contributing in their experience to the perceived effectiveness of change implementation.

The skills and competencies identified by Buchanan and Boddy (1992) are clearly set in the context of change agents who are required to assess the political environment, the potential consequences of each change intervention, and to utilise a range of skills as appropriate. Burnes (2004, p.310) in commenting on the Buchanan and Boddy model states:

‘What emerges from their work is a picture of the change agent as a highly skilled and well trained political operator who has not only an in-depth knowledge of change processes and tools, but also the personal qualities to use them both in the open and, especially behind the scenes.’

In a major research study within a public sector environment, Massey and Williams (2006, pps.669, 671, 672) focus on the views of change agents in a health sector NHS Trust, implementing a series of CANDO projects (see section 4.4.2, p.99) and emphasise the change agents involvement at a very early stage in the process to work with the team to recognise the need for change, scanning the immediate workplace and related environment and requiring the skills to negotiate between team members, identify appropriate resources etc. rather than actually suggesting particular changes. They refer to Schein’s (1997) perspective on the requirements for being a successful change agent with the ability to be; supportive, deal with realism of the situation, accept lack of knowledge, be supportive and view change as an intervention, take ownership of problems, not be prescriptive, involve people in the problem, look for resolutions and learn from each intervention. It is emphasised that throughout the change process the change agent requires capabilities in; communication, relationship development, political acumen, people management and resilience while retaining professional integrity.
Massey and Williams also see the change agent requiring the skills to; *focus the team on reflective activities to determine what has been learned, and what can be done better on subsequent activities.*

**Summary Comment - The Skills of the Change Agent**

The analysis of the literature shows a diverse range of skill sets and models ranging from the long list of skills (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996; Hutton, 1994), to the more situational models (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992), and what emerges is an often confusing picture of the change agent on the one hand; requiring every skill available in the management and change repertoire; to the more focused approach where the individual’s skill requirements are dependent on a number of variables. From the available literature, it is however possible to distil a number of key themes which emerge:

- **Facilitation consulting and negotiating skills:**
  Following on from the roles of the change agent as detailed in the last section of this review, many authors see the change agent requiring a group of skills to assist in the consulting and facilitation process. These skills of facilitation, consulting and teaching, grouped as general headings, are reflected in almost all the models examined; Cummings and Worley (1993) refer to the need for *general consulting skills, organisation development and interventionist skills* Hutton, (1994) refers to the change agent being required to, *negotiate, be a team player* and over time *teaching other people,* Steffen (2000) refers to the change agent requiring skills in *diplomacy, persuasion and acting as a catalyst.* De Caluwe and Vermaak (2003) in their skills analysis, state that depending on the role the change agent plays and their perception of the change, they require *mediation and influencing skills, working in teams, facilitating, convincing, coaching and motivating.* Similarly, Buchanan and Boddy (1992) in examining the role of the change agent and the process agenda, see the need for expertise in *negotiating, selling, influencing and stimulating motivation.* This facilitating and negotiating skill is similarly identified by Paton and McCalman
who see the external change agent in terms of facilitation and consulting, and Massey and Williams (2006) see the change agent requiring skills to work with the team to recognise the need for change, negotiate between members and build consensus. Also, set within a process consultation model, Schein (1997) sees change agents requiring skills to; involve people in the problem, develop relationships, being supportive and not being prescriptive.

- **Interpersonal skills:**

  Given the role of the change agent, working with others, either internally as part of a team, or as an outside consultant facilitating the change process, the literature also places emphasis on the full range of interpersonal skills. These skills are particularly itemised by Cummings and Worley (1993) in an OD context. Doppler and Lauterburg (1996) describe the change agent requiring the special skills of the ability to create trust and openness and Hutton (1994) provides a list of what he terms basic management skills to include interpersonal skills, working with groups etc. Similarly, De Caluwe and Vermaak (2003) in their analysis of the skills of the change agent, refer to Cummings and Worley’s (1993) list of interpersonal skills and select those specific to the role being played, and the agent’s perception of the change process. Buchanan and Boddy (1992) place emphasis on the change agent’s ability to: recruit and retain support, as well as influence and negotiate with those in the political and cultural system. Emphasising the need for change agents’ interpersonal skills, Paton and McCalman (2008) stress that they need to get on with people, have the ability to listen and show empathy.

- **The credibility of the change agent:**

  If the change agent is to fulfil a facilitating and consulting role they must have a level of credibility within the system. What cannot be assumed however is that someone who possesses a vast range of the skills as identified by; Cummings and Worley (1993), Doppler and Lauterburg (1996), Hutton (1994), Steffen (2000), will automatically be accepted as credible within the system, especially if they are an external consultant who has not had an opportunity to build
confidence and expertise within the organisation. Hutton (1994) in commenting on the change agent’s attitude draws specific attention to the fact that the successful agent must be *acceptable to others, as well as the ability to perform the task*. De Caluwe and Vermaak in analysing the requirements for a successful change agent make reference to the *attitude* requirement, and in particular the need to have credibility within the system, demonstrating; *stability, diplomacy, dedication, trustworthiness, openness and honesty*. Patton and McCalman (2008), refer to the change agent as requiring specific *client related experience in order to have credibility within the system*, and Massey and Williams (2006), point out that throughout the process the change agent requires resilience, while retaining *professional integrity*. While credibility itself is not a skill, it is an important factor to be considered when selecting or supporting change agents in the dispersal of change agency and will depend largely on the task to be performed and the personality of the individual charged with the responsibility.

- **The variants of perception and situation:**
  Another common theme which emerges from the literature is that the skills set for change agents is not necessarily constant but can vary according to the perception of the change being undertaken, the time frame and the sequencing of the process. This is emphasised in particular by De Caluwe and Vermaak (2003) who make reference to the skills required by the change agent being influenced by the role they perform and their perception of the change. Similarly, Buchanan and Boddy (1992) detail a number of variables which influence the skills requirements namely; *the context, control and process agendas*. Massey and Williams (2006) while identifying a range of skills required by the change agent throughout the entire process, place considerable emphasis on the skill requirements at the inception of the process, *to work with the team to recognise the need for change*. The situational nature of skill requirements therefore, makes the determination of an ideal skills set for change agents extremely complex and only provides general guidance on the relevant skill requirements for the change agents in this research. Another important factor influencing required skills relates to the barriers/resistance
which the change agents can encounter, this potential resistance is discussed in the next section.

4.4.3 Resistance to Change

In order to consider the third research question:

What barriers to implementing change did the change champions encounter?

This section of the literature review examines what is already known about resistance to change and in particular it examines:

- The definition and sources of resistance
- The theories relating to resistance
- Options for its management
- Potential benefits to the organisation in recognising resistance as an organisation stabiliser or positive influence in the change process.

Resistance is particularly relevant to this research in that the change agents who are currently implementing the major change process need to be aware of; from where/how resistance may be encountered and its effect on the change process.
Resistance – definition and sources:

Hughes (2010, pps.163 & 164) in a critical review of the literature around resistance to change from various perspectives, initially makes reference to the notion that resistance is problematic and requires management. He states that ‘in managerial discussions there is a tendency to depict resistance to change as something that must be overcome’ and cites Lines (2004, p.198) definition of resistance in the following terms: ‘Resistance towards change encompasses behaviours that are acted out by change recipients in order to slow down or terminate an intended organisational change.’ This perception of resistance as a problem which has to be managed, is similarly supported by Stickland (1998, p.136) who sees resistance as ‘an ongoing problem’, and by Randall’s (2004, p.37), belief that ‘the problem of resistance lies at the heart of most change programmes’. In addition, King and Anderson (2002, p.10) in their review of classic texts on resistance conclude that:

‘The common theme binding all of them being, we argue, a naive and managerialist assumption that resistance is counterproductive – even irrational – behaviour which needs to be overcome.’

An examination of the sources of such resistance to change demonstrates that resistance can come from a number of sources and for a number of reasons: Burke (2002, p.92) in considering the phenomenon of resistance to change states that:

‘change is not necessarily that of resisting the change per se but is more accurately a resistance to losing something of value to the person – loss of the known and tried, in the face of being asked, if not forced, to move into the unknown and untried. Feelings of anxiety associated with such change are quite normal’.

Similarly, Senior (1997, pps.217-218) makes reference to driving forces against change, which can come from individuals or the organisation itself, categorised into ‘individual and organisational responses’ which prevent a new perspective being formed, and prevent implementation of change once the intentions for change are known (Ginsberg and Abrahamson, 1991).
These driving forces as described by Senior are set out in Table 14, as follows:

**Table 14  Resistance – Forces Against Change (Senior, 1997)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Resistance</th>
<th>Organisational Resistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of the unknown</td>
<td>Inertial forces deriving from a systemic nature of organisations and from group norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike of the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding the change</td>
<td>Interlocking aspects of structure, control systems, rituals &amp; routine, signs &amp; symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential loss of power base</td>
<td>Potential loss of group power bases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential loss of rewards</td>
<td>Entrenched interests of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived lack of skills for new situation</td>
<td>Lack of organisational capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential loss of current skills</td>
<td>Lack of resources and threat to resource allocations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Summarised from Senior, (1997, p.218)*

Senior, also states that the above resistance factors ‘may be externally or internally generated, however the role of leading change is more likely to be concerned with resistance from inside the organisation, which can be from individuals or be organisationally generated’. Adding further sources of resistance, Paton and McCalman (2008, p.52) state that: ‘no matter how welcoming an organisation is to change it will still face a degree of resistance from suppliers, distributors, stakeholders, and consumers as well as employees’. They state that; organisations, individuals, and groups, often fear change for many rational reasons including: organisational redesign, new technological challenges, it confronts apathy, it permeates throughout the supply chain, and it challenges old ideas and encourages debate’.
Coghlan (1994, p.18) emphasises that focusing on individual’s resistance to change should not be dealt with in isolation from groups with which they identify. This warning is taken further by Thompson and McHugh (2002, p.330), who acknowledge that groups are sites of resistance and bearers of sectional and cultural interests. Forms of such group based resistance to change are identified by Burke (2002, p.103) including:

- **turf protection and competition**: this is the group fighting for survival
- **closing ranks**: this may be paraphrased as ‘one for all and all for one’
- **changing allegiances and/or ownership**: the wish to depart from the parent organisation in some way
- **the demand for new leadership**: seeking to replace the leader

The management problem of resistance, reviewed to date, is further complicated if the view is taken that the categories from which resistance can be demonstrated, (individual, organisational, suppliers, distributers, stakeholders, consumers and groups), together with the many reasons why such resistance might emerge, are not mutually exclusive. As many individuals may also be part of a group/team, or form internal/external stakeholder alliances, the problematic dimension of managing resistance becomes increasingly complex. Having examined the potential sources of resistance, and advanced some of the reasons why individuals, organisations, stakeholders and groups may fear or resist change the question of why they are selective in the changes they resist is further explored in the next section.

**Theories relating to resistance:**

Hughes (2010, pps.164-167) examines the various explanations as to why people may be selective in resistance with reference to the general point that resistance may be part of natural behaviour. He refers to Burke (2002, p.93), who cites the research of Brehm (1996): ‘what comes closer to a universal truth about human behaviour is that people resist the imposition of change’

The four predominant perspectives on resistance to change as suggested by Graetz et al. (2006) are also examined in the following terms:
• **The psychological model** – specifies causes of resistance to change in terms of individual behaviours
• **The systems model** – suggests that it is not change as such that people resist, but instead people resist loosing something
• **The institutional model** – suggests that resistance becomes embedded in organisational structures, decision making processes and resource allocation
• **The organisational cultures approach** – suggests that resistance can be inherent in the culture of the organisation, attitudes, values and beliefs.

Another classification of perspectives on resistance is advanced by King and Anderson (2002, p.215) who describe resistance as: ‘An unavoidable behavioural response, a politically motivated insurrection and class struggle, a constructive counterbalance and cognitive and cultural restructuring’. Similarly, Piderit (2000, p.785) in a review of previous empirical research on resistance, identifies three different conceptualisations of resistance as ‘a cognitive state, emotional state and as a behaviour’. She states that: ‘although these conceptualisations overlap somewhat, they diverge in important ways. Finding a way to bring together these varying emphases should deepen our understanding of how employees respond to proposed organisational changes’.

Burke (2002, pps.93-94) in citing the work of Hambrick and Cannella (1989) distinguishes between:

• **Blind resistance** – those who are afraid and intolerant of change, any change.
• **Political resistance** – those who believe that they stand to lose something of value if change is implemented, such as loss of one’s powerbase, status, job, income etc.
• **Ideological resistance** – those who genuinely believe that the planned change is ill-fated, (it simply will not work) or in violation of deeply held values.

It is also noted that resistance to change can be covert, or overt, or a combination of both. King and Anderson (2002, p.210) provide examples of covert resistance at an individual level, including: demotivation, intentional underperformance, and purposeful lack of realisation of potential.

Graetz et al, (2002, pps.254-255) also differentiate between active and passive resistance, noting that; ‘resistance may manifest itself in many forms, ranging from active resistance (where change is aggressively challenged) to passive
resistance (where change is indirectly undermined). They also conceptualise a continuum of resistance ranging from commitment to rejection which acknowledges the different degrees of resistance and is more sophisticated than the universal concept of resistance.

Ford et al., (2002, p.106) challenge individual-based explanations of resistance to organisation change in that they believe that resistance is not to be found ‘in the individual’ but in the constructed reality in which individuals operate. They argue that resistance results out of ‘background conversations’ that create a reality for individuals, which is very different from resistance existing within individuals. Such background realities are identified as: complacency, resignation and cynicism. Ford et al., (2008, p.365) also point to the possible contribution which the change agent can make to resistance by:

- **Breaking agreements** both before and during change and by failing to restore the subsequent loss of trust. (Anderson, 1996; Cobb et al, 1995; Reichers et al, 1997)

- **Communication breakdowns** – Failing to legitimise change

- **Engaging in intentional misrepresentation** to induce participant’s participation, to look good, or to avoid losing face and looking bad. (DePaulo et al, 1996)

- **Not calling for action** – discursive justifications and realistic representations of change are necessary, but they are not sufficient for producing action. Change is fundamentally about mobilising action and although talk is essential, not all talk leads to action. (Eccles et al, 1992, Ford and Ford, 1995, Winograd and Flores, 1987) Only conversations for performance are specifically designed to elicit action. (Ford and Ford, 1995)

Hughes (2006, pps.120-125) having examined the various explanations and classifications of resistance to change states that there are similarities and differences and concludes that:

'No consensus explanation of resistance to organisational change currently exists. In the light of a wide range of organisational changes and organisational contexts that occur, it is unlikely that a single universal explanation of resistance to change will ever be sufficient'. (Hughes 2010, p.120)
In critically examining the literature on resistance to change he expresses concern with the lack of sophistication of analysis given the complexity of the subject and states that it deserves much greater attention than it often gets during change management exercises (Stickland 1998, p.138).

**The Management of Resistance:**

Given the emphasis in the problematic context of resistance to change in the previous section, it is important to consider the potential management response to resistance and how its potential ‘harmful’ effects can be limited. Some authors recommend that management spend time initially attempting to discern the source of the resistance and examine ways to overcome it. Eccles (1996, p.67) provides guidance on managing resistance in the following terms; ‘Any management contemplating a major change could prudently spend time trying to gauge the likely sources of resistance and organising to deflate them through policy adjustments’. A theme which is also advanced by Senge (1990, p.88), who states that wherever there is resistance to change, there are also hidden balancing processes and perceives resistance as;

‘neither capricious nor mysterious. It almost always arises from threats to traditional norms and ways of doing things. The norm is entrenched because the distribution of authority and control is entrenched. Rather than pushing harder to overcome resistance to change, artful leaders discern the source of the resistance.’

Carnall (2007, p.3) examines the notion that; if resistance relates to uncertainty rather than the change itself, then resistance is a consequence of how change is managed, rather than the change itself, and Burke (2002, p.93) drawing upon the work of Brehm (1996) writes: ‘The degree of ease and success with which an organisation change is introduced is therefore directly proportional to the amount of choice that people feel they have in determining and implementing the change’. While acknowledging the complexities of resistance, Dawson (2003, p.20) identifies a range of strategies that change agents have utilised to
overcome resistance which typically centre on; participation, communication and support at one end of the continuum, through to negotiation, manipulation and coercion at the other. Dawson clarifies that organisational development approaches tend to opt for participative approaches, whereas contingency approaches tend to opt for more coercive strategies. The use of power bases; reward, coercive, referent, legitimate and expert, as popularised by French and Raven (1959), are described by Graetz et al, (2002, pps.242-243) as a possible means of managing resistance to change and in support of the active expression of resistance (Connor, 1998, p.128) states that;

‘Where there is major change, there is resistance; but you can minimise negative effects by encouraging resistance to be expressed openly instead of secretly. Otherwise, the danger is that although overt resistance may be suppressed, it may be replaced by more covert resistance to change’.

What emerges from the review of the literature is that there is no universally accepted theory on how to manage resistance. This is as emphasised by King and Anderson (2002, p.208), who, in reviewing the literature relating to resistance to change, draw the conclusion that; ‘proffering highly general models and advice on how to overcome resistance is clearly fraught with danger’. What the literature does provide is a framework for analysis in attempting to solve the problematic nature of resistance, which should be viewed as a useful source of guidance in the change management process.

**The Positive Perspective on Resistance:**

The previous two sections have reviewed the literature in relation to the definition and sources of resistance and how it might be managed in the context of its problematic nature. The emphasis on managing resistance discussed to date has the underlying assumption that resistance should be overcome or managed into submission and that change is always good for the organisation and should be constant in order for the organisation to survive.
This assumption has been challenged from a number of perspectives: Paton and McCalman (2008, p.54) challenge the need for change regardless of its context and consequences and state that:

‘Change for change’s sake, change for short-term commercial advantage or indeed change which may adversely affect the ‘common good’ should be resisted, not only on moral grounds, but also on the basis that the adverse long-term financial consequences are likely to outweigh any short-term gain.’

Similarly Mintzberg et al, (1998, p.281) in examining the need for constant change state: ‘With all the hype these days about change, we desperately need more messages about good old-fashioned stability’. Cummings (2002, pps.278-280) addresses the contention that ‘change requires continuity’, and traces the notion of consistency back to Aristotle (The Physics) who developed the idea that ‘there must always be something that underlies, out of which things come to be’, inferring that we are only able to recognise something as having changed if something about it, or what it does, has remained the same. On this view, the presence of traditions enables a connection between past, present and future so that we may at once recognise an ‘object’, an individual or an organisation, as being ‘the same being’ and as ‘a being that has changed’. Cummings (2002, p.279) sees these dimensions as being embedded in the paradoxical notion that managing change requires continuity, which he feels is often overlooked in managing change today where the change process is approached as a matter of replacing the old with the new.

An example of this thinking is provided in the language of ‘process re-engineering’ which tends to use the rhetoric of ‘discontinuous thinking, start with a clean sheet of paper, obliterate and start over, and wipe the slate clean’. Cummings asserts that ‘Many old aspects of changing organisations are often not inconsistent with the achievement of the new ideals’ and is sceptical of the notion of change which advocates such ‘fresh starts’ and believes that it is difficult for people (as implicit in the stories of organisations unfolding over time), to forget histories and traditions. Sturdy and Grey (2003, p.63) also caution against change and continuity being perceived as alternative states and describe them as: ‘typically coexistent and coterminous and they are not
objective because what constitutes change or continuity is perspective dependent’. A practical, example of this interdependency is provided by Hughes (2006, p.124) in critically examining the literature in this respect, when he states:

‘Resistance to change may enable an organisation to maintain stability in times of change in a manner similar to how the stabilisers on a child’s bicycle enable a child to achieve simultaneous stability and progress’.

In a direct challenge to the negative definition of resistance Schon (1963, p.82), also provides a particularly notable quotation:

‘Resistance to change is not only normal but in some ways desirable. An organisation totally devoid of resistance to change would fly apart at the seams’.

This point is also supported by King and Anderson (2002, p.217) where they state that resistance ‘can thus act as a counterbalance to change which is ill-conceived, poorly enacted, or simply detrimental to the productive efficiency of the organisation’ and by Clarke (1997, p.107) where she describes resistance as a ‘powerhouse which provides energy for change’.

Similarly, Piderit (2000, p.786) in reviewing resistance to change states that:

‘What some may perceive as disrespectful or unfounded opposition might also be motivated by individuals’ ethical principles or by their desire to protect the organisation’s best interests. It is worth entertaining efforts to take those good intentions more seriously by downplaying the invalidating aspect of labelling responses to change resistant.’

In a study of ten case illustrations of positive resistance to change by middle managers Perrin and Megginson (1996, p.27) suggest that such resistance can be seen as natural, and provide a number of implications to be considered by those pursuing organisational change, namely:
• **Resistance may prevent folly** – often those resisting change will have more detailed understanding of the organisational consequence than those driving the change.

• **Skilled resistance saves skins** – there is an opportunity to help middle managers become skilful (graceful even) at resisting change. This may save careers which otherwise would have been damaged, as well as empowering middle managers to challenge badly designed change projects.

• **Blindness to the value of resistance isolates leaders** – Management developers and champions of change can find themselves out in front leading, with no followers. Listening to resisters, finding out and addressing their real concerns are steps to ensuring a more effective change.

**Summary Comment – Resistance to Change:**

• **Definition and sources:**
In examining the definition and sources of resistance, what emerges is a confusing picture for the change agent, with very little guidance on the definition of resistance or common approach to its analysis (Stickland 1988; Randall 2004; Lines 2004). Discussion of resistance is often predicated in the belief that it is essentially disruptive, exampled by resistors who behave in this manner for a variety of reasons, in a covert or overt way, and are either passive or active in their resistance depending on their attitude to the specific change (Burke 2002; Senior 1997; Paton and McCalman 2008).

• **The management of resistance:**
The change agent’s potential role in causing the resistance is also highlighted, (Ford et al, 2008) and it is not surprising that; with no universal agreement on a definition of resistance, and different views on how it can be managed, that the change agent is again left with very little guidance on how to cope with resistance in practice. Since change is in many cases situation specific, the point is well made that reliance on generalised remedies to overcome resistance is problematic, and could cause further resistance rather than help cope with the perceived problem (King and Anderson 2002).
• **The positive perspective on resistance:**
In a more positive perspective on resistance, the view that it is something that must be managed and overcome at all costs is challenged by a number of authors who see resistance potentially as; *a challenge against change for the sake of change, a means of providing stability and continuity as opposed to all change, and a counterbalance to change which can be ill-conceived or potentially detrimental* (Paton and McCalman 2008; Mintzberg et al, 1998; Cummings 2002; King and Anderson 2002; Sturdy and Grey 2003).

The conclusion from this section of the review is that the notion of resistance as an obstructive force can be challenged and that it may not be necessary for the change agent to concentrate all efforts on managing resistance as opposed to facilitating the necessary challenge to the change that in the end may lead to an improved change process or increased organisation effectiveness.

**4.4.4 Development Needs of the Change Agent**

The review to date has identified recommended skill sets for a range of change agents operating in various circumstances and potentially encountering resistance in attempting to implement change. Assuming that such skills are not necessarily present in all potential change agents, it is therefore important to examine ‘how’ the recommended skills can be acquired or developed. It is the ‘how’ question which is particularly relevant to this research in attempting to design an improvement and development plan for the change champions operating in local government, and therefore it is important to examine the existing body of knowledge in the context of the fourth research question:

**What are the development/support needs of the change champions?**

Buchanan et al, (1999, p.31), in their detailed study of managers in public and private sector organisations with strategic change implementation responsibilities, reported that *surprisingly* - given the literature identifying the competencies that change agents must possess if they are to perform
effectively - there seemed to be a lack of systematic management development in change expertise. This lack of development they attributed to the perception that the role is a bolt-on to the normal managerial role, therefore requiring no specialist training or support provision. They suggest that the bolt-on nature of the role may be due to the dispersal of change agency in organisations, and that, as various commentators have noted, change agency involves a number of distinct, if often overlapping roles (Ottaway, 1983; Buchanan and Storey, 1997) and it is difficult in most settings unambiguously to identify ‘the change agent’. Consequently the change agent is not a specialist management function, but rather a hybrid functional and change agency role.

The immediate practical consequences arising from their study from a development needs perspective included:

- **The introduction of systematic support for change management**, with respect to better definition and understanding of the role(s) and the processes through which change agents are selected, developed and rewarded.

- **The need for a strategic approach to stress management**, in anticipation of potentially expensive litigation in this area, exacerbated by the pressures of continuing change.

- **The development of context-sensitive strategies** for change implementation and communication, recognising the limitations of ‘textbook’ and ‘best practice’ advice.

*Summarised from (Buchanan et al, 1999)*

In an extension of this study, Doyle et al (2000, pps.S72, S79), reported that while most managers reported that their change responsibilities afforded valuable personal learning, this was accompanied by stress, work intensification, command and control and management-employee distrust, and that change in the public sector has been more pressurised than the private sector. They concluded that effective practice should consider the linkage of change implementation with organisational learning mechanisms which, from the evidence of the research, were absent. The concluding findings of the research, relevant to the development needs of change agents included:
- **The need to introduce pan-organisational programmes** for the development of change management expertise.

- **Introduce effectively resourced ‘damage control’ strategies** to reduce fatigue, burnout, self interest and cynicism, reduced loyalty and trust.

- **The need to develop effective stress management procedures.**

  *Summarised from (Doyle et al, 2000)*

Hutton (1994, pps.19-27) discusses the development needs of the change agent to guide transformation and acquire a knowledge of quality over time and suggests that there is a great deal to learn, and that a major investment of time, energy, and dedication is required to become an accomplished and effective quality change agent. Since the task of the change agent is not simple or easy, Hutton suggests that the lack of initial experience of the change novice needs to be developed by parcelling out the learning tasks and by judiciously drawing upon external resources and by learning on the job. He sees this development taking place in a team based environment with the team jointly creating improvement and learning from firsthand experience. Hutton also emphasises the need for ‘external resources’ to assist the team effort, which may be peers in other organisations, consultants with extensive implementation experience and associations and other organisations that can provide information. This text also provides an interesting self-assessment development check list for change agents with a long list of ten desirable criteria for the change agent, together with itemised *symptoms of a weakness, likely consequences if not addressed*, and *possible action*. The self analysis is interesting in that it places emphasis on the individual development needs of the change agent as opposed to a generic list of *must have* qualities which need to be developed for all those involved in the change process.

The focus on ‘learning on the job’ also emerges in a research study by Massey and Williams (2006), in their study focussed on the views of change agents in a health sector NHS Trust, implementing a series of CANDO projects (see p.98), who similarly see the change agents as requiring training in the necessary skills, together with a programme of support, mentoring and shadowing. Key to this learning process is that the knowledge created by change agents should be
shared at every opportunity and at as many levels within the organisation as possible. An important point raised in the concluding summary of the research relates to ‘on the job’ learning by doing where it is stated that:

‘The development of the change agents meant that they experienced new opportunities for understanding their working environment and gained a more holistic perspective on how the organisation worked. The knowledge they gained, they then used, and transferred to new projects’. (Massey and Williams 2006, p.679)

Other authors support ‘on the job’ or ‘project based’ learning programmes, where organisations seek outside support to develop change agents in a change project based context. In particular; Dover (2003) describes the major change agent programme conducted by Siemens Nixdorf (and later Siemens AG), part of which included a continuous learning process for both individuals and the organisation itself. Learning activities included a comprehensive development programme (CAP) for individuals, together with processes to assist organisational learning. This CAP externally managed programme ran for a period of six years (officially discontinued in late 2000) by which time 142 participants had graduated. The key lessons from this change agent development programme are set out below in Table 15.

Table 15  Designing a Development Programme for Change Agents

(Dover, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons from the Siemens Nixdorf Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Incorporate change agents into the culture change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Blend programme design with post-programme planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create realistic programme expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider carefully who should be selected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make change task driven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Determine locus of control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish performance measures.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Although the research is specific to the Siemens Nixdorf CAP, the above lessons are valuable for organisations wishing to construct a project based development programme with outside assistance in order to achieve overall organisation change.

The research project by Hartley et al, (1997) on internal change agents in the management of change in elected local authorities; (see Table 11, p.100) also provides an insight into potential development programmes and learning opportunities for change agents in a local authority environment. The use of action research and action learning in what the authors term the ‘Learning Laboratory’ provided a mixture of on the job learning with peer and facilitated support. Unlike the research reported by Dover (2003), the participants in the learning laboratory, while part of the shared local government environment, did not (with one exception), belong to the same organisation or share similar work related areas. They did however share a related learning point with the Dover (2003) research in that change agents need to be integrated into the culture change in the organisation. The strong point emerging from the Hartley et al, (1997) research is that the analysis of the change agents’ learning and skill development should not be divorced from its organisational context (in this case the local authority organisation). This is clearly applicable to the NI local authority change champions and steers any proposed training and development away from the provision of generalised skills training, and towards tailored development programmes in the context of the local government environment in N.I. Similarly, since NI local government currently faces a reorganisation of local authorities in the years ahead, and the change champions may have to deal with a potential shift in emphasis away from their change priorities towards other strategic external change influences, this further conclusion from the Hartley et al, research is also relevant:

‘The external context of the authority has a major impact on the role the change agent may take in initiating and progressing change’ (e.g. reorganisation of local government, central government financial stringency).
These conclusions point to the need for research into the particular needs of the change agent, the organisation change agenda, and the external environmental change pressures, prior to the implementation of a development programme to support the change agents in practice.

In a further major research project which commenced in 1997, and involved a team of researchers working in close collaboration with a ‘forum’ of some 30 public and private sector organisations from across the UK East Midlands region Doyle (2002), examined the issues of learning, development and support available that change novices required to become change experts. The research findings suggest that a significant number of the individuals in the change processes were effectively ‘change novices’ and a number of them lacked the knowledge, skills and expertise to adapt and respond to the new pressures and challenges introduced into their role by adding change responsibility. In considering how organisations may address this lack of development, Doyle (2002, p.470), refers to the literature to date which has identified and given attention to developing change management skills, stating that approaches have been characteristically informal, flexible, holistic, and reflective in nature (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Edmonstone and Hargeval, 1994; Hartley et al, 1997). He states that:

‘this is supported by the research findings, which have indicated that whilst conventional development methods (in-house training courses, competency based programmes, management education etc.) may have value in providing important grounding in specific skills, change expertise can only be derived from real – world experience and learning. In other words, formal training may provide the tools but the novice change agent has to learn to select and use those tools in different change contexts to perform as a change expert’

(Buchanan and Boddy, 1992)

Doyle (2002) concludes that it would appear that experimental, real world, on-the-job development approaches such as; coaching, mentoring, role modelling, shadowing, learning laboratories, action learning sets, project leadership duties, have the potential to form the basis for a portfolio of preferred methods for developing change knowledge and expertise (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992;
Hartley et al, 1997). The key points arising from the Doyle (2002, p.473) research are set out in Table 16 as follows:

**Table 16 Development of ‘Novice’ Change Agents (Doyle, 2002)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points in Designing Development Programmes for Change Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Organisations have to appreciate that many novice change agents are being selected on the basis of their demonstrated competence in an existing role and may lack the added knowledge, skills and expertise to perform as an effective change agent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formalised, structured training and development programmes may be limited in their capacity to develop change expertise, e.g. political skills, and intellectual capacities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developmental pathways to take change agent novices to change experts should be explicit in HR strategies, e.g. appraisal processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Training approaches that are based on experimental 'learning by doing' appear to be the most effective methods. Their effectiveness is enhanced if they are under the supervision and guidance of expert change agents acting as mentors and coaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organisations would benefit from having a cadre of experienced change experts who can be deployed to ‘seed’ the organisation with change skills and act as a learning resource. External and internal consultants have a valuable role here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is not enough to capture past experience. Organisations must find a way of translating that experience into forms of learning and knowledge that inform and guide change management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Summarised from Doyle, (2002, p.473)*
Arising from the research, Doyle (2002, pps.479-480) also draws attention to the important need to pay attention to the *emotional needs* of the change agent, and states that:

‘there appears to be little attention being paid to the emotional needs of some individuals who find it difficult to cope with added change responsibilities . . . With regard to the personal qualities required to perform as a change agent, at times the impression was of a hope and a faith that these qualities would somehow ‘automatically’ materialise as individuals were exposed to the focus of change. For example, there may be a prevailing view that individuals would somehow survive the social and psychological stresses involved in managing change and, in doing so, evolve the emotional resilience to operate in an environment that is often hostile and threatening to individual self-identity and esteem.’

In summary remarks, Doyle (2002, p.480) concludes that;

‘Despite the emergence of new empowering structures, cultures and working practices, there appears to be a general lack of awareness that managing change might represent a substantively and qualitatively different experience from that contained in an existing operational management or technical/professional role. For most individuals, the experience of managing change goes well beyond the technical exercise of project management skills to encompass higher order political, interpersonal, intellectual and coping skills.’

He also emphasises the need for a more explicit organisation focus to develop change agents from novices, through to experts and the need to include this focus in future HR strategies. The research commentary concludes with the finding that organisations might not be fully aware of the inefficiency, cost, risk and stress that individuals and teams experience as they manage change on their behalf and that the need for a comprehensive HR strategy to manage those who manage change is therefore long overdue.

While this research provides valuable insights into the methodology to help develop change agents and identifies the need for support systems; as with other research in this area, it does not provide a blue print or best practice implementation framework to assist those who would seek to manage or
develop those who have change management responsibilities, but similarly points to the need for further research in this important area.

**Summary Comment – Development Needs of the Change Agent**

The analysis of the literature in relation to the development needs of change agents supplements the review in other sections on roles and skills, and demonstrates the interrelationship between the role the change agents are expected to play, the skills required and the *resultant* development needs. It also places emphasis on the situational nature of the skills/development needs relationship, (Hartley et al, 1997; Hutton, 1994; Dover, 2002) and the need for personal development based on experience and the dynamics of the internal/external environment (Dover, 2002; Hartley et al, 1997). While no operational blueprint for the development of the change agents in this particular research can be determined, as with the review of the literature for roles and skills, some key themes have emerged which will help inform the development of the change agents in practice.

- **Development strategies – situational context:**
  The literature review demonstrated that there is a lack of systematic management development in change expertise and considerable difficulty in developing a generic change agents’ development programme. (Doyle et al, 2000; Doyle, 2002; Buchanan et al, 1999; Hutton, 1994; Dover, 2002; Hartley et al, 1997). Therefore there is a tendency for authors to concentrate and emphasise the situational nature of development provision and how any development programme must be set in the context of the change needs of the organisation. (Dover, 2002; Hartley et al, 1997).

- **Methodology - on the job learning:**
  In parallel with the change needs of the organisation, *on the job learning* or *learning by doing* appears to be the preferred and practiced methodology for a change agent’s development (Massey and Williams, 2006; Dover, 2002; Doyle, 2002). The research also demonstrates that organisations need to set the
learning by doing in the context of a team learning approach, with internal and external support as and when required (Hutton 1994, Massey and Williams, 2006; Dover, 2002). Such support might include coaching, mentoring, role modelling, shadowing, learning laboratories, action learning sets etc. (Doyle, 2002).

- **Personal support:**
The literature places emphasis on the personal difficulties experienced by change agents and the need to introduce effective stress management procedures, pay attention to emotional needs, and provide expert support systems (Buchanan et al, 1999; Doyle et al, 2000; Doyle, 2002).

### 4.5 The Need for Further Research

This literature review established what is known, relevant to this research, about change management, change agency and the roles, skills, and development needs of change agents. It also provided background on the topic of resistance to change, which has particular relevance to the change agents attempting to introduce change across a number of varied local government organisations. What is evidenced from the review is that there is no consensus of opinion on the emergence of change management theory and change agency. This is best illustrated, in summary, by Caldwell (2006, p. x), in the preface of his recent comprehensive review of agency and change, where he states that, 'The history of the concept of agency in organisational change theory over the past fifty years makes dismal reading' and by Doyle (2002, p.480) who comments on the literature on change theory and practice in the following terms:

‘The evidence suggests that with one or two exceptions, existing change theory and practice are aligned behind a set of unchallenged assumptions about the nature of contemporary organisational change and the way it should be managed.’
Similarly Hartley et al, (1997, p.62) commenting on what is known about the roles played by change agents in practice, provide a particularly relevant comment on the need for further research where they emphasise that ‘There has been relatively little empirical research on the roles played by change agents. We still know very little about the role of internal change agents in organisations, in any systemic way (Ottaway, 1993; Porras and Robertson, 1992; Weisbord, 1988)’. Caldwell (2006, p.18) provides an additional summary quotation on the need for further research on change agency in practice where he states that ‘Change agency theory has not come a long way over the past 50 years and this presents an unpalatable message for those who wish to further theory and practice. For those readers looking to the future however the challenge is to rethink the subject and relevant practice.’

As well as its contribution to professional practice, the research in relation to the operation of change champions in local government in NI, will contribute to the general body of knowledge on change management and change agency. In addition it will provide a contribution to the gap in the literature on the role of change agents in practice, and a specific contribution to the literature in understanding change agency in the public service and local government where the gap in the literature is described by Hartley et al, (1997, p.62) in the following terms:

‘there is very little literature on change agents and change processes in public service organisations, and the contribution of internal change agents in elected local authorities is unexplored.’

Chapter 5 provides details of the methodology used to implement this research, and examines my role as practitioner researcher operating within an action research framework.
## CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

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Chapter 5 introduces the methodology used to conduct the research and fulfil the aims of the DBA programme in that the research should inform professional practice and similarly contribute to my professional development. This chapter examines the research framework, the rationale for undertaking the research, why action research was seen as a suitable methodology, my role as practitioner researcher, and the ethical considerations informing the research.

In this chapter the emphasis is upon the justification of methodological choices. In the next chapter emphasis is upon how methods were employed.

5.1 The Research Framework

Introduction

The background to the research, which is designed to address a management problem, is explained in Chapter 3, together with the aim of the research as described in the thesis proposal in the following terms:

the aim of the research is to discover how change champions implement their role in a major change programme in the local government environment in Northern Ireland.

This research takes place across the local government sector with a view to solving a management problem, (underrepresentation of women in local government) and contributing to professional practice, (establishment of a network of champions to implement change) and examining their role in the change process (to improve their performance and model best practice). The research framework under which this research has been conducted can therefore be described as within a series of three levels of inquiry as detailed in Table 17 as follows:
Table 17: Studying Change Champions in Practice - Research Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 - Organisational Management Research Setting</th>
<th>Context:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context:</strong></td>
<td>The Commission as a management organisation, utilising management research to develop ‘good practice models’ to be implemented by its client base. The study being part of the organisation's ongoing management research programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Government as clients, actively participating in the process and jointly contributing to the outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2 – Project/Problem solving Action Research Project</th>
<th>Methodology:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology:</strong></td>
<td>Utilising Action Research methodology to solve problems, improve practice and develop improvement plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designed to assist in solving the underrepresentation of women in local government in N.I.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3 – Individual/Roles Qualitative Research Methodology</th>
<th>Researching:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researching:</strong></td>
<td>Utilising a Qualitative enquiry approach to develop a greater understanding of the roles and development needs of a particular group of implementers in the change process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researching how the network of champions operate in practice with a view to improvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Informed by Maxwell, 2005, 'Interactive Model of Research Design')
The research framework places this study in the context of a wider research agenda and is represented by three levels. **Level 1** being the organisation initiating the management research, working in partnership with its client base. **Level 2** the problem being addressed through action research and **Level 3** as the main level of enquiry to which this study relates. Each research level is examined in detail within this chapter beginning with the first organisational level.

### 5.2 Level 1 – Organisational (management research)

#### 5.2.1 What is the rationale for undertaking this research?

Remenyi et al, (2005, p.24), states that the need to research is related to the fact that there are many issues and subjects about which we have incomplete knowledge. They emphasise that although there are examples of this in every discipline, in business and management studies there are perhaps even more unanswered questions than in many other areas of study. In this context, the Commission, with a duty to recommend best practice to local government, as described in Chapter 2, is continually attempting to develop best practice in relevant subject areas where the existing knowledge is incomplete. The rationale for this research is the Commission’s duty to develop best practice; in this case how the network of champions operates in practice and where the literature review identified there is a knowledge gap.

This need for increased efficiency is similarly referred to by Remenyi et al, (2005, p.25) as a second reason why an organisation may undertake management research, namely: the need for improvement, underpinned by the apparent endless requirement for increased performance in all aspects of life. The evolving local government reorganisation and change agenda as described in Chapter 2, also places an obligation on the Commission to continually improve and develop. This developmental approach, within a public service organisation is encouraged by Stringer (1999, p.3), who emphasises that companies in the commercial and business world invest significant proportions
of their budgets in human resources development, to ensure that their workers have the skills and knowledge necessary to keep them abreast of new techniques, technologies, and conditions, and states that: ‘The need is just as clear in public and professional life. Service practitioners should strive to cultivate the skills that will help them investigate and master systematically the issues affecting them and their constituencies’. Stringer (1999) goes on to advocate the need for professionals in public life to change their vision from one of professional mechanic/technician, to one of a professional as a creative investigator and problem solver. He asserts that this new vision requires the rejection of the application of standardised practices across all settings and contexts, and instead utilises contextually relevant procedures formulated by inquiring and resourceful practitioners, developing effective and sustainable solutions through systemic approaches to inquiry.

This research aims to generate a body of knowledge which will assist the Commission and senior management to formulate such contextually relevant procedures which will enable the current network of change champions and their successors to contribute effectively in implementing major changes in local government in N.I.

5.2.2 What type of research is most appropriate for this study?

Easterby-Smith et al. (2009) in examining the existing concepts and ideas regarding the types of research and how these relate to management research examine the main classifications of pure, applied and action research. They note that these are distinguished primarily by the outcomes that are assumed to emerge - although, as ever, the distinctions do not hold clearly in practice. An examination of the classifications and the assumed outcomes in terms of this research, identifies that there is some overlap between the three distinctions, but places the research more appropriately within an action research framework. This is further examined under the headings of the three distinctions as follows:
**Pure research** is described as intended to lead to theoretical developments where there may or may not be any practical implications. Forms of theoretical developments are explained as:

*Discovery*: where a totally new idea or explanation emerges from empirical research which may revolutionise thinking on a particular topic.

*Invention*: where a new technique, method or idea is created to deal with a particular kind of problem.

*Reflection*: where an existing theory, technique or group of ideas is re-examined, possibly in a different organisational or social context.

Key features of pure research is that its results are openly disseminated through books, articles, conference papers or theses and are likely to be addressed mainly to an academic audience.

This change management research, designed to discover the roles and development needs of change champions, and exploring how the existing body of knowledge applies to the work of the champions in practice, could be described as falling within the discovery/reflection categories, resulting in a thesis for submission to an academic institution; in this case for submission as the final stage of the DBA programme. However it is important to compare other research classifications in order to justify how the chosen method for this study was determined as the most appropriate method.

**Applied research** is intended to lead to the solution of specific problems, and usually involves working with clients who identify the problems. From an academic perspective it is important to try to explain *what* is happening rather than simply describing things. Phillips and Pugh (2005) also distinguish between the ‘*what*’ and ‘*why*’ questions, stressing that genuine research must include consideration of ‘*why*’ questions, be critical of ideas and methods used and consider the quality of evidence introduced in support of the data.

Easterby-Smith et al, (2009) describe a common form of applied research as the evaluation of the process and results of particular courses of action - such
as the reorganisation of the department, the introduction of new technology or the training of new graduates in the company. It is noted that the results of applied research always need to be reported to the client, but there should also be potential to discuss their wider implications in journals and other publications aimed at practitioners.

As with the pure research classification, this change champions research could be described as conforming to the various classification criteria, in that it evaluates a process i.e. “the roles played by individual change champions” and evaluates the results of particular courses of action criteria i.e. “the appropriateness of the development programme provided to date for the change champions”. The results of the research will be reported to the Commission as client, and subject to agreement on confidentiality issues, may be available for potential discussion in journals and other publications for practitioners. However before selecting an appropriate methodology, it was important to explore the appropriateness of action research to the study of the management problem and in context of the general aim of the final stage of the DBA programme.

**Action research** is described by Easterby-Smith et al, (2009, p.9) as a number of research approaches which have developed in management and do not fit neatly into either of the above categories. These start from the view that research should lead to change, and therefore should be incorporated into the research process itself. Action research starts from the idea that if you want to understand something well you should try changing it, and this is most frequently adopted in Organizational Development (French and Bell, 1978; Holmen, 1979). The importance is stressed of establishing collaboration between researcher and researched, leading to the development of shared understandings (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

Because of the collaborative features, action research participants are likely to learn a lot from the process itself, and their interest may be in what happens next rather than any form of current research findings.
As with the pure and applied classifications, it is necessary to examine the change champions’ research against the various characteristics of the action research classification. It is clear that this research will lead to change, as the change champions’ network will be improved and potentially replicated as a result of the research. Collaboration has been established between the researcher and the researched, with me as the researcher being involved in the change process. It is also anticipated that the research participants and I can reflect and learn from the process itself. The research participants, through the use of semi-structured interviewing and critical incident techniques will be provided with an opportunity to reflect on the usefulness of their role to date and provide suggestions for an improvement plan. Following consideration of the three general research classifications, for the above reasons, it was determined that the change champions’ research was most appropriately set within an action research framework.

In order to fully understand what is meant by action research in practice and how it is particularly relevant to this study and the aims of the DBA programme, the following section (Level 2) charts the development of action research, where it is located within the research framework methodology and how it was utilised in this research at project implementation level.

5.3 **Level 2 – Project/Problem Solving (action research principles and practice)**

While the last section (Level 1), identified action research in general terms as the most appropriate research method for this study, this section examines action research methodology in greater detail. Questions are posed relating to the history and development of action research, action research methodology, and where it fits within a methodological framework and the overall aims of the DBA programme.
5.3.1 History and Development of Action Research

5.3.2 How did action research develop?

McNiff and Whitehead (2005) refer to the history of action research as being well documented in various comprehensive accounts in the literature (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McKernan, 1991; Noffke, 1997) and explain how the work of John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933 to 1945, might be seen as the first identifiable starting point for action research. They explain that Collier was committed to developing ‘community’ as it related to education and social contexts for Native Americans, and this was to be accomplished through ‘the experience of responsible democracy’ (Collier, 1945, p.275, cited in Noffke, 1997, p.4). It is also noted that Kurt Lewin, shared the same interests as Collier, but from the perspective of industrial contexts and how participation in decision-making could lead to enhanced productivity.

Gill and Johnson (1991) attribute the first conscious use of the expression ‘action research’ to Lewin (Lewin, 1946). They assert that Lewin does not seem to have used any comprehensive definition of the term but nevertheless refers to research programmes within organisations, and frequently uses the expression ‘problem centred research’. The main feature of action research, according to Lewin, was that it should be focused on problems and that it should lead to some kind of action and research on the effects of action by understanding the dynamic nature of change and studying it under controlled conditions as it took place. While recognising the important contribution to action research made by Lewin, Gill and Johnson (1991) also chart the development of action research through the work of the Tavistock Institute (UK) in the 1960s. This work was guided by a strong orientation towards the study of the research process and in particular the relationships that developed between researcher and client and the extent to which these helped or inhibited utilisation of findings. In the management field, they attribute the best-known early work in this tradition to Jaques (1951), based on research in the Glacier Metal Company; Sofer (1961) in further education; Wilson (1961) in Unilever;
and Trist et al, (1963), working in the Durham coalfield. These studies included planned organisational change, the analysis of tasks in organisations and the relationship of the organisation to its environment, and the analysis of absenteeism, accidents and alienation as symptoms of organisational malfunction. In almost all cases the researchers included very full accounts of their fieldwork methods, especially the day-to-day interactions between researcher and client, and the context in which the work was carried out, as being major influences on the change process.

Gill and Johnson (1991) also examine the term ‘action research’ emphasising the large amount of related literature and the many varied uses of the term. They quote Rapoport’s (1970, p.499) definition as follows:

Action Research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework.

It was noted however that the above definition poses many questions – as Rapoport himself was well aware of. These included the inherent need for close collaboration between the parties and between the distinctive and very different cultures of the managerial and academic worlds which gives rise to issues about whether the aims of the work will be concerned primarily with problem solving for the particular organisation or with producing theoretical generalisations of the wider community (Gill, 1986). As with the aim of this research into the role and development needs of change champions, Gill and Johnson (1991, pps.61-69) identify a number of positive examples of action research projects which were all undertaken to solve specific managerial problems (as with the champions network) and, at the same time, to generalise from the specific and to contribute to theory, (in this case professional practice).

With regard to the development of action research as collaboration between the parties i.e. the researcher (myself) and the researched (the change champions), McNiff and Whitehead (2005) perceive action research as a process of learning from experience, a dialectical interplay between practice, reflection and learning. They define action research as the name given to a
particular way of researching your own learning and a practical way of looking at your practice in order to check whether it is as you feel it should be. Mc Niff and Whitehead (2005, p.15) provide an explanation of why action research is particularly relevant to me as a researcher practitioner and to the aims of the DBA in seeking to develop candidates by researching a specific problem within their own organisations, in the following terms:

Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner research, or a similar name such as practitioner-led or practitioner-based research. It is a form of research which can be undertaken by people in any context, regardless of their status or position. It involves you thinking carefully about what you are doing, so it can also be called a kind of self-reflective practice... the idea of self reflection is central. In traditional (empirical) forms of research, researchers do research on other people. In action research, researchers do research on themselves in company with other people, and those others are doing the same.

They go on to describe how no distinction is made between who is a researcher and who is a practitioner. Practitioners are potential researchers, and researchers are practitioners, and explain that some people who like to maintain their status as ‘pure’ researchers do not always see it this way. Traditional researchers are seen as inquiring into other people's lives and speak about other people as data. Action researchers inquire into their own lives and speak with other people as colleagues.

Having charted the history and development of action research, it is important to also pose the question as to where action research is situated within the framework of research methodology and its justification as a research method. It is also important to examine its particular relevance within the DBA programme framework where I developed my knowledge of research methodology over the years and choose action research as the most applicable methodology for this study.

5.3.3 Action Research Methodology

5.3.4 How does action research fit within the framework of research methodology and the aims of the DBA programme?
In setting action research within a methodological framework, Coghlan and Brannick (2005) make reference to Shani and Pasmore’s definition as follows:

action research may be defined as an emergent inquiry process in which applied behavioural science knowledge is integrated with existing organisational knowledge and applied to solve real organisational problems. It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organisations, developing self-help competencies in organisational members and adding to scientific knowledge. Finally, it is an evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry. (Shani and Pasmore, 1985, p.439).

They cite several broad characteristics which define action research and are particularly relevant to this study, and to the requirements of the final stage of the DBA programme which require the candidate to:

- undertake a still larger project, lasting two years, which will normally be based on action research. The aim of the action research project will be to bring about some improvement in professional practice in the candidate’s organisation and also advance knowledge in the area of business.

(The Brighton Doctorate of Business Administration- Programme Overview, p.6.)

The characteristics cited by Coghlan and Brannick (2005) and how these relate to the aims of the DBA programme are outlined as follows:

- **research in action, rather than research about action** - the central idea is that action research uses a scientific approach to study the resolution of important social or organisational issues together with those who experience these issues directly, working through a cyclical four step process of continuously and deliberately: planning, taking action, evaluating the action, leading to further planning, and so on.

This characteristic supports the choice of action research methodology, in line with the aims of the final stage in the DBA programme, in that candidates are expected to undertake a research project which contributes to professional practice in their organisations. In this study the network of champions was established to help solve an organisational problem in my organisation, the results of the research will be utilised to plan further action, and these actions evaluated over time.

- **a collaborative democratic partnership** - members of the system which is being studied participate actively in the cyclical process, contrasting with traditional research where members of the system are subjects or objects of the study.
In this research the interviewees are full participants in the change process and are examining the problem in partnership with me as the researcher. This characteristic similarly fits with aims of the DBA programme in that candidates are expected to choose a project which adds to their own professional development and management practice.

- **concurrent with action** - the goal is to make that action more effective while simultaneously building up a body of scientific knowledge.

This research takes place at a time when ‘the action’ is actually taking place across local government in NI and relates to a real management problem, which fulfils the DBA programme criteria where candidates are expected to apply their research findings in terms of professional practice within an organisation.

- **a sequence of events and an approach to problem-solving** - as a sequence of events it comprises iterative cycles of gathering data, feeding it back to those concerned, analysing the data, planning action, taking action and evaluating etc. As an approach to problem-solving, it is an application of the scientific method of fact-finding and experimentation to practical problems requiring action solutions and involving the collaboration and cooperation of the action researchers and members of the organisation system.

  (Summarised from Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p.4)

These characteristics are present in the research in that they reflect the implementation of the research in practice, with data gathering and feedback taking place at stage 1(b) of the DBA programme, the champions’ network being further developed and the current research investigating how the network members currently operate and suggesting further development needs.

In order to locate action research within a methodological framework, Coghlan and Brannick (2005) also pose the question ‘**how is action research scientific?**’ and stress that many writers have articulated the ontological and epistemological foundations of action research and contrasted them with those of the scientific method associated with positivistic philosophy, (Susman and Evered, 1978; Riordan, 1995; Eden and Huxham, 1996; Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Gummesson, 2002; Reason and Torbert, 2001).
In the context of this study, it is not intended to restate these foundations of action research in detail, but to discuss the characteristics of the two main social science research philosophies of positivism and phenomenology and to locate action research within these philosophies.

5.3.5 Summary Characteristics of Positivism

Easterby-Smith et al, (2009) state that the key idea of positivism is that the social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition. The French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1853) as an early influential proponent of this view is quoted as stating that; ‘All good intellects have repeated, since Bacon’s time, that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts’. The assumptions with this statement being: firstly, that reality is external and objective; secondly, that knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observations of this external reality. Easterby-Smith et al, (2009), identify a number of implications/propositions which follow on from these assumptions, but stress that they are not simply the view of any single philosopher but a collection of points that have come to be associated with the positivist viewpoint, although some ‘positivists’ may disagree with some of the following: Independence; Value-freedom; Causality; Hypothetico-deductive; Operationalisation; Reductionism; Generalisation; Cross-sectional analysis. Easterby-Smith et al, provide examples to illustrate that philosophers within the same school, not only disagree with each other, but also change their own views significantly over time.

5.3.6 Summary Characteristics of Phenomenology

Easterby-Smith et al, describe the emergence of a new paradigm (phenomenology) that has arisen during the last half century, largely in reaction to the application of positivism to the social sciences. Phenomenology can be described in general terms as: stemming from the view that the world and reality are not objective and exterior, but that they are socially constructed and
given meaning by people (Husserl, 1946). The task of the social scientist should therefore not be to gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience. They should try to understand and explain why people have different experiences, rather than search for external causes and fundamental laws to explain their behaviour. Human action arises from the sense that people make of different situations, rather than as a direct response to external stimuli. They point out that, as with the positivist viewpoint, there are many different variants, associated with phenomenology including: interpretive sociology (Habermas, 1970), naturalistic enquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1986), social constructivism (Berger and Luckman, 1966), qualitative methodology (Taylor and Bodgan, 1984), and ‘new paradigm inquiry’ (Reason and Rowan, 1981) and it is stated that each of these takes a slightly different stance in the application of phenomenology and in the features of positivism on which they do not agree.

5.3.7 Where is action research located within these main research traditions?

Although it could be argued that it is possible to conduct action research in a positivist way, for example by attempting to change the organisation from the outside and then measuring results, in most respects action research derives from ideas that do not conform to a positivist philosophy. The positivist proposition that the researcher is independent does not conform to the action research tradition which assumes that any social phenomena are continually changing rather than static, and the researcher is seen as part of the change process itself. This is particularly true of this research on the change champions network in that they are developing their role over time and encountering resistance and support at various levels as they attempt to implement change and identify their development needs. I am a stakeholder in the change initiative and a direct link with the steering group responsible for the implementation of the change and I am therefore a part of change process.
In a further explanation to locate action research within the research paradigms, Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p.5) provide a general overview of the three main traditions, positivism, hermeneutics and critical realism and locate action research within the various research paradigms in the following terms;

**Table 18  Research Paradigms and Action Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical foundations</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Hermeneutic and postmodernism</th>
<th>Critical realism and action research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Objectivist</td>
<td>Subjectivist</td>
<td>Objectivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Objectivist</td>
<td>Subjectivist</td>
<td>Subjectivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Generalisable</td>
<td>Particular</td>
<td>Particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>Hyper</td>
<td>Epistemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the researcher</td>
<td>Distanced from data</td>
<td>Close to data</td>
<td>Close to data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Extract from Coghlan and Brannick 2005, p.5, Table 1.1)

Epistemology, (the grounds of knowledge), and ontology, (the nature of the world) are described in Table 18 on a continuum moving from an objectivist, (realist) to a subjectivist, (relativist) perspective.

An objectivist view of epistemology accepts the possibility of a theory-neutral language, where it is possible to access the external world objectively; whereas a subjectivist view denies the possibility of a theory neutral language.

From an ontological perspective, the objectivist view assumes that social and natural reality have an independent existence prior to human cognition; whereas the subjectivist ontology assumes that what we take as reality is an output of human cognitive process (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

It is argued that different epistemological and ontological approaches encourage different kinds of reflexivity, which is the social sciences concept used to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the object of the research. Reflection involves thinking about the conditions for
what one is doing, investigating the way in which the theoretical, cultural and political context of individual intellectual involvement affects interaction with whatever's being researched, often in ways difficult to become conscious of (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Lynch, (1999) describes systematic reflexivity as the constant analysis of one’s own theoretical and methodological presuppositions which helps with retaining an awareness of the importance of other peoples’ definitions and understandings of theirs. This is further subdivided by Johnson and Duberley, (2000) in to two forms, epistemic and methodological. Epistemic reflexivity focuses on the researcher’s belief system and is the process for analysing and challenging our meta-theoretical assumptions. Methodological reflexivity is concerned with the monitoring of our behavioural impact upon the research setting as a result of carrying out the research. This requires us to follow the research procedure and protocols identified and demands of the different research traditions.

The positivist approach or paradigm, as described earlier, adheres to an objectivist (realist) ontology and an objectivist epistemology. Positivists adopt a methodological approach towards reflexivity, and concentrate on improving methods of their application (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). The aim of positivist science is a creation of generalisable knowledge or covering laws; where findings are validated by logic, measurement and consistency, achieved by the consistency of prediction and control, with a relationship to the setting of neutrality and detachment.

Having examined the definition of action research earlier in this chapter, (McNiff and Whitehead, 2005; French and Bell, 1978; Holmen, 1979; Easterby-Smith et al, 2009), action research would conflict with the positivist research tradition in that, it is not concerned with the creation of generalisable knowledge or covering laws but with the objective of gaining insight into particular situations, (in this research how the change champions operate in the local government system in N.I.). Similarly action research places emphasis on the insider researcher (in this research; my role in the change process and the research)
and reflexivity on the influence of that relationship, neutrality and detachment are not possible.

(Further sections in this chapter subtitled: para. 5.4, p.152 ‘My Role as Practitioner Researcher’ and para. 5.5, p.155 ‘My Values and Beliefs Informing the Research’ provide details of how I believe my subjective ontological and my subjective epistemological position have influenced this research and my reflections on the process)

In contrast to the positivist tradition, action research can be examined in relation to Coghlan and Brannick's (2005) description of the hermeneutic tradition, (sometimes referred to as phenomenology, constructivist, interpretivist, postmodern interpretivism, relativist approach) which argues that there is no objective or single knowable external reality and that the researcher, as with this research, is an integral part of the research process, not separate from it. They state that this approach follows a subjectivist (relativist) ontology and epistemology and that inquiry is inherently value laden. Hermeneutic inquiry is directed towards the development of particular or ideological knowledge. Nothing can be measured without changing it and this insider close to the data perspective provides valid rich and deep data. This hermeneutic tradition reflects the definitions of action research as discussed earlier and, as with this research, places the researcher as an integral part of the research process with the enquiry directed at the development of particular knowledge and the insider researcher close to the problem or involved in the change process.

Johnson and Duberley, (2000) identify a third approach as ‘critical realism’ incorporating pragmatic critical realism which aligns with the concept and understanding of action research as detailed earlier. It is asserted that if reflexivity is to facilitate change it needs to be guided by principles of democratic engagement and commitment to change. Reflective knowledge has to do with normative states of social, economic and political realms, concerning a vision of what ought to be, what is right and what is wrong and arises through
the process of consciousness raising and conscientisation (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

Having examined action research in relation to the positivist and phenomenologist (hermeneutic) traditions, it can be seen that action research in general, and this research in particular, conflicts with the positivist tradition and aligns with the hermeneutic tradition in that:

- **the focus of action research is on knowledge in action**
- **knowledge created through action research is particular**, situational and out of praxis.
- **The action researcher is immersed in a research setting** where the data are contextually embedded and interpreted, the basis for validation being a conscious and deliberate enactment of the action research cycle.
- **The contrast of roles** is between that of a detached observer in positivist science and of an actor and agent of change in action research.

(Evered and Louis, 1981)

In summary, Weisbord (1988) provides a relevant illustration where he draws a distinction between taking photographs and making films in relation to organisational development. Taking photographs is described as freezing a moment in time and arranging key factors in a conceptual framework. No photograph takes in the whole reality; it only takes what is in the frame. Photographers decide what is to be in the frame and they manipulate the setting to include and exclude desirable and undesirable features. In contrast, making films is an engagement in patterns of activity and relationships by multiple actors who are moving and interacting over a period of time. It is also increasingly common to find actors directing their own films. In these cases, actor-directors engage in their acting role in costume, and then return to behind the camera in order to study the take, critique it and make decisions about proceeding to the next take. The image of making films and the action researcher as an actor director is pertinent and useful thinking in conducting action research.

Having placed action research methodology, and this research, within the hermeneutic tradition, it is important to reflect on my role as practitioner/researcher and the values and beliefs that I bring to this research in particular.
The following subheadings explain my reflections on how I influenced the study, the ethical issues involved and my development in an action research environment.

5.4 My Role as Practitioner Researcher

From the analysis of action research and its position within the two research philosophies, I am aware that I am performing the role of a practitioner researcher, operating within the hermeneutic/phenomenological tradition. It is therefore important to examine my role within the action research framework. Shani and Pasmore (1985) identify four factors which they assert represent a complete theory of the action research process, and these four factors provide a useful framework for analysis of this research and my role in the process.

**Context:** As described in Chapter 1 there are a number of factors which set the context for this action research project. These include the goals of the organisation, my own goals and the goals of the participants. While in many cases we will have shared goals and expected outcomes e.g. attempting to solve the underrepresentation of women in local government; the organisation is primarily concerned with discovering how the champions network works in practice; my goals are to develop my skills and complete the research; and the individuals are mainly concerned with the continuation of their work in an effective and efficient manner. These differing goals already affected the timing and direction of the research, the allocation of resources and the extension of the initiative to which this research relates.

Conducting the research in a hermeneutic tradition as an insider researcher, directly involved in the change process, I am aware that my involvement has an evolving impact on the change initiative and the study for example;

- securing increased availability of funding for the initiative and the research,
• gaining overall organisational support and the commitment of the change champions to participate in the change process,

• ensuring the various stakeholder groupings gave priority to the change initiative by utilising my position to ensure the establishment of a network of champions and the continuing support for their work by their employer organisations.

This involvement contrasts with the positivist tradition where it is assumed that I would be independent of the subject of the research and that I would neither affect, nor be affected by the subject.

**Quality of Relationships:** The hermeneutic tradition does not see the researcher as independent of what is being researched, but an intrinsic part of it, and in action research it is recognised that the quality of relationships between the researcher and the research participants is paramount. In this research I have had to manage my relationship with the research participants, who represent a wide range of officer and member groupings, on an ongoing basis. I have had to continually remind them, through the use of an introductory letter and subsequently, before and after interviews that the research being carried out by me is academic in nature, confidential and personal. I have attempted to build trust, demonstrate concern and interest in relation to the critical incident examples provided at interview, and to share a common language by seeking clarification of points raised when necessary. Despite the measures taken to avoid barriers being created due to differing power bases and loyalties, I recognise that true equality has been difficult to achieve between myself and the research participants, nevertheless their confidence in the research process and commitment to its purpose has been demonstrated by their full participation and cooperation.

**Quality of the action research process itself:** Further aspects of the quality of the action research process are fully discussed in this chapter under sub para. 5.8, Level 3, p.164, but it is important to emphasise that the quality of the
action research process is grounded in the dual focus on both the inquiry process and the implementation process. With my involvement in the inquiry process; ranging from initial design stage through implementation and preparation of this report, I have had full responsibility for the inquiry process. In my role as Chief Executive of the Commission I have also had responsibility for the project implementation process. With the establishment of the network of 37 champions, a significant level of active involvement by stakeholders in the problem solving process was encouraged. The champions’ involvement in implementing the change also enabled them to perform significant tasks at local level and contribute to the overall implementation of the project. The various pilot development initiatives, workshops, benchmarking opportunities and networking sessions (as set out in Appendix 2, p.368), which were introduced to encourage the work of the champions provided an opportunity for individual learning and development and through the use of semi-structured interviews; I was able to interact personally with research participants.

**Outcomes:** In keeping with the hermeneutic tradition, the study outcomes were based on the data relating to the direct experience of the participants based on their interoperation of a unique problem and how they implemented their role in practice. The dual outcomes of the action research are seen as some level of improvement and the development of self-help competencies out of the action and the creation of new knowledge from the inquiry. Recommendations arising from this research will be considered by the Commission and utilised to improve the work of the champions’ network. The Commission’s additional outcome is the development of itself as an organisation and my development through the lessons learned in undertaking the research. New knowledge and a greater understanding of how the champions operate in practice have been gained by the organisation utilising its own resources and increasing its self-help competencies by creating a learning opportunity for its chief executive and indirectly for all those involved in the research process.
5.5 My Values and Beliefs Informing the Research

Public Service Ethos and Learning by Experience:

My values and beliefs are heavily influenced by the public service ethos and environment in which I have worked for the last 40 years, including:

- As a public servant, I have worked in the education, housing and local government sectors in N.I.
- On a part time basis, I have been involved in lecturing in further education and consultancy work within the private sector and in particular with the travel industry.
- For the last 15 years I have been involved as project leader on various public sector reform projects sponsored by the Department for International Development (DFID) and through European Union (EU) twinning projects. These overseas projects included a six-year regional reform project in Russia, a two-year anticorruption project in Poland and a further eighteen month anticorruption project in Romania.
- I have led seminars on anticorruption in HR management practice for the European Institute of Public Administration in Warsaw and Maastricht.
- As an accredited mediator with the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution, I have been actively involved in mediation on contractual matters and in particular grievance and disciplinary issues.

Throughout my career I have had to work hard at consensus building and seeking the agreement of key stakeholders to introduce major change. My belief in the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in the change process has developed through my work in the highly charged political environment in N.I., and in developing countries where ‘foreign consultants’ are often perceived as attempting to impose solutions to problems rather than working with those involved to develop their own solutions through the use of facilitation and appropriate guidance. In all my work in organisational development and change I try to find ways to accommodate multiple value
perspectives, and to respect the views and identity of others, and hold the belief that learning is developed by experience and practice.

**Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives:**

From an ontological perspective, I believe that people are able to create their own identities and allow other people to create theirs. Despite the difficulty in achieving this in practical terms, given individuals and groups often conflicting value systems, it is important that we understand one another's point of view and this can be achieved by building trust and recognising or suspending our own prejudices. I feel that it is in our power to create a better society, and through my commitment, and the commitment of others, this can be achieved by being creative and searching for improvement. I have a strong belief that in order to change the current social system, there is a need to involve all key stakeholders and attempt to reach consensus firstly on what we want to achieve and secondly how this may be attained. I have often experienced rejection of improvement ideas and accept that there are many setbacks in attempting to improve the current situation, but this rejection should not deter us from advancing the overall improvement agenda both within our organisations and the wider environment. Of necessity, and particularly when working in a political environment, change has to be incremental, but each small step can help advance the overall improvement process and should be celebrated.

In order to convince others of the necessity to work towards a better and fairer society it is important that I lead by example and am seen to 'live out' the values that I perceive are necessary to do so. This means building trust and confidence in my profession and the work that I am doing. My understanding of trust in dealing with my colleagues conforms to the idea that trust is a method, not a result, (Miyazaki, 2004) which can be developed by; being available when assistance is required, seeking assistance from others, committing to the task in hand and delivering the best possible outcomes.
My view of being, and how things are in the world has influenced me to identify with the research community who support the view that reality is socially constructed and subjective rather than external and objectively determined. My task as a researcher in the social sciences is therefore not to gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience. I believe I should try to understand and explain why people have different experiences, rather than search for external causes and fundamental laws to explain their behaviour. This ontological position conforms to my belief that the object (s) of my investigation exists independently, as described by Coghlan and Brannick (2005), as the subjectivist/relativist perspective. Remenyi et al, (2005, p.103) set out a continuum (Table 19) to enable the basic assumptions about research activity to be distinguished;

Table 19  Basic Assumptions about the Research Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominalism</th>
<th>ontology</th>
<th>Realism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-positivism</td>
<td>epistemology</td>
<td>Positivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntarism</td>
<td>human nature</td>
<td>Determinism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideographic</td>
<td>methodology</td>
<td>Nomothetic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Summarised from Burrell and Morgan, 1997 - factors represented as polarities across a continuum)

It is argued that the four dimensions as detailed in Table 19 inform radically different frames of reference or paradigms underpinning the work of researchers and indicates that there are discernible differences among research approaches based upon different permutations of the four factors. Within the above framework I can identify my ontological position as within the Realism definition and conforming to an Anti-positivism epistemology. I can relate in particular to what Prigogine and Stengers (1984) describe as the ontology of ‘becoming’ in the following terms:
reality, including the thought processes we use to understand it, is in a state of flux, a constant process of becoming. Whatever is, is constantly transforming into newer versions of itself. Each new transformation is an entirely new creation which has evolved out of its own history. There are no final outcomes, for any experience in any moment is already in the process of change; any answer is already transforming into new questions.

(Extract from McNiff and Whitehead, 2000, p.43)

This belief in transformational change encourages me to be continually involved in action research methodology where as an insider researcher I can be part of what is being observed, and attempt to understand what is happening, and develop ideas for improvement through induction from the data collection process.

My belief in learning as an evolutionary process and the role of research in building organisational and individual learning is best described by McNiff and Whitehead (2000) in the following terms:

Research is learning in order to gather information and to create and test new theories. Different research methods offer different ways of learning. Learning is not a static concept. It is an evolutionary process. Learning involves creating new ideas out of old ones. It does not mean entirely rejecting what went before, but making new connections and reconfiguring the networks, so that previous knowledge transforms into new knowledge that serves human purposes more adequately than older forms'.

(McNiff and Whitehead, 2000, p.8)

This evolutionary process of learning and research has been evidenced in my career and personal development to date, together with my desire to improve the performance of my organisation and contribute to the development of a more fair and equitable society. I see learning and knowledge as something that I do and a living process. I believe that people can generate their own knowledge from their experience, with no fixed answers to specific problems. Learning in this way involves reflecting on the experience of practice, and deciding on future action as a result of reflection. The action research framework utilised to examine the work of the change champions; which enabled me to examine the experience of the change champions in practice, reflect on the learning and develop an improvement plan was therefore particularly suited to the improvement environment in which I work and in
sympathy with my own research preferences. Having been involved in introducing change and committed to an action research methodology within a local government environment for the last number of years I am aware of a number of ethical issues which have emerged and have attempted to address them as detailed in the following pages 159-164.

5.6 Ethical Issues in Introducing Change in Local Government in NI

In my experience of introducing change, the overarching ethical issues have always been in relation to the necessity for the change, my motives for initiating the change process, what I perceived as best for those affected by the change, and how the change should be introduced in practical terms.

Implicit in my approach to introducing change, together with a high level of involvement by those affected, as detailed in the last section, has been the introduction of meaningful consultation and where necessary negotiation with stakeholders as to necessity, methodology, and practical application. There are often differing views on what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ and what is ethical behaviour in particular circumstances. The trade unions will often have a different view on what is ethical in relation to the interests of their employees as opposed to what management see as ethical in terms of introducing efficiency savings to protect the interests of ratepayers. Similarly the Commission will often hold the position that it is right to enforce our statutory duty regardless of the cost to those involved or the priorities of the Minister in power at any particular time. Ethical decisions therefore often have to be made by attempting to balance differing perspectives and attempting to reach joint agreements on what is the best approach given all the circumstances and the level of shared confidence within the stakeholder grouping.

Ethical behaviour can also take on different meanings depending on the history, culture, and location of the organisation and the governance, regulatory and audit arrangements in place. The Commission’s background, as an organisation created to improve equality and fairness, and track record of
Introducing change in the local government environment over a number of years through the involvement model and utilising action research, has helped develop a positive reputation and increasing confidence in the change process by those affected. This means that the necessity for the change and the motives behind the change can be discussed with those affected in an open and frank manner. Similarly, working jointly with those involved, to determine the best method for implementation, and agreeing the pace of change, has helped develop a shared confidence in the change process and trust among those involved.

While accepting that ethical codes of conduct and regulatory frameworks cannot, in themselves, guarantee ethical behaviour, and can only be part of a larger system attempting to support an ethical culture (Hughes, 2010 p.227), in attempting to introduce change within the local government system in NI they continue to have a strong influence on what is seen as acceptable behaviour. Although often situation specific, set in a political environment where local government officers and members are continually questioning what is right or wrong in terms of individual behaviour, e.g. (officer/member relations, potential conflicts of interest, public service values, impartiality in dealing with budget priorities, membership of secret organisations), the code of conduct for officers as recommended by the Commission, and the similar code for elected members as issued by the Department of the Environment, help establish a common understanding of what is perceived as ethical behaviour in specified circumstances, and help build a greater awareness of potential ethical issues in the wider local government system. My research has taken place in the local government environment described above where there is an expectation that I will conform to the standards of behaviour already embedded in local government and have regard to other ethical issues specific to the research.
5.7 Ethical Issues in Action Research

While details of the specific ethical issues I considered and how these were addressed throughout this research project are detailed in Chapter 6: pps.178-186, as part of the discussion of how my values and beliefs informed this research, it is also useful to discuss in general terms, my understanding of the ethical issues relating to the implementation of the action research projects I have initiated to date.

Traditionally, ethics in research relies on considerations such as not doing harm, not breaching confidentiality, not distorting data, informed consent, honesty, and the right to withdraw (Coghlan and Brannick 2005, Winter and Munn-Giddings 2001). While action research takes place within this framework, particular issues relating to the close relationship between the researcher and the participants and the explicit aim of changing practice make the ethical aspects of action research unique (Williamson and Prosser 2002, Lathlean 1996). In considering this uniqueness, Williamson and Prosser (2002), detail three ethical questions which should be discussed between the researcher and the participants.

Firstly:

*If the researcher and participants collaborate closely, how can confidentiality and anonymity be guaranteed?*

They emphasise that as action research is a political enterprise for the insider researcher and the participants, with potential consequences for their careers, it is very difficult to guarantee anonymity; others in the organisation will know who participated, and disguising data in finished reports may be problematic (Lathlean 1996, Morton 1998, Webb et al, 1998). It is argued that complete confidentiality and anonymity are sometimes inappropriate, particularly where individual underperformance or risk taking are identified. From my experience the extent of confidentiality has to be discussed in advance, is dependent on the specific investigation and sometimes renegotiated as the project progresses. There are instances where the participant structure has to be disclosed, in order to lend weight to the findings, (e.g. the political makeup of
the sample and the experience and level of the participants) and this provides an opportunity for others in the organisation and across local government to make an informed guess as to the individual participants. Having discussed potential breaches of confidentiality and anonymity with participants as suggested above, I feel that the reliability of the data collected requires rigorous testing to ensure validity. There is a danger that participants, in a situation where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and where they feel they will be identified, will either ‘hold back’ information, exaggerate their role in the change process, or claim successes which could be questioned. In these instances I need, as an insider researcher, to be close to the data, have a full understanding of the problem and process followed to date and have confidence in the participants before recommending a course of action based on data analysis.

Secondly:

*If action research is a ‘journey’ and ‘evolves’, how can informed consent be meaningful?*

Williamson and Prosser (2002, p.589), emphasise that as action research is a journey (Hope, 1998), evolving through participation, reflection, and purposeful action, it is unlikely that ‘informed consent’ is as meaningful as in other research approaches. In action research, neither the researcher nor the participants know where the journey will take them in advance and participants cannot possibly know to what they are consenting. This is particularly true in my research to date which is constantly evolving e.g. the updating of HR standards or codes of practice on recruitment, which have developed over years of ongoing research. Some councils, having agreed to participate, could potentially withdraw if they were not happy with the line of questioning or the investigative nature of the research. They could not however withdraw from the ongoing observation of how they operated in practice, as this is often part of the research and it is within the Commission’s statutory remit to compel them to continue. If an individual council objected to the observation of their behaviour, they may feel that this would raise suspicion or draw particular attention to their working practices. It is therefore important to discuss fully with participants all
aspects of the research as it progresses and, as with confidentiality, to continually update participants on consent issues at each stage in the process.

Thirdly:

**As action research can have political consequences, how can the researcher avoid doing harm to participants?**

This is particularly relevant to my various research projects to date. If participants are known to identify with a recommended course of action which is unpopular in their organisation, political party, or with their colleagues, this can lead to isolation, loss of the party whip, or damage to their career prospects. Similarly if working practices change as a result of the research this could have a detrimental effect on participants, (e.g. responsibility for certain duties could move to another post holder resulting in a downgrading for the present post holder who participated in the research). The established codes of behaviour within local government, as discussed in the preceding section, together with locally negotiated agreements with trade unions, can assist in limiting potential harm to participants. In particular they help set the terms of reference for various action research projects within a local context of what is ‘acceptable’ and what may cause harm to participants, and are allied to the idea of ‘professional morality’ (Williamson 2001, Marks-Maran 1994) which, in the absence of an agreed ethical code for conducting action research, has evolved through discussion over time in the localised supportive public service environment in N.I. The issue of what is perceived as ‘harm’ and arguments as to the ‘greater good’ and the creation of ‘safety nets’ and ‘no detriment/personal to holder’ agreements all feature in this discussion. As action research projects have developed over the years within the Commission, all these issues have been discussed in a collaborative dialogue with participants, and often result in rewriting terms of reference for the study or providing specific assurances to participants and their organisations as to how the data will be utilised and improvement recommendations implemented. This can have a limiting effect on the improvement agenda implicit in much of the research and often dictates the pace of change by shifting the emphasis in the shorter term to incremental change rather than the transformational change initially envisaged.
The Commission accepts that while the pace of change may alter from what was originally envisaged, the collaborative nature of the action research itself can help resolve ethical issues through this continuing discussion and reflection and the emergence of relevant ethical issues in action research can therefore arise from its practice (Carson et al, 1989). Examples of how ethical issues emerged and were dealt with in this research are provided in Chapter 6, p.178, and it is my belief that this experience will add to the Commission's overall learning experience of the identification of ethical issues in action research, and how potential ‘harm’ to participants can be limited in future studies.

Having discussed my values and beliefs which informed the research and the general ethical issues involved in action research, the next level within the research framework (Level 3 - individual roles) examines the choice of the qualitative research methodology which was utilised to gather the data in relation to the work of the change champions at local level.

5.8 **Level 3 – Individual Roles**

Within the action research framework, this level of enquiry examines the role of the individual champions in the change process, utilising a qualitative research methodology as described below:

**Qualitative Research Methodology**

Creswell, (2003) states that the knowledge claims, the strategies and methods, all contribute to the research approach which tends to be *more* qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. He sets out in tabular form the distinctions between the various approaches as detailed in Table 20 as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tend to or typically</th>
<th>Qualitative approaches</th>
<th>Quantitative approaches</th>
<th>Mixed methods approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use these philosophical assumptions Employ these strategies of inquiry</td>
<td>Constructivist/advocacy Participatory knowledge claims Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study and narrative</td>
<td>Post positivist knowledge claims Surveys and experiments</td>
<td>Pragmatic knowledge claims Sequential, concurrent and transformative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ these methods</td>
<td>Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data</td>
<td>Closed ended questions, predetermined approaches, numeric data</td>
<td>Both open and closed ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches, and both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use these practices of research, as a researcher</td>
<td>Positions himself or herself Collects participant meanings Focuses on a single concept or phenomenon Brings personal values into the study Studies the context or setting of participants Validates the accuracy of findings Creates an agenda for change or reform Collaborates with the participants</td>
<td>Tests or verifies theories or explanations Identifies variables to study Relates variables to questions or hypotheses Uses standards of validity and reality Observes and measures information numerically Uses unbiased approaches Employs statistical procedures</td>
<td>Collects both qualitative and quantitative data Develops a rationale for mixing Integrates the data at different stages of inquiry Presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study Employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Creswell, (2005, p.19) – Table 1.4, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches)
In selecting a research method to investigate the work of the change champions at local level the above three methods were evaluated, utilising the Creswell, 2005 and Blaxter et al, (2006, pp. 64-66) definitions in the following terms:

A **quantitative** approach was not felt to be appropriate as it is one where the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e. cause-and-effect thinking, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories). It assumes a stable reality and lends itself to experiments and surveys and the connection of data on predetermined instruments using statistical data. This approach is more appropriate where the researcher is a detached outsider. With my direct involvement in the change process and with the work with the change champions set in an action research framework, I am primarily concerned with understanding behaviour from my own frames of reference and obtaining real, rich and deep data to assist in the problem solving process.

In a **qualitative** approach the Inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e. multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with the intent of developing a theory or pattern). This approach lends itself to a participatory, collaborative change orientated perspective. It provides for a close to data, ‘insider’ perspective which is required in the change champions’ research. A qualitative approach also assumes a dynamic reality, and is subjective as opposed to the objective paradigm implicit in a quantitative research approach. It uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographic, grounded theory studies, or case studies which enables the researcher to collect open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from that data. The use of a qualitative research approach in the study of the change champions provided me with the opportunity to explore the work of the change champions through the use of semi-structured interview and critical incident techniques and gain a deep understanding of their
roles, the resistance they faced in implementing change and their development needs.

A mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (e.g. consequence-orientated, problem-centered, and pluralistic). This involves collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems. As a ‘mixed method’ the data collection involves gathering both numeric information as well as text information, so that the database represents both qualitative and quantitative information. The knowledge claims are based on pragmatic assumptions utilising e.g. closed ended measures and open-ended observations. The use of a mixed methods approach, collecting diverse types of data, initially commencing with a broad survey in order to generalise the work of the change champions in practice, and the addition of a second phase utilising qualitative, open-ended interviews to collect detailed views of a representative sample of participants was considered and evaluated in the following terms.

Firstly the time commitment required by participants was considered. The change champions had already participated in workshops to identify their perceived initial role; they had completed a questionnaire appraising their work to date and provided additional information on development needs. Their change agent role was carried out on a part time basis in a local government environment with increasing demands on their time and in a ‘more for less’ culture. On this basis it was felt that, should participants be asked to participate in a mixed methods approach, perhaps over a longer period of time that they may perceive it as another demand on their already scarce time and not fully participate in the process.

Secondly, it was considered that, while a mixed methods approach would provide diverse types of data, the use of a qualitative approach utilising the interview and critical incident techniques, with a representative sample of participants committed to the research process would generate more rich
descriptive data and provide more in-depth knowledge on which to the research conclusions and recommendations.

Thirdly, since my own time was limited and the Commission also required the research to be completed within the shortest possible timeframe in order to improve professional practice in this area, a mixed methods approach would have required extra time due to the need to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. This extra time was not available either to me as a researcher or to the Commission as an organisation attempting to improve professional practice. On the basis of the above three considerations a mixed methods approach was rejected and a qualitative approach selected utilising a semi structured interview; incorporating 'critical incident' techniques to add to the data collection process.

The next Chapter 6 describes in detail how the semi structured interview and critical incident techniques were used to gain a deep understanding of how the change champions operated in practice.
In order to provide a justification of the methodological choices, Chapter 5 examined the research framework, the rationale for undertaking the research, why action research was seen as a suitable methodology, my role as practitioner researcher, and the ethical considerations informing the research. This chapter provides an explanation of the methods employed, their appropriateness in this research, and how they were applied in practice.

6.1 Methods Employed

6.1.1 Qualitative Interviewing

I selected interviewing as a preferred method for data collection as it enabled the participants to fully describe how they carried out their change champions’ role in practice and was particularly relevant in an action research context. I, as the researcher, had the distinct advantage of physically identifying on a face-to-face basis, with those who were actively involved in the research process. Stringer (1999, p.68) in discussing the usefulness of interviews for obtaining data in an action research project states that:

> interviews enable participants to describe their situation. The interview process not only provides a record of their views and perspectives but also symbolically recognises the legitimacy of their views.

As emphasised in the previous chapter, I decided that the research required in-depth insight into the topic, (how the change champions operated in practice) and that this would be best served by obtaining data which provided an in-depth insight into the topic from a selected number of participants; I therefore decided to examine the following two questions in order to be satisfied that overall, interviews were the most appropriate option to pursue in terms of the particular type of data they were likely to produce.
6.1.2 Does the research really require the kind of detailed information that interviews supply?

The justification to obtain depth rather than breadth of information was based on the very nature of the research question which was to examine how change champions operated in practice. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to probe deeply into their experience as change champions in implementing their role, based on their actual experiences; their feelings and emotions regarding the resistance they encountered, and their proposals in relation to their individual development needs. Such information could not be reported in a few words but needed to be explored in depth. Since the research covered issues that might be considered sensitive or personal, these required careful handling and probing in order to obtain open and honest information. Despite the potential ‘interviewer effect’, where I may be perceived as leading the interviewee, I decided that the face-to-face approach would produce better data.

6.1.3 Is it reasonable to rely on information gathered from a small number of informants?

Given the time restrictions, discussed in the previous chapter, and that the data obtained was based on privileged information, the justification for using interviews with a small number of participants, was based on the value of contact with key players in the field who had the ability to provide such privileged information. The depth of information provided by interviews in this research relied heavily on the informants’ willingness and ability to provide information that others could not. They had the ability to offer specific insights, due to their special positions and the specific role they were performing, which was personal to them, operating in a unique environment and setting.

I also considered the feasibility of interviews with regard to access and viability in terms of the costs involved in time and travel. With regard to access and viability, I had the advantage that potential participants, having agreed to
accept the role of a change champion and currently performing this role at local level, were already committed to the change process and improvement agenda. I therefore thought it was reasonable to approach them to participate in the research, based on how their current role could be utilised to best advantage and what further assistance could be provided to them to help them in the future. As well as utilising my position as a partner in the change process, I also emphasised the research objective of utilising the findings to bring about similar change in local government and advancing further initiatives. With one exception (due to illness) each person who was approached to participate in the research did so and access was not a major problem.

With regard to time and travel, I considered that the interview could be accommodated within an agreed time frame and would therefore provide an efficient use of my time and the interviewees. From my perspective; information could be gathered immediately and analysed as soon as possible afterwards. From the interviewee's perspective; the interview provided a time bound opportunity to provide as much information as possible in relation to their personal perspectives on their role and future development needs etc. directly to me, in the interest of improving professional practice in an area to which they were committed. With regard to costs involved in travel, as this research was taking place in a local government environment, those taking part would be provided with time off to participate, and the costs involved in travelling to various locations to be interviewed would be covered by their respective councils. In my role as Chief Executive of the Commission, the research was seen as a part of my overall duties and travelling costs would also be recoverable.

In order to supplement the interview process and maximise the opportunity for further in-depth questioning, as detailed in Chapter 5, I decided to provide an opportunity for interviews to relate critical incidents and provide examples of where they felt their ‘role’ had been most successful or unsuccessful in implementing change. The reasons for selecting critical incident techniques as a further method of data collection are detailed as follows:
6.1.4 Critical Incidents

Before deciding to use critical incident technique, reference was made to the Easterby-Smith et al, (2009, p.150) description of ways of supplementing interviews, and the identification of the critical incident technique as a method of teasing out information which might not be readily expressed (as proposed by Flanagan, 1954). They state that Flanagan defines the technique as ‘a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles’. ‘Incident’ being defined as any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inference or prediction to be made about the person performing the act. With ‘critical’ being defined as an incident occurring in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer, and when it's consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effect.

It was noted that the definition of a ‘critical incident’ has changed somewhat over the years (Edvardsson and Ross, 2001), with Flanagan originally describing his technique from a highly objectivist, standpoint, and Easterby-Smith et al, describing the technique as being used by qualitative researchers to great effect, particularly in conjunction with in depth interviews, with respondents being asked to track back to particular instances in their work lives, and to explain their actions and motives with specific regard to those instances. An example is provided, which is particularly relevant to the use of critical incident techniques in this research, where reference is made to Thorpe’s (1980) research where he used the technique to ask owner/managers of small companies what have been the barriers to growth. At a given point in the interview he would ask if there had been any particular problems in the development of the company and then encourage the manager to explain the problem in some detail and illustrate how the problem was eventually surmounted. From this example he would begin to develop ideas about how individuals’ manage particular problems and about the information they used in
doing this. It is emphasised that it is important to use material that can be substantiated since there are criticisms of the technique relating to recall, and the natural tendency of individuals to use hindsight in rationalising the past.

Edvardsson and Ross (2001) in appraising the differing variants of critical incident technique also argue that one must understand the significance of critical incidents in the light of human memory mechanisms and judgment processes. Flanagan, (1954, pps.327-342) expresses the preference for the ‘direct observation’ in relation to recording critical incidents, but on the basis of putting in place a particular procedure to record the incident states that:

on the whole, it seems reasonable to assume that, if suitable precautions are taken, recalled incidents can be relied on to provide adequate data for a fairly satisfactory first approximation to a statement of the requirements of the activity.

He then goes on to describe how interviews can be used to collect critical incidents and provides a brief summary of the principal factors involved in utilising the interview process to best effect, for example; the provision of explanations in relation to the authority for the study, its purpose, why the interviewee was selected, the anonymity of the data, the importance of framing questions to minimise bias, and the need to evaluate the critical incident examples as to whether or not they are verifiable etc.

When the above factors were evaluated, I concluded that the majority of the recommended factors related to good practice in interviewing techniques and the use of critical incident examples would enrich the data obtained from general questions, and could be used to verify general statements made in the interviewing process: for example where a particular role was identified as being crucial to the work of the change champion, it would be useful to ask at a later stage in the interview process for an example of a critical incident where the interviewee had been particularly successful and subsequently analyse whether or not the skill identified as being particularly important had been utilised in the successful example provided.
Having described the reasons for selecting the various research methods, the next section details how they were implemented in practice and describes the interview process in detail commencing with the selection of participants.

6.2 The Interview Process

6.2.1 Selection of Participants

As outlined in Chapter 1, pps.3-4, this research is concerned with the work of 37 change champions representative of the local government system in N.I. Chapter 3, p.52 provides details of the composition of the network and its unique features. The overall sample boundary was therefore confined to these 37 champions and a representative sample from within this potential field was chosen to reflect their various backgrounds and differing roles. Table 21 summarises the composition of the champions’ network and those selected for interview in the various categories.

Table 21 Interview Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Nominees</th>
<th>Interview Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local District Council: Chief Executives Directors HR Managers</td>
<td>26 consisting of: 11 5 10</td>
<td>12 consisting of: 5 4 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party nominees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Association &amp; Association of Councillors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18 (12 Officers &amp; 6 Elected Members)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I recognised that construction of the sampling frame was crucial, particularly in relation to later analysis and any conclusions or recommendations that I would make arising from the research. With a manageable number of change champions (37) it would have been preferable to interview all the change champions. Given the restrictions on my time, and more importantly the time available to the change champions, I concluded that a sample of approximately 50% spread across various categories of champion would be preferable. This was achieved within a timeframe of 11 months, allowing for coordination of diary commitments and emerging priorities. The key features considered when determining the sample were as follows:

*Boundaries* - the overall total boundary for the research was determined as the 37 change champions, currently operating at local level but with further sub-boundaries created in order to capture data from a cross section of officer and member champions.

*Sample size* - the sample size was small enough to study the participants in depth within a reasonable timeframe.

*Purposive* - participants were selected to specifically represent a cross section of champions as opposed to a random sample, which may have produced a biased, rather than a representative sample. The change champions were examined by category; firstly in terms of the distinction between officer and member, with 12 officers selected from a population of 26 and six elected members selected from a population of 11. The reason for the larger percentage sample of elected members as opposed to officers was to provide a spread of interviewees across political parties (Nationalist/Unionist traditions). Within the officer category, five of the eleven chief executive champions were interviewed. The five chief executives were selected as they represented a cross-section of councils in terms of size, location and majority political opinion. I decided to interview four of the five directors as two of the five director posts had direct responsibility for the HR function together with their overall corporate responsibilities.
This choice resulted in a smaller overall proportion of HR managers being interviewed; three from a population of 10. Sampling in this manner, both within and across categories enabled me to provide details of general constructs and their relationships. In practice, the original sampling construct was implemented as planned, but this was not easy to achieve, as emerging commitments of both myself as a researcher and the participants, had to be accommodated and resulted in a longer than anticipated timeframe to complete the interview process. All the participants hold senior positions within the local government sector and are well respected for their knowledge of the system, most serve on joint working parties and joint local government committees and gaining access for interview purposes was only possible due to their commitment to the change initiative and my central ‘recommending’ role.

A full experience profile for those interviewed, detailing their current posts or political affiliations and experience in managing and implementing change is detailed in Appendix 1, p.350 (Interviewee Personal Profiles). By way of summary:

- **The five chief executives interviewed** had each been in post for at least six years and each had a minimum of ten years local government experience. All had previously been responsible for implementing major change in their own organisations and within the local government sector as a whole.

- **The four directors interviewed** all had responsibility for differing directorates (development, corporate services, management services, people and policy). One director was promoted to this level during the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative, and all had a minimum of ten years local government experience. As with the chief executives interviewed, the directors had previously been responsible for introducing major change within their own organisations assisted in implementing various change initiatives across local government.
• **The three heads of HR interviewed** had been in post for a minimum of ten years and had extensive local government experience. Two were promoted from within the system and the other had been recruited from the private sector. In addition to their HR role they also had other functional responsibilities within the organisation. Each had introduced other major changes within their own organisation and had served on local government sector working groups to implement change across the local government sector.

• **The six elected members interviewed** had served a minimum of two (4 year) terms as district councillors (five had served a minimum of four terms). Two of the interviewees were Members of the Local Assembly (MLA) at Stormont and the others held senior party positions on representative bodies. All six were responsible for introducing major change and had influenced party policy at all levels.

6.3 Ethical Issues

Having examined the ‘Ethical Issues in Action Research’ in general in Chapter 5, pps.161-164, and their relevance to this research, it is important to examine how these issues were considered during the interview process and the reasons why specific actions were taken at implementation stage.

Mason (2006) in her text on qualitative researching provides relevant examples of potential ethical issues when determining the research strategy, generating qualitative data and analysing qualitative data. Similarly Miles and Huberman (1994) provide an outline of ethical theories and specific ethical issues to be considered before, during, and after qualitative studies. On the basis of the above guidance, and utilising the headings identified in Miles and Huberman (1994, pps.290-295) the following ethical issues were identified as particularly relevant to this research.
Worthiness of the project - this was a fundamental consideration, given that I required the commitment of my organisation and that I was involving high profile and busy people in the research. While there was always the danger that the research would not fulfil the specified objectives, or would be abandoned before completion, a risk analysis, carried out in discussion with key stakeholders identified sufficient positive indicators to enable the project to proceed. Such positive indicators included the fact that each district Council had signed a statement of commitment to the change initiative, the change champions had already been implementing their role at local level for a two-year period, the Minister for the Environment had agreed funding for the project, and a similar change champions’ network was being considered to assist with the planned reorganisation of local government in the years ahead. More importantly the change champions themselves were keen to learn from the process and agreed to participate in any planned future development programme based on the research findings.

Competence boundaries - I considered that I had the expertise to carry out the study to a good quality standard and that guidance would be provided on an ongoing basis by my supervisors, the course leader, and other members of my action learning set. I recognised the dangers of involving participants in a research study without such assistance and expertise. Not only would the findings be potentially flawed, but if the findings were adopted as future professional practice, the impact on the overall change initiative would be negative rather than positive. By involving others, as participants in the research, their professional reputations as well as my own, would be seriously damaged if the research process or analysis was found to be fundamentally flawed.

Informed consent – As discussed in the last chapter, in action research full informed consent by participants may not be possible (Williamson and Prosser 2002), but I felt that due to the sensitivity of this research, it was very important that the people participating in the study had full information about what the study would involve and that their consent to participate was freely given. In
order to gain consent and provide those selected for interview with the opportunity to withdraw from the process or otherwise, I had regard to the University of Brighton (2007) *Guidance on Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance* and wrote to each potential interviewee detailing the purpose of the study and seeking their assistance. I also enclosed a copy of how the interview would be conducted (see Appendix 3, p.373) – making reference to the interview as a structured interview. In practice the interview was conducted on a semi structured basis, but in the local government environment, use of the term structured signals to potential participants that they would be asked a series of pre-planned questions together with supplementaries.

Having received their consent to participate, prior to the interview participants were informed again about the purpose of the research, the terms of their participation, how the data would be collected stored and analysed, and they were also provided with an opportunity to discuss any points of clarification. They were asked to sign a participant consent form based on the information provided, (see Appendix 4, p.376). Although this information was provided at the commencement of the interview, in practice points of clarification in relation to participation were discussed more frequently at the conclusion of the interview. Participants were particularly interested in ‘what happens next’ and who would have access to the transcript of the interview. None of the participants wished to have sight of the transcript, preferring to take their comments and suggestions as given in real-time and only offering to be contacted again should points of clarification be required. Their main questions related to their access to the findings from the research and how these would be disseminated. They expressed a real desire for me to consider how the results of the research could be communicated to all the change champions and the resultant improvement recommendations implemented in practice. I have since suggested that I present the results of the research and resultant action plan at a champions’ workshop to be held in April 2011, to which all champions would be invited together with chief executives and HR managers. This will provide an opportunity to demonstrate that I have listened to the suggestions of interviewees regarding dissemination, and also provide an
opportunity to recognise the important role played by the interviewees in the research process.

**Benefits, costs, and reciprocity** - it was important to consider what each party to the study would gain from having taken part and whether or not the balance was equitable. My organisation on the one hand had the potential to gain information that would further inform best practice, and on the other hand they had to agree to invest their chief executive’s time in pursuing the research and also pay for the costs involved. From my own perspective, I had the opportunity to pursue a subject I was personally interested in and from which I could potentially gain an academic qualification, but at the same time I had to balance the time spent on the project against ongoing work and family commitments. The interviewees had the opportunity to have their ongoing role appraised and make a valuable contribution to their future development program and this had to similarly balanced against their time and work commitments.

One additional unexpected point which arose from the research was that a number of interviewees indicated that they actually appreciated the opportunity to tell me about their ongoing work at local level, the roles they performed and what further assistance they required. On a number of occasions their colleagues have contacted me asking why they were not selected for interview and were informed that they were not part of the champions’ network and therefore outside the boundary of this research project. From the analysis of the benefits and costs, to all those involved in the research project, it appears that all parties had potential gains and losses but what emerged was a mutually supportive environment with all participants committed to the process and hoping to benefit from the outcome.

**Harm and risk** – As discussed in the last chapter, I recognised that this study, in common with any qualitative study, had the potential to harm or hurt the people involved. This point is emphasised by Mc Call and Simmons (1969, p.276) who believe that real or feared harm will always occur to someone in a
qualitative study and state the question bluntly: ‘to whom shall harm be done in this study and to what magnitude?’ As stated earlier the sponsoring organisation, together with me as researcher both had a high risk of being harmed, should the credibility of the process be brought into question. Real hurt, could be caused to the reputation of the political champions if confidentiality was breached as they were required to be honest in admitting their strengths and development needs.

The political champions were also in danger from their own party colleagues if for example, they made suggestions which implied the political system in which they operated was a barrier to their success and this was subsequently highlighted. Officer champions, who may admit to not being successful, may also feel at risk by admitting their failure to overcome resistance to the interviewer, who in future years may be deciding on their future employment. The analysis of such risks and potential harmful effects were considered by me, both in advance of conducting the research, and throughout the research process, and while it is virtually impossible to eradicate all the potential harmful effects of any research, I was conscious at each stage, that I was working in a political environment and dealing with real people who have the potential to be hurt in some way should be process not protect their reputation and integrity.

**Honesty and trust** - the reputation of my organisation as an ‘honest broker’ and my personal reputation as Chief Executive of such an independent organisation, assisted greatly in building an environment of honesty and trust throughout the research process. Our joint commitment to the change initiative to date, ongoing support to the champions’ network and our declared interest in its success, helped foster the relationship with the interviewees which enabled them to speak freely about their experiences. From my perspective as a researcher, while having confidence in the honesty of the interviewees answers to various questions, the use of the critical incident technique helped confirm or otherwise the answers given to earlier questions, and could be used to probe further when general examples were provided. As an insider researcher the interviewees were aware that I had a level of knowledge of the various
incidents to which they referred and as such may have an opinion on the appropriateness of the example provided or whether or not they were exaggerating their role. From an ethical perspective, I had to be aware that interviewees were speaking to me as a researcher and not as the Chief Executive of the Commission. When reminding interviewees that this was the case, I also had to remind myself when analysing the data, that I was working with the individual's perception of their world and reality and that this should be respected at all times.

**Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity** - The choice of location for the interview was left to the interviewee, with most choosing a private room in their work or constituency location, or my office. Providing this choice of location demonstrated my commitment to respect their privacy and introduced an element of partnering in the interview process. I was acutely aware that I had to protect the individual’s privacy particularly when discussing examples provided in response to critical incident questions. The change champions as a group are highly committed individuals who give freely of their time to the cause they really believe in. The ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative was designed to advance the position of women within local government and those individuals who agreed to be change champions may well have suffered gender inequalities and wish to change the system under which they have suffered. It was important during questioning to set boundaries and seek information relevant to their current role and how it might be developed and fostered, as opposed to in-depth discussion of their private reasons for becoming involved, and the merits or otherwise of what had happened to them in the past. Fortunately there were no instances in this research of the interviewee’s desire to right personal wrongs, which they might have suffered in the past, but the risk of such private issues emerging was real and had to be considered.

The issue of confidentiality was particularly important and highlighted in the information provided to interviewees. During one interview with an elected member, they requested that the recording machine be turned off as their response to one of the questions was politically sensitive. They were happy
however for me to continue taking notes which was an endorsement of their trust in my personal confidentiality, but they may have had concerns about how the recording would be transcribed, and who might have access to it. Such concerns were legitimate and recognised at the beginning of the process, with all recordings being transcribed anonymously by a commercial provider outside Northern Ireland.

Having provided the guarantee of anonymity to the participants, steps were taken throughout the process to ensure that no individual could be identified by the use of coding in individual analysis and when preparing summary data. This anonymity was carried forward when reporting findings in the body of this report. In order to ensure ongoing confidentiality and anonymity all electronic data is held on password protected hardware and transcripts of interviews are held securely by me in my own home.

**Intervention and advocacy** - The research had a potential ethical dilemma where I might hear information that could harm others, or be provided with examples of illegal actions or wrongful behaviour. In a political environment, deals and trade-offs are often part of the process in advancing change. Some champions provided examples of how they ‘managed’ to move change forward despite opposition but within a legal framework. When examples were provided of barriers which the champions encountered in the change process, it was important not to be judgmental or offer advice in overcoming such barriers in the future.

**Research integrity and quality** - while this is more a technical issue, ethical issues could arise when analysing and reporting the data if conclusions are reached to support my own thinking on the subject under investigation rather than the conclusions emanating from the data. In the data collection process, having outlined the question areas to be explored, the time frame for the interview was left to the interviewee. Most talked for approx. 45 minutes, but some took much longer and letting the interviewee set their own pace, I feel added to the ownership and integrity of the research. Similarly if conclusions
are reached based on ‘sloppy data’ and purported to be well-founded in order to gain continuing support for the initiative, I could be accused of exploiting the system. In carrying out the research, I relied on qualitative research literature, followed best practice examples and the advice of my supervisors to ensure the ongoing integrity of the research process.

**Ownership of data and conclusions** - ethical issues arise regarding my ongoing protection of the data. While this research report will be submitted to the University and scrutinised by various examiners, it can only be scrutinised to the extent that the anonymity of those who took part in the research is fully protected. It is unlikely that anyone in my organisation or in local government in Northern Ireland would wish to read this report in full, but there will of course be considerable interest not so much in the research process, but in the findings, conclusions and recommended way forward. A summary report or presentation will be prepared, and I have an obligation to ensure that the confidentiality protection afforded to date continues in subsequent reporting. With regard to the ownership of the data, the data obtained through the interview process will be held personally by me. I regard the findings of the investigation as the property of my organisation to be shared with those who participated and the wider local government community. Requests for access to this report will have to be initially considered on a need to know basis and within the confines of the assurances given to participants. To do otherwise would conflict with the ethical undertakings provided throughout the research process.

**Use and misuse of results** - in line with the objective of the research, the major use of the results should be to improve the effectiveness of the champions’ network and contribute to future planned change implementation. There is an obligation on the Commission, who sponsored the research and me as the researcher, to ensure that the results are used for this purpose. Having raised the expectations of the research participants, it is important that they are allowed to utilise the results to advance their improvement agendas at local level. It is difficult to see how the results could be misused, but to some extent if they are ignored; then this could be seen as a misuse of the process, and
could greatly damage those in local government initiating or participating in further research studies.

**Conflicts, dilemmas, and trade-offs** - it is clear from the number of ethical issues discussed, that potential conflicts can occur between the various ethical issues. Miles and Huberman (1994) provide the example of *validity versus avoiding harm* which is particularly relevant to an action research project where the insider researcher may utilise data which could cause harm in order to increase validity. If such a dilemma arises there is an obvious trade-off required and a judgment has to be made as to whether the end justifies the means and the elimination of potential harm is traded for the perceived overall validity of the research. At the commencement of this research I accepted that should such conflicts arise they would have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, as the very nature of such conflicts required individual reflection and attention to detail. Fortunately I did not have to consciously deal with particular ethical dilemmas, but it was important to recognise that such dilemmas could arise and be prepared to deal with them and seek advice where necessary.

The last chapter examined the ethical issues involved in introducing change, and implementing action research projects in particular. This section examined the ethical issues involved and what steps were taken to avoid harm in this particular research. The key learning point for me and my organisation in this respect is that ethical issues, while being common to all research, and having added dimensions in action research, are also particular to individual research projects and require ongoing attention at each stage in the process, by engaging with participants and gaining an insight into their particular concerns and potential ethical risks.

The following sections explain how the interviews were conducted, the scope and sequence of interviewing questions, efforts to limit bias, recording the data, the pilot interview and learning and validity.
6.4 Conducting the Interview

As discussed in the previous chapter, I adopted a qualitative semi-structured interviewing approach as this enabled me to tailor the interview process; Mason, (2006) considers the term ‘qualitative interviewing’ as usually intended to refer to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing. It is suggested that all such interviewing has the following core features in common:

- **The interactional exchange of dialogue**, which in my case was face-to-face.

- **A relatively informal style.** I encouraged the interviewee to see the interview as a conversation or discussion rather than a formal question and answer session. Although interviewees were provided with a list of question topics prior to the recording session, it was emphasised that our discussion would centre on these topics and the interviewee would be given an opportunity to determine their relative importance.

- **A thematic, topic-centered, biographical or narrative approach.** This was encouraged by the use of open questions and in particular with the opening question which asked the interviewee to talk about themselves and how they came to be a champion in the change process (see Appendix 5, p.377 - Change Champions 2008/9 – Interview Questions). The interview also had a fluid and flexible structure with various topics not being covered in the order detailed on the question sheet. On many occasions the planned questions did not need to be specifically put to the interviewee, as they were covered or naturally lead from discussion of an earlier topic. For example the discussion of development needs centered on the usefulness or otherwise of the training provided to date, with suggestions for future training emerging naturally from discussion. The term ‘conversation with the purpose’ as described by Burgess (1984, p.102) seems an appropriate way to describe this topic centered/narrative approach.
• Operating from the perspective that knowledge is situational and contextual. I tried to ensure that the relevant contexts, (their own position, their organisation, and the overall local government context) were brought into focus so that situated knowledge could be produced. My belief that data and knowledge could be constructed through dialogue during the interview encouraged the use of probing questions, supporting comments and gestures, seeking further examples and providing an opportunity at the end of the interview for the interviewee to talk about any relevant points not covered to date and to make further suggestions. This dialogue on a number of occasions took place when the recording of the interview had been completed and relevant data was collected by means of my own note taking and subsequently used in the data analysis.

6.4.1 Scope and Sequence of Interviewing Questions

In designing the scope and sequence of interviewing questions, I was conscious that this was an action research project, (as described in detail in para. 5.3 - Level 2, p.140), concerned with solving problems and contributing to professional practice. The purpose of the interview process was to gain knowledge from experienced practitioners on their roles, skills and development needs, what resistance they encountered, and their suggestions for an improvement plan. Maxwell, (2005) in suggesting that interview questions do not necessarily follow the format of research questions, emphasises that there is no way to “mechanically” convert research questions into methods and the methods (including interview questions) are the “means” to answering the research questions and not a logical transformation of the latter. Nevertheless, I was conscious that, working within a collaborative relationship with interviewees, my main objective was to provide data which would help solve the research problem; ‘the underrepresentation of women in local councils’ and that the information obtained from the interview could be utilised to improve the role of the change champions in practice. While this was clearly my agenda, it was important that the design of the questions did not inadvertently impose
restrictions on the interviewees’ perceptions of how they operated at local level.
Spradley, (1979) provided a useful framework for the design of potentially neutral and non-leading questions in that the questions put to each interviewee (Appendix 5, p.377 refers) included:

- **Grand tour questions**: these enabled interviewees to describe the situation in their own terms talking about themselves, how they came to be a change champion and how in their experience to date they had championed change.

- **Global questions**: interviewees were asked to describe incidents and examples where they felt they had been successful or unsuccessful in implementing change. In many cases interviewees provided examples which led to the specific type questions.

- **Specific questions**: While often arising from quoted examples the interviewee was asked specific questions about their development needs; support provided to date; and the most important role which they felt they played as a champion for change and how this worked in practice.

While the questions used were intentionally quite short to enable the interviewee to place their own interpretation on the question, in many cases prompts were required to reveal more details of the phenomena being discussed, including extension and encouragement questions (tell me more about?.... is there anything else?) and supplementary example questions were also utilised to provide a more extensive exploration of the setting or event described by the interviewee.

The sequence of questioning was designed with an opening grand tour unfreezing question, to enable the interviewee to talk about themselves, become familiar with the interview process, utilise eye contact, receive nonverbal support and encouragement, and determine the pace of their answers. The opening question also enabled me to capture the interviewees
own terms and concepts at an early stage in the interview process. Similarly
the closing question covered the totality of the topics discussed and asked if
there was anything else the interviewee would like to say about the subject
under discussion. The middle questions were more specific, and their
sequencing very much depended on the priorities identified by the interviewee
in answer to the opening question, their thought patterns, their natural linking of
topics and points raised during discussion of examples and critical incidents.
Since all interviewees had allowed a considerable amount of time for the
interview, interviews were relaxed and each interview session came to a natural
end and the final question, soliciting further information, enabled me to bring
the interview to an end in an orderly fashion.

6.5 Limiting Bias

Efforts to limit bias have been discussed under ‘sample selection’ (para. 6.2.1,
p.175) and ‘scope of questions’ (para. 6.4.1, p.188), but since I was engaged in
an action research process I was not detached from the subject I was
researching, but working in collaboration with those interviewed to develop best
practice and help solve a particular problem. I had to be aware that the
knowledge I had gained to date on the use of change champions, and the
development program put in place would be challenged and new suggestions
could and did emerge. I had to be careful not to challenge suggestions or
openly support any new initiatives suggested. I was aware that my ‘presence’
as an interviewer could bias the interviewees’ responses to questions. I had
personal ties with this study, both from an organisational development and
academic perspective, and could not exclude my own personal goals and
concerns from the design of the research, but I was particularly careful to
ensure at the data collection (interview) stage, that a non-judgmental stance
was maintained towards the interviewees answers to questions. I had a distinct
advantage, as an action researcher, in that I was viewed as a colleague,
facilitator and stakeholder in the problem under investigation. This also had the
disadvantage of potentially turning the interview into an opportunity for
discussion of other issues or for power issues to emerge. In order to avoid
these ‘social’ or ‘political’ issues emerging, prior to the interview there was a fair
degree of social interchange where it was agreed if requested, that following
the interview, other matters of general interest could be discussed.

6.6 Recording the Data

Data recording took place at two levels; firstly, with the consent of the
interviewees the interview was recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed in
full, and secondly, I made my own field notes, on each interviewee, guided by a
pro forma interview template (see Appendix 6, p.379 - Change Champions
2008/09 Interview Structure, Checklist and Notes).

The use of the digital recorder meant that I could concentrate on the process of
the interview and could focus my attention on the interviewee, and provide
appropriate eye contact in support of nonverbal communication. I also had a
verbatim record of the whole interview. I was aware that recording could
potentially make respondents anxious and less likely to reveal confidential
information, but in discussion before the interview, each interviewee indicated
that they were happy with the recording process and I did not detect at any
stage during the interview (with one exception) that the recording process
inhibited their openness and honesty. Many of the interviewees had previous
press and television media exposure and perceived the recording of interviews
as normal practice.

As with all technology, there were two instances where the digital recorder for
whatever reason, did not fully record the interview process.

The first instance occurred when the interviewee in the course of the interview
expressed concern relating to their own honesty in answering various
questions. They had overtly criticised members of their political party for their
reluctance to embrace change and adjust their policies in line with new thinking
and changes in the political climate. They were worried that the recording
would be fully transcribed and may one day be made available to others.
Despite assurances, they were much more comfortable with my note taking during discussion of ‘sensitive’ issues, and when these issues had been discussed, they indicated to me to return to the recording process. On another occasion, the recorder did not work at all and I had no transcript of the interview. In this case I fed back my field notes to the interviewee and sought various points of clarification. I also provided a data summary to the interviewee who agreed the content. This was particularly interesting in that the interviewee did not introduce any new points or elaborate further on answers to interview questions. At the conclusion of our second meeting to clarify the data summary I asked the interviewee if their agreement may be due to interview fatigue and their response was clear that they felt that their views had been adequately covered and that there was no need to comment further. I did however feel that by the third stage in the interview process, I was receiving passive consent from a very busy individual who had already given their best, and had other work priorities, as well as contributing to the research process.

Knowing that I would have a full verbatim record of the interview (with the above two exceptions), allowed me to make some additional field notes. The disadvantage in the loss of eye contact when taking notes was balanced against the advantage of recording additional or supplementary data. I was aware that those being interviewed had participated in selection interviewing and were aware of the use of a competency-based framework. They had all interviewed candidates for various posts where it was essential that they record candidates’ answers to questions in order to evidence their competencies against the stipulated criteria. The loss of eye contact when noting candidates’ responses to questions was seen as normal practice and usually explained to the candidate in advance of the interview to assure them that the interviewers were not disinterested in their answers but on the contrary, were noting responses for further consideration. During my many years interviewing candidates for chief executive and senior posts and acting as an independent assessor on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments I had also gained a level of expertise which enabled me to maintain a high level of eye contact and simultaneously make notes. I therefore felt that those being
interviewed would be comfortable with additional note taking and I had the skills to make additional notes and not appear disinterested in interviewees’ responses to the various questions.

Having made the decision to take notes during the interview, it was important that I maximised this opportunity and did not simply record the same data as the digital recorder. In order to help structure my note taking and assist with later data analysis, my note taking template was also designed to take account of the headings in the ‘contact summary sheet’ which I had prepared as an analysis tool to assist at the first stage of my planned data analysis. This provided a link, at an early stage, between my field notes and the first stage in my planned data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) in considering the early steps in qualitative data analysis refer to the preparation of a ‘contact summary sheet’, which is useful for focusing or summarising questions about a particular field contact. This is prepared following the consideration of the field notes and is described as a rapid, practical way to do first run data reduction without losing any of the basic information; the write up or transcript, to which it refers. At data analysis stage, I had decided to complete a contact sheet for each interviewee following receipt of the interview transcript. This contact sheet was more detailed than the summary sheet referred to in Miles and Huberman and was designed to capture as much relevant data as possible from the transcripts and my field notes to address the core questions relating to the research, reference examples of critical incidents quoted by participants and identify key quotes under research topic headings.

The interview template, including the headings from the contact summary sheet, acted as an overall guide to the interview process as well as providing an outline structure for field note recording (see Appendix 6, p.379). In summary it contained:

- The name of the interviewee, their organisation and post held, and the date, location and time of the interview.
- A check list of major points to be covered pre interview.
• A reminder to introduce the unfreezing questions
• A list of the unfreezing questions together with space to note useful supporting quotes, the interviewees attitude to the question, any nonverbal behaviour and points to be probed or discussed later in the interview.
• The interview core questions with space for similar note taking.
• The final page of the pro forma provided space for any comments which I wished to add at the conclusion of the interview relating to the topic headings in the data analysis contact sheet.

In practice the pro forma proved very useful for guiding the interview, particularly as a template for my note taking, and to keep me focussed on the subject headings to be used in later data analysis.

The use of two data recording methods was particularly useful, in that the transcripts, while providing a verbatim record of the interview, could not provide a real feel for the participant’s enthusiasm or otherwise in answering each question, their tone of voice or the emphasis they placed on the examples provided. The field notes enabled me to record immediate general impressions and provide comments at an early stage in the data analysis process which I could not have provided from analysis of transcripts alone.

6.7 Pilot Interview and Learning

Prior to the pilot interview, which took place in Dec.’08, my practical planning process included:

• A series of test sessions with the digital recorder.
• Discussion with supervisors (Nov.’08) on the interview design, the venue and the environment, how the interview would be conducted and the topics to be addressed.
• Preparation for my role as an interviewer included revisiting the literature on qualitative techniques and the interview as a source of data collection; recording useful lessons and references.
• Revisiting the problems associated with the insider researcher.
• Developing the note taking pro-forma template.

The choice of the individual to be interviewed was difficult in that I wanted the pilot to be ‘real’ and not conducted as a role-playing exercise. Equally, I did not want to ‘practice’ my interviewing technique with a busy chief executive or political representative. I was fortunate that a chief executive, who had recently retired from their post, when approached, willingly agreed to take part in the pilot interview. They agreed that should the interview take a long period of time or if I needed to repeat the interview, stop it at any time, and restart or change the line of questioning that this would not be a problem. They also agreed to provide feedback at the end of the interview on their feelings about the process and provide any suggestions for improvement.

A summary of the learning from the pilot interview included:

• The need to plan time in advance of the interview to talk to the interviewee in general terms over coffee/tea in order to put the interviewee at ease and to reinforce collaborative working and insider researcher relationships. To plan time at the conclusion of the interview to socialise or discuss business with the interviewee in order to ensure that they were not simply dismissed at the conclusion of the interview. This ‘after interview’ discussion became more relevant as the other interviews progressed in that interviewees appeared to perceive this as ‘their time’ (often only ten minutes) when, with the interview completed, they could talk about other things happening in their lives unrelated to the research topic.
• The need to try to focus the interviewee on the research topics without interrupting their thought processes or the story they want to tell.
• The importance of confidentiality was really reinforced by the pilot interview in that, when the participant was asked about how they came to be a champion for change, they provided very personal examples relating to their childhood upbringing, their career challenges and their desire to create a better society.
● Confidentiality was also reemphasised when real-life examples were provided in relation to the barriers often encountered in the change process.

● I became more comfortable with the digital recording process and was really relieved when the transcript returned with only a few queries regarding individuals’ names or place names.

● I increased the amount of space under each heading in my interview pro forma outline and learned that the questions did not follow the sequence pattern as originally envisaged as the interviewee continually linked topics and referred back to answers to other questions.

● The critical incident examples were particularly useful and I learned to code the examples in line with the interviewee’s perception, as either positive or negative.

● The interviewee felt that the most positive aspect of the interview was that in their view; it covered all matters related to their role, provided an opportunity for them to contribute to the learning process, and to tell their story in the hope that others might learn from it.

● The negative comments only related to the timing of the research; in that they had hoped that it would happen sooner and lessons learned could be disseminated well in advance of the reorganisation of local government (then planned for May 2011).

● I became more comfortable with the actual interview process, as I became more practiced with other interviewees, but the pilot interview gave me a sense of confidence and enabled me to continue with the research.

6.8 Validity

Mason (2006) defines the concept of validity in terms of asking if your research is valid; in that you are observing, identifying and measuring, what you say you are. As discussed in this report the sampling frame represented a cross-section of those who had direct knowledge of the topic being observed i.e. how change champions operated in practice (Table 21, p.175 – details the composition of the champions’ network and interview sample) and the methods
used to gather the information were seen as the most appropriate in the circumstances (see para. 6.1, p.170).

Maxwell (2005, p.108) argues that qualitative researchers generally deal with validity threats as *particular* events or processes that could lead to invalid conclusions rather than *generic variables* that need to be controlled, and discusses two broad types of threats to validity that are often raised in relation to qualitative studies: *researcher bias* and the *effect of the researcher on the individuals studied*. The particular potential bias threats in this research are discussed in a previous section (para. 6.5, p.190 - Limiting Bias) and the effect of the researcher on the individuals studied has been discussed in Chapter 5 (para. 5.3.3, p.143), (para. 5.4, p.152) and (para. 5.5, p.155).

Maxwell (2005, pps.109-116) emphasises that although methods and procedures do not necessarily guarantee validity, they are nonetheless essential to the process of ruling out validity threats and increasing the credibility of conclusions. He makes reference to various checklists that can be used for this purpose, (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Becker, 1970; Kidder, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990) and provides a composite check list of strategies which can be utilised not for verifying conclusions but for testing the validity of conclusions, or the existence of potential threats to those conclusions. Each of the strategy headings and their relevance to this research are considered as follows:

- **Intensive, Long-Term Involvement**: It is claimed, (Becker and Greer, 1957), that long-term participant observation provides more complete data about specific situations and events than any other method. Although this research was not based on participant observation, I had a long-term involvement with the problem being researched, a shared relationship with those under investigation and through initial studies of the change champions, under part one of the DBA, I had gained knowledge of their initial role definition and development needs.
• **‘Rich’ Data**: The intensive interviews, verbatim transcripts and the structured field notes ensured that mistaken conclusions could not be supported. All conclusions were referenced back to the data collected and evidenced to provide a research audit trail for verification purposes.

• **Respondents Validation**: Respondents’ validation or ‘member checks’, is described as systematically soliciting feedback about your data and conclusions from the people you are studying (Bryman, 1988, pps.78-80; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and is seen as an important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and the perspective they have on what is going on. However, participants’ feedback is also seen as no more inherently valid than their interview responses; both of which should be taken simply as evidence regarding the validity of the account (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As discussed under ‘Ethical Issues’ (para. 6.3, p.178), interviewees were not provided with copies of the transcript for checking as, although they were provided with the opportunity, chose not to do so. Had there been problems with interpretation of the transcripts, or the understanding of examples provided, participants would have been asked for clarification.

Throughout the interview, where clarification was required, I asked direct questions or sought further examples; these points of clarification are recorded in the transcript. The contact summary sheets, prepared following the interview, as the first stage of analysis, often contained comments made by me as an insider researcher, and on occasions, resulted in initial generalisations being validated or queried as the analysis process progressed. I also felt that the individual input from respondents at an early stage in the data analysis process may have caused confusion should they wish to reinterpret the data or with hindsight, retract political or the highly sensitive examples provided.
• **Intervention:** As this was an action research project, my involvement as the researcher; both in the change process and in the development of the champions’ network can be described as an intervention. This intervention enabled me to discuss my understanding of the change process with all those involved, provide development opportunities to be evaluated later in the research, and to explore with the change champions their initial perceived role. The intervention strategy placed me as an integral part of the research, with an understanding of the problem to be solved and how the research might contribute to improved management practice.

• **Searching for Discrepant Evidence and Negative Cases:** This was particularly relevant in the analysis of critical incidents or examples provided by the interviewee when answering direct questions on role definition, skills, barriers and development needs. At the data analysis stage, it was important to scrutinise the transcripts to seek out evidence in the described critical incidents of how, for example; the role described early in the interview was evidenced in practice. Similarly where generalisations were being made and a number of participants did not conform to the generalisation, it was necessary to revisit the transcripts and field notes and ascertain why this had occurred and the generalisation, if appropriate was qualified accordingly, and reported in the research findings.

• **Triangulation:** Fielding and Fielding (1986) provide an extensive discussion of triangulation, (collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods), as a validity testing strategy in qualitative research. They note that it is not true that triangulation automatically increases validity in that the methods that are triangulated may have the same basis and sources of invalidity, for example; interviews, questionnaires and documents are all vulnerable to self-report bias. In this research, regardless of methods of data collection adopted, I was dealing with the sole sample population, I was
working within a restricted time frame with a group of change champions who had already been involved in initial research and to a large extent were validating or otherwise their initial role perception utilising their unique experience at local level over a period of years. It was this rich and relevant experience that was being investigated, and I felt that to ask them to participate in the research through a variety of methods could result in a lack of enthusiasm to participate or at worst that they might withdraw from the process. I felt it was more important to examine what particular sources of error or bias might occur and to look at specific ways to limit such bias, rather than relying on additional research methods.

- **Quasi-Statistics**: Although this was a qualitative research study, the data analysis had an implicit quantitative component in order to determine whether particular roles, skills, barriers or development needs were typical, rare, or prevalent in particular situations (council or political party level) or applied to certain categories of champions (officer or elected member). This enabled me to describe findings based on the amount of evidence in the data attributed to a particular conclusion together with the rich examples provided and critical incidents. Reference to numbers and groups also assisted in displaying the analysis of the data to support conclusions and recommendations.

- **Comparison**: Due to the crosscutting nature of the sample I was able to compare the findings in one group e.g. chief executives, directors and HR managers and relate these findings to elected representatives, and evaluate any potential correlation or otherwise. In most cases I was able to identify clear similarities while in other cases differences were evident and reported in the research findings. As a final comparator, the research findings were related back to the summary conclusions from the literature review and comparisons made with relevant studies undertaken in relation to the change agents operating in a similar
environment and involved in the implementation of major change at local level or across a number of organisations.

Having conducted the interviews, compared the transcripts and my own interview notes, the next stage in the process was to analyse the data and determine the research findings. How I analysed the data, the method adopted and the research findings are detailed in the next Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS

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7.2 What are the strengths and limitations of my data analysis? 209
This chapter details how I analysed the data in order to determine the findings from the research. It describes how the organisational categories were determined at the commencement of the study, how the data from the individual transcripts and interview notes were analysed to produce sub-categories, how these were combined across the overall sample for further analysis to determine general themes, and how the emergent general themes were explored and expanded to determine the overall findings.

7.1 How did I analyse the data?

The data analysis consisted of three concurrent and interwoven flows of activity; data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, (Miles and Huberman, 1994 pps.10-12). Data reduction being described as the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appeared in my written-up interview notes and transcripts for each individual interviewee. Data display occurred at the second stage of the analysis, when I continued with data reduction by combining the data from all interviewees and developing cross cutting themes and preparing results matrices. Conclusion drawing and verification, while described as a specific stage (3) in the analysis process, was an integral part of the first two stages, in that; I continually asked what statements made by interviewees meant, explored emerging patterns, exceptions and contradictions, and revisited transcripts and interview notes to verify and test initial findings before determining and verifying final conclusions.

The staged data analysis process followed is detailed in Table 22:
Table 22  Summary Staged Data Analysis Process

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<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Data reduction:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Determining pre interview main organisational categories</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Identifying subcategories (individual) as the interviews progressed</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Data reduction/data display:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing a summary data matrix for each of the four organisational categories and related subcategories (see Data Display Tables 25-28)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Frequency coding.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Supporting statements</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Conclusion drawing/verification:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- identifying breadth and depth of ideas and suggestions</td>
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</table>

How the above process operated in practice is described in greater detail as follows:

7.1.1 Stage 1 – Data reduction

Determining pre interview main organisational categories

Prior to conducting the interviews, some issues relating to the general categorisation strategy had been determined, in that the research question in seeking to explore; the roles, skills, barriers encountered, and the development needs of the change champions had established four ‘organisational’ categories (Maxwell, 2005), to be utilised as segments for future analysis. These organisational categories were the ‘broad areas, issues or topics’ that I established prior to the interviews, and through pre interview planning, could reasonably expect them to be discussed during the interview process. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, pps.469-470) describe such topics as the
descriptive name for the subject matter of the segment and state that in
determining these topics the researcher is not asking ‘what is said?’ which
identifies the meaning of the topic segment, but that these categories act as
‘bins’ for initially sorting the data for further analysis (cf. Coffey and Atkinson,
1996, pps.34-35). These four categories related directly to the research
question and were useful as headings for presenting results, but did not make
sense of what the change champions actually perceived as; their role, skills, the
resistance they encountered, and their development needs. This task required
the creation of further substantive categories drawn from the interviewees own
words, their beliefs and concepts, and based on ‘open coding’ of the data
(Strauss and Corbin, 1998) as follows:

**Identifying sub-categories (individual)**

As described in para. 6.6, p.191, interview questions were designed around the
four initial organisational categories and included in the ‘interview structure,
checklist and notes pro forma’ (see Appendix 6, p.379) which was designed as;
a pro forma interview outline to assist note taking, a guide to the planned
interview format, and as a reminder of the four organisational category
headings detailed in the extended ‘contact summary sheet’ (Miles and
Huberman 1994), which I completed as soon as possible after the interview and
in advance of the next planned interview. The extended contact summary
sheet contained:

- **A Personal Profile** – detail of the interviewees background and experience
  in introducing or managing change.

- **Interviewer’s Comments** – my general comments on the overall
  impression made by the interviewee for example: the emphasis they placed
  on commitment to the task, their perspective on change in general and how
  they could be described in terms of managing the process e.g. a people
  centered approach, performance driven, creating networks etc. This
  general impression proved useful when revisiting the data for more detailed
analysis and any assumptions made at this stage were later verified and referenced.

- **Analysis Matrix** – completed following the interview with reference to the interview transcript and my notes. The matrix included the organisational headings of; *context, roles, skills, barriers, development needs, and positive and negative critical incidents* which were referenced back to the conversation in the transcript under the headings of; *commentary, examples and reference*.

The completion of this individual extended contact summary sheet formed the second step in my data analysis (see Appendix 7, p.384 - Sample Completed Contact Summary Sheet), and enabled me to reflect on the main themes, issues and concepts which I saw emerging from each individual interview. This analysis identified individual substantive sub-categories under the four organisational categories and provided an insight into what was actually going on, and were referenced back to the interviewees own description of their beliefs as to their role, skill requirements, resistance encountered and development needs for example:

Organisational Category – **Roles**, was expanded to include new ideas with reference to the interviewees own description of their role as a change champion which resulted in development of the following sub-category headings:

- Leadership
- Belief in the Process
- Commitment
- Supporting the Change
- Motivating
- Building Support
- Communication
The other three organisational categories; skills, barriers, and development needs, were similarly expanded on the basis of each interviewee's description or their beliefs. These individual sub-categories were brought together, in order to develop a more general theory of what was going on in practice (Maxwell, 2005), as explained at the next stage (2) in the data analysis.

7.1.2 Stage 2 - Data reduction/Data display

Summary data matrix
Having developed substantive sub-categories for each interviewee under the four main organisational categories, the next stage of analysis involved the completion of an overall data summary matrix which consisted of the sub-categories identified from all seventeen interviewees listed under the four main organisational categories. This enabled me to display the data obtained from all interviewees and compare and contrast their ideas under each of the four main categories. The result of this detailed analysis enabled me to cluster together similar ideas and create general sub-category headings as 'chunks' of data (Rossman and Rallis, 1998, p.171), representing emerging common themes and ideas and utilising terms used by the interviewees. Appendix 8, p.392 details the resultant, sub-category headings and the frequency colour codes utilised at the next stage of analysis.

Frequency coding
At this stage transcripts and data summary sheets were revisited to test the validity of the new sub-category headings, which were amended to ensure that they captured the meaning of the ideas put forward by interviewees and were not simply catch all titles. For example a new sub-category heading; (securing support from others) was added to the 'Barrier' main category to add greater meaning and complement the more general 'people' sub-category.
In order to assist with the formulation of conclusions at a later stage, the frequency or number of occurrences of each new sub-category heading was examined across the overall sample with reference to the summary data matrix. This was carried out by the allocation of individual colour codes to each sub-
category heading and coding by hand with coloured markers to determine both frequency in relation to the overall sample and by category of interviewee, (elected member, officer, and their position in the organisation; chief executive, director or head of HR). To test the validity of the results of the frequency of occurrence categories, each colour code allocated to a particular category of interviewee was traced back to their individual contact summary sheet and cross referenced to a particular paragraph and line in the interview transcript.

7.1.3 Stage 3 – Conclusion Drawing/Verification

Having determined the main ideas put forward by interviewees under the organisational categories; (roles, skills, barriers and development needs) and identified the related sub-category headings, their frequency and nature of occurrence and relationship with the interview transcripts and notes, the next stage involved identifying the breadth and depth of the ideas and suggestions. This involved revisiting the interview transcripts and preparing an audit trail of references to ensure that the basis for reaching the various conclusions could be retraced and verified. The verification process also included the testing of understanding of the meaning placed by me on the ideas put forward by interviewees. A display table was also prepared for each organisational category, listing sub-category headings, the language used by interviewees relating to the heading, the frequency analysis and relevant quotations from interview transcripts referenced as appropriate. These display tables are included in Chapter 8, to assist with the presentation of the findings and to help explain the conclusions and recommendations.
7.2 **What are the strengths and limitations of my data analysis?**

The Data analysis process relied entirely on the two data sources, my interview notes and the interview transcripts. The ‘interview structure, checklist and notes pro forma’ as detailed in para. 6.6, p.191, and Appendix 6, p.379 provides an example of the format of my note taking under the interview question areas which was used to supplement the data in the interview transcripts. A sample of interview transcripts, consisting of a transcript for each category of interviewee (see Appendix 9, p.410) demonstrates the length of time that interviewees talked about their ideas and the critical incidents identified on which the analysis was based. The transcripts similarly demonstrate the amount of my interjection which I attempted to limit to encouraging remarks or points of clarification.

It is however recognised that I introduced a level of bias by potentially probing specific examples and leading the interviewee to develop certain themes. While this may be inevitable in any interview process, the exploring of critical incident examples with the interviewee helped limit this bias and provided a level of reassurance that interviewees were bringing forward their own ideas and evidencing suggestions by clear examples from their own experiences.

The establishment of the main organisational categories prior to undertaking the study could be seen as anticipatory data reduction at an early stage in the process, as I intentionally related the data collection categories to the research question. This was an overall research design decision, taken by me at an early stage in the process, to enable data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously (Maxwell, 2005) and also to enable the research findings to be directly relevant to the action research problem under investigation.

The data analysis process as described earlier was based on a reduction of the data from the two sources namely; the interview transcripts and field notes. This involved a process of ‘data condensation’ (Tesch, 1990) which included organising the data into chunks in such a way that the conclusions could be
drawn and verified. This fragmentation of the data into ‘chunks’ and the creation of sub-category headings for the development of general conclusions inevitably resulted in a loss of context and meaning behind the comments made by individual interviewees (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Having examined the advantages and disadvantages of the use of computer packages (CAQDAS, ATLAS, NUD.IST, NVivo) to analyse the interview transcripts (Silverman, 2007, pps.188-206), I concluded that the use of such packages could result in a further loss of context and meaning and that my skills in operating these types of computer packages could not be sufficiently developed within the research time frame to enable me to utilise such packages effectively.

In order to limit this loss of context, and to be able to track the findings and recommendations from the research back to the two data sources, I introduced a referencing system at stage one of the analysis process. This involved ensuring that any data extracted from the interview transcripts or my field notes and summarised in the data summary sheets was referenced to a specific comment or suggestion made by a particular interviewee. This referencing system was similarly implemented at stage two in the preparation of the summary data matrix and at stage three in the drawing of conclusions. This system enabled verification and cross-checking between transcripts and analysis headings at each stage in the process and provided an audit trail between data sources and final recommendations. Similarly the ‘funnelling’ process, (Silverman, 2007,p.178) of preparing the data for final analysis and conclusion drawing involved me in moving deeper and deeper into the data in order to understand it, interpret larger meaning and on occasions revise original thinking and initial conclusions. The process, operating on a staged basis, also avoided the risk of early conclusion drawing and helped develop the conclusions as the analysis progressed, based on a redefining of topics (sub-category headings) as they became clearer and could be elaborated or redefined.

Having outlined the data analysis and the strengths and limitations of the process, Chapter 8 details the findings from the research.
CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS

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8.5 The Research Findings in Context 283
Research findings and recommendations are initially discussed in this chapter separately under each of the main categories of: *Roles, Skills, Barriers and Development Needs*, and where appropriate cross-referenced. The learning points from each category are also considered in order to develop recommendations to increase the effectiveness of the network. The discussion of findings, initially under separate headings, enables conclusions to be reached in relation to specific research questions:

- What roles did the change champions play in the change process?
- What skills did the champions utilise in the change process?
- What barriers to implementing change did the change champions encounter?
- What are the development/support needs of the change champions?

However, in order to determine the overall contribution of the research to the work of the Commission, in Chapter (9), the research findings are treated as a whole; with findings relating to individual research questions and individual category headings discussed in terms of how they fit within a practical best practice framework, before determining a recommended overall improvement plan. This approach both answers specific research questions, and facilitates the preparation of an overall improvement plan, which will contribute to the ongoing work of the Commission and improve its professional practice.

Summary tables are provided for each main category, together with related sub-categories developed as part of the data analysis process. These tables also include sample excerpts from interview transcripts listed under each sub-category to provide an understanding of the meaning behind interviewees’ ideas. A frequency analysis by sub-category is also included, to enable comparison of ideas between and across change champion categories.
8.1 Roles –Key Research Findings

What roles did the change champions play in the change process?

Discussion of the roles of the change champions is set initially in the context of the above research question. The roles as identified by interviewees are set out in summary form in Table 23 overleaf followed by a detailed explanation of the suggested sub category topics and related critical incident examples.
### Table 23  Key Research Findings – Required Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vital, needs to be clearly demonstrated, leading by example, leading from the front, being a role model

“The whole thing is if you get commitment from the top.” (D1)
“I thought that the right thing to do was to show leadership at the top of an organisation that is, at the top end, fairly solidly weighted with male executives and directors” (CE1)
“People are actually listening to what I said” (EM6)
“We have implemented a fairly substantial period of change for the leadership side of the council” (D2)

| Belief in the process | Frequency | 2 | 1 | 4 | 7 |

Personal commitment, clearly demonstrated, advocate, visibility and commitment, belief in change process, demonstrate belief.

“You’ve got to prioritise this as something that you want to do” (CE1)
“My starting point is always giving people the desire and the want for that change” (D2)
“strongly influenced by personal belief that the change is for the better” (CE1)
“I’ve always wanted to try and change some of that” (EM1)

| Commitment | Frequency | 3 | 4 | 6 | 13 |

Demonstrate commitment, personal commitment, advocate, persuasion, being comfortable with change process, understanding complexity, living the change process.

“We have to do is get a commitment on a corporate basis” (D3)
“If I get involved in something I like to give it the time” (EM6)
“you need to believe in what you’re doing” (D4)
“I took on because I felt strongly about them personally” (EM4)
Table 23  Key Research Findings – Required Roles (cont’d.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support the Change</th>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting the Change</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chief Executive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Director</strong></td>
<td><strong>HR Managers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Elected Member</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support and mentor, seeing more strategic picture, advocate, advancing overall agenda, provide help and guidance, recognising success, advancing agenda at every opportunity, bring unique added value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“awareness that being political isn’t a bad thing” (EM1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“the council are much more sympathetic to working women” (HR3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I speak on women’s issues” (EM4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’ve seen lots of changes in the organisation” (HR2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivating</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivating others (4), developing others, persuasion, value peoples contributions, encouraging others to commit, involving others, building ownership and involvement.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The key role you play is a motivator” ((D2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I recommended that highly and I think we should be doing more of the coaching” (HR2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think I have encouraged Directors” (HR3)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“again giving people opportunities” (CE2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Support</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building alliances, building trust, position and resources, involve others (2), change coalitions, utilising skills, develop capacity in others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“in association with women’s aid in Newry and all of the unions” (D3)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“you need buy in from others across the working group” (HR1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“making people feel comfortable...safe in that change” (D2)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“my time as director had brought these people up to a level of skills” (CE2)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23  Key Research Findings – Required Roles (cont’d.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gain consensus/tailor approach to audience, raising change profile, knowledge of subject, articulate the vision, building consensus.

“reporting...to the senior management team and council on progress” (D4)
“communication must be followed up by action if it is going to be meaningful” (EM2)
“the message comes down every single time” (HR1)
“I am a good advocate” (D1)
Discussion of findings:

Leadership: as a required role
Interviewees put forward the idea that leading the change process was the most important role for a change champion. This was a common theme raised similarly under other headings (skills and development needs), and in critical incident examples; with interviewees’ quoting successes and failures in attempting to show leadership and influence others. Although all interviewees saw leadership as a key role, the way they implemented this leadership role varied in practice.

- Chief executives and directors commented that they ‘demonstrated leadership through commitment’ and by ‘representing’ the change process. One interviewee made this point strongly by stating; ‘The whole thing is if you get commitment from the top’.
- HR managers saw their leadership role as ‘role models’ and talked of ‘encouraging others’
- Elected members saw their leadership role on two levels; firstly as individuals’ openly demonstrating commitment to the change process at every opportunity, e.g. ‘When I was Mayor, I was able to use that as a platform as well’ and secondly in a representative role, leading the change within their political party or nominating body. One interviewee described how she went to her party leader determined to change her party’s attitude to the change, in the following terms, ‘Look I’m meant to be the champion, I think I better actually do something, and I said are you happy enough, and I gave him a few ideas’.

No examples were provided to illustrate change champions stepping outside their main role within local government where chief executives would be expected to lead from the top, with senior staff exercising an influencing role and elected members in a representative role. Where two change champions came from the same council, there was little evidence of both jointly leading the change process, with the exception of elected members occasionally
seeking support by way of funding from senior staff for ‘one off’ initiatives. Examples quoted mainly related to ‘Visible Women’ events or community initiatives with local women’s groups.

Although staying within their normal roles and positions, some of the examples of how individual champions lead from the front were ‘novel’, in that they rarely happen within local govt. e.g. generating community support, Visible Women events and meaningful collaboration across parties. These had an impact across their council, jointly with other councils and with community groups. These initiatives were not planned, but the fact that they were given the title ‘change champion’ seemed to empower them and enable them to take a lead role in making things happen.

The style of leadership adopted by the champions varied depending on their perception of the best way to manage change, their background and current position. Chief executives saw their role as leading an improvement agenda, described as ‘it would be ISO9000, Charter Marks and QUEST’ with change as an integral part, and were therefore driven by system and process changes. They also saw their role as providing strategic direction and delegating the outworking of the change to directors and appropriate professional offices. A typical comment included ‘I know that I always have to have on my team the people who are very good at the detail - that’s not where I live. I like the blue sky, I like the global thinking’. HR practitioners saw leadership from a very human perspective and leading initiatives by ‘involving people’ across the council and building trust, while elected members saw leadership as being an advocate for the change at every opportunity. Best described by one elected member as keeping the change ‘on the council agenda, before the council and the public’, at every opportunity. Discussion on leadership often led to interviewees confirming their role as showing a ‘belief in the change process’.
Belief in the process: as a required role
After each interview, without exception, I was left with a feeling that the change champions were driven by their real belief in the change and that they were committed to give of their best to make it happen. They had enthusiasm which was nurtured by sometimes even small successes. The critical incidents quoted, where they had not been successful, were seen as a learning opportunity and did not deter them from attempting to try and make change happen on another occasion. This was described in detail by one interviewee where their lack of progress in the change was ‘due to the leadership not addressing the change tensions’, but ‘this has helped make me stronger and more determined’. This strong belief, that the change was good for the council or the community, meant that they gave it a high priority and tried to convince others to work with them to make it happen, example comments included: ‘I am strongly influenced by my personal belief that the change is for the better’, and ‘you’ve got to prioritise this as something that you want to do’. Their belief in the change itself was further evidenced by numerous references to their commitment to the role.

Commitment: as a required role
Although this was emphasised across categories, elected members in particular, saw their role as demonstrating commitment and implementing the change process by what they described as ‘living the change’. In order to achieve this they often paid a price in terms of time commitment, but this time was freely and willingly given. In quoting successes and failures through critical incidents, their non-verbal behaviour also indicated a passion for the various changes they had championed over time, (arms were raised to indicate success, heads were lowered and shook from side to side to indicate disgust, and eyes were closed to coincide with pauses of concern). They had a desire to recruit others to their ‘cause’ and saw their role as persuading others to join them. In a number of interviews the examples quoted were striking, with both elected members and officers telling how they had risked their personal reputations, or safety, to champion a change that they really believed in and were committed to. In a real critical incident example of this
personal risk, one interviewee described how she had shielded a neighbour from a potential sectarian attack, in an attempt to advance the equality agenda in NI, and in another example a chief executive described how he risked the confidence of his council by opposing their desired course of action to advance a change he believed was for the benefit of the local community.

**Supporting the change: as a required role**

Their role as a supporter of the change itself was largely explained in terms of the women’s initiative where champions turned their belief in the change and commitment into specific actions by publicly stating their support, speaking to women’s groups, and sharing their experience of success with others. This visible support related back to their comments on leadership and examples quoted included; chief executives and directors committing resources and recognising success, those responsible for HR actively encouraging women applicants to apply for promotion posts, and elected members encouraging women to become involved in politics and demonstrating that ‘being political isn’t a bad thing’. Chief executives and directors provided examples of supporting and mentoring women through structured management development programmes and HR managers provided examples of providing advice and guidance to women colleagues. They saw these actions as visible support with tangible outcomes and of real benefit in making the change. One HR professional, when asked to provide a critical incident relating to her success in supporting the change, described how she had personally mentored an individual who she described as ‘having no confidence’ and encouraged them to apply for promotion, and although unsuccessful the first time, with further coaching was eventually successful.

**Motivating: as a required role**

Motivation was mentioned at two levels; firstly how their own motivation was maintained at a high level by small successes and being encouraged or supported by others, and secondly how they motivated others in the councils to assist in the change process, one interviewee described how they had ‘encouraged directors’ and another how they ‘gave other people the
opportunity’ to contribute. The involvement of others was linked closely with ‘demonstrating leadership’ and examples were provided where the champions had encouraged others to take ownership of the problem and to jointly seek solutions. This was particularly evident in examples provided by elected members in working with community groups, but as with leadership, this activity was largely confined to peer groups, one off events, and was quoted as ‘encouraging participation’ and providing the opportunity for others to become involved with coaching suggested as a motivational technique.

**Building support: as a required role**

Interviewees stressed the key role of ‘building alliances’ and utilising all possible resources in terms of other people, organisations and their positions to build change coalitions and develop change capacity in others. This support building was not simply recruiting others to assist in the process but rather; an attempt to build meaningful and lasting partnerships with other groups involved in attempting to introduce similar changes. Examples were quoted from chief executives and directors where, in the past, they had built the capacity of their staff to introduce change by giving them change assignments and assisting them in this process. They felt that this past experience lead to a common bond of trust which was now useful as a lever to convince these staff to support other change initiatives. This was illustrated by an example provided by a chief executive interviewee who stated that his ‘time as director had brought these people up to a level of skills’ which he could now utilise to assist him with future change challenges. He felt that he had built this support initially by reputation, and by making potential supporters feel ‘safe’ about the change, which was further reinforced as the change programme unfolded, and he gradually delegated implementation to others to enable them to learn from their successes and failures in a supportive environment.

**Communication: as a required role**

The champion’s role as a communicator and negotiator of the change kept reoccurring when interviewees were asked about their roles, skills, the
barriers they encountered, and their development needs. They placed considerable emphasis on the importance of communication with all those involved throughout the change process, and saw their communications role as not simply passive (telling people what was going on) but utilising proactive communication to gain consensus, raise the profile of the change, and to develop joint action planning. Their role as a communicator had many similarities with their ideas on leadership, advocacy, motivating and support building. When asked to explain how communication took place, downward communication was defined as; ‘ensuring the message comes down every single time’, and upward communication was defined as; ‘communicating to the senior management team and council on progress’. Being a constant ‘advocate’ for the change process was seen as ‘visibly communicating’ and the importance of not just communicating, but establishing a joint change agenda was explained by one elected member in the following terms; ‘communication must be followed up by action if it is going to be meaningful’.

8.1.1 Contribution to Knowledge and Professional Practice – Roles

When the network was initially established it was not clear what specific roles the champions would perform. These have now been identified and clarified by the research, as set out in summary format in Table 23, pps.214-216, which answers the research question designed to answer the ‘what they do in practice’ aspect of the research. Having identified the various roles, and been assured that the champions feel that they can collectively contribute effectively to the implementation of the change process, it is not intended to redefine their roles or prioritise these emerging roles in order of importance. From the Commission’s perspective the real contribution to practice lies in enhancing the network, and recommendations are therefore designed to enable the champions to perform their roles more effectively, and create conditions where they can continue to develop.

In order to initially consider how the research findings in relation to the roles performed by the change champions can contribute to the development of the overall improvement plan, the findings are discussed from two perspectives,
firstly; the evaluation of existing practice, and secondly if they suggest any improvements. The discussion of each topic is followed by an improvement recommendation which will be considered as part of the overall improvement plan in the next chapter.

Where appropriate, relevant literature, as detailed in the Literature Review (Chapter 4) is also initially signposted during discussion of each topic, to enable the overall contribution to knowledge of the research to be discussed, together with the overall recommendations to improve professional practice in the next Chapter 9.

8.1.2 Evaluating Existing Practice - Roles

Network composition
The Commission adopted a dispersal approach to the change, utilising a number of individual change champions, but reflecting their differing roles and stakeholder groupings (Officer/Member) within local government, (Hartley, et. al., 1997). The research demonstrated that this approach generated what Caldwell (2006) describes as ‘creative human action’ across the whole local government system, with a range of champions implementing their emergent change agency roles in differing ways. As the research indicated that each category of change champion tended to implement their change agency role in the same manner as their normal role within local government, had the Commission created a network consisting only of, for example, chief executives; as influential individuals within their councils, (Ohmae 1992; Tichy and Devanna 1986; Hunsaker and Cook 1986), the differing approaches to the change process, and access to differing interest groups and sources of support may not have occurred, (Hammer and Champy 1993; Davenport 1993; Buchanan and Badham 1999). The research indicates that by the implementation of a multi-functional dispersal strategy, the Commission have, over time, created a network of many individual 'actors' with these individuals implementing many and often differing roles (Buchanan and Storey 1997;
De Caluwe and Vermaak 2003) jointly contributing to the overall change implementation.

**Recommendation (1):** In order to maximise the advantages of this multidisciplinary approach, the Commission should continue with the structure of the network as currently constituted, but should also consider increasing the number of individuals in each category of change champion/agent to maximise their scope for increased influence and support.

**Appointment procedure**
The clear link between the roles performed by change agents and their necessary skill requirements was highlighted in the literature review. The review highlighted differing views on the skill requirements for change agents; ranging from the development of a long list of management type skills (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996; Hutton, 1994), to a more focused approach where the skills requirements were based on a situational analysis and focused more on the individual’s specific requirements, (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992).

While the findings in relation to skill requirements will be discussed separately in the next section, the literature review raised a key question in relation to the selection of individual change champions which only became apparent as the research progressed. The Commission allowed individuals to self select or be nominated by their appropriate body as change champions and the question which arose, particularly as interviews progressed, related to whether this self selection method was the most appropriate method to populate the network? Alternatively should a selection of necessary skills have been established in advance, with interested parties invited to apply, and a selection method devised to measure their current skills against the established requirements? In analysing the data from the interviews relating to roles, it became clear that champions placed importance on the key roles of ‘belief in the process, commitment, and self motivation’, all of which would be difficult to assess by a skills based selection process. Such a selection process might only gauge an
individual’s commitment etc. through their self testimony or by seeking examples of similar commitment or references, and prospective candidates may be deterred from applying, for what essentially is a difficult and voluntary position, if the selection process was perceived as rigorous and time consuming. The self selection process, where nominating bodies sought volunteers restricted by numbers, appeared to produce effective change champions, as all those interviewed saw their roles, all be it by differing methods, as actively demonstrating commitment to the process and leading, influencing, and motivating others to become involved. The alternative method is of course untried, and with the aid of a properly constructed assessment centre may produce individuals who are more effective in their role, but with the commitment and belief in the change process clearly demonstrated by the current champions, the self selection method currently appears the most effective mechanism to populate the network.

**Recommendation (2):** The current method of self selection by individuals to populate the champions’ network should continue as the network needs to be refreshed, updated or expanded.

### 8.1.3 Suggested Improvements – Roles

**Partnership working**

While individual champions clearly worked hard to implement the change process within their perceived sphere of influence, the research showed that this was confining, and that a partnering approach between the officer/member champion categories may have been more effective. While each individual was effective, their role in the change process was singular, and there was the felling that much more could have been achieved had they joined together and developed joint initiatives. Examples of complementary working were however evidenced in five councils with interviewees quoting the examples as critical incidents where they had been most successful. In particular, the success of champions from neighbouring council jointly initiating the ‘Visible Women’ events, was cited by elected members as an
example of success in involvement, demonstrating commitment, communication and partnership working. A further critical incident cited by one large council as an example of partnership working involved the officer champion taking the initiative and creating a ‘women’s group’ within the council consisting of second and third tier women employees and women councillors. This group became a force for change and began talking of their role as ‘changing the culture of the organisation’ and became ‘multiple drivers’ of the change, (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Williams et al, 1993). Evidence of joint working in the other councils related to working with neighbouring councils to involve community groups, and tapping into European funded training initiatives. One council had received a national training award for their women’s development initiative which helped reinforce joint working and increased motivation. Based on these examples, there would appear to be more scope for cooperation between champion categories and for the development of a more coordinated approach between partners.

**Recommendation (3):** The change champions should be encouraged to work in partnership, form alliances and cross traditional role boundaries in an effort to increase effectiveness.

**Structured action planning**
As explored in the literature review Chapter 4, and evidenced in the research, the champions are involved in both planned and emergent change processes, attempting to implement a change planned at central level, but within an emergent change situation at local level. As part of the planned change process and in an attempt to focus individual champions and councils on specific actions to implement the change, individual council action plans were prepared in conjunction with council champions and officers. These action plans were only passively referred to during interviews and did not have a major impact on the role of the change champion. The preparation of the action plan conforms more to the planned change approach, ascribing tasks within the typical local government hierarchy of decision making and
reinforcing the roles of the change champions as operating within defined boundaries (Ottaway, 1982).

From a central planned change perspective the individual action plans demonstrate council wide commitment to the change process and are a useful monitoring tool to review progress. It is however evident that rather than working to a defined plan, the change champions are operating in a more flexible manner, often conforming to the leadership element of Caldwell’s (2003) Leadership, Management and Consultancy models of change agency roles. The roles played by the champions are situational (Quinn, 1988; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003) in that champions varied their role depending on the council culture, the resources available, and their understanding of what might work at a particular point in time. The traditional local government action planning process, which links individual change champions with their traditional roles, may no longer be appropriate when they are operating in an emergent change situation and they are expected to work across departments, create networking opportunities and maintain momentum (Hartley et al, 1997).

If greater cooperation and coordination between champion categories is to be achieved, emphasis should be placed on ‘Team Model’ planning (Caldwell, 2003), and the process of designing individual action plans revisited to place emphasis on flexibility, team and joint project working, in the delivery of the desired change agenda.

**Recommendation (4):** Central level planning needs to take account of the creative responses required by change champions at local level, and build flexibility, traditional role switching and cooperation opportunities into the planning process.
Maintaining champions’ commitment

The research showed that champions saw their role as demonstrating a belief in the change itself, demonstrating commitment, supporting the change and motivating themselves and others to maintain momentum. From critical incidents quoted during interviews (as detailed under findings pps.222-223), it was evident that all the champions, for varying reasons, actually believed and often passionately, that the specific change they were implementing or had implemented previously was, in itself, good for the organisation and the community at large, (Hutton, 1994). Their motivation to bring about the change appeared to be rooted in their personal belief systems, and they had a desire to advance the change at every opportunity, over a long period of time. They could best be described in the emotive Swedish term for committed change agents as ‘Souls of fire’ (Stjernberg and Philips, 1993).

Apart from development interventions (see Appendix 2, p.368), aimed at building specific skills and providing networking opportunities at central level, there has been little reinforcement of why the change was necessary, why people should commit to it, or reinforcement of the champions’ current belief that it would lead to improvements. As the research identified the considerable emphasis placed by the champions on personal commitment to the change, there is a need to nurture their belief in the change itself and to maintain and strengthen their ongoing commitment. This continuing personal commitment has to a large extent been taken for granted, with emphasis placed on how to implement the change rather than why it is necessary.

**Recommendation (5):** Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure ongoing commitment by champions to the change itself, including; improved information systems, and motivational/recognition events.
8.2 Skills- Key Research Findings

What skills did the champions utilise in the change process?

Discussion of the skills of the change champions is set initially in the context of the above research question. The skills as identified by interviewees are set out in summary form in Table 24 overleaf; followed by a detailed explanation of the suggested sub category topics and related critical incident examples.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utilising your Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilising past experience, utilising leadership position, ability to persuade/convince, leadership, knowledge of system (3), commitment (4), playing to your strengths, getting involved, integrity, strategic view</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I was able to access some facilities and some resources that I probably wouldn’t otherwise have” (EM1 pg3)</td>
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<td>“I had to help children to get on with one another” (EM3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“it’s easy to champion change when you’ve new people coming in who are with you from the very start” (CE2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging results, encouraging involvement, build coalitions, securing support, building gradual consensus, mentoring, creating team working, genuine interest in change</td>
<td></td>
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<td>“feel passionately about and fight for them” (EM4)</td>
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<td>“bringing people with you” (HR2)</td>
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<td>“My role is more of a softer approach I suppose” (HR3)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>People Skills</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of humour, understanding what motivates people, relationship building, empathy with people, basic practical management skills, people skills, personality that values people, coaching</td>
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<td>“people know that if they go with me on things that I will support them” (CE2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I am quite good at persuading people” (D2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dealing with and addressing problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logical approach, taking advantage of commitment (3), organising and planning, knowing when to intervene, finding a way around problems, anticipating problems, foresight to utilise opportunities, being prepared, flexibility, determination</td>
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<td>“I believe in currently looking at how you could improve and how you review” (CE2 pg3)</td>
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<td>“I had to go back and deal differently” (CE3)</td>
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</table>
## Table 24  Key Research Findings –Required Skills (cont’d.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication/Learn and Listen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by doing, communicating (9) build allies</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I’m good at listening to people” (EM3)</td>
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<td>“Reasonably good communication skills” (D2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“have a communication strategy” “it’s the openness that works” (D3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“communication skills were certainly very important” (HR2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selling (2), influencing (4), confidence (4), facilitation and conciliation, persistence (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“You’ve got to convince people that you’re serious about it”(CE1 pg4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I think I’m good at influencing and I do my homework” (D1 p.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You’re trying to sell it to the organisation” (D4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“to find what will hit the spot with each individual” (HR1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation, setting change in context, analytical, ability to make business case, organisation (2), timing, integrating change into performance agenda (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I always have to have on my team the people who are very good at the detail – that’s not where I live” (D2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“It’s about building capacity” (EM6)</td>
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</table>
Discussion of Findings:

During the research process, interviewees continually linked the various roles they performed to the skill requirements of the change agent and the examples provided as critical incidents demonstrated how these skills were utilised in practice. There was confusion as to what was a skill requirement, with interviewees often taking for granted their own skills and seeing these as normal or inherent in their personality. They were reluctant to ‘boast’ about their own abilities, and the skill requirements therefore required probing and example seeking throughout the interview process.

Utilising your Position: as a required skill

Although the roles played by individual champions tended to be within the confines of their role in local government, each interviewee provided examples of how they had utilised this role to best advantage and saw this as a particular skill, for example:

- Chief executives and directors utilised their positions in the hierarchy to lever support, utilise staff changes to encourage enthusiasm in new entrants to the system, and place the change within the overall council strategy. This was stated by one interviewee in the following terms, *it’s easy to champion change when you’ve new people coming in who are with you from the very start*

- HR managers, whenever possible, utilised their position to link their change agenda with wider organisation development initiatives. They saw this as being opportunistic, and in answer to a probing question as to how they utilised their position to secure considerable linked funding with another initiative, one interviewee replied; *the two just happened to be at the same time and that was great*, and they explained that if you see the need for funding and you see the opportunity to get it, *you grasp it and write the proposal*. 
• Elected members provided examples of how utilising their position helped them gain access to scarce resources, generate community support and how they utilised their learned ability to persuade and convince others to join with them in the change process. A Comment from one elected member provides a general summary: ‘I was able to access some facilities and some resources that I probably wouldn’t otherwise have’ and another elected member explained in a critical incident example how she tried to change the culture of the religious divide in NI when she was employed in the primary school sector. At great personal risk and unknown to the school principal, she utilised her position to introduce a cross community initiative which gave her access to children from both sides of the divide, as she believed that if change was to take place, it would be driven by the next generation. She justified her risk taking by stating; ‘I had to help children to get on with one another’.

Numerous examples were provided, in particular by elected members, of how they utilised their position both within the council and in their wider political environment to take advantage of unique opportunities to continually advance change. Elected members also felt that their electoral mandate demonstrated their integrity and that they were powerful allies, together with council officers, in implementing change. They were capable of providing access to networks and communities not normally available to other champion categories and when probed to provide examples, responses included; ‘The strange thing was that the group I was involved in, with........, I was actually able to integrate that into it (context: the change initiative)’, and another member stated; ‘I’ve tried to keep it in front of my party, through the women’s group in the party, through the ........... I speak on women’s issues at the NI Rural Women’s Network and events that they may have, and I’m invited to speak at those’. Chief executives emphasised their position as head of the council’s paid service and their knowledge of the system as enabling them to get things done and encourage ongoing support. One chief executive explained that as a director he had felt constrained in how he could manage change and
address problems but once appointed as chief executive he could make things happen. He stated;

‘So obviously as chief executive I didn’t have those constraints and, in fact, I had a council saying to me; now get on and do something and sort this place out – more or less in simple terms’.

While it might be assumed that those in powerful positions in organisations are well placed to use their power base to actually force through change, there was little evidence to suggest that this had happened in practice. All categories of Interviewee, rather than relying on their power to direct or command support, provided examples of utilising their positions to lever support, and to encourage others to join them. This approach of encouraging rather than directing was illustrated by remarks from a chief executive; ‘when you get down to dealing with people on the ground, you have to tailor your approach to the way they work and the way they see change’, and by an elected member who was Mayor of the council who emphasised that; in order to make change happen; ‘what you want is to instil the interest’ as a first step in the successful change process.

Encourage Others: as a required skill

Each category of change champion emphasised the importance of having the skill to encourage others to support the change process and build consensus on the best way forward. The word ‘encouraging’ was used to illustrate various actions, including: ‘seeking results’, ‘building coalitions’, ‘securing support’ and ‘creating a team working environment’. HR managers in particular placed emphasis on ‘bringing people with you’ and by quoting examples of success factors in critical incidents mentioned how they had ‘coached and supported’ others through major change. One critical incident example was provided by an HR manager who explained how they had utilised a new ‘work-life balance’ policy, designed to change the culture of the organisation and demonstrate its commitment as a ‘caring employer’, to help an individual member of staff through a period of major change in their life, to cope with a work related disability, and how the council created a job for him which meant moving him away from a manual job to clerical duties. This critical incident example was cited as a successful achievement of change at
a personal level, by identifying with the individual’s needs and encouraging them to change, and at an organisational level, in that its success would encourage other managers to implement the new ‘work life balance’ policy. This ‘encouragement’ skill was also linked to ‘leadership’ as discussed under ‘roles’ (8.1) and was similarly linked to ‘belief and commitment’ which often meant taking individual ownership and leading by example. Examples of how to encourage others from within the organisation to change from were stated as; ‘get people involved in organising their own development programme’, and ‘giving people opportunities ......getting them to think wider and broader.....create innovation and bring people along’. Encouraging others from outside the organisation to become involved in the change process was explained by a councillor, through a critical incident example, where she described how she built a coalition of neighbouring councils to bring about change and share a common agenda. ‘I actually held a cluster meeting within [my own council] and invited; council A, council B, council C, and council D to address areas of common concern and to ask them how we could work together, what issues needed to be raised, how we were going to deal with all of that’.

People Skills: as a required skill
Chief executives and directors felt that their background knowledge, reputation and personality had helped develop their people skills to introduce change, while elected members quoted examples of empathy with people and how they valued others and coped with often opposing views. All categories provided examples of both negative and positive critical incidents to demonstrate their resilience in the face of opposition and their determination not to ‘give up’ when challenged or when things did not go as planned. ‘Having a sense of humour or the personality to handle criticism’, constructive or otherwise was seen as an important personal skill which was often built by experience, particularly in a political environment. This was best illustrated by a critical incident example provided by a chief executive who described how he did not initially succeed in introducing structural change but by improving
his people and political skills, as summarised below, he eventually succeeded;

‘I think an example would be ....where one department was not making any progress ....the problem initially was that I did not enjoy the support of Members in saying where the problem lay; in that the director retained support of certain members because of his style and the fact that he had introduced all kinds of arguments which were really not simple....and were of his own making and all that sort of stuff. First of all you had to have time, you had to have patience to allow political consensus to build up and that took patience and there were times when it tested my patience because I thought, or I knew in my mind what the problem was, and wanted to get on with it, and the members were still being confused, but when that cleared up, then by having been patient, I was in a stronger position to convince staff that I hadn’t taken sides....but the learning process has actually helped me in a couple of smaller issues around the same thing, around personalities, around relationships in the organisation......I think it’s one of the biggest things, if you can handle relationship issues.’

The meaning given to ‘people skills’ by interviewees was wide ranging and was often linked to general management skills, managing people, or understanding what motivates individuals at various stages in the change process. There was general acceptance that in order to introduce change you needed to understand people and have the skills to address their problems and the individual’s motives for supporting or resisting the change. In a summary example on the importance of ‘people skills’ in introducing change, one chief executive reflected at the conclusion of his interview on his long experience in this area and concluded:

‘The advice I got when I was appointed Recreation Officer all those years ago from a Director of Education who was on the panel. He came to see me a couple of months afterwards, which I thought was nice, and on the way out the door, (context: having discussed what I wanted to achieve), he said, you’ll never have any problems, only people and that was the wisest sentence I’ve ever heard.’

Dealing with and Addressing Problems: as a required skill

All categories of champion identified that in any change process problems can arise. They emphasised the importance of dealing with real or potential
problems at an early stage and having the skills to recognise and address the
problems. In particular:

- Chief executives and directors placed emphasis on ‘having the knowledge
  of the change process’ and the ‘management skills to address problems’.
  They described the knowledge necessary to solve the problems as being
  built over time by experience and reflection and was often related to
  implementation (process) problems rather than resistance. This was
  described by one chief executive as a gradual learning process which he
  believed was; ‘currently looking at how you could improve and how you
  review’.
- HR managers saw problem solving as a vital skill but in terms of ‘securing
  ownership’ and ‘needing to get stuck in with people’ to find a way round
  problems and being flexible in approach, described as; ‘it’s not one size
  fits all’.
- Elected members addressed problems by being determined, utilising other
  opportunities when things did not go according to plan and taking
  advantage of the overall commitment to the change process.

Examples of critical incidents across all categories showed the need for
flexibility in approach and that individual change problems often require
unique solutions. The skills to deal with problems were demonstrated as
situational, often knowledge based and ‘being prepared’ for the unexpected.
One director provided an example of the need to be flexible in approach and
to tailor solutions to meet particular needs by describing how she had been
given the added responsibility to manage and modernise an existing
department. Her usual approach of addressing the modernising agenda as a
‘visionary thing’, did not work, and she had ‘to get down to the bricks and
mortar’, gradually solving problems and accepting that; ‘small wins were
actually very significant’. In this particular situation problems were solved by
being ‘much more incremental….. because they couldn’t actually think in big
pictures’. The need to build this problem solving knowledge over time was
also stressed in the following terms: ‘So what it taught me was that maybe
sometimes my principal methodology in change management, which had worked pretty well over the years, was not really the right strategy for this particular problem, and that I had to modify that strategy. I had to actually fall back and rethink the way I was bringing about change.'

Communication/Listen and Learn: as a required skill
As stated under ‘roles’ (8.1) communication became a recurring theme throughout the research. When asked about the skills required of a successful change champion interviewees answered differently from their definition of the ‘role’ of the champion as a communicator. What emerged was a deeper understanding of the many dimensions of communication required in the change process.

When asked about skills, all categories tended to concentrate on the ability of the champion to ‘listen to feedback’, ‘learn from experience and communicate results’. Whereas interviewees identified the role of the champion as informing, gaining consensus and action planning, what emerged from this part of the research was the notion of the champion as a conduit for feedback from those affected by the change process who communicated this feedback to those leading the change, and adopted the change through a process of listening and learning. The role of communication in helping the champion implement the change was therefore supplemented by the skill of the champion to utilise communication to adapt the change and to learn from the process. This skill of listening and learning was evident in examples of ‘successful’ critical incidents quoted by chief executives and directors who placed emphasis on learning by doing and reflection on lessons learned from other change experiences. An example of this was provided by a director who explained that the chief executive and the senior management team ‘went out and did road shows round the organisation, and spoke to everyone there back in October’, to explain directly to staff how the organisation was developing and future planned changes. It was felt that this twice yearly visit enabled managers and staff to ‘put their points across’ and that staff appreciated that their views were listened to. She provided an example of
how the concerns and suggestions, expressed at the road show by a particular employee had been taken on board and implemented. This three day, two way communication exercise is now seen as a regular event by employees and she stressed that; ‘now that we’ve told them we’re going to do it twice a year, we need to make sure we deliver on that’. HR managers similarly placed emphasis on openness and listening to feedback particularly through joint management/staff working groups, which one interviewee described as; ‘helping to change the mindset of senior staff’, where she described how this joint involvement in an ‘employer of choice working group’ had resulted in making a ‘genuine difference to the lives’ of those in the organisation. Elected members also provided examples of receiving feedback and acting on it to influence changes of direction, or the application, of various policies. In one example relating to the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative a male elected member champion explained that; by reflecting on the views of women elected members, he realised that ‘women’s experience of local government was very different’ and had a greater appreciation of their problems and an understanding of how meaningful change might take place.

**Influencing: as a required skill**

As with communication, influencing also emerged as a recurring theme throughout the research. Comments on influencing were often related to the leadership, advocacy, commitment and building support roles. Interviewees however, when specifically questioned from a skills perspective again added further understanding of how influencing had happened in practice. Analysis across all categories, but particularly among officers, saw influencing in terms of ‘selling’ the idea, ‘having the confidence to influence others and persistence when met with initial opposition’. What emerged, was the need for champions to have confidence in their own abilities, which was described as ‘doing my homework’, in order to fully utilise their ‘belief in the change process’ as identified under ‘roles’. It was felt that without selling skills, no matter how beneficial the change might be, it could fail, if the champion was not determined or had the skills to influence and convince others of the need for change. This need for determination and selling ability is illustrated by two
quotations from directors: ‘you’ve got to convince people that you’re serious about it’ and ‘you’re trying to sell it to the organisation’. In a critical incident example from an elected member they described how they formed a disability committee in their council area and utilised this committee as a pressure group to help sell the need for change within the council, and as result, described their success in the following terms;

‘I got every building in the council owned by the council brought up to speed on helping those with disabilities, not just those in wheelchairs and I was also involved in making sure the plans for the new leisure centre were, in every sense of the word disability friendly’

Miscellaneous
Having analysed the data on skills under the various sub-categories, there were a number of exceptions which did not fit neatly within the analysis framework, but were powerful in terms of either supplementing points made elsewhere or were put forcefully, with convincing examples by individual interviewees. Some points were also considered due to the unique experience of the change champion, or due to their unique position within their organisation, e.g. leading a large directorate, major influencing position in a political party. These suggestions on additional skill requirements included:

- When implementing the leadership role there is a need to be a skilled delegator and not become involved in detail.
- The skills to see beyond the single change agenda, no matter how strong your belief in that change might be and set the change in an organisational context, perhaps linked to a business improvement plan.
- While capacity building was identified as a role for the change champion, it was emphasised that this could only happen by design and that change leaders needed the skills to build organisational capacity for change as well as individuals.
- The skill in recognising the timing issue when introducing change and encouraging support was emphasised with examples of both success and failure provided in critical incident examples.
• **Creative and Innovative** skills were also identified together with the ability to **analyse** possible consequences of the change and gauge reactions.

A number of these suggested skills supplement discussion under ‘barriers’ and ‘development needs’ headings during later analysis, but what emerged from these ideas is the notion of a skills base, not always directly linked to the earlier identified roles, but in some cases; the notion of the change champion as a creative innovator, building organisational capacity for change, and a skilled delegator, who introduces or encourages change at a time when it is most likely to succeed.

### 8.2.1 Contribution to Knowledge and Professional Practice - Skills

The consideration of the research findings in relation to skills as outlined in para. 8.2 answers the second research question in that interviewees have detailed their views on the necessary skill requirements of a change champion as set out in Table 24, pps.230-231. There is a clear link between the first research question on ‘roles’, which was designed to seek views on **what** the change champions did in practice, with the second research question on skills designed to seek views on aspects of **how** they carried out their role.

From the Commission’s perspective the real contribution to practice lies in enhancing the network and identifying opportunities to utilise the findings from the research to help manage future local government change challenges. Recommendations are therefore designed to enable the champions to perform their roles more effectively, create conditions where they can continue to develop, and examine how their skills might be utilised to assist in further similar change initiatives.

The various skills sets identified by the interviewees are directly linked to the professional practice of the Commission when considering the **development**
needs of the change champions. How these skills can be further developed and enhanced will be considered further under the 'Development Needs' heading in para. 8.4, p.266. This section addresses, in particular, the need to retain the experience profile of the champions’ network, the need for succession planning, and how the skills of those involved in the network can be fully utilised to assist in future planned change.

As with the discussion on ‘roles’, the research findings on ‘skills’ are discussed both in relation to existing practice, and any further improvements suggested by the research. Individual skills related topics are discussed, followed by an improvement recommendation to be further considered as part of the overall improvement plan in the next chapter.

Where appropriate, relevant literature, as detailed in the Literature Review (Chapter 4) is also initially signposted during discussion of each topic, to enable the overall contribution to knowledge of the research to be discussed, together with the overall recommendations to improve professional practice in the next Chapter 9.

8.2.2 Evaluating Existing Practice – Skills

Utilising Previous Change Experience
The long-list of the various roles played by the change champions as discussed in para. 8.1 placed emphasis on: Leadership, Belief and Commitment, Supporting, Motivating and Communicating. The necessary skill requirements to enable these roles to be implemented effectively were linked through the research to the identified roles as detailed in Table 25 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Roles of the Change Champion</th>
<th>Corresponding Skills Sets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Utilising your position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in the change and Commitment</td>
<td>Dealing with and Addressing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting the change</td>
<td>Encourage others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building organisational capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative and innovative skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analytical and timing skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivating</td>
<td>People skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Listen and learn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What emerges from the research is the need for change champions in the local government environment in NI, when performing the identified change agency roles, to be highly skilled in the above range of management, people and communication skills, with influencing, learning and problem solving skills, developed through experience and practice.

These research findings, which identified change agents as requiring a range of high level skills, can be compared with the summary comments on ‘skills’ in the Review of the Literature (Chapter 4) as follows:
• Comparison can be made with the Buchanan and Boddy (1992) competency model for the ‘expertise of the change agent’ (as described in Table 13, p.106), where the various roles of the change agent are matched to a competency framework detailing a similar list of management, negotiation and communication skills.

• The emphasis placed by interviewees on ‘people skills’ required at each stage in the change process, similarly aligns with the emphasis placed on ‘Interpersonal Skills’ required by the change agent as detailed in the literature (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Hutton, 1994; Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996).

• The need for; ‘Facilitation, Consulting and Negotiation skills’ (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Hutton, 1994; Steffen, 2000; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003, Paton and McCalman, 2008) was identified by interviewees in terms of Influencing, Listening and Encouraging support.

A particularly relevant comparison in relation to the research findings, can be drawn with the comments made by Burnes, (2004, p.310) in relation to the Buchanan and Boddy (1992) competency model where he sees the change agent as a highly skilled and well trained political operator, with an in--depth knowledge of change processes and tools, and with the personal qualities to use them openly or behind the scenes as required.

The literature review therefore is generally reflected in the research findings that change agents/champions require a wide range of management and behavioural skills to implement their various roles. While the Commission did not set out to recruit experienced and highly skilled change champions, those interviewed highlighted examples of how they had utilised their positions, professional and political experience, and insider knowledge to successfully implement change. Where they had not been successful in the past, they demonstrated the ability to reflect on this experience and utilise it as a learning experience. This is clearly a positive factor, in that the existing change champions have developed in their role over time, and utilised their existing skills base in the process.
In the dispersal of change agency, where agents are required to play many roles and have access to a wide range of skills, the Commission’s network of champions can continue to play a vital role in implementing the change as experienced insider change agents, with an ongoing commitment to the change process. The alternative of selecting new ‘novice change agents’ (Doyle, 2002), due to their high performance in their current management role, may prove ineffective; as the change novices may lack the added knowledge, skills and expertise to perform effectively in their new change agency role as opposed to those who have practiced and learned over time.

**Recommendation (6):** In order to maximise the change skills base within the local government system, the Commission should retain, as far as possible, the existing network of champions and when necessary recruit further experienced change practitioners, who demonstrate commitment to the change process.

### 8.2.3 Suggested Improvements – Skills

**Succession Planning**

Following on from the recommendation to recruit experienced change practitioners to the network as required, there is a need to put in place a system to identify potential successors, as existing champions move on, or resign their membership. This succession planning has to take account of the benefit identified under ‘roles’, by enabling potential champions to self select. Succession planning could initially be encouraged by inviting existing members to discuss the use of substitutes, or the greater involvement of other potential champions who had expressed an interest in the change implementation. Given the commitment of existing members, and their pride in being the appointed champion, it is important to protect their role and to ensure that they do not feel threatened or pushed out by the notion of identifying a successor. As the current appointment process (following nomination from the various groupings), is handled centrally, a mechanism to
identify successors could be developed at central level, with this research playing a major role in generating potential volunteers. The presentation and dissemination of the findings from the research, which is planned for 2011, could be adapted to profile a typical champion and include the circulation of an ‘expression of interest’ form, seeking self selection by individuals who felt they met the profile attributes. The completed forms could be passed to nominating bodies to assist with future nominations or for use in an expanded network.

**Recommendation (7):** In order to ensure continuity in the work of the network and provide for possible expansion, a succession planning system should be developed, based on informed self selection and the dissemination of the results of this research.

**Supporting Other Change Initiatives**
Interviewees, when discussing the skill requirements for implementing change referred to the importance of practical experience and of learning by doing. Emphasis was placed on the situational nature of the skill requirements and the need to apply leadership, influencing, or problem solving skills, dependent on; the specific situation, perception of the problem, or particular events, (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992, Massey and Williams, 2006). Their learned experience in the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative and in other change situations should be evaluated as a potential reference source for other similar change initiatives.

While it cannot be assumed that the roles and skills etc. identified in this research are applicable to all change initiatives in local government, the research to a large extent drew on the previous experience of interviewees and it is important that this experience in maximised. The current network of change champions could be utilised to help support other change initiatives by providing case studies of their experience and the lessons learned through their years of practice, which the research illustrated they valued highly. Over time they could be developed as a community of practice, providing; continuity
in the face of continuing change (Cummings, 2002), credibility within the system and a source of encouragement, (Hutton, 1994; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003), empathising with other change agents and providing assistance with problem solving, (Paton and McCalman, 2008).

**Recommendation (8):** The Commission should investigate a mechanism to ensure that the experience gained by the network of champions is fully utilised to maximise the effectiveness of other similar change initiative across local government.

**Coaching and Mentoring – Management Development Programmes**

In addition to the cross sector support as detailed above, the existing change champions could provide a useful role, formally or informally, in individual staff development initiatives. The Commission, with responsibility for training and development across local government, is continually piloting and initiating supervisory, middle and senior management development programmes. These programmes are often ‘project based’ and change management related, where participants are required to develop a work based project, which results in service, management or cross sector improvements.

With the emphasis placed by interviewees on the need for; influencing, problem solving, and communication skills, in implementing change and their evidenced experience in these areas, there is a case for considering how these experienced individuals could be used to assist as mentors and coaches in staff development programmes. Integrating coaching and mentoring into structured development programmes would enable participants to benefit from the experience of practiced change agents on a one to one basis. While this may place an additional burden on individual members of the champions’ network in terms of time, it could also serve as a mechanism for reinforcing their role, provide a further opportunity to demonstrate their commitment and to recognise their expertise. A number of current members of the network indicated their intention to retire from local government in the next four years, (see Appendix 1, p.350 - Interviewee Personal Profiles).
These experienced individuals, on retirement, could be retained on a consultancy basis to perform the coaching and mentoring roles in a restructured management development programme. This would ensure that the vital skills, identified in the research as necessary to effectively perform the role of change agent, are not lost to the system but developed at an individual level to help prepare the next generation of officers/elected members to manage future local government change challenges (Dover, 2003; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Doyle, 2002).

**Recommendation (9):** In order to develop future change agents in local government, management development programmes should be redesigned to incorporate coaching and mentoring by experienced members of the change champions’ network.

### 8.3 Barriers – Key Research Findings

**What barriers to implementing change did the change champions encounter?**

Discussion of the barriers encountered by the change champions is set initially in the context of the above research question. The barriers as identified by interviewees are set out in summary form in Table 26 overleaf, followed by a detailed explanation of the suggested sub category topics and related critical incident examples.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Securing Support from Others</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Securing whole system buy in, convincing members/others (6), gaining commitment, inbuilt opposition, apathy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“it’s just accepted that’s what we do” (EM6)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“it’s the fear of change that drives people into a corner” (CE3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They thought the management team were off doing things they shouldn’t be doing” (D3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resistance to Change</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nature of change (4), not a priority, linked to other change, perception of change</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Initially there was a reluctance from some of the Councillors and they questioned the need for the programme” (EM6 p.3)</td>
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<td>“I didn’t expect that to happen because of the attitude of the Council to women” (EM4)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Initially there was reluctance” (EM6)</td>
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<td>“the Equality Officer here thought it wasn’t appropriate” (D1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“why are we changing things” (CE2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture of the Organisation</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture (7), systems, cultural problems (2), council procedures and practices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s always so and so will do this…but it’s always male” (EM3)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“I think it’s the culture” (EM4)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“people have been here a lifetime” (CE2)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“resistance is in the culture you’re in” (D2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“we had a good ethos within Omagh” (HR2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“This is still an old fashioned organisation” (HR3)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 26  Key Research Findings – Barriers Encountered (cont’d.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Environment</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local government, political environment (5), involving whole system, political structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I really felt they weren’t interested” (EM3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“the councillors didn’t like it” (D3)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time (9), balancing tasks (2), diminishing resources, funding, no central blueprint/framework (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Over the years the Council takes up a significant amount of my time and it’s not just the Council meetings, it’s everything that comes with it” (EM1 pg6)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“competing with day to day stuff” (HR1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I still think we have to have time for learning and development” (HR2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You physically can’t get the time” (HR3)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People’s attitudes, personal frustration, gaining trust, coordinating others efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Men!” “I was edged out of that circle” example given by EM2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“People are in a pattern” (D2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“See the change as detrimental to their position” (D2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of Process</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of knowledge (2), communication</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I think there is a barrier in communication” (HR1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping momentum, Trade Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“not sufficiently mature in how they want to engage with management” (D4)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Discussion of Findings:

While the literature review examined ‘resistance’ to change as the general term used in text books and journal articles to define the actions of those opposing the change or preventing implementation; throughout the research the term ‘barrier/s’ was used interchangeably, to identify similar actions which prevented change implementation. This terminology was more familiar to those interviewed and helped provide a local understanding of the related questions and critical incident examples. During questioning however, interviewees also mentioned ‘resistance’ as a specific barrier to change implementation and provided some examples of how this resistance manifested itself through people, culture and systems. Such examples were often linked to other ‘barrier’ topics as described below.

Securing Support from Others: as a barrier to change

Since ‘building support’ and ‘motivating others to assist in the change process’ were identified as key roles for the change champion, conversely, securing that support was seen as a barrier to implementing change. Interviewees provided examples of only securing support from one section of the organisation or one group of stakeholders with opposition coming from the other sections or groups who saw change as a threat to their current position or were simply apathetic and did not want to become involved. This was emphasised in an example provided by a chief executive in the following terms:

‘we’ve done this change, but its where you have people, and you have a section where you have two or three people in their late fifties, have done the exact same job for years and worked for a previous director and didn’t want to come into it and just continuously create a block into it’

Definitions of ‘securing support’ were varied and ranged from actively ‘gaining commitment’ to more passively ‘gaining buy in’. The reasons provided for not securing support from others included; colleagues showing opposition, not taking the change process seriously, and having an ‘inbuilt acceptance’ of the
status quo. Officers felt that the ‘fear of the change or potential detriment’ led to this lack of support, summarised by one director as follows:

‘and then finally for me there’s the other group of resistors and they are not going to change pretty much no matter what you do. They tend to be people who are invested in the present and who see those changes as detrimental to their position and see the change process as something which is going to make them the loser.’

A chief executive also explained why support had not been secured for various change initiatives he had tried to introduce over the years in the following terms:

‘Often it’s fear – fear of change that drives people into a corner, so you have to give them some time to come out of it.’

Elected members provided examples of how ‘party lines’ often dictated sticking to the accepted way of doing things, in order to protect party political control of the council. A long serving councillor stated that this situation was;

‘Just totally frustrating. We’re having an AGM tonight, I may as well not bother going’ and emphasised that the party political voting patterns meant that her proposal for change, the week before, had been rejected by an opposing party; ‘they voted that down and that was voted down last week by the .......... party’.

Resistance to Change: as a barrier to change

Further discussion of the ‘barriers to change’ developed around the reasons why ‘resistance’ was encountered, with the lack of trust between officers and members seen as a major problem. This lack of trust resulted in a fear factor, with members wondering what was the real motive for the change and how it might be linked to a future ‘undisclosed’ change agenda. One director described his council’s attitude to the officers ‘away day’ to look at strategy development for the coming year as ‘they thought the management team were off doing things they shouldn’t have been doing’. Even minor change initiatives were often not supported e.g. advancing the position of women, in case they set a precedent to advance a wider equality agenda, e.g. the positions of other underrepresented groups or religious affiliations. Such wider change required a party mandate and could not be advanced...
unilaterally at local level. This situation was described in a critical incident example by a director who suggested to the council that, as part of an affirmative action programme, a ‘welcoming statement’ should be included in all future job advertisements and the council website welcoming applications from women who were underrepresented at senior grades:

‘We ended up saying a particular welcoming statement could help address the issue. However that one didn’t succeed because politically the Unionist types were saying if we agree to this; then that’s the start of the slippery slope into specific welcoming statements for religious reasons and other underrepresented groups’.

Further reasons why change was resisted included; ‘the conservative nature of the council’, being ‘put off’ by the title or concept of the change itself, and the lack of key support due to other priorities. The ‘political’ nature of the organisation was seen as a particular barrier to change, and was described in terms of the ‘culture of the organisation’ and the complex ‘political environment’ in the following terms.

Culture of the Organisation: as a barrier to change
All categories of interviewees identified the culture of their organisations as a barrier to change. They defined culture in terms of the systems, procedures and practices in the organisation and the fact that many officers and members had been with the organisation for a long time and had a set way of doing things. Critical incident examples provided by elected members centered on the ‘male dominated’ and macho culture, described by one interviewee as; ‘It’s definitely like all political parties, in all of life, it’s definitely the men who have like a little boy’s club in my party and I presume it’ll be the same in any party and there are things happen that women never hear about’, while officers provided examples of resistance to change due to ‘the history of the organisation’, and the ‘lack of staff turnover in the organisation’. This was explained by a chief executive as follows:
‘The frustration that I get is that you have people (like 70% of the people have been here a lifetime) – we don’t have big turnover. So you have people in position and I suppose when I was introducing a new change process, I found a level of frustration sometimes in that people didn’t see what I was offering them.........I suppose it comes back from we had a very stable organisation. Sections which have been together for a long time......and I was coming forward with change, and there was a level of resistance to it’.

From a positive perspective the culture of the organisation was mentioned by officers as often supporting the change, where elected members had embraced change and in particular supported staff development and various efficiency agendas. An HR manager emphasised her council’s supportive role in initiating a new staff development programme as; ‘So there was great support right from the council for the project ......I suppose we had a good ethos within ..........’. Chief executives also provided examples of overcoming embedded resistance and attempting to change the culture over time by recognising success and celebrating success with the elected members and the wider community. An example of this experience was provided in a critical incident example by a chief executive who described a celebratory event sponsored by his council to mark the completion of a women’s development programme as follows:

‘Probably the most pleasant elements of this were the presentation of certificates for having completed the cross-border Women’s Action Programme through a very large number of females, and we did make a big fuss of it and a wee bit of a reception and so on, the Mayor doing it and actually doing it on a ship that was in at the time. I suppose making people feel wanted and seeing just the turn out for that course –it was probably the best’.

Political Environment: as a barrier to change

As with role definition, interviewees felt that the political structure at local level was confining, resulting in restricted cooperation across the council. It was explained that the officer/member agenda was often different, with officers being blocked overtly and covertly in introducing change, if it did not fit with the political agenda (see critical incident explained under ‘Resistance to Change, pps.252-253). In quoting critical incident examples, interviewees accepted this potential conflict as ‘normal’ and either accepted the situation or found ways round it. A chief executive, having provided a critical incident
example where the change process failed due to lack of political commitment concluded his story with the following partial acceptance of the situation; ‘So maybe stepping back a wee bit, and saying maybe I’m being slightly more critical than I should have been of the politicians because it does take a while to work its way through the organisation’.

As discussed under ‘skills’, emphasis was placed on; dealing with problems, influencing, negotiating and finding solutions over time. Since all interviewees were involved in managing in a political environment, they were fully aware of the political nature of change and were prepared to deal with such resistance on a day to day basis. Officers and members quoted examples of thinking through the consequences of the change, anticipating where resistance might be encountered, the importance of timing, and discussing the change initially with those involved to gauge possible support or opposition. A critical incident example was cautiously provided by an elected member, where she, as a senior party member, had been appointed to champion a change process but experienced great difficulty due to the overall political system in which she operated. She experienced difficulty at the highest level within her party as she was perceived as utilising the change programme to advance her own career. Similar difficulty was encountered at local level where her council opponents overtly opposed the change process to avoid being perceived by their political party as supporting her party policies, and officer members, aware of these political tensions, similarly only provided limited support. Despite this ‘political’ opposition, the change was progressed utilising support from outside agencies, other government departments, the voluntary sector and appropriate local media personalities.

**Resources: as a barrier to change**

Discussion of the lack of resources as a barrier to change covered a wide range of definitions. Elected members saw ‘time’ as a vital resource and provided examples of the many demands placed on their time by their council duties, constituency matters, and involvement in community activities. This was typically summarised by one elected member in the following terms:
'the council takes up a significant amount of my time and it’s not just council meetings, it’s everything that comes with it – it’s the constituency work, it’s meetings with residents’ groups, it’s the involvement of other agencies. It starts to widen out – it starts off quite small and then it starts to grow and grow......so sometimes it’s getting that work-life balance and it’s trying to juggle it all'.

Officers similarly identified lack of time as a barrier, but viewed the time commitment required as interfering with their planned work programme, ability to react to day to day problems and manage their departments. An HR manager in a smaller council drew particular attention to this lack of time as follows:

‘We are so bound up in just getting through every day, that we don’t have time to sit down to extend our role and to do a lot of things we would like to do’

Since ‘belief in the process’ was identified as a key role for the change champion, the discussion of ‘time’ as a confining resource also provided a greater understanding of why the change champions would hold such a belief and be prepared to commit their scarce time to help implement it.

- Members saw their time commitment to change dependent on their personal belief in the change process and the fact that they had made a commitment to help make it happen. As explained by one member; ‘Time, that’s always going to be a problem for me and more now than previously, and at the same time if I am involved in something, I like to give it the time’.

- Officers saw their time commitment to the change process dependent to a lesser extent on their personal belief that the change was ‘good’ and more on their belief that the change would lead to improved organisational performance, service delivery and staff development. Typically, a director explained, that in order to justify the required time commitment; ‘You need to believe that, yes, there is an issue here to start with, which needs to be addressed for the benefit of the organisation’.
While ‘time commitment’ was seen as a barrier to change, what emerged from discussion was that; if the champions believed in the change process, for whatever reason, they were prepared to commit their scarce time to it. Examples provided demonstrated that the stronger they believed that the change would lead to improvement the more time they were prepared to commit to make it happen. An elected member explained; ‘I get a notion in my head or when I’m really determined about something, I’ll keep at it until I get it sorted or I get it up and running’. Examples also illustrated that officers, at lower levels in the organisation, who had the change champion role allocated to them, found the time demands of the additional duties hard to manage, even though they believed in the change and were committed to it. An HR manager explained; ‘It goes back again to the time constraints on myself..........I feel I haven’t been able to do enough to bring gender change to (the named council). Officers at senior levels found the additional time commitment easier to manage and often delegated day to day responsibility to others, as explained by a chief executive; ‘Its time management.....I had very good support in terms of carrying the load and doing a lot of the donkey work in terms of the actual initiatives we took, and that was done by a very .inventive young lady at second tier level’.

Lack of resources was also defined as lack of funding. Examples were provided of initiatives not receiving council backing due to other competing priorities or being progressed slowly due to lack of finance. Both elected members and officers accepted that their change priorities had to be considered in line with overall council priorities and that lack of funding would be an ongoing problem. This acceptance of lack of funding was more evident in discussion with members than officers, with officers providing examples of leveraging funding from other budgets or sources; ‘a cross-border initiative attracted actually other funding along with it’. Chief executives, in particular, saw funding as less of a problem, once they had convinced the council that the change was the way forward and felt that they were well placed to ‘find the necessary funding’ and protect allocated funding at all costs, typically described by a chief executive; ‘With tight finances ......there were attempts to
raise elements of that finance and take it into all our pockets to do different things with it, but I was determined to keep it as a women’s initiative and to keep it in that’.

Overall, the funding barrier was perceived as normal, and part of working in a fragmented local government environment, with increasing emphasis on value for money and efficiency. In order to assist in securing resources at local level, (dedicated change staff and funding), one chief executive suggested that; ‘change should be centrally driven with adequate resources provided from a central source, either the Department or the Commission’.

People: as a barrier to change
While building support, and motivating others, were seen as key roles for the change champion, together with the necessary skills of influencing and encouraging others, conversely, the attitudes and lack of cooperation by people were seen as major change barriers. Both members and officers provided examples of being frustrated by people barriers, where individuals would simply not cooperate or wanted to keep ‘things’ the same. Typically, one chief executive described the lack of enthusiasm for change displayed by his elected members; ‘Most difficulty, as I said, was the disappointing element at elected member level. I found that; as I say the staff embraced it, embraced what we were trying to do. It took a bit of convincing......whereas in terms of elected members..... they didn’t enter into it’.

Chief executives, directors and elected members saw people barriers as individuals ‘protecting their positions’; one chief executive provided a typical example of how a restructuring exercise had been met with major resistance and suspicion, with his motives for the change questioned as follows; ‘Why are we changing things? Why are we changing the whole process? This organisation’s only three or four years why is he putting in a whole new structure?..........It worked alright in the past, why isn’t he leaving it alone?’ and he explained that: ‘people were at that sort of a level of frustration and people don’t realise it’s got to keep refreshing things’. Similarly one elected
member's concluding comment on people’s resistance to change summarised the comments made by many interviewees as follows: ‘It’s that thing of I’m holding onto what’s mine is mine and you ain’t getting it’.

HR managers saw people barriers as a normal part of the change process to be overcome by communication and involvement. One HR manager emphasised how the people barrier could be overcome in terms of; *I think there is a barrier in communication, things getting from the top level down to the bottom level in a language that they’ll understand, but more importantly that they’ll trust, and I think they can only see that through the genuineness*.

Due to their political environment, members accepted people resistance as part of the political process, with individuals’ attitudes and political outlook directly affecting their support or otherwise for the change. This individual resistance was also evident within individual political parties where support or otherwise was often influenced by the person in power and their individual belief systems and alliances. One elected member provided a critical incident example where the Deputy Party Leader was directly opposed to the proposed change initiative, for what the member perceived as the wrong personal reasons, and as a result progress was slow and she did not receive the support which the Party Leader had previously promised.

**Knowledge of Process: as a barrier to change**

Discussion around barriers and how they might be overcome led to the suggestion that a barrier to implementation was lack of knowledge of what the change process actually entailed, and how and when communication took place. It was suggested that the change champions themselves, as part of their development, should continually update their knowledge of the change process in order to communicate it effectively to others. This was typically summed up by one chief executive; *‘It’s to take it to the next level and I know I wouldn’t be an expert on it, but it’s how you would get that (knowledge)’.*

While communication was identified as a key role and related skill for the change champion, what emerged from discussion on ‘barriers’ was; what can
happen if communication is not effective, and why it is so important. Discussion centered on the need to take timing into consideration and ensure that the desired message is not just received but is understood. By way of example, a chief executive described a current critical incident involving a restructuring exercise, and explained that he perceived a major problem as a result of the lack of proper communication, and the fact that the planned restructuring was taking place at the wrong time and that all those involved had not been properly informed. He described the potential consequences in emotive terms; ‘It’s going to be like a Mexican revolution here very soon with that unless there is ........ That’s what I’m saying. It’s a bad time to look at change in that respect’.

The need to communicate with and gain the commitment of trade unions to the change process was emphasised and how their opposition can be a major barrier. An example was provided which emphasised ‘the need for trade unions to take a longer term view of change, and not simply a short term view of how their existing members may be affected’. This example linked the need for greater trade union involvement in change at local level, to the development of a more mature central mechanism to consult with, and potentially gain the support of full time officials.

**8.3.1 Contribution to Knowledge and Professional Practice - Barriers**

The consideration of the research findings in relation to barriers as outlined in para. 8.3 answers the third research question in that interviewees have detailed their views on the barriers most frequently encountered in the change process as set out in Table 26, pps.249-250. While the roles and skills of change champions identified what they are required to do, and how they should operate, the discussion on barriers centered on the problems they faced in implementation.
What emerges is a general acceptance that resistance is part of the change process, (Stickland, 1998) and an ongoing change problem. Interviewees did not however see resistance as confined to introducing change but rather in the context of a ‘barrier’ to what they wanted to achieve. These barriers (organisational resistance) are implicit in the local government political system in which they operate (Senior, 1997), where most new proposals, services, projects or rate settings are constantly challenged and scrutinised, with resistance embedded in structures and decision making processes (Graetz et al, 2002). This challenge and scrutiny was seen as the natural order of things, and interviewees provided examples of their coping skills, (negotiation, persuasion, people skills and building support), as the means of overcoming this institutional resistance, and finding a way to introduce changes as they emerged.

From the Commission’s perspective in driving change from the centre, the real contribution to practice lies in examining ways to assist the change champions to continue to ‘cope’ with the system’s inbuilt resistance and to harness such resistance to examine the real benefit of the change and its likely long term effects (Paton and McCalman, 2008).

As with the discussion on roles and skills, the research findings on ‘barriers’ are discussed both in relation to existing practice, and any further improvements suggested by the research. Individual barrier/resistance related topics are discussed, followed by an improvement recommendation to be further considered as part of the overall improvement plan in the next chapter.

Where appropriate, relevant literature, as detailed in the Literature Review (Chapter 4) is also initially signposted during discussion of each topic, to enable the overall contribution to knowledge of the research to be discussed, together with the overall recommendations to improve professional practice in Chapter 9.
8.3.2 Evaluating Existing Practice – Barriers

**Encouraging Support**
Although the Commission has held a number of events; (launch and relaunch of the initiative, celebratory events and awareness seminars), the research has demonstrated the continuing need to build ongoing support throughout the system, by strengthening the knowledge of the change, its potential benefits and future involvement opportunities. This central support could be supplemented by targeted support at local level, through the sponsorship of further local events designed to create greater awareness and encourage involvement (Burke, 2002). This increased participation, communication and support would supplement the change champions’ already existing skills of negotiation, persuasion and negotiation, and help overcome the institutional resistance within the local government system (Dawson, 2003).

**Recommendation(10):** The Commission should review the range of awareness raising events currently undertaken, and place greater emphasis on events at central and local level designed to increase support, involvement and commitment to the change process.

**Resource Provision – Time and Funding**
The two main barriers to successful implementation, identified under resource provision, centered on the difficulties champions face in finding time to devote to the process and securing the necessary funding.

An individual’s time is finite and the allocation of time to specific change projects will depend on individual priorities, other commitments and unplanned incidents. It is therefore important to ensure that the allocated time is used most effectively. To date the central support offered to champions has centered on networking opportunities, best practice examples, capacity building workshops and conferences (see Appendix 2, p.368). The research identified the need for this support to be expanded, to develop the champions to make informed choices as to how best to utilise the time they have
available, and to become familiar with time management techniques. In order to reduce the required time input by change champions at local level, the direct assistance provided at central level by Commission officers and other stakeholder groupings should be examined to concentrate on how this can be better targeted. While this resource is limited, it is important to ensure that it is utilised effectively, to provide assistance which might otherwise be a further strain on the champions’ limited time resource.

Currently funding is provided at central level for support initiatives (see Appendix 2, p.368) and local initiatives, at the suggestion of individual champions. The allocation of funding for these local initiatives tends to take place on a demand and supply basis, with those champions close to the centre or involved with the Commission on a range of initiatives having priority. While no specific demand for increased funding for the current change initiative was evidenced in the research, as discussed in para. 8.3, p.261, the lack of adequate funding to support ongoing implementation was seen as a barrier to change.

**Recommendation (11):** The Commission should develop a methodology to target support to individual change champions to effectively utilise their time and provide direct assistance where practicable. A system should also be developed for the equitable distribution of available funding resources and additional sources of funding investigated.

### 8.3.3 Suggested Improvements – Barriers

**Communication**

The recurring theme of communication throughout the interview process was emphasised under roles, skills and barriers to change. Interviewees saw communication as central to the change process at all stages (Quinn, 1988; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992) and the lack of communication leading to resistance. To date, communication of the Commission’s change initiative has been confined to awareness raising events and irregular information
There is a need to discuss, with current change champions, how a central/local communication strategy could be established to increase awareness of the change initiative and help develop greater commitment and the support of other stakeholders. The communications strategy could similarly help address the lack of knowledge of the change process, and be linked to a wider communications strategy to help address the difficulties in working and managing in a political environment.

With the emphasis placed on ‘culture’ as a barrier or potential source of encouragement, the Commission could initiate a ‘readiness for change’ pilot initiative to help identify how these cultural barriers could be overcome and how the ‘positive’ culture identified by the interviewees could be showcased and developed.

**Recommendation (12):** The Commission should develop, in conjunction with current change champions, a central/local communications strategy to help overcome the barriers identified in the research. A parallel sectoral ‘readiness for change’ project should also be initiated to help address the cultural change barriers inherent in the NI local government political system.

**Member/Officer Relationships**
As discussed under ‘Roles’ (para. 8.1, p.217), the compartmentalised thinking between members and officers was similarly displayed in discussion on barriers. What emerged was the perception of elected members as either ‘blockers’ of change or under resourced ‘facilitators’ of change. A similar continuum emerged for officers perceived as ‘opportunists’ in the change process manipulating members, or as ‘facilitators’ drawing down on available resources. In critical incident examples, the lack of trust between members and officers was evident with, as discussed under ‘Roles’, each pursuing not necessarily differing agendas, but for differing reasons, which were often undisclosed.
Despite this lack of trust, each category of champion accepted that this was part of the political system and culture in which they operated and provided examples of how they achieved change in spite of their often opposing positions in the political system. The lack of trust was not perceived as totally negative but rather part of the game of negotiation and compromise implicit in implementing change (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Doyle, 2001). However, each category of champion regarded the time, although sometimes enjoyable and rewarding, as unproductive, and time which could be better utilised in implementing the change rather than attempting to build alliances to gain approval for it to proceed.

As discussed in para. 8.1.3, pps.225-226, the discussion of ‘barriers’ similarly demonstrated that, in order to advance the change process, there is a need for greater co-operation between officers and members. While clarity of roles, and a shared agenda, should assist in fostering greater cooperation, the Commission should consider the introduction of a pilot initiative to help foster greater trust between members and officers. Such an initiative could be designed on a pilot basis, with the establishment of a joint member/officer group to scope current relationship problems and design a trust and confidence building development programme that, if successful, could be implemented across the sector.

**Recommendation (13):** The Commission should investigate the establishment of a development programme, designed to enhance Member/Officer relationships’ and to build a culture based on trust and increased confidence, to address the increasing change agenda, across local government in N.I.

**Trade Union Consultation and Commitment**

Although not mentioned frequently by interviewees, trade unions’ involvement in implementing change was highlighted in a very powerful example of how, on one occasion, they had successfully blocked change, and in differing circumstance, actively supported it. As an action researcher, closely involved
in the current and other changes facing local government in NI, these examples point to the need for the Commission to create a consultation/negotiating mechanism, to formally involve trade unions in all future planned change at central level, and seek their commitment to assist with implementation. This involvement could also serve as a joint learning process between management and staff representatives, to help address emergent change issues at local level over the coming years.

**Recommendation (14):** The Commission should consider the establishment of a permanent Trade Union/Management forum, to consult and negotiate on future planned change initiatives, in order to gain increased involvement and commitment to the change process.

8.4 Development Needs – Key Research Findings

**What are the development/support needs of the change champions?**

Discussion of the development needs of the change champions is set initially in the context of the above research question. The development needs as identified by interviewees, are set out in summary form in Table 27 overleaf followed by a detailed explanation of the suggested subcategory topics and related critical incident examples.
### Table 27  Key Research Findings – Required Development Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Champion Category</th>
<th>Chief Executive</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>HR Managers</th>
<th>Elected Member</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources/Time Management</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securing and utilising resources, providing support systems, delegation skills, time management, role models (2), dedicated resources, information sharing, benchmark against success</td>
<td>“Time Management” (EM4)</td>
<td>“It’s getting that work/life balance” (EM1)</td>
<td>“I’ve learned that you can’t build Rome in a day” (CE2)</td>
<td>“You choose your battles... when you are coming up to RPA” (D1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Working with Others</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing political/officer interface</td>
<td>“I think that mentoring is one of the biggest things” (EM4)</td>
<td>“opportunity to get a more general discussion going” (EM6)</td>
<td>“you have to spend time reading, listening and talking to people” (CE3)</td>
<td>“I have been inspired by other people who have created huge change” (D2)</td>
<td>“hearing what others are doing” (HR2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confidence Building</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining motivation (2), confidence building (5), keeping enthusiasm, increasing knowledge, encouragement</td>
<td>“develop some skills and master the nervousness” (EM1)</td>
<td>“I would be looking for... confidence building” (EM2)</td>
<td>“It’s about building your confidence” (D1)</td>
<td>“I wouldn’t be a confident person” (HR3)</td>
<td>“I am able to push out the boundaries” (D1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion Category</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>HR Managers</td>
<td>Elected Member</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Development</td>
<td>Developing your own skills, knowledge of system, thinking strategically, learning by doing (3), benchmarking for problem solving</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“at the beginning I was very enthusiastic” (EM6)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Making time for yourself to do it”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“you have to change too” (D2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My big development as a person came when I did the Masters at Queens” (EM3)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Training in Specific Skills and Targeted Development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Targeted support systems (4), tailored development, practical skills training, selling and influencing capacity building, influencing skills, leadership training, read and reflect, building commitment and elected member capacity</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“Through the Women’s Development Programme, I was able to get that one to one mentoring support, with the interview skills” (D1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I see a need for training for the staff” (EM2)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“the styles of leadership and the different styles available” (D3)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“To ensure training is good and made available” (D3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“you learn better ways...you learn to live with the rough and tumble” (D2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning from mistakes, direct support, creating thinking space, accepting inevitable resistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s probably the first time in my career that I found resistance” (CE2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“you realised how difficult it was for women” (HR3)</td>
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</table>
The analysis of the data in relation to roles, skills and barriers, as well as answering the specific research questions, provided a limited insight into the development needs of the change champions, and provided initial development recommendations mainly aimed at sustaining the network. Asking the specific ‘development needs’ question provided an opportunity to focus interviewees on their more specific/individual development needs, and seek critical incident examples to support their suggestions. In many cases the same discussion headings and headline phrases emerged during discussion of ‘development needs’ as with ‘skills’ and ‘barriers’ but the phrases and words were used in a different context and warrant separate analysis and reporting as additional findings. The following analysis therefore builds on the reporting of findings to date and clarifies the meaning interviewees placed on their development suggestions.

**Resources/Time Management: as a development need**

While the issue of time management was seen as a barrier in implementing change and an associated recommendation has been made to help overcome this potential problem, what emerged from discussion in relation to ‘development’ was a more personal and individual development need. Issues emerged around the use/abuse of delegation and the need for sharing and benchmarking of best practice in order to utilise resources more efficiently.

It was suggested that change champions, although committed to the cause, needed personal support to sustain a healthy work/life balance, described by a director as knowing when to ‘fight battles’ and when ‘to take a longer term view’ of the change process. When asked about development needs, an elected member typically replied ‘Time management, and I think that mentoring is one of the biggest things’. A similar response was received from a chief executive; The problem with this job is that there’s loads of things coming at you all the time and you never get the space for yourself to start to think, to review things, change and reflect on what’s happening........making time for yourself to do it.......I suppose that’s probably the development need'.

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All categories of champion showed the ‘human side’ of committed champions, not as change implementers working systematically through a set of linear roles utilising previously acquired skills, but more vulnerable individuals who required targeted support and ongoing encouragement. Having described the difficulty in managing her time an elected member stated; ‘it’s getting that work life balance and it’s trying to juggle it’, and another provided a critical incident of how her commitment to change had put a personal strain on her husband, who although employed full time, was often called upon to assist her with her work, and she concluded by stating that without the necessary work life balance skills; ‘It would be enough to flatten a marriage I would say, very easily’.

**Working with Others: as a development need**

Officer/Member relationships were initially suggested as a barrier to change and a resultant recommendation developed. The suggestion made by interviewees under ‘development’ was that the differing categories of champion could learn from each other through discussion, and that the political/officer interface was a rich source of joint learning, as they could both gain a deeper understanding of their differing perspectives and attitudes. In a critical incident example an elected member described how she had successfully worked with officers on a change initiative within her council and concluded as follows: ‘It gave the opportunity for officers and members to work together because there are issues and there are certain things where it’s good that officers and members work together. And again, it gave that thing of we are a band together, if you know what I mean’. Another elected member provided an account of how she has learned from the experience of others, from outside her council and also how she felt that she had also contributed to the joint learning process; ‘it wasn’t really until I was able to get out to external bodies such as (examples quoted) that people were actually listening to what I said and taking it on board and that kind of gave me the confidence that I could contribute........and the opportunity to bring forward things as well’.
While working with and through people had been a recurring theme under roles, skills etc; suggestions were always based on gaining support for the change or overcoming barriers. What emerged from discussion on development needs was; how hearing other peoples change experiences and how they had championed change, could encourage and inspire the ongoing work of the change champion. This point was summarised by a director in the following terms; ‘I can pick up more techniques, but for me I pick those techniques up from hearing people who have themselves created change and that’s where I’ve learned’.

Interviewees also felt that direct mentoring and coaching could be provided by working with other change champions both inside and outside the local government system. An elected member typically commented; ‘I think that mentoring is one of the biggest things’. Similarly a director emphasised; ‘the mentoring and coaching stuff, I’m a really big fan of now. I’ve always had people that I have looked to for support and mentoring in my career’. She then went on to explain, by way of a critical incident example, how she had been mentored over the years and provided with various development opportunities which resulted in her learning how to change herself, and introduce changes across the organisation.

When asked specifically about the support provided to date (see Appendix 2, p.368), responses ranged from passive praise to a general enthusiasm. The passive praise was around getting the opportunity to network and hearing good practice examples from others. Sample supportive comments included; ‘you were learning models from other organisations and sharing the experiences that we had’
‘I feel I’ve been very fortunate and supported through this’.
‘I don’t think you could have given me much more, it would be more balancing of my own workload and time’
However, some interviewees found hearing good practice examples from others demotivating, in that, given the culture of their council, they could never replicate the showcased good practice examples at local level. One HR manager commented that she left the showcasing event thinking; ‘I’m never going to get away with putting a lot of this into practice, it’s just not going to happen’.

**Confidence Building: as a development need**

The need for confidence building among change champions emerged mainly in discussion with elected members and officers at director and HR manager level. This was defined in differing ways, not just having the confidence to progress the change, and the knowledge base to do so, but having the personal confidence to stand up and speak out when necessary, the confidence to take the lead and enthuse, encourage, and motivate others. Again the very human side of the change champion emerged, as an individual who felt they had a personal responsibility to lead by example, but unsure that they had the personal skills and confidence to do so. An HR manager, by way of example, commented; ‘I wouldn’t be that confident a person. So some sort of development around that would probably have been very useful, for me just personally, and that’s a very very personal issue’. This need for confidence building was also identified by an elected member who similarly cited her own lack of confidence as an example; ‘I’m actually not a very confident person and strangely enough, although I’m in the world of politics, I don’t like public speaking and I don’t like being in the front line’.

**Personal Development: as a development need**

In discussion of the support provided to date, the need to treat champions as individuals, as well as members of a network emerged. Linked to confidence, was the need for individuals to develop their own skills, and to be given the opportunity to learn by doing. It was emphasised that, as well as advancing the change, the champions had no best practice path to follow and had to develop an implementation path as they went along. Even with their previous experience, they felt there was no overall ‘best way’, and they had to learn by
trial and error as emerging circumstances arose. A chief executive described
his personal learning journey in the following terms:

‘It’s much more difficult when you’re trying to champion change in a
very set format. I think that probably I found a level of frustration and
where I changed was that, it’s probably the first time in my career that I
found resistance. I think that where I’ve developed is that you know
that you don’t build Rome in a day. You have to actually take your
time, you have to take a couple of steps forward and a few steps back
to get to where you want, and you’ve got to take people on a slowly
basis.......I have to realise that there’s different horses for courses
.....some people work at a different pace and it sometimes takes a
while for them, for the penny to drop’

Powerful examples of personal development were provided where individuals
had utilised the change process to advance their career at member and officer
level. They felt that, in order to demonstrate that the change was possible,
they had to change themselves, and they did. Their advancement has added
to their enthusiasm for the change and they freely coach others to achieve
higher standards in their employment and political lives. An elected member
described how she had utilised her role as a change champion in the ‘Women
in Local Councils’ initiative to develop herself in terms of confidence building,
progressing within her party, and contributing to a local government wide
initiative. In response to the question on how she had championed change,
she replied; ‘I’ve changed myself, if that’s of any use. I have to say that
involvement in this has probably been quite positive in how I’ve ended up
because I was able to get out of the mode of being in council and my council
has 23 members and there are only two females, both of whom had been
there a terribly long time’. She went on to describe how, having had the
opportunity to step outside her council; she had seeded the idea with a senior
party official, to hold a joint awareness event with a neighbouring council and
emphasised ‘as a result of that came the .......... event’. This event was
held, and has been successfully repeated on an annual basis. An officer
champion similarly described how she had utilised the initiative to take
advantage of the capacity building programme for women, and as result had
 gained new skills, which she directly attributed to her recent promotion in the
following terms; ‘Through the Women’s development Programme, I was able
to get that one to one mentoring support, with the interviewing skills. I found
that really, really, invaluable and I don't think that I would have made that jump if I hadn’t done that.......I found that an invaluable help to me; it’s something that I would definitely encourage other people if they were going for a senior post to take on board”.

Training in Specific Skills and Targeted Development

Interviewees placed emphasis on the fact that there should be ‘management’ type skills development. Definitions of such skills included: practical skills, selling and influencing, leadership, building commitment, and elected member capacity. The skills training suggested, resembled the skill sets identified under previous discussion of ‘skill requirements’ and although repetitive, demonstrated the need for a ‘spread’ of skills training with each module not necessarily applicable to each individual or category of champion. One elected member commenting positively on the training programme provided to date emphasised; ‘Having said that, I found that it was difficult to combine officers with women members because I feel that their needs were different and, in essence, they’re coming from different perspectives and their jobs are different; so fundamentally, their training needs or their support mechanisms are different’. An HR manager also commented on the usefulness of the training provided to date but suggested; ‘I find it more useful to have the one to one, we had ................. quite a bit providing support and that was excellent’.

As discussion developed, and critical incident examples were provided, the issue of targeted individual development emerged as the suggested methodology to build capacity across the network. By way of example one director described how those involved in implementing change needed individual development as some became too involved in the process and needed skills as ‘completer/finishers’, but that this did not apply to others who could actually ‘deliver’ the required results, but required better ‘management skills’. He stated; ‘I know of one or two cases here.......where the person in charge has not been a completer/finisher, a management thinker type and it drags on without any overt conclusion, if we could only pick completer/finishers to be in change!!!’. He went on to describe the need for
the preparation of a proper project plan to implement the change and the need for a development plan for those responsible for delivering the change.

Miscellaneous development needs
Discussion of ‘miscellaneous’ suggestions, i.e. those which did not fit neatly into data analysis subheads, have been included to add greater meaning to development suggestions and differing contexts. In particular a strong point was made that champions should have an opportunity to learn from mistakes. An elected member, relating her personal development journey to date, clearly stated; ‘I learned through mistakes, I learned to have confidence in myself and I learned to give as good as I was getting’. Similarly a chief executive explained; ‘I did make mistakes, but I wasn’t crushed for them or they (the council) didn’t know about them, or they didn’t find out about them until we’d fixed them. Sometimes you make an absolute horlicks of it and you learn by it’. This point supplements the suggestion of ‘learning by doing’, but raises the wider issue of the need to cultivate an acceptance culture where such mistakes are admitted, rectified and treated as experience.

Issues around ‘creating thinking space’ also added to the earlier discussion on ‘resources’ and the need to plan time for champions to think, act, and reflect, as they attempt to develop solutions to emerging problems. This point was summarised by a chief executive as follows; ‘the sort of thing you are doing at the minute, I think you have to spend a bit more time reading and listening and talking to people who are not engaged every day down in the thick of it, but are back from viewing the principles and the strategies, and the sorts of ways you can do it, the sorts of ways you can get out of blockages along the way, or be better at anticipating what’s coming forward’.

While resistance has been discussed as a separate heading, the strong point was made by interviewees that although they operate in a challenging environment, there is a need to coach champions on how to deal with, or utilise resistance to best advantage. A chief executive explained that he
utilised resistance from his senior management team to quality assure his decision making as follows;

‘I see these people now starting to be openly forthcoming with their own ideas. They’re not sitting and they’re engaging in the meeting and they come up with ideas and challenge it and say, ‘I think you’re going down this the wrong way, we need to be doing that’. And that’s where I want to see people doing it – you want to have managers that are not just going to sit and by compliant and say ‘yes, you’re the boss, whatever you say, will happen’ but saying ‘no that’s a bad idea. Should we not be thinking of doing it in a different manner?’

The suggestion was also made that it is just taken for granted that the champion will cope with ongoing resistance, without regard to their skills in doing so, or the potential personal damage to their ongoing enthusiasm and personal beliefs. In a critical incident example an elected member explained how she felt following a debate in the chamber where she had attempted to back a change initiative brought forward by a director but was verbally abused by other members; ‘I was driven the other night to tell them they’d actually upset me and the Mayor who’d walked out. And I would also care about the staff of .......... council and how they’ve been treated, which is very badly most of the time, and I know that the staff appreciate that and know that, that they can talk to me about things and I won’t reveal it to the rest of my party or any of the other parties that would oppose me’.

8.4.1 Contribution to Knowledge and Professional Practice – Development Needs

The consideration of the research findings in relation to development needs as outlined in para. 8.4 answers the fourth research question, in that interviewees have detailed their views on their development needs as set out in (Table 27, pps.267-268). As stated earlier, a number of the data analysis headings have also emerged through the discussion of roles, skills and barriers, with interviewees often repeating the long list of skill requirements, (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996; Hutton, 1994), which they identified as essential skills during earlier questioning.
The uniqueness of interviewees’ answers to the ‘development’ question lay in the fact that the conversation became increasingly personal, and centered on individual interviewees looking ahead and suggesting the most appropriate development needs to meet their personal development goals. The emphasis changed from talking about their current and previous experience as change champions, to how they felt they could build on current strengths and overcome potential weaknesses in order to continue to advance change. What emerged was the need to develop champions as individuals as well as part of a network.

From the Commission’s perspective, these findings are an important outcome from the research, and as with the discussion on roles, skills, and barriers are discussed from two perspectives, firstly, evaluating existing practice and secondly suggested improvements. Individual topic based recommendations are made for further consideration in the next chapter, as part of an overall contribution to practice. Where appropriate, relevant literature, as detailed in the Literature Review (Chapter 4) is also initially signposted during discussion of each topic, to enable the overall contribution to knowledge of the research to be discussed, together with the overall recommendations to improve professional practice in the next Chapter 9.

8.4.2 Evaluating Existing Practice – Development Needs

Building on Existing Development Interventions

As described earlier, Appendix 2, p.368 provides details of the development interventions introduced by the Commission since 2005, and it was evident through general discussion and specific questioning, that these interventions were seen as useful. However, taken in the context of supporting a group or network of champions, made up of a diverse range of champion categories, they were not seen as addressing the individual development needs of the champions, who came from differing sizes of councils or political parties, with differing systems and cultures. It was recognised that when targeted training took place, e.g. for elected members, although from differing political parties,
that this facilitated a greater sharing of information and provided an opportunity to discuss problems and possible solutions.

What emerged from the research was that specific categories of champion often required more targeted training, and where blanket training had been provided to date, there was a mixed response with some participants finding the intervention very useful, while others felt they had not benefited from participation. The existing programme, although determined in conjunction with the change initiative steering group, consisting of a cross section of champions and other stakeholders, was also viewed as fragmented with the objective and content of interventions not properly communicated in advance.

The existing development centrally delivered programme therefore needs to be evaluated and redesigned to take account of the research findings. This evaluation and redesign should be carried out by a cross-section of champions with assistance from the Commission’s directorate officers and fed back to the champions’ network for final amendment and endorsement.

**Recommendation (15):** Existing development interventions should be redesigned by a cross-section of change champions to reflect the improvements suggested by the research findings and the redesigned programme evaluated and endorsed by the champions’ network.

### 8.4.3 Suggested Improvements – Development Needs

**Work/Life Balance**

A previous recommendation; 11, in para. 8.3.2, p.263, dealt with the importance of targeting support to help change champions manage time and utilise resources to support the change process. While this is clearly of importance to the champions, the research under ‘development needs’ identified the need to address the individual’s personal concerns and stress levels, and to nurture their ongoing commitment both from a welfare and personal life perspective, (Buchanan et. al, 1999; Doyle et. al, 2000).
It was only through probing that a number of the committed change champions, who were clearly answering questions honestly, and providing life experience examples, began to see themselves as individuals requiring personal support, and began to realise that their attempts to introduce change were often at the expense of their family life and health. From an organisation perspective, such often long term commitment is a real advantage, but the organisation in return, should consider the introduction of support programmes to care for the individual and nurture their commitment in a suitable work/life balance framework (Buchanan et. al, 1999).

To date the change champions’ network has been perceived as a means of implementing the change process utilising ‘multiple actors’ (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003) and viewed from a very abstract perspective; assuming that the committed, experienced, skilled and politically astute champions, when empowered at local level, will survive and make things happen. There has been little thought given to the fact that the change responsibilities are an add-on to their normal role (Buchanan et. al, 1999), family responsibilities, and in the case of local government; additional public/civic duties and increasing citizen focus (Doyle et al, 2000). Given the additional time commitment placed on the change champions as identified in the research, there is a need for a more focussed approach on the real and personal needs of the champions in an effort to limit their stress, prevent ‘burnout’, and foster their ongoing commitment.

**Recommendation (16):** The champions’ development programme should include work/life balance training, stress management and personal support mechanisms, which should be provided on an ongoing basis and made available as part of the overall programme or on a confidential basis.

**Support Groupings**
Discussion with interviewees identified the preference to attempt to learn from each other, or with other change champions/agents involved in similar change
initiatives. They saw this learning taking place informally, through discussion and initially with those who shared similar organisational and functional backgrounds. This learning opportunity was seen as progressing ‘beyond learning’ and developing as a support network where they could share change problems and discuss possible solutions.

The introduction of such a learning opportunity has a number of potential advantages:

- It could develop as a cross sectoral interest group consisting of active change agents as part of a local government wide development programme (Hutton, 1994).
- If effectively supported and facilitated, it can be linked to a ‘damage control strategy’ to help alleviate stress and provide for shared problem solving (Doyle, et. al, 2000).
- It could operate as an action learning programme, providing a mixture of job learning with peer and facilitated support (Hartley, et. al, 1997).
- The members of the shared learning and support group could focus on change issues rooted in the NI local government culture and develop a shared understanding of the challenging local government environment (Hartley, et. al, 1997; Dover, 2003).

While the potential advantages as detailed above may not all be realised in the short term, a number of pilot groups could be established, on a self selection basis, to operate for a trial period and be subsequently evaluated. The pilot group could determine their terms of reference and desired outputs at the initial meeting, and these could be matched to appropriate facilitation and resource requirements.

**Recommendation (17):** A pilot initiative should be introduced, to bring together a small group of self selecting change champions, in an informal environment which facilitates discussion, shared learning, support, and joint problem solving.

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Mentoring and Coaching – Change Champions

The suggestion of a mentoring and coaching programme was mentioned in discussion under ‘roles’, ‘skills’ and ‘development needs’ and in each section it was referred to as building/encouraging support or as a development opportunity. There was a strong demand from interviewees to introduce a centrally driven programme, as part of a ‘learning by doing’ approach, with assistance from experienced change agents acting as mentors and coaches (Doyle, 2002). The opportunity currently exists to introduce a mentoring and coaching programme for the change champions (as discussed in para. 8.2.2), utilising the more experienced change champions who will be leaving local government service in the next year. If those being mentored were given the opportunity to select an appropriate mentor who could relate to their particular environment, this would facilitate a shared understanding of the change context and the challenges.

**Recommendation (18):** Following detailed awareness training, a mentoring and coaching programme should be introduced utilising experienced change champions, with participants given the opportunity to select appropriate mentors with direct experience of their particular operating environment and council culture.

Personal Development Plans

The research identified that the current change champions demonstrated a wide range of management skills and also suggested that any potential development programme should include ‘Training in specific skills and targeted development’. The range of what was termed ‘specific skills’ included a long list of management skills as discussed in para. 8.4, p.278 and detailed in Table 24, pps.230-231. While the list also reflected the ‘skills’ discussed in para. 8.2, pps.232-244, emphasis was placed on the importance of ‘targeted’ skills training, with all training topics not necessarily being common across the network. Individual champions often had differing training needs depending on their experience, environment and the particular challenges they faced.
The research demonstrated the difficulty in attempting to introduce a common, generic change champions’ development programme, (Doyle, et. al, 2000; Doyle, 2002; Buchanan et. al, 1999; Hutton, 1994; Dover, 2002; Hartley, et. al, 1997) and the need to tailor, as much as possible development opportunities to the individual change champion needs. It is therefore important to introduce a mechanism to identify individual development needs, and as their needs may change over time dependent on their situation and the changing organisational environment, (Dover, 2002; Hartley, et. al, 1997) to periodically revisit the resultant action plan and update as necessary.

**Recommendation (19):** A formal system of personal development planning should be introduced for all change champions, with regular review and update planned as part of the personal development process.

**Supporting Development and Learning Experiences**

The research identified two further related development needs which require wider support from within the system namely; ‘opportunities for self development’ and ‘confidence building measures’. Both these development needs cannot be met by training alone, but require an open culture, supported by systems and procedures, where self development is encouraged and where confidence is built by experience and the celebration of success. Similarly, If the ‘learning by doing’ methodology is to be successful, as discussed in Para 8.4.1, p.279, this learning culture needs to be strengthened within local government. Since the research also identified the closed culture in local government as a barrier to change, the introduction of a new open culture where development is generally seen as a priority will not be achieved easily in the short term, and is a matter for wider discussion beyond the scope of this research. The research can however highlight the general development suggestions made by participants and ensure that they are brought to the attention of the major local government policy development groupings.
**Recommendation (20):** The Commission should highlight the suggestions made by research participants that increased self development; confidence building and ‘learning by doing opportunities’ should be introduced and encouraged throughout local government in N.I.

8.5 The Research Findings in Context

Having presented and examined the findings in relation to the four research questions, and made recommendations in respect of roles, skills, barriers and development needs, it is important to refocus on the overall purpose of the research as set out in Table 5 (p.60) as follows:

<table>
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<th>Aim of the Research</th>
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<tr>
<td>The aim of the research is to discover how change champions implement their role in a major change programme in the local government environment in Northern Ireland.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Contribution to Knowledge and Practical Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This would provide a contribution to knowledge of practice in implementing change in this highly political environment. The practical outcome will be the application of the knowledge gained to future major change initiatives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the completion of the research and the presentation and discussion of findings in this chapter, the above aim has been addressed. With regard to the contribution to knowledge and practice, topic specific recommendations have been made and relevant literature signposted for further discussion. What remains to be discussed is the **overall** consideration of the findings in order to determine the potential contribution to knowledge and the practical outcomes from the study. These are considered in the next Chapter (9).
## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CHAPTER CONTENTS

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9.1 Introduction

The literature review, at the commencement of the study, covered what is known in particular about change agency and change agents and pointed to the need for additional research in this area (Caldwell, 2006; Doyle, 2002). Specifically the review pointed to the relative lack of research in relation to the roles played by change agents and their contribution in elected local authorities (Hartley, 1997). This lack of research is particularly pertinent in local government in NI, where the introduction of change across the twenty six local authorities, utilising a network of change agents, to which this research relates, is a new initiative and previously untried. This research therefore adds to the body of knowledge of what is known about the roles of change agents in general, using the case of local government in NI as a particular exemplar.

This research is timely, as a contribution to practice, as the Regional Assembly at Stormont attempts to introduce massive budget cuts imposed by Central Government which will have continuing change implications for local government officers and elected members over the next four year period. The research provides a deeper understanding of the practice of change champions in local government in NI, in order to develop an improvement plan to enable the current network of change champions to function more effectively. It will also be utilised to inform best practice when creating future change champion networks.

The aims of this chapter are twofold:

- To demonstrate the research’s contribution to knowledge of the theory of change agency and change agents.
- To interpret the findings of the study, and set the topic based recommendations in an action plan format which will contribute to improved practice in the implementation of change in local government in N.I.
In order to illustrate the contribution of the research in the above areas, two specific questions are posed, which provide an opportunity to discuss the research findings in context and to reach final conclusions and recommendations.

9.2 Contribution to Theory

What are the implications for the theory of change agency and agents arising out of these research findings?

9.2.1 Research Implications

In considering the implications of the research findings in relation to the theory of change agency and agents, these can be discussed from three perspectives, namely:

- How the research contributes to what is already known about change agency and agents in local government in N.I.
- The contribution of the research in supporting/contradicting what is already known about change agency and agents in general.
- Any added contribution which the research can make to the overall body of knowledge in relation to change agency and agents.

It should be noted that the above perspectives are not mutually exclusive and are interlinked in order to determine the overall contribution of the research findings, but are useful to structure discussion of the above question and provide a framework for analysis.
How the research contributes to what is already known about change agency and agents in local government in N.I.

This study is unique in that there is no empirical research carried out on change agency and agents operating across local government in Northern Ireland. It was prompted by the establishment, for the first time, of a network of change agents (champions), under the sponsorship of the Commission and selected for the contribution the findings could make, as part of an action research project, to improve the management and development of the change champions. It was also selected as being a suitable project for study under the DBA programme at the university. The study was opportunistic, in that interviews were conducted during the implementation of a live change project, with willing participants who genuinely hoped that the study would improve the way they operated and provide a tailored development programme for change champions. Access to participants was only made possible since I was an action researcher actively engaged with them in the change process.

A review of the literature (Chapter 4, pps.71-131), on change agency and agents, provided a comprehensive range of models, roles and suggested implementation mechanisms. What emerged was a somewhat confusing picture, with often conflicting views on how change agency operated in practice and how the role of the change agent could be developed and enhanced. The summary comments at the conclusion of the literature review pointed to the need for further research on how change agency operated in practice in differing organisation environments and how individuals implemented their role in particular circumstances (p.131). The results of this research therefore add to the overall body of knowledge in this area, utilising the exemplar of the development of change agency and agents in the local government environment in NI.
When disseminated, it will serve as a reference document for future change initiatives where change agency is dispersed across the local government sector in NI, and will provide a useful comparator for those seeking to implement change in elected local authorities outside NI, and the wider public service.

**The contribution of the research in supporting/contradicting what is already known about change agency and agents in general.**

**Change Agency Definitions**
The literature review (Chapter 4, para.4.3.1, p.72) highlighted the competing discourses on agency and change as reviewed by Caldwell, (2006) emphasising the acceptance that we now operate in workforces characterised by new forms of flexibility and where the consequences of change interventions have become fundamentally problematic and where change agency is a synthetic category of creative human action. The research findings in relation to the roles of the change agent (Table 23, pps.214-216) which identified how individual change agents perceived their various roles and implemented them in differing ways dependent on their unique situations and decision making processes, supports Caldwell’s analysis and his emphasis on the difficulty in seeking to provide an all embracing definition of change agency.

The rationalist approach, where change is planned within a strategic framework was initially demonstrated by the planned change evidenced in predetermined local action plans and projected outcomes. Yet the champions saw their skills as negotiators, utilising opportunities with flexibility in approach while dealing with problems, of vital importance, and evidenced their change actions as emergent and set in a contextualist framework (building support, p.246; utilising their position, p.232; dealing with problems, p.236). Similarly the champions provided evidence of how in some cases they learned from each other and from best practice examples elsewhere, which they used to implement their often unique change agendas (working with others, p.270;
personal development, p.272). This non-uniform behaviour and actions, dependent on individual perceptions, where change is implemented by many drivers (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Williams et al, 1993) equates with dispersalist theories where multiple actors implement change across organisation(s) (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003).

In summary, the differing types of behaviour displayed by the change champions and summarised in the research under roles and skills and how they acted to overcome barriers as they encountered them, equates with the assertion by Caldwell (2006, p.8) that there is no ‘pure type’ of change agency as it can assume a multiplicity of forms, some of which may overlap with apparently competing discourses.

**Dispersal of Change Agency**

The literature around the difficulties in the dispersal of change agency (Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Doyle, 2001) emphasises that change will not be achieved simply by utilising a number of change agents and that the dispersal can lead to the ‘cast of characters’ (Hutton, 1994) not acting in unison or with a combined vision or purpose. It is asserted that the dispersal of change agency utilising a number of ‘individual’ change agents, with potentially differing perceptions of the change, and differing interpretations of the process, can add to the lack of control and have a possible destabilising effect on the change as opposed to assisting its implementation (Doyle, 2001).

This research clearly identified that, while there were differences in how the champions pursued the change agenda, there was little sense of a loss of vision, or what success would look like, if the change was fully implemented.

The champions’ emphasis on their; ‘belief in the change’ (p.219) and their ‘commitment to the process’ (p.219) may have limited the potential destabilising effect inherent in change agency in general. Similarly, their own interpretations of the change did not seem to hinder implementation, as
examples of how ‘linking the change to other initiatives’ (p.232) or ‘utilising the change as part of their development’ (p.273) helped foster commitment and renewed actions. Their ‘felt need’ (Lewin 1947) for the change, although often for differing reasons, seemed to bring the champions together in a common cause and foster ongoing involvement and commitment (Bargal et al, 1992; Dickens and Watkins, 1999; French and Bell,1984).

Since the planned change process meant its introduction in twenty six differing locations, it is difficult to see how this could be achieved by a single mandated agent or authority without the ownership and involvement of a diverse stakeholder grouping. Given that the research indicated that each change champion acted within their normal role in local government, (Leadership, p.217) the lack of involvement by one particular grouping, either officer or member, would have provided less ownership within the system, with a resultant lack of differing implementation mechanisms and skill sets. The research findings therefore equate with the Hartley et al, (1997) research on implementing change in local authorities, where it is stressed that change agents must look to two sets of champions; elected members and managers, with elected members not just endorsing the change but also leading it.

This research therefore, while recognising the loss of uniformity implicit in change dispersal strategies, indicated that this loss was often compensated by the need for local action and champions adapting to emergent issues and problems p.236. This need to adapt differing approaches was evidenced by examples of champions changing strategies to cope with; new political priorities, differing challenges to the process, or where they felt they could build alliances, or potentially gain support (pps.217, 218, 221, 232, 236). The champions recognised that they were part of a political system and accepted the need to work within the dynamics of the system to move the change forward (pps.253-255).

Previous research around dealing with ‘politics and power’ in implementing change (Buchanan and Badham, 1999) places emphasis on how change
agents deal with these issues, or utilise them to their advantage by skilful
behaviour and a range of political styles, and how power and politics can be
constraining factors in implementation. This research both confirms and
builds on the Buchanan and Badham findings in that it deals with the dispersal
of change agency by a ‘cast of characters’ working in a political environment
in this case with a large ‘P’, who demonstrated how they utilised their skilful
behaviour, differing political styles and power bases, to advance the change
and confront the barriers implicit in a power dominated political environment.

Change Agents – Roles
The literature review in Chapter 4 demonstrated that comprehensive reviews
of the literature around the roles played by change agents (Caldwell, 2003;
Ottaway, 1983; Buchanan and Storey, 1997) tended to summarise the roles
by; long lists, models of change agency, or by the change implementation
processes change agents followed. As with change agency, what emerged
was a similar confusing or contradictory picture of what change agents might
do in practice. While the literature review could not provide a set of roles
applicable to change agents in local government it did identify, as detailed
under summary comments (p.101), a number of key points relevant to the
research which also provide a framework for analysis of the contribution of
this research to what is already known about the roles of change agents.
These key points are considered individually under the following summary
headings:

- The change champions as agents for change and may assume
differing roles
- The change agents roles may be situational and influenced by their
  perception of the change process
- The change agents are involved in both planned and emergent change
- The change agents are internal to the organisation, with potential
  conflicts of interest
The change champions are agents for change and may assume differing roles.

The notional separation of roles within the ‘panel of actors’ in change agency, between ‘change champions’ and ‘change agents’, is described in (para. 4.4, p.82) of the literature review; with champions described as sharing responsibility for drawing up and coordinating the intervention plan and gradually involving more people in the change process, in contrast to the more proactive role of the change agent; as possibly the most important factor in effecting change (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003). This notional separation of roles was not apparent in the research across all categories of champion, with both officer and member champions assuming, to a greater and lesser degree, both ascribed roles depending on their particular circumstances (p.217).

The research clearly identified in discussion of ‘Roles’ (Table 23, pps.214-216) that the management/practitioner terminology of ‘change champion’ utilised to establish the network, is aligned to the definitions of change agent summarised by (Burnes, 2004; Ottaway, 1983; Caldwell, 2003). By way of illustration, the many roles practiced by the champions can be seen as crossing the notional divides of all four models of change agency as described by Caldwell (2003) and set out in Table 28 as follows:
Table 28  Models of Change Agency – Corresponding Champions Roles in Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Models</th>
<th>Management Models</th>
<th>Consultancy Models</th>
<th>Team Models</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corresponding Champions’ roles:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Corresponding Champions’ roles:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Corresponding Champions’ roles:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Corresponding Champions’ roles:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading the change (p.217)</td>
<td>Motivating (p.220)</td>
<td>Dealing with and addressing problems (p.236)</td>
<td>Working with others (221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role model (p.217)</td>
<td>Encouraging others (p.221)</td>
<td>Supporting the change (p.221)</td>
<td>Developing others (pps.221, 234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building support (p.221)</td>
<td>Living the change process (pps.219-220)</td>
<td>Demonstrating commitment (p.219)</td>
<td>Building alliances (p.221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Involving others (pps.225, 234, 270)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research therefore provided insights into the wide ranging and diverse roles played by the network as a whole, and individual champions, and demonstrated that those committed to the change process are not necessarily constrained by the title ascribed to their role, (in this case ‘change champion as opposed to ‘change agent’), in dispersing change agency, (Paton and McCalman, 2008). In the case of this research and the implementation of the main change issue examined, this lack of constraint by title is not a problem, as change champions were expected to utilise all their skills and implement the change as appropriate. This may not be the case in other change interventions; in which case the role of the change champion/agent should be clearly agreed and defined, without reliance on a perceived restraining title or a commonly accepted definition of the role expected to be performed.
The change agents’ roles may be situational and influenced by individual’s perception of the change process.

The assertion in the literature to date that change agents’ behaviour can be situational and related to the circumstances pertaining at the time (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Quinn, 1988; Patton and McCalman, 2008) is supported by the research findings. Interviewees described how they moved from ‘leading’ the change (p.217) in circumstances where they felt the change needed to be encouraged and fostered to situations where they ‘supported’ the change by delegating responsibility and utilising other supportive networks (pps.220, 257). The research similarly demonstrated how individuals supported the change for differing motives depending on how they perceived the outcomes (Quinn, 1988), and utilised differing approaches e.g. leading by example, influencing, advocating and building alliances; dependent on a number of emergent variables, including political circumstances, the target audience, and possible links with other change initiatives (pps.220, 221, 239).

Although the change champions displayed considerable role switching within a ‘multiple roles’ change agency framework (Buchanan and Storey, 1997), the research identified that this role switching was often underpinned by their dominant reason for being involved in the change process and their perception of change in general (p.219). Through analysis of all interviewees’ answers to the research questions and the critical incidents quoted, it was possible to determine their primary driver for being involved in the change process, and their perception of the change (see Appendix 10, p.422 - Change Champions – Primary Drivers and Perception of Change) the dominant reason for their involvement can be summarised as follows: ‘Commitment to the change topic; for personal or organisational development reasons’.

This commitment influenced their behaviour and role switching in the face of identified barriers and changing situations and was the most important factor in their role as a change agent. The influence of ‘commitment’ (p.219) in the
dispersal of change agency by the officer/member change champions adds to the assertion by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) that it is one of the most important factors involved in ‘employee’ support for change initiatives, reflecting not just a positive change attitude, but also a willingness to exert behaviours that will ensure its success and is a vital prerequisite for change implementation (Robertson et al, 1993; Herold et al, 2007). This powerful assertion, while set in the context of employee commitment to change, and emphasised by Massey and Williams, (2006) as; the need for senior managers to recognise the level of commitment required by all those involved in the change process, was evidenced by all participants in this study, and is an important factor to be considered when seeking the involvement of elected members (Hartley et al, 1997) as well as employees (officers) in change processes in elected local authorities.

A further important factor in relation to how the champions perceived the change process related to how they saw change happening in practice. This can be summarised as: ‘Through people and systems’ (see Appendix 10, p.422 - Change Champions – Primary Drivers and Perception of Change). All interviewees perceived change in general as being brought about through people (pps.217, 235, 239, 258). Chief executives also placed emphasis on systems and processes but recognised that change meant bringing people with you and that ‘people barriers’ had to be overcome if change was to be successful (pps.217, 237, 239, 258).

The literature review (para. 4.4.1, p.85) detailed the many roles of the change agent, often set in the context of a number of behavioural type models including: expert, teacher, manager, OD specialist (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Caldwell, 2003; Margulies and Raia, 1978), and including a mixture of the change agent as the expert consultant or facilitator. The perceptions of the change process by the champions in this research meant that their various role switching activities were influenced by their belief as to how people’s attitude to the change could be utilised to best advantage (pps.220, 221), often switching between; facilitator, team leader and project manager.
(Paton and McCalman, 2008). The perception that ‘change happens through people’ meant that they often empathised with the emotional needs and priorities of individuals involved in the change process (Massey and Williams, 2006) adopting a persuasive, influencing and negotiating role to obtain buy in (pps.234, 235, 237). This overall perception of the change process as ‘being about people’ and resulting in a more persuasive approach to change rather than a directional approach (pps.232, 234, 235), may be due to what Hartley et al, (1997) describe in one of the lessons from their research as; the wider role of the change agent in local government who needs to look to other stakeholders, to build consensus across a wide range of departments, diverse elected members, political parties and community groups.

**The change agents are involved in both planned and emergent change**

The summary comments in relation to the literature review on the roles of the change agent (para. 4.4.1, p.102) drew the conclusion that the roles of the champions in this research could not be categorised as exclusively falling within the change agency models relating to planned or emergent change as described under ‘Development of Change Agency’ (para. 4.3.2, p.76). From a planned change perspective, the research demonstrated that the champions, often performed an ‘up front’ leadership role (p.217) and worked with a transparent agenda; helping, problem solving and working with others (pps.221, 236) to identify options (French and Bell, 1995). Similarly the champions moved, in a sequential manner, between the 3 key headings of change agency roles as identified by Ottaway, (1983) initially acting as change generators, moving to implementors and subsequently adopting the change process in their own organisations as set out in the following terms:
Table 29  Taxonomy of Change Agency Roles – Corresponding Champions Roles in Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Generators</th>
<th>Change Implementors</th>
<th>Change Adopters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking responsibility for the change (p.217)</td>
<td>Internal implementors (pps.219, 220)</td>
<td>Maintaining personal commitment (p.232)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating commitment (p.217)</td>
<td>Actively encouraging and supporting implementation (p.221)</td>
<td>Utilising the change to develop themselves and others (pps.234, 272, 273)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming an advocate (pps.219, 220)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defending the necessity to change (p.219)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The change champions could also be described as working within Lewin’s (1958) three phase planned change paradigm; acting as generators in unfreezing roles, performing the mover role as implementors and the refreezing role as adopters.

While this planned change perspective can be described and justified, it can also be seen that the champions did not confine their role within a structured planned approach but became actively involved throughout the process in an emergent change process, (Pettigrew, 2000; Weick, 2000); developing and encouraging new agendas, linking the change process to other changes and attempting to shape the perceptions of other potentially supportive individuals or groups (Table 23, pps.214-216). The research shows that the change champions did not necessarily work within a sequential plan or follow the planned sequence of events (pps.217, 220, 221), but in keeping with the emergent change perspective, adapted their timetable and implementation plan in line with emerging events, political priorities and potential level of support (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). As described earlier in this section, they continually switched roles as circumstances dictated, and implemented the change process in their own organisations in differing ways, often changing earlier planned initiatives and tactics and taking advantage of opportunities as they arose. In summary, the change champions therefore did
not, as suggested in the literature, implement their various roles exclusively within either a planned or emergent change model perspective which could have been easily followed. The research therefore reinforces the need for those seeking to understand the role of change agents in their specific organisations to think carefully about the roles they feel the change agents should implement and where possible research the potential role with a representative focus group or as part of a pilot implementation study.

**The change agents are internal to the organisation – with potential conflicts of interests and power/involvement problems**

It is clear from the construct of the network of champions that the change agents in this research are internal to the organisation. This contrasts with the argument, advanced by some commentators in the literature, that the change agent should preferably be external to the organisation, utilising an external expert/facilitating role, working within a process consultation framework in partnership with an internal client/manager (Schein, 1988). While the relationship between individual change champions and the central steering group and the Commission could be viewed as a partnering arrangement with the external partners providing help by way of support and advice to the network, there is a clear lack of a formal specialist consultant/client relationship with resultant learning advantages, (Patton and McCalman, 2008).

As detailed in the literature review (para. 4.4.1, p.93) Patton and McCalman compare and contrast the differing views on the roles of internal as opposed to external change agents and identify the particularly difficult situation for the change agent and the factors which may help or hinder objectivity. These factors range from; ‘being too close and part of the problem’, to the ‘nature of the voluntary relationship between the change agent and the organisation’. All these factors were accepted by interviewees as ‘given’ or seen as potential advantages in implementing change and were not seen as a barrier or hindering objectivity (see Summary Tables 23, p.214-216 and 26, p.249-250). It could however be argued that they were simply not aware of potential
objectivity problems, or that the political system in which they operated dictated their change activities, but all interviewees saw their up front and close involvement as a distinct advantage (p.217). The research therefore did not identify the use of an external consultant as a change agent, or the lack of specialist help, as a particular ‘barrier’ in implementing change but placed greater emphasis on the culture of some organisations as being ‘conservative and macho’ and opposed to change in general terms (p.253). Although not specifically mentioned by interviewees, it could be argued that the ‘knowledge of the change process’ which was seen as a barrier (p.259), could have been helped by the use of an outside change agent operating in a consultancy role and similarly with the ‘lack of resources’ barrier and ‘people resistance’ barrier, (pps.255, 258) which may have been solved by outside assistance or mediation. These suggestions were not however advanced by interviewees who saw the Commission as providing the required information and assistance and suggested improvements in this respect as detailed in (para. 8.3, p.258).

By contrast, and contradicting one of the ‘Golden Rules of Change Agency’, (Paton and McCalman, 2008), that the change agent must be an outsider who is not part of the hierarchical power system in which the client organisation is located (see Table 10, p.97), the change champions saw their part-time internal change agent’s role as a distinct advantage. This enabled them to lead the change by example, with many references to the advantage of knowing the system, being able to influence from within, building alliances, leveraging resources, and linking their change agenda to other internal change initiatives (see Table 23, pps.214-216). The change champions in this research therefore are more aligned with Caldwell’s (2003) Leadership Model of change agency and the need for those in senior influencing positions to lead the change process by example (Ulrich, 1997) and that change champions should be drawn from within organisations, (Schon, 1963) and in practice few organisations create full-time or specialist change management roles (Buchanan et al, 1992).
In summary, the research therefore adds to the body of knowledge of what is known about the **roles of change agents in practice** and lends weight to the suggestion that change agents can be both internal and external to the organisation and that the role of the insider change agent can be tailored to the organisation environment and be seen to lead, implement and adopt the change from both a planned and emergent change perspective.

**Change Agents – Skills**

The literature review in Chapter 4 demonstrated the clear link between the roles of the change agent and the related skill requirements, with a similar long list of skills (Cummings and Worley, 1993), competencies and personal characteristics (Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996), and personal attributes (Paton and McCalman, 2008). In summary comments on the literature in this area (p.108) it was recognised that no one person, or a group of persons, could possess all the identified skills; and what was required from the research was a more focused examination of the skill requirements based on a number of key themes or commonly recommended skill sets which had emerged from the overall literature review as follows:

- Facilitation, consulting and negotiation skills
- Interpersonal skills
- The credibility of the change agent
- The variants of perception and situation

In order to examine the contribution of this research to what is already known about the skills of change agents, the findings from the research are discussed under the above key theme headings.

**The skill requirements of facilitating, consulting and negotiating**

The literature review (para. 4.4.2, p.108) under ‘summary comment’ provides greater detail of the identification of the above common skill sets; which were mentioned in both long lists of recommended skills and the more specific behavioural models as detailed in Table 30 as follows:
Table 30 Facilitating, Consulting and Negotiating Skills and Related References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitating</th>
<th>Consulting</th>
<th>Negotiating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{Reference:}</td>
<td>\textbf{Reference:}</td>
<td>\textbf{Reference:}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many cases the three skill sets were expanded, grouped according to the roles played by change agents at various stages in the change process, or set in a teaching/coaching context with the change agent seen as a catalyst developing supportive relationships and stimulating motivation.

As detailed in (para. 8.2, p.229), the summary findings fully support the above recommended skills, with interviewees describing their need for skills to; ‘encourage others, encourage involvement, build coalitions, secure support, build a team working environment and coach and support’ (see Table 24, pps.230-231 and p.234). The research therefore confirms the literature review findings in this respect.

\textbf{Interpersonal skills}

The summary comments in (para. 4.4.2, p.109) similarly identified the full range of Interpersonal skills as being important in supporting the role of the change agent; working with others either internally or externally as part of a team, (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996; Hutton, 1994; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Paton and McCalman, 2008). The change champions in this research held a common view that ‘change was about people’ (pps.234, 235) and as such identified a range of what they termed ‘people skills’; understanding what motivates people, relationship building, gradually building consensus,
empathy with people, etc (see Table 24, pps.230-231). Further interpersonal skills were identified by interviewees as ‘influencing’ and included facilitation, persistence, selling and tailoring your message to the individual. Taken together therefore, the people and influencing skills identified in the research, equated with and confirmed the behavioural type skill requirements summarised from the literature review.

**The credibility of the change agent**

The overall point was made in the literature review summary comments that it could not be assumed that a change agent with a vast range of skills would be automatically accepted as credible within the system, (Cummings and Worley, 1993; Doppler and Lauterburg, 1996; Hutton, 1994; Steffen, 2000). It was stressed that the change agent must be acceptable to others, demonstrate stability, dedication, and honesty and retain professional integrity.

The change champions in this research continuously stressed the need for credibility with others and how they utilised their previous experience of implementing change to their advantage (p.232). They explained how they were able to utilise all available opportunities to advance the change by what they termed ‘utilising their position’ (p.232) which played to their strengths and increased their integrity. Their credibility was further enhanced by ‘building allies (p.234), learning by doing (p.272), and helping solve problems’ (p.236). Critical incident examples of ‘success’, emphasised the importance of building a change team over time, and how ‘trust’ gained from their previous involvement in major change had assisted implementation in new and emerging change challenges (p.221). The findings from this research therefore supported the need for the change agent to have credibility within the system as identified in the literature review. The added point made by interviewees provided an insight into how this ‘credibility’ might be gained and accepted. All categories of interviewee saw ‘Utilising your position’ (p.232) as a vital skill. Just as an external consultant might rely on their organisation’s reputation, array of skill sets, staff, connections and networks; the change champions in this research relied on their past and current positions within the
local government sector, their knowledge of the political system in which they operated, their proven leadership skills and declared commitment, and their personal access to resources and useful networks. Their unique previous experience and their ability to ‘learn by doing’ (p.272) helped build their individual reputations and credibility as change agents within their own organisations and across the sector.

**The variants of perception and situation**

The literature review identified that skill sets for change agents, as with roles, were not necessarily constant, but could vary according to the perception, context, timing and sequencing of the change programme, (De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Massey and Williams, 2006).

The research showed that, as with roles (see discussion earlier in this section p.292), the change champions utilised differing skills dependent on their perception of the change process at any particular time or changing situations. Examples were provided of champions utilising their negotiating skills to link their change agenda to other change processes (p.232) and taking advantage of newly available opportunities. Other examples included how they built consensus over time, knowing when to intervene, finding a way around problems, and being flexible in approach (p.272). The most notable examples of champions utilising differing skills, dependent on the situation were provided by critical incident examples of ‘setting change in context’ as the organisation needs and priorities changed (p.237). The champions had the sense making skills to analyse the new situation, change their original perception of what might work, and apply a different more appropriate approach given the new organisation priorities (p.236, 237, 238,239, 275).

In summary, the research therefore adds to the body of knowledge of what is known about the skills of change agents in practice and supports the link suggested in the literature between the roles of the change agents and the necessary skills sets dependent on their perceptions of the change process and particular situations. It similarly confirms the importance of facilitation,
consulting, negotiation and interpersonal skills at all stages in the change process and the importance of the ‘credibility’ of the change agent.

**Resistance to change**

The Summary Comments in relation to resistance in the literature review in para. 4.4.3, p.121 emphasised; the differing definitions of resistance and the lack of a common analysis approach, the role of the change agent in either causing or overcoming resistance, and the differing views on how it can be managed or utilised to best effect. In order to evaluate how this research either supports or contradicts what is already known about resistance in relation to change agency and agents, discussion takes place under the following headings:

- Definitions and sources
- How resistance can be managed
- The positive perspective on resistance

**Definitions and sources**

As detailed in the literature review there are many differing, overlapping, or complementary models, perspectives, and conceptualisations advanced to explain how resistance can manifest itself in practice, (Brehm, 1996; Graetz et al, 2002; King and Anderson, 2002; Piderit, 2000; Hambrick and Cannella, 1989; Graetz et al, 2002; Ford et al, 2002). Due to the complexity of the existing theory, it is not possible to appraise the research findings against all the differing perspectives advanced to enhance the understanding of resistance, but it is possible to identify some areas where particularly relevant comparisons can be made between the research findings and existing theory.

In particular interviewees saw resistance as problematic and a barrier to change (Lines, 2004; Strickland, 1998; Randall, 2004) and as counterproductive behaviour to be overcome (Anderson, 2002). They saw resistance as coming from a wide range of sources and motivated by many
reasons, and within all four predominant perspectives on resistance as itemised by Graetz et al, (2002) namely:

- The psychological model – was evidenced by individual behaviours (see Table 26, pps.249-250)
- The systems model – evidenced by the potential loss of status and position (p.258)
- The institutional model – evidenced by resistance in council structures and procedures (pps.253, 255)
- The organisational cultures approach – evidenced by the culture of the council and the local government and public service environment (pps.253-254)

They cited many examples of the reasons for resistance in terms of stemming from individuals or the organisation itself (pps.251-253). These sources of individual and organisational resistance generally equated with the ‘driving forces against change’ (Senior, 1997) as discussed in the literature review (see Table 14, p.113).

By way of example the sources and potential reasons for resistance, as identified by interviewees, are set out under the Senior (1997) ‘individual and organisation’ analysis headings in Table 31 as follows:
Table 31  Sources and Reasons for Resistance as Identified by Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Resistance</th>
<th>Organisational Resistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convincing individual members and officers –</strong></td>
<td><strong>Securing whole system buy in –</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting due to:</td>
<td>Resistance due to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• apathy (p.251)</td>
<td>• not a council or political party priority (pps.251, 253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• inbuilt opposition to the change itself (p.251)</td>
<td>• against the ‘norms’ of the council or its stakeholders (p.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• loss of status (p.258)</td>
<td>• against political policy (p.252)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• not a personal priority (why bother) (p.258)</td>
<td>• fear of creating precedents (p.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• used to doing things this way (p.252)</td>
<td>• lack of resources (p.255)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• lack of knowledge (p.259)</td>
<td><strong>Against cultural norms:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ineffective communication (pps.258-260)</td>
<td>• ‘conservative’ resistance (p.253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• fear (p.252)</td>
<td>• the local government environment (pps.253-254)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the findings from the research generally conformed with the resistance forces against change as summarised by Senior (1997), the interviewees placed increased emphasis on the culture of their organisations, the political environment in which they operated and the resisting forces outside the organisation, e.g. political parties, community groups, trade unions and public service procedure and practices (Paton and McCalman, 2008; Coghlan, 1994; Thompson and Mc Hugh, 2002). They saw themselves as operating within a culture of resistance with their focus on overcoming resistance as it presented itself (pps.253-254). They did not see themselves as resisting the change,
but being less effective due to their lack of knowledge, resources and central support systems (pps.255, 259).

In summary, the research findings in this area can be seen as conforming to the theories advanced regarding the general view that resistance is problematic, and can come from a wide range of sources, including; individuals, organisations and their related stakeholder groupings. The resistance is seen to occur for various reasons, and the change agent while not consciously resisting the change themselves, can be limited in implementing the change by their own ability and access to resources. The major resistance in this research was identified as coming from the culture of the various councils and their operation within a political environment and points the way for those seeking to attempt to manage resistance (Eccles, 1996), in a local government environment that special attention needs to be paid to the inbuilt resistance to change in politically driven public service cultures.

**How resistance can be managed**

The conclusions from the review of the literature in Chapter 4 in relation to the management of resistance emphasised that there is no universally accepted theory on how to manage resistance and that the recommendation of general models was fraught with danger (King and Anderson, 2002). The most notable point from this research as described under ‘definitions and sources’, p.304, is that all interviewees perceived resistance as problematic and something to be overcome. They therefore adopted problem solving techniques in an attempt to eliminate the problem or limit its harmful effects. The change champions accepted that resistance to any change, particularly while operating in a political environment, is always present (p.254) and rather than pushing hard to overcome the resistance, they identified the potential sources (Senge, 1990) and developed strategies to either overcome the resistance or counteract its harmful effects. Examples of overcoming resistance (see pps.234-241) included; involving as many stakeholders as possible in the change process, (Brehm, 1996) negotiation, (Dawson, 2003)
and the use of power, (French and Raven, 1959). Tactics used to counteract the potential harmful effects included targeted communication (pps.238, 259), providing support (pps.234-235), and forming co-operative alliances (p.232), (Dawson, 2003).

The perceived ‘given’ nature of resistance meant that it was seen as natural and was dealt with openly (Connor, 1998) and since the champions perceived the change process to be mainly about ‘people making change’ (see Appendix 10, p.422), people management solutions were often utilised to overcome sources of resistance, including; increasing awareness (p.259), generating interest (p.232), overcoming apathy (p.235), gaining trust (pps.217, 221, 259) and convincing others of the need for change (p.234).

In summary, the research confirms the view that there is no universal model for the management of resistance, with champions utilising various management techniques, power bases, and networks to overcome the sources of resistance which they either identified in advance or during implementation. Although attempting to limit resistance by various methods and interventions, overall, the champions’ actions were informed by their belief that change was about people and that resistance was a natural barrier to be overcome.

**The positive perspective on resistance**

There was little evidence from the research that the ongoing nature of the change champions’ work suggests continuity (Mintzberg, 1998; Cummings, 2002), with all champions being driven by their belief that change would bring about improvements (p.219) and was good for the organisation (see also Appendix 10, p.422). Resistance was not seen as challenging the change from the perspective that it was not good in the short or long term for the organisation (Paton and McCalman, 2008) but mainly as a tactic to protect various individuals or groupings power bases or interests, (see discussion on definition and sources, p.304).
Although interviewees saw resistance as problematic and part of the system in which they operated (p.254), there was some evidence of the recognition of the potential positive effects of resistance (p.267). In some cases interviewees described how resistance had hardened their resolve to make the change happen (p.219) reshaped their thinking or improved their implementation strategy (p.236). Critical incidents were provided where successful change could not be implemented due to resistance, but how the change champion had learned from the experience and applied the learning to other change initiatives (pps.237-238).

The very acceptance of resistance as part of everyday change implementation meant that champions thought through potential change methodologies, planned tactics, and considered potential counterarguments (p.255). This advance thinking (Eccles, 1996) was part of their ‘learning by doing’ process which they identified as a key skill and development need for change agents (pps.237, 275) and was aligned to their perception that if change was to happen ‘through people’, then people’s perception of the change and potential reactions should be considered and openly recognised during implementation (pps.221, 222, 238-239). This recognition of resistance also encouraged champions to build alliances, seek whole system approval, and determine the most appropriate timing; (both organisationally and politically) for the introduction of the new change initiative(pps.254-255).

In summary, while there was little up front recognition of the potential positive aspects of resistance during interviews with the change champions, more detailed analysis of their answers to questions and the critical incident examples demonstrated that they learned from the resistance they encountered. This learned experience resulted in; more thoughtful preplanning and open recognition of resistance (potentially preventing covert opposition), increased sensitivity to the needs of individuals and the recognition of the dominant political environment in which they operated.
Overall the research has added to the body of knowledge of what is known about the resistance encountered by change agents from two perspectives.

Firstly; it confirms the view in the literature that resistance is often perceived as problematic, comes from a wide range of sources, and that there is no universal model or technique for its management. The change champions, due to their perception of the problematic nature of resistance, attempted to manage resistance mainly by the use of a range of differing, people orientated, general management techniques dependent on the situation, and were driven by their belief that the change was ‘good’ for the organisation and local government as a whole.

Secondly; A number of the positive aspects of resistance, as currently described in the literature, while not recognised overtly by the change champions, were evidenced in critical incident examples provided during the interviews. These examples provided insights into how the champions learned from their experience of previous successes and failures and how this learned experience was utilised in future change initiatives.

As with the findings in relation to roles and skills, the research in relation to resistance, while recognising the many and varied sources of resistance, identified the ‘culture’ of the organisation and the political environment, with its resultant norms, as a major source of resistance for those championing change in a local government environment in N.I.

**Development needs**

The Summary comments in relation to ‘development needs’ in the literature review in Chapter 4, p.130, emphasised the links between the roles the change agents were expected to perform, their related skill requirements and the resultant development needs. Emphasis was placed on the situational nature of the development needs, the various methodologies which can be utilised and the need for personal support. In order to evaluate how this research either supports or contradicts what is already known about the
development needs of agents, discussion takes place under the following summary headings:

- Development strategies – situational context
- Methodology – on the job learning
- Personal support

**Development strategies – situational context**

The literature on change agency and change agents identifies the lack of systematic management development of change expertise (Buchanan et al, 1999) which is often attributed to the many varying roles played by change agents, (Ottaway, 1983; Buchanan and Storey, 1997) and the fact that ‘the change agent’ is often not an individual with a specific exclusive change agency role, but rather a manager with bolt on change agency responsibilities. This dispersal of change agency across organisations (Caldwell, 2003), with change agents playing many and often differing roles (Doyle, 2001; De Caluwe and Vermaak, 2003), presents a great difficulty in attempting to define the development needs of change agents. The literature therefore suggests that the skill requirements and resultant development needs are situational and dependent on particular circumstances (Hartley et al, 1997; Hutton, 1994; Dover, 2002).

What emerged from this situational research, set within a local government context, was that it is possible to develop a hierarchy of topic based development needs (see Table 33 – Model Development Framework, p.324), based on those identified by the change champions. This model is discussed later in the Chapter (pps.322-326) in the context of practical implementation. In summary it consists of three levels of development activity with **level one** consisting of topics which were identified as common across all categories of change champion, and summarised as ‘awareness raising’, to include information on the change initiative (p.259), and general support topics e.g. working with others (p.270), the management of time and resources (p.269), and confidence building (p.272). The **second level** ‘targeted training’,
includes a menu of development topics aimed at specific groups of champions which were specifically identified by various categories of change champion dependent on their current level of awareness or level of experience as a change champion (p.272). The third level in the hierarchy ‘personal’ provides for the development needs of individual champions and is based on personal development planning and informed self identification of development requirements, as individuals develop in their role over time as a change champion (p.273).

This hierarchal approach to fulfilling identified development needs confirms and builds on the literature which suggests that the development needs of change agents are situational and set within the context of the change needs of the organisation, (Dover, 2002; Hartley et al, 1997). It also follows the recommendation in the Doyle, (2000) research, for the need to introduce pan-organisational programmes for the development of change management expertise. In the context of introducing change in local government in NI, the research therefore provides an insight into the situational ‘menu’ of development needs and provides a suggested methodology, as to how they might be delivered in practice.

**Methodology – on the job learning**
The summary comments in the literature review (Chapter 4, p.130), identified the preferred development option as ‘on the job learning’, (Massey and Williams, 2006; Dover, 2002; Doyle, 2002) with the design of an internal/external support mechanism which might include; coaching, mentoring, action learning sets etc (Doyle, 2002). As detailed in (Table 27, pps.267-268), Interviewees in this research placed considerable emphasis on ‘on the job’ learning, with specific suggestions including; learning from others (p.270), working with and through people (p.271), and learning from the experience of other change agents (pps.271-272). This ‘learning by doing’ also included utilising the expertise of more experienced change agents as coaches and mentors (p.271). Perhaps because they were currently engaged in change agency, they saw the research in the context of adding to their skills
base, and all suggested development needs applicable to change agents ‘in the field’, and actively involved in implementing change.

This research therefore confirms the emphasis placed in the literature on ‘on the job’ training, and is particularly aligned to the findings from the Massey and Williams (2006) research focussed on the views of change agents in a health sector NHS Trust, which confirmed the advantages of learning by doing, the need for the knowledge gained by change agents to be shared at every opportunity, and for change agent support programmes to include mentoring and shadowing. A similar direct comparison can be drawn with the Doyle (2002) research on the development of ‘novice’ change agents where he places emphasis on ‘learning by doing’ allied to peer support, expert guidance and real world experiences.

**Personal support**

The literature places emphasis on the personal difficulties experienced by change agents and the need to provide expert support systems (Buchanan et al, 1999; Doyle et al, 2000; Doyle, 2002). These personal difficulties were similarly experienced by the change champions in this research with emphasis placed on the need for confidence building (p.272), time management (p.269), targeted support systems (p.272) and tailored development (p.272). The research therefore confirms what is already known about the personal support needs of change agents, but perhaps because the change champions in this research accepted that they operated within a ‘macho’, political, and often conservative culture (p.253), where challenge is the norm, they did not place emphasis on the need to recognise their own ‘emotional needs’ as identified by Doyle, (2002). Interviewees instead placed greater emphasis on the need for targeted personal development programmes (p.272) allied to their own individual needs and personal goals.

This need for targeted personal development plans is not fully explored in the literature to date with discussion of change agency programmes and development plans often examined in general terms or in a group context as
opposed to the individual change agent’s needs. The greater insight into the tailored personal development needs of the change champions in this research was facilitated by the use of critical incident techniques, which provided the interviewees with an opportunity to relate their suggested development needs to their own change agency experiences (pps.273-275). Also, as interviewees were aware that the research was taking place within an action research framework, in order to develop an improvement plan, they may have been anxious to ensure that the resultant development programme included a mechanism to address their personal/individual needs, to enable them to effectively contribute to the ongoing change agenda.

Any added contribution which the research can make to the overall body of knowledge in relation to change agency and agents.

Concluding comments in the literature review in Chapter 4 (p.131) stressed the need for further research on change agency and agents (Caldwell, 2006; Doyle, 2002). The implications for the theory of change agency and agents arising from the research has been discussed from the perspective that it is unique; in that it contributes to the gap in the literature relating to how change agents operate in local government in N.I.

The research provides a further contribution to what is already known about the theory of change agency and agents in general, in that it supports and builds on the existing body of knowledge, and in particular the roles, skills, resistance encountered, and development needs of change agents as discussed in the last section. The research also provides a further addition to the body of knowledge, in that the findings make a contribution to knowledge for those seeking to implement change in a local government, or public sector environment or as a private sector comparator.

The research also adds to the general body of knowledge, in that it has a number of features which provide a unique set of research insights not evident in the change agency literature to date, namely:
Unlike other studies which tend to be historical and are carried out by researchers looking in at the organisation and its change agents, this study was conducted by an insider researcher close to the research topic.

The study took place under an action research framework, seeking improvement actions which will be implemented.

The study took place in a live change implementation setting in a highly politicised environment.

The methodology adopted allowed for personal insights into change agency in practice, utilising a committed group of change champions representing differing local government stakeholders.

The research findings were informed by those who had championed change over a prolonged period utilising their previous experience and belief in the change process.

The findings, while confirming existing theory, also added further insights into the situational role of the change agent in an elected local authority.

The implications of the findings on practice were evaluated, and set within an improvement framework, to improve local government practice centrally and within the twenty six individual elected authorities.

The above features of the research while taken separately are not unique in themselves, but when combined, provide a unique research framework, implemented in an often inaccessible political environment, the results of which can be utilised by those seeking further insights into change agency and agents in practice.
Summary comments

The question posed at the beginning of this section (9.2, p.286) prompted discussion on the implications for the theory of change agency and agents arising out of the research findings. These implications have been discussed from three perspectives, with detailed discussion around the roles, skills, resistance encountered, and development needs of change agents; as these topics related to the problem solving aspect of the research and formed the main research questions. This discussion demonstrated the added value of the research to the existing body of knowledge, its unique framework and how it might be utilised by those seeking comparator studies. A critical success factor of the research was gaining accessibility to interviewees and their openness and frankness during discussion. It was their cooperation which provided the rich data on which the research findings and improved practice recommendations are based. It was only made possible since the research was part of an improvement agenda, to which they were committed and wanted to succeed. Having identified how this research contributes to the body of knowledge on change agency and change agents, as required in the final stage of the DBA programme (as detailed in para. 1.4.1, p.7); the next section explains how the research fulfils the further requirement of the programme (para. 1.4.2, p.8) and makes a significant contribution to the field of management practice.

9.3 Contribution to Professional Practice

What are the implications for the practice of managing, developing and supporting change champions in local government in NI arising from this research?
9.3.1 Research Implications

This research has produced a number of contributions to practice which were discussed in Chapter 8 together with resultant best practice recommendations. These recommendations are set out in full, on a topic based basis, in Appendix 11, p.430 (Research Recommendations by Topic).

While the full list of recommendations is set out in Appendix 11, p.430 in order to fully answer the above question, to demonstrate their impact on improved practice, and allow for ease of implementation, it is necessary to integrate the recommendations within the Commission’s normal three phase implementation model which is utilised when dispersing change agency across local government i.e.

- **Inception**: selecting change agents/champions, and establishing a network (managing).
- **Operation**: operating the network and managing the change agents (managing).
- **Development**: supporting the change agents and developing a learning culture (developing and supporting).

While these three phases are not mutually exclusive, particularly in relation to ‘operation’ and ‘development’, they enable decision makers to think of change initiatives in practical implementation terms, and to see where the research recommendations fit within the change implementation process.

The 20 topic based recommendations are therefore summarised and set out in Table 32, p.318, to conform to the practical implementation model. The table illustrates, on a staged basis, the implications of the research on the Commission’s existing practice in dispersing change agency, and also acts as a suggested phased improvement agenda.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inception Phase (managing)</th>
<th>Operational Phase (managing)</th>
<th>Development Phase (developing and supporting)</th>
<th>Development Phase – Culture Changes (developing and supporting)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composition (1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Partnership Working (3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Member/Officer Relationships (13)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Encouraging Support (10)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue with present structure &amp; consider expanding (p.224)</td>
<td>Encourage cross category partnership working (p.226)</td>
<td>Initiate enhancement programme (p.265)</td>
<td>Initiate Central &amp; Local awareness raising of change initiative (p.262)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appointment (2)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plan of Work (4)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work/Life Balance (16)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication Strategy (12)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue with self selection (p.225)</td>
<td>Build flexibility &amp; allow for creativity (p.227)</td>
<td>Initiate a programme of stress management &amp; personal support (p.279)</td>
<td>Designed to overcome identified barriers (p.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utilise Previous Experience (6)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maintaining Commitment (5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Support Groupings (17)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Readiness for Change project (12)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain existing network &amp; recruit by experience &amp; commitment (p.245)</td>
<td>Improve information on the topic, introduce motivational and recognition events (p.228)</td>
<td>Initiate pilot self select group(s) for shared learning and joint problem solving (p.280)</td>
<td>Initiate project, monitor, disseminate results &amp; evaluate recommendations (p.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Succession Planning (7)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resource Provision (11)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mentoring &amp; Coaching (18)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Trade Union Consultation (14)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate planning system (p.246)</td>
<td>Target individual support to reduce time commitment &amp; equitable distribution (p.263)</td>
<td>Introduce awareness training and introduce programmes (p.281)</td>
<td>Establish consultative &amp; negotiation mechanism (p.266)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting other Initiatives (8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Development Plans (19)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Development Plans (19)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supporting Development and Learning Experiences (20)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilise existing expertise for other change initiatives including retirees (p.247)</td>
<td>Initiate personal development planning scheme (p.282)</td>
<td>Initiate personal development planning scheme (p.282)</td>
<td>Highlight concerns re: need for improved self-development &amp; confidence building measures and learning environment (p.283)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching &amp; Mentoring – in Mgt. Development Programmes (9)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Building on Existing Development Interventions (15)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Building on Existing Development Interventions (15)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilise existing expertise as mentors in all future senior local government management development programmes (p.248)</td>
<td>Initiate re-design team and implement recommendations (p.278)</td>
<td>Initiate re-design team and implement recommendations (p.278)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.3.2 Developing the Action Plan

Table 32 (p.318) sets the findings from the research in the context of the Commission’s phased implementation model and establishes some 20 suggested improvements. These action points cannot be considered as single interventions, but must be set within an overall action plan. From the Commission’s perspective, in order to implement the research findings, such action planning must include; prioritising recommendations, deciding when, how, and by whom the various improvement actions will be undertaken and placing the action plan within the normal business planning framework.

To ensure that the research recommendations are integrated within this planning process, prior to the preparation of an overall action plan, it is necessary to consider the possible implications of implementing individual recommendations in so far as they might support or limit the effectiveness of others. This requires considerable discussion and prioritisation by the Commission, but it is possible to identify a number of these potential implications when the recommendations are examined within the context of the three phase implementation model (Table 32, p.318) headings of: Inception, Operation, and Development.

**Inception Phase**

**Composition:** The recommendation (1, p.224) to consider expanding the present network has implications on the recommendation to provide ‘Mentoring and Coaching’ (18, p.281) and ‘Personal Development’ (19, p.282) in that the availability of suitable mentors and coaches may be limited, and similarly if personal development plans are to be prepared for each change champion, this could be time consuming and costly. Also, if personal development planning is to be effective, it requires adequate resourcing to carry out development appraisals and implement a tailored programme to meet identified development needs. In developing its action plan, the Commission needs to consider the balance between further expansion of the
network, with resultant pressure on resources, as opposed to confining the network to its current size and concentrating on the development of existing members or replacements.

**Appointment:** The recommendation to continue with a system to enable change champions to 'self select' (2, p.225) must be considered in line with the recommendation on ‘Utilising Previous Experience’, (6, p.245) where the knowledge and experience of change champions in other change situations was identified in the research as a valuable asset (p.270). Equally the ‘Commitment’ of the change champion was seen as a vital role and skill in implementing change (p.219) and the recommendation on ‘Maintaining Commitment’ (5, p.228) assumes that there is an already existing level of commitment to be built on and encouraged. The recommended ‘self selection’ method assumes this level of experience and commitment which may only be present in varying degrees.

In order to inform the self selection process, the Commission should consider providing awareness seminars, based on this research, to provide potential change champions with the necessary information on the level of experience and commitment required to successfully implement their potential role. The seminars could include ‘my story’ examples from existing or former change champions in local government.

**Supporting other Initiatives:** The recommendation that current change champions be utilised to ‘Support other Initiatives’ (8, p.247) and provide ‘Mentoring and Coaching’, (9, p.248 & 18, p.281) together with an expansion of their current role as recommended in ‘Partnership working’ (3, p.226) and participation in an enhanced personal development programme (19, p.282) will need to be prioritised in practice. The use of retirees has already been discussed as a possible source of assistance, but this additional resource is limited, and may only alleviate to a small extent, the pressure on ‘time commitment’ identified in the research as a barrier to achievement (pps.255-258).
The Commission, in developing an action plan, needs to recognise that not all recommendations involving additional time commitment by existing change champions can be implemented initially, and may need to be phased over time, in parallel with the implementation of the ‘Work/life Balance’ recommendation (16, p.279) and the individual’s preferred time scale.

**Operational Phase**

**Plan of Work:** The recommendation in relation to work planning which allows for central planning, but increases flexibility and creativity by change champions at local level (11, p.263), requires a departure from the current planning process and places greater emphasis on the actions of existing individual change champions. To ensure that current change champions have the necessary skills to maximise the effectiveness of this recommendation, the timing of its introduction needs to be considered in line with the recommendations in relation to development and support. These recommendations: Work/life balance, (16, p.279) Support Groupings, (17, p.280) Mentoring and Coaching (18, p.281) and Personal Development planning (19, p.282), should enhance skills and enable existing change champions to work in a less directed fashion, cope with emergent change and have greater confidence in their actions. It is therefore important that the Commission seek the views of existing change champions when determining the timescale for the introduction of this recommendation and its potential impact on the ‘skills’ (Table 24, pps.230-231) and ‘barriers’ (Table 26, pps.249-250) identified in the research.

**Resource Allocation:** The general recommendation to target individual support needs, and to ensure the equitable distribution of available resources (11, p.263) impacts directly on a number of other more specific recommendations and variables as follows:

- Individual support needs should be identified in parallel with the Personal Development Planning recommendation (19, p.282).
• The availability of funding for local initiatives is dependent on the size of the overall change initiative budget, the funding required to implement the Development Phase training recommendations, the various supporting projects e.g. (Readiness for Change, 12, p.264; Member/Officer Relationships, 13, p.265; Encourage Support, 10, p.262; Building on Existing Programme, 15, p.278).

• In developing a resource allocation framework, there is a need to ensure that the change champions, who have initiated successful awareness and commitment building projects at local level, (Building Support, p.221; Utilising your Position, p.232) continue to be funded, and are not excluded as a result of a new equitable funding allocation process.

In order to determine what funding is available to introduce this general recommendation (11, p.263), the Commission needs to determine the overall project funding available, examine the funding requirements to introduce the above specific development phase initiatives and their potential phased introduction, and set the general recommendation within an overall prioritised funding framework. This framework should be determined in conjunction with existing change champions and aligned to the Commission’s business planning process.

Development Phase

Building on Existing Programme: The recommendation to initiate a re-design of the existing support programme and to implement the resultant recommendations (15, p.278), has to fit within the Resource Allocation recommendation (11, p.263) and its limitations as previously discussed, and provide for a level of continuity of existing provision. The discussion of development needs findings and recommendations in Chapter 8 (para. 8.4, pps.266-276) provides considerable detail on ‘what’ is required and ‘why’, and provides details of ‘how’ suggested development needs could be provided, but these suggestions are not set within an overall framework for delivery, and the Commission will need to consider ‘how’ the delivery of the overall
development programme can be provided and managed. This ‘Building on Existing Programme’ recommendation (15, p.278), while mainly concerned with the integration of all the suggested development recommendations into a new support programme, should also address the potential delivery mechanisms and frameworks to deliver the new programme. The research would suggest that a framework should be designed as a three level development approach as set out in Table 33 as follows:
Table 33 Model Development Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Level</th>
<th>Content – linked to recommendations</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. General</td>
<td>Awareness Raising</td>
<td>All champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General information and developments relating to the change process (10)</td>
<td>(Advance details would enable potential participants to opt in or out of the general programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal/External best practice examples (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Targeted</td>
<td>Content driven by group needs who could set their own development needs agenda on an annual basis (17)</td>
<td>Specific categories of champion e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional content to cover awareness training to support specific development recommendations e.g.</td>
<td>Officer/member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring and Coaching, (18)</td>
<td>Self selecting groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work/life Balance, (16)</td>
<td>Common Interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member/Officer relationships (13)</td>
<td>Support groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal</td>
<td>A full range of topic based seminars as identified in the research (Table 27, pp. 267-268) and linked to</td>
<td>Individual champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Development Planning (19)</td>
<td>Self select from a detailed seminar programme issued quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g. general management skills, communication skills, people skills, problem solving, negotiation and self confidence building skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this might appear an ambitious programme to design and deliver, if the Commission’s existing resources are utilised to implement the development framework, and the content integrated within the Local Government Training
Group’s (LGTG) annual business plan, it could become a natural extension to their existing learning and development activities. From the Commission’s perspective, utilising the LGTG, (the training provider body established by the Commission to discharge its statutory training responsibilities), to initiate and manage the development programme, ensures accountability for delivery and is set within existing governance arrangements.

**Cultural Issues**: A number of recommendations which, while impacting on the roles, skills, barriers and development needs of change champions, similarly impacted on the overall ‘culture of local government’ as described by interviewees (para. 8.3, pps.253-255) The changes required to facilitate a cultural shift to implement the findings and recommendations arising from the research cannot be implemented by the Commission and the change champions alone. There is an urgent need to bring the findings to the attention of key stakeholders in the wider local government sector and to seek their assistance with implementation. Without such assistance and ownership, change champions can only be developed in isolation and will continue to face the overall culture related barriers identified in the research (para. 8.3, pps.253-255). A programme to seek ownership of the recommendations could be initiated in the following terms:

- Initiate a stakeholder mapping exercise detailing the recommendations and identifying key stakeholders.
- Initial briefings with key stakeholders from local and central government to provide awareness of the findings and to link the cultural change agenda with the overall local government change agenda.
- Initial presentation of the findings and recommendations at a high profile launch supported by keynote speakers and attended by officer/member representatives, trade unions, central government representative and change champions.
- Requests made to place the recommendations within central and local strategic and business plans linked to the ‘Vision for Local Government’ in the years ahead.
• Monitoring and updating arrangements put in place linked to continuing awareness and communication.

While accepting that the recommendations relating to cultural change in local government cannot be achieved by the Commission alone, the Commission as the only body in NI with powers of direction to bring about change is well placed to initiate and coordinate this cultural change process.

**Summary Comments**

The question posed at the commencement of this section sought clarification on the implications for practice, arising from the research, on the management, development and support of change champions in local government in N.I. As set out under the topic headings of ‘Research Implications’ (para. 9.2.1, p.286) and ‘Developing an Action Plan’ (para. 9.3.2, p.280), it can be seen that the implications for practice are applicable at two levels of local government within N.I.

The first level relates to the change champions themselves and the work of the Commission where it can be seen that the research generated individual topic based recommendations, which when brought together under the Commission’s change practice framework, provides a considerable contribution to practice by way of an improvement agenda, directly relating to how change champions are managed and developed. This improvement agenda, based on a better understanding of how change champions operate in practice, when implemented, will lead to greater efficiency in the allocation of resources and targeted support to change champions in line with their identified development needs. The suggested improvements would not have been identified had the research not taken place, the results set in an implementation model framework, and action planning considerations identified and discussed.
The second level which was not considered at the commencement of the research, relates to the cultural change required across local government to help manage and develop the change champions. The research structure and questions were very much topic based, but led to a wider discussion of ‘barriers to change’ which identified the wider topics of; officer/member relationships, encouraging support, readiness for change, trade union involvement and creating a learning and development culture. This wider agenda has similarly been identified by the research, the implications discussed and a programme developed to seek ownership by the wider local government stakeholder grouping. The research can therefore inform practice across local government organisations seeking to create a culture which encourages change, and assists change champions to develop and learn from experience. Discussion of the research findings in this section demonstrates a significant contribution to management practice as required at the final stage of the DBA programme (as outlined in para. 1.4.2, p.8).

9.4 Limitations of the Study Findings

Having discussed the usefulness of the study in terms of its contribution to practice and knowledge, it is important to discuss the limitations of the study findings and to provide some guidance as to how they might be utilised by others in similar and differing circumstances. The results of the study, while directly applicable to local government in NI, are situational, and the findings cannot be taken as necessarily transferable to other jurisdictions, the wider public service environment, or related organisations. It is accepted that, as with any action research study, the research questions were chosen carefully to help improve practice and provide further insights into change agency in a given situation. It is therefore difficult to generalise the results of the study in an attempt to formulate any new theory relating to change agency or the management of change agents. This is particularly difficult in that the literature (see para. 4.5, p.131) on change agency points to the lack of any universally accepted model of change agency and emphasises the danger in attempting to define the roles, skills etc. of change agents in any general way,
and the importance of the situational nature of such roles, skills etc. The study therefore does not claim to provide such a universal definition, or to claim that the findings can be taken by others and simply applied to their similar type problems in order to provide successful outcomes.

In claiming that the research will be useful to others seeking insights into change agency and how change agents operate in practice; from a knowledge perspective, they may wish to add to, or contradict the findings or utilise them for comparator purposes with other empirical studies. Similarly those seeking comparison from a management practice perspective, will find reasoned discussion of the findings with resultant recommendations, in an attempt to improve the performance of the change champions network and increase their effectiveness. It will be a matter for those seeking to apply the findings to other situations, to appraise the similarity of the research problem, the applicability of the research questions, the framework for analysis and the applicability of the resultant recommendations to their specific situation, organisation culture, policies and operational arrangements. I feel that they will find a sound basis for discussion of improved practice in relation to the introduction of major change initiatives and the dispersal of change agency.

9.5 Further Research Suggested by the Study

The research was designed around a particular problem and the research questions were consequently designed to help provide specific insights into how the problem might be solved. The construction of the research was therefore limited to the specific problem solving exercise and did not attempt to cover all aspects of the management of change in organisations. The literature review similarly concentrated on what is already known about change agency and agents operating in practice. The research however, as it progressed to data analysis stage, raised some further unexpected research questions which could not be answered within the scope of the planned research but could be suggested as areas of further related study at a future time, these included:
Belief in the change process and the commitment of the change agents
As an action researcher who felt they had some knowledge of the motivations of the change champions, and did not feel that analysis of their motivations was important to the research question, I was surprised by the level of emphasis that the champions placed on belief and commitment as a necessary prerequisite role and skill of a potential change champion. While the literature on change agency does provide some insights into commitment (Schon, 1963; Sternberg and Phillips, 1993; Eccles, 1996) and belief in the change process, (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Hutton, 1994) the findings from this research demonstrated the power of commitment in that it underpinned all aspects of the various roles played by the change champions, had a strong influence on their desire to develop within their role and related to their belief that the change was good for their organisations and society as a whole (Quinn, 1988; Westra and Van de Vliert, 1989). Should the Commission consider facilitating further change agency networks, there is a need for further research to attempt to establish the relationship between the desired change, the belief systems and potential commitment of those being considered to champion the change initiative.

The change topic and potential resistance to change
Although the change champions in this research, in answer to the various research questions, provided suggestions, examples, and critical incidents, based on their overall experience in implementing change in general; they were aware that the data collected would be analysed to develop an improvement plan to assist them in their current change role. This had the potential, when speaking about resistance, to focus their attention on resistance related to their current change challenge. Their current role was part of the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative designed to help increase the number of women in key positions across local government. This change was welcomed by many, but also, as described in the research findings, found opposition from those who felt threatened by change or were opposed in principle to the change topic itself. While this change potentially threatened a
number of stakeholders; due to its links with an overall equality agenda accepted throughout NI, it had a potential 'feel good' factor which may not be associated with other change topics. Such topics might include; potential pay cuts due to system changes, organisation design changes, and changes directly relating to terms and conditions of employment. If the Commission is considering a forced change initiative, which have the potential to adversely affect all those employed in local government, as opposed to a desired change initiative, the level of commitment evidenced in this research, and the resistance factors could alter, dependent on the level of commitment building measures introduced, employee consultation and the feelings of insecurity (Baraldi et al, 2010). Although this research provided insights into resistance from the perspective of those making the change, in order to provide a range of perspectives, and before embarking on wider change initiatives it would be desirable to research the views of those directly affected by the change in order to supplement the views of the change champions. This further research would provide an increased understanding of the relationship between the planned change topic and potential resistance factors, and provide a blueprint for consultation and confidence building measures to assist practical implementation.

9.6 End Word

Since the research to which this thesis relates commenced some three years ago, there have been a number of developments within local government in NI which are worth noting as they have a potential impact on the research findings and recommendations. These include:

Availability of Funding

Despite the current austerity measures in the public service increased funding has been obtained to ensure both the continuation of the change initiative, the dissemination of the results of the research and the phased implementation of the recommendations. This funding could not have been secured had the research not taken place within an action research framework designed to
provide an improvement agenda to continuously develop the network of champions.

**Reform of Local Government**

The reform of local government which was planned for 2011 has been postponed and is now planned for 2014/15, with a final decision to be taken following the May 2011 Regional and Local Government elections. This has left many employees demotivated and elected members uncertain of their future. The research recommendations will be disseminated as part of the local government improvement agenda and provide a platform for discussion on how the eventual reorganisation can best be implemented. The Commission will utilise the research to help raise morale and provide increased development opportunities for current and future change champions.

**‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative**

The ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative which provided the access to the change champions is seen as successful both within local government and the wider public service, in that it has increased the number of women in senior positions and raised the profile of women in general in local government. The critical success factors are soon to be the subject of further research but notable successes include:

- The Commission who are responsible for recruitment of chief executive and senior post has seen the number of applications from women more than double.
- When this research commenced there were no women chief executives in local government. Today there are five and the number of women in senior grades has proportionally increased.
- Political parties are under pressure to field women candidates in the May 2011 elections who have developed from the initiative and gained in confidence.
The office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has showcased the initiative, with Ministers and MLA’s requesting that a similar initiative be introduced in other parts of the public service.

The initiative has been integrated within the United Nations equality agenda and recommended for adoption in other jurisdictions.

The initiative is now embedded in local government and seen as a priority when determining strategic and business plans.

The initiative has been replicated to address the underrepresentation of disabled people in local government and last year the Commission established a similar network of change champions to progress this initiative.

The success of the initiative has been recognised at various award ceremonies both regionally and nationally. Notably, in Nov.2010, the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative received the Best Diversity Project award at the final of the prestigious Business in the Community awards ceremony in Belfast. The award was accepted on behalf of all those involved by three of the change champions who were interviewed as part of this research.

Organisation and Personal Development
A new Commission has been appointed by the Minister with effect from 01.12.10 with induction planned for January and February 2011. It is anticipated that this Commission will be guided in its work by the HR strategy currently being designed by chief executives and HR managers together with Commission officers. This new composite strategy for the sector will, for the first time, provide a framework for the development of Commission work, training and development activities and the design of local HR strategies. It paves the way for collaborative working, shared services and the introduction of cross sectoral change initiatives. The research on the work of change champions in practice will serve as a useful basis for discussion of change agency in this respect and will assist with organisation development and change across the sector.
From a personal development perspective, initiating and conducting this research has provided me with new insights into managing change in local government, it has increased my appreciation of the role of research in developing best practice models, and developed me as an action researcher with increased knowledge of the research process in practice.
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The Theory and Practice of Change Champions in Local Government in Northern Ireland

ADRIAN EUGENE KERR

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

(VOLUME 2 of 2 Volumes)

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

June 2011
# Volume 2

The Appendices included in this Volume relate to the Thesis Text as detailed in Volume 1 (pps. 1-349)

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## Appendix 1 - Interviewee Personal Profiles

### CHIEF EXECUTIVES

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<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tony Mc Gurk</strong> (Pilot Interviewee)</td>
<td>Responsible for major change initiatives including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired Chief Executive, Derry City Council (2008) having performed the role of change champion for 3 years.</td>
<td>20+ years service in Local Government, formally City Engineer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years service in Local Government, formally City Engineer.</td>
<td>- Establishment of a new department which was an amalgamation of former directorates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Establishment of City Airport as a council owned facility and upgrades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering to a range of council services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction of Best Value initiative across the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Various Cross Border initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Initiation of EU sponsored community led programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Opening of the Millennium Forum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reorganisation of City Marketing into a new council structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Dunn</td>
<td>Responsible for major change programmes including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ND)</td>
<td>• Leading the council change process from a median range council to a leading proactive authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• First council in NI to obtain IIP status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One of the first councils to develop a corporate planning culture and performance management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Constantly questions the status quo (first council to leave the Local Government Association).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Chair of Inter council groupings seeding new initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Led the development of new council premises and the relocation to renovated premises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving Chief Executive</td>
<td>Has signalled his intention to retire around the date of May 2011 when the council structure changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Chief Executive of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and experience</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liam Hannaway</strong></td>
<td>Involved in a wide range of change programmes throughout his career including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serving Chief Executive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Currently Chief Executive of [Banbridge District Council](#) (since 2007). Formerly Director of Development with the Council and formally held a senior post with the NI Housing Executive (NIHE). | • Leading the council change process to turn round an ineffective Leisure services dept. to a fit for purpose unit within the council.  
• As Director of Development he led a major change of emphasis in Council marketing to attract a new outlet shopping facility within [Banbridge](#) and on the main Dublin / Belfast corridor.  
• Performed a wide range of change roles within the NIHE and held many varied posts within the Executive.  
He signalled his intention to remain in Local Government following the reorganisation planned for May 2011. |
Serving Chief Executive

Currently Chief Executive of [Redacted] Council (since 2002). Formerly Director of Technical Services with [Redacted] Council and formally held other senior posts within the local govt. structure and as a teacher in the education sector.

Involved in a wide range of change programmes at local, regional and national levels throughout his career including:

- Leading a major programme of change in the management of leisure services in Omagh council which was recognised as a model of effective practice within the leisure industry and resulted in many awards and quality standards.
- The reorganisation of the management structure at Strabane council which had been initiated by a previous chief executive but not implemented.
- Development of new quality standards and their pilot and implementation within the leisure industry. These were used as best practice examples in Scotland and England.
- Introducing new quality control systems and ensuring management and staff ownership.
- Through his training and mentoring various managers they have progressed to senior officer positions in local government.

He signalled his intention to seriously consider his options in the lead up to the reorganisation of Local Government planned for May 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Dempsey</td>
<td>He has been involved in a wide range of change programmes throughout his career including:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Reorganisation of the council structure and staffing.
- Major IT introduction in the Civil Service.
- Introduction of Single Status for employees.
- Continuous improvement culture within council (Best Value).
- NI Chair of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.
- Member of cross sector advisory groups on government sponsored change initiatives.
- Staff side representative on the Civil Service negotiating machinery.

He signalled his intention that he may remain in Local Government following the reorganisation planned for May 2011.
**DIRECTORS (SECOND TIER POST HOLDERS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving Director</td>
<td>She has vast experience of change at all levels in the organisation. Her participation in major initiatives includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As part of a team moving from a committee structure to an executive board structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introducing new governance arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developing a change model to accredit the council as an “Employer of Choice.” The first council in NI to receive the award.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Together with her role as a Change Champion for the Women’s Initiative, she is a member of the senior management team with responsibility for moving the council to a new council structure under reorganisation. This new structure will see [Council] combine with two other council areas ([Banbridge] and [Craigavon]).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is expected that [Director] will continue within Local Govt. when reorganisation takes place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently holds a Director (2nd Tier) post in [Council]. [City] is famed as the [ecclesiastical capital of Ireland] steeped in tradition and reflecting both communities. [Director] began in local government in a secretarial capacity over 20 years ago and worked her way through HR and other corporate departments, to become a Director in the Council.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving Director</td>
<td>Her participation in major initiatives includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As part of the “Making _____ Work” team building confidence in the city and providing a positive vision for the future and for its citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In the FE sector, changing people and providing a second chance for adult learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth Service experience in encouraging participants to retrain and working with enterprise development initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initiating a new department within _____ Council and growing the development function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Changing the development function from a separate department of 40 people to an integrated department of 500 staff and an annual budget of 30 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initiating numerous new development projects both on behalf of the _____ and with other local, national and international partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Developing EU and National Lottery funded projects on behalf of the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As part of the senior management team, initiating a performance management model for the council and the delivery of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modernising the Community Services Department within the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is expected that _____ will continue within Local Govt. when reorganisation takes place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and experience</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Curtis (EC)</td>
<td>Serving Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMDC</td>
<td>Currently Holds a Director (2nd Tier) post in NMDC. NMDC is a nationalist controlled council which borders the Irish republic. NMDC has gained city status but the council maintains its district identity and has a pride in its traditions. NMDC is eight years in post and has been a director in other departments in the council. Prior to his local government career he has been in teaching and has led change by example having served in almost every department in the council, (community services, economic development, tourism and leisure and now Administration). He has changed job approx. every five years and continually advances an improvement agenda throughout the council. He is currently completing his Masters in Executive Leadership (a tailored programme with emphasis on the changes facing the public service in NI and jointly sponsored by the University of Ulster and the Local government staff Commission).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In addition to his experience as a change champion in his current post, his other change initiatives include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development of the Council’s management team from a transitional management style to a transformational management style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development of an improvement culture in the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction of family friendly policies and movement towards an employer of choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improvement in absence management figures from 10.4 av. per annum to 4.6 av. per annum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initiating an OD strategy to support the cultural change from a reactive closed culture to a proactive open culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initiated an economic action plan for Newry and Mourne consisting of public and private partner stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is expected that he will continue within Local Govt. when reorganisation takes place in 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DIRECTORS (SECOND TIER POST HOLDERS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Bell (DB)</td>
<td>His experience in leading other change initiatives includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving Director</td>
<td>• Developed the finance role in <a href="#">Coleraine Borough Council</a> from financial accountancy to management accountancy and the integration of IT management systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction of an integrated IT system across the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction of “family friendly” policies in HR across the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing two restructuring exercises in the council to match the introduction of new central government policy initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction of aspects of the single status agreement within the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is expected that he will continue within Local Govt. at least for a short period, when reorganisation takes place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coleraine is a council area in the North East area of N.I. which encompasses areas of natural beauty, including seaside resorts, coastal areas, harbours, and historic towns. The area also includes a University of Ulster campus which attracts students from all over Ireland, both north and south. David joined the Council as a Director twelve years ago, having been head of finance in [North Down Borough Council](#) for the previous six years.

He assumed the role of Champion for the Women in Local Council’s initiative as it was seen as a corporate issue and with his responsibility for HR; particularly during a period of senior staff absence within the council he was seen as the natural champion to lead the change initiative. He identifies strongly with the initiative and although operating in very stable and conservative environment has managed to advance the initiative at officer and member level.
## HEADS OF HUMAN RESOURCES (3rd TIER)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaine Magee</strong></td>
<td>Her participation in major initiatives includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- As part of a team moving from a closed paternalistic type culture to a more open and participative style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introducing new HR policies and practices (Employer of Choice and work life balance policy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Developing a change model to accredit the council as an “Employer of Choice.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Together with her role as a Change Champion for the Women’s Initiative, she advises the senior management team on an ongoing basis with specific responsibility for HR development and Elected Member corporate management approaches. It is expected that <strong>Elaine</strong> will continue within Local Govt. when reorganisation takes place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently holds a Head of HR post (3rd Tier) in **Antrim Borough Council**.

**Antrim** was a conservative type council with a good reputation in local govt. and the appointment of a new C Ex approx 4 years ago and changes in the SMT has built on this reputation and further enhanced the work of the council.

**Elaine** came to local government to the head of HR some 6 years ago and has championed the change culture in the organisation.

She has experience of change at all levels in the organisation.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of Administration &amp; Personnel post (3rd Tier) in Magherafelt District Council</td>
<td>Florence Wilson has an autocratic type culture with strong leadership from the Chief Executive and the all male director team. There is a strong sense of localism, and what describes as a, “kind of a family” (final para. page 2) culture within the staff. It is a council with the lowest level of absenteeism in local govt. in N.I. and one of the lowest rates. It has won awards for achievement in service provision but is perceived as often going its own way and not especially part of the local government wider community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Florence has been in Local Govt. for “a long time” and developed from a receptionist type role through part time study, obtaining a degree and membership of CIPD and worked her way up the organisation to the third tier position.

She has never led a change process from the front but has always worked on her own initiative at a local level, or as part of a team. Her personal achievements in change have been in persuading others to change and to introduce change.

In this change process her role is limited to the above.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary Rafferty (RR)</td>
<td>Her active participation in major initiatives includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently holds a Head of HR post (3rd Tier) in Omagh District Council.</td>
<td>• Fostering an open culture within the organisation where people are valued and nurtured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh is a rural area in the west of N.I. and has a very proud identity. It suffered greatly from the “troubles” and the bomb which killed innocent civilians is never forgotten. In the aftermath of the explosion it attracted visits from Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Mary McAleese and many other dignitaries who wished to express their sympathy with the people of and their concern to foster peace in N.I.</td>
<td>• Introducing new HR policies and practices, including leading the team to become IIP accredited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary came to local government as a clerical officer in Feb.1977 and has progressed to the Head of HR by a series of promotions and her qualifications (CIPD) which were sponsored by Omagh District Council.</td>
<td>• Lead the drive by the council to introduce training and development for the unemployed in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has championed change, including changing herself, over many years and at all levels in the organisation.</td>
<td>• Founder of Tyrone Training Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Worked with colleagues in the private and public sector to establish Omagh Training Consortium to address cross sectoral training needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Part of the team to introduce computerisation within the council and in particular computerised HR records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Part of the reform team within the council to implement the Review of Public Administration (2008-2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set up the WRAPS (Women Redress Advancement in the Public Sector) programme as part of the women in local councils initiative and secured cross border funding for the programme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ELECTED MEMBERS

**Title and experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cllr.</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Currently a serving Councillor with **[North Down Borough Council]**, (a mostly prosperous council area), and a member of the Assembly at Stormont.

A member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and a former President of the NI local Govt. Association (NILGA). At the time of the interview he was **[VP of NILGA]** and his party’s main representative within local government. **[Peter]** is a graduate and perceived as a DUP member who will progress within the party. He has 20 years in politics and came to local govt. in 2005. He visibly champions the Women in Local Councils Initiative and has experience in other areas of change in local/central Government as follows:

- The review and reorganisation of NILGA in 2006/7.
- The negotiation of the St. Andrew’s Agreement for the return of regional power to N.I.
- The RPA change process.
- Membership of various Strategic Leadership forums re. the reform of Local Govt.
**ELECTED MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr. Michelle McIlveen MLA (MM)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This interviewee is currently a serving Councillor with Ards Borough Council, which is a mostly prosperous council area, and is also a member of the Local Assembly at Stormont.

She is a member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). First elected to local government in 2005 and subsequently elected to the Assembly. She holds both positions until May 2011 when joint local/central elections will be held and has signalled her intention to put herself forward for re-election. Of the change champions selected for interview she has the least local government experience and provides a unique perspective on change in a political environment. Her experience of change is limited to the role of change champion for the “women in local council's initiative”, an initiative to which she is committed, and is currently vice chair of the Central Steering Group. She is also a NILGA champion and a local and party champion.

Other major change initiatives where she plays a key role include:

- Part of the power sharing initiative at the local assembly.
- Member of the Transition Committee to amalgamate her council area with North Down Borough Council.
Cllr. **Lynn Frazer** (LF)

**Lynn Fraser** is an Alliance councillor in **Newtownabbey Borough Council**. This council is Unionist controlled and is situated on the outskirts of **Belfast**. It has developed considerably over the last ten years and has piloted many new local govt. initiatives. The council has won many awards in recognition of excellent service provision and HR training and development initiatives. It is driven by a corporate strategy which has all party backing and is linked to a performance management system for staff. **Lynn** was originally a NILGA champion and has now become an Alliance party champion and can provide a unique perspective on change from a central local government perspective, a party perspective and a local council perspective. Her experience in change management includes:

- 18 years as a Councillor setting the strategic direction for the council and part of the **Newtownabbey** transformation process.
- Mayor for the council in a time of developing services and planning new facilities.
- Established the “Making a Difference Matters Forum in **Newtownabbey**.
- Community based change initiatives in relation to neighbourhood renewal.
- Devotes time and effort to improving community relations in Northern Ireland.

It is felt, from discussion that **Lynn** will continue in politics, if elected beyond the reorganisation of local government planned for May 2011.
### Elected Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cllr. Sara Duncan (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sara Duncan is an Alliance councillor in Castlereagh Borough Council. This council is DUP controlled and while situated on the outskirts of Belfast, has a unique identity within the city. It is perceived as strongly Unionist and the Alliance party councillors are perceived as outside the controlling influences. Sara has had to fight hard to be recognised as the “moderate” voice, identifying with both communities, and moving the moderate change agenda forward in a highly charged political climate. Her role in change management goes back to the early 1970’s with the foundation of the Alliance party and her desire to change the sectarian politics in Northern Ireland and to have women recognised as equal partners in the political arena has motivated her change agenda.

Sara believes passionately in all aspects of equality and in addition to her role as a change champion in the “women in local council’s initiative” she has been involved in other change initiatives as follows:

- Joined the “Peace People” in NI in an attempt to bring about peace prior to the introduction of the IRA ceasefires.
- Was part of the North South peace train which left Dublin and Belfast simultaneously and met in Drogheda to come together to promote peace on the island.
- Worked tirelessly within part politics to build coalitions for change throughout her life (41 years).
- A primary (infant class) school teacher in a strongly sectarian area who attempted to change attitudes in the education sector to a more integrated approach.
- Tried to fill the vacuum of change not happening for the better in NI society.

During discussion Sara indicated that she did not think she would continue as a councillor following the reorganisation of local government in May 2011.
ELECTED MEMBERS

Title and experience

Cllr. Kate Lagan (KL) is an SDLP councillor in Magherafelt District Council. This council is Nationalist controlled and is situated inland in the mid Ulster area. Magherafelt council has a reputation for devising its own systems of operation and has won praise from the Local Government Auditor for its low level of sickness absence among staff which is the lowest of any council or public body in N.I.

Kate has been a councillor for 18 years and has, (as a member of the minority nationalist party within the council) had to manage within a male dominated and larger majority context. Her background is in teaching, and she has made many strides in changing the culture of the organisation from a closed system driven culture to a more open culture where people’s contribution to effectiveness is valued. Her major experience of change includes:

- 18 years as a Councillor setting the strategic direction for the council.
- Chaired the first Disability Forum in Magherafelt
- Chaired shop-ability in Magherafelt
- Established the Fuel Poverty Committee in Magherafelt
- Initiated the first Visible Women Conference in Magherafelt

It is felt, from discussion that Kate will continue in politics, if elected beyond the reorganisation of local government planned for May 2011.
**ELECTED MEMBERS**

**Title and experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cllr. Marion Smith (MS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ulster Unionist councillor in North Down Borough Council. This council is predominantly unionist dominated and situated on the North Down coast which is considered to be a more prosperous area in Northern Ireland. Marion has been a councillor since March 1995 and was elected Mayor in 1999/2000. She is involved at all levels in the local community through a wide range of representative and pressure groups, and serves on a wide range of committees, boards of governors, local partnership boards and political party sub-committees. She holds a number of public appointments which were obtained through open competition and serves on the Local Government Staff Commission, the District Policing Partnership, various Health and Social Services Committees and the NI Local Government Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She holds a strong belief that her representative role can make a real difference to the quality of life for all the citizens she represents and has sought throughout her career to advance a change agenda to improve public services and the wellbeing of the community. In addition to her role as a change champion for the women’s initiative her additional experience in change management includes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- First Chair of the District Policing Partnership created to localise community policing and hold the District Commander to account at local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Headed campaigns to retain residential care homes for elderly residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Developed improvement strategies for Health and Social Care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Member of The Local Government Reform Policy Development Panel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Chair of the Planning Committee of the Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vice Chair of the Local Government Staff Commission.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Appendix 2 - Change Champions, Schedule of Supporting Activities - January 2006-August 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17th February 2006</td>
<td>NILGA Conference</td>
<td>Annual Conference</td>
<td>Female Cllrs Attending</td>
<td>Fringe session addressing change issues for political parties/NILGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th March 2006</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>First Champions' Workshop</td>
<td>Malone House</td>
<td>Nominated champions developed their role, what they hoped to achieve, discussed what support could be provided and developed an initial action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th March 2006</td>
<td>Political Champions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Commission House</td>
<td>The workshop focussed on the possible strategies and actions to gain support throughout the Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th May 2006</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Political Action Planning</td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Connecting the 'Women in Local Councils' initiative to the overarching Equality Agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th May 2006</td>
<td>Political Champions</td>
<td>Capacity Building, Culture and Networking</td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Supporting change champions within the parties to adapt the generic action plan and establish mechanisms for effective implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23rd June 2006</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Implementing Workplace Gender Diversity</td>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>Case studies from organisations and support for councils to establish Steering Groups to implement action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th September 2006</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Breaking the Glass Ceiling</td>
<td>Equality House</td>
<td>Case study from Brent Council and reflections of a gender champion from QUB and local progress from Belfast City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; September 2006</td>
<td>NAC Conference</td>
<td>Annual Conference</td>
<td>Female Cllrs Attending</td>
<td>Election of NAC Women's representative and agreement on topics for future workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; October 2006</td>
<td>NAC Women's Committee</td>
<td>The Role of Champions</td>
<td>Commission House</td>
<td>Increasing the involvement of women councillor in the Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; October 2006</td>
<td>NAC Women's Committee</td>
<td>Sub Group meeting</td>
<td>Female Cllrs Attending</td>
<td>Detailed plan prepared with specific recommendations for NAC Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; October 2006</td>
<td>Political Champions’ Meeting</td>
<td>A Year of Women in Local Councils</td>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>Provided an overview of work to date and discussion around potential NILGA action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; October 2006</td>
<td>Political Champions’ Women's Event</td>
<td>Women and Political Life Conference</td>
<td>Female Cllrs Attending</td>
<td>Hosted by the Secretary of State this event was designed to help women develop the confidence to embrace all of their professional challenges and realise their full potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November 2006</td>
<td>NILGA Champions’ Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female Cllrs Attending</td>
<td>Celebrating the women in local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November 2006</td>
<td>Political Champions’ Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Over 100 women came together to share experiences and endorse the role of the change champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; December 2006</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Implementing Gender Action Plans</td>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>Support to champions implementing Action Plans and encouragement to share experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th December 2006</td>
<td>NAC Women’s Committee</td>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>Commission House</td>
<td>Determining goals and outcomes and considering how to increase women’s confidence and assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th January 2007</td>
<td>NAC Women’s Committee</td>
<td>Political Action Planning</td>
<td>Commission House</td>
<td>Gaining commitment for the extension of the Initiative from 1 to 3 years to focus on gender balance in the new council structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th February 2007</td>
<td>NAC Cluster Group Meeting</td>
<td>East Antrim Area</td>
<td>Newtownabbey</td>
<td>Women councillors utilised political networks and discussed measures to support the change including flexible working practices and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th February 2007</td>
<td>NILGA Conference</td>
<td>Annual Conference</td>
<td>Female Cllrs Attending</td>
<td>Fringe session with input from Derry City Council and women’s organisations and the champion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th March 2007</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Examples of Good Practice</td>
<td>Magherafelt</td>
<td>Champions provided own best practice examples to share learning and prompt discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 20th April 2007 | Workshop                 | Key Actions and Progress    | Craigavon        | The workshop aimed to develop the priorities identified for 2007 by:  
  • Identifying the skills and achievements required by individuals to champion change  
  • Focusing on actions that will meet the needs of the organisation  
  • Highlighting aspects of the Initiative at local level |
<p>| 2nd May 2007  | NILGA Champions           | Preparing Women and the Party for Increased Representation by Women | Stormont         | Encouraging action and to promote participation in the Initiative |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May 2007</td>
<td>NAC Conference</td>
<td>‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative</td>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>Reporting on progress to date and discussing capacity building measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June 2007</td>
<td>Workshop (Chief Executives, Champions &amp; Support Workers)</td>
<td>Making a Difference</td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Range of contributions from other Public Sector organisations in bringing about change in gender related issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd August 2007</td>
<td>NILGA Champions</td>
<td>Promoting and Sharing Information</td>
<td>NILGA Offices</td>
<td>Reviewing how elected members feel about the culture in local government in N.I. and its support or otherwise for the change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; September 2007</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Leadership Inspiring Commitment</td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Recognising the leadership role for councils and political parties in addressing under representation and gaining commitment through political leaders, councillors, chief executives and key managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November 2007</td>
<td>Political Champions’ Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Celebrating the women in local government initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; April 2008</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>Overcoming Barriers</td>
<td>Craigavon</td>
<td>Champions discussed real examples of barriers in organisations and parties as well as practical suggestions for how to overcome them within the context of the RPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; June 2008</td>
<td>Celebration Event</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hillsborough Castle</td>
<td>Postponed until autumn 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd July 2008</td>
<td>Champions’ Workshop</td>
<td>Women and the RPA</td>
<td>Craigavon</td>
<td>An action learning based workshop where a cross section of champions discussed their difficulties and progress made to date working in cluster groups’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th May 2009</td>
<td>Political Champions’ Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stormont</td>
<td>Outreaching to women in society to support the initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 - Copy Letter Inviting Potential Interviewees to take part in the Research

Copy letter sent to potential interviewees in relation to their role as a change champion in the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative 2004-2008

AEK/jh/Brighton Change

01 December 2008

Dear

“Researching Change Champions”

As part of my continuing professional development and in order to target Commission resources in an effective manner, I am currently studying the roles played by Change Champions in practice, the barriers they encounter and their development needs.

I am currently conducting practical research in this area as part of my part time studies for a DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) through the University of Brighton.

A considerable amount of resources have been directed at the development of our Champions network relating to the implementation of the “Women in Local Councils” initiative and I am anxious to learn from the work of the Champions in practice both from a research perspective and to examine, in practical terms, if the lessons learned can be applied to other change situations in local government.

I am hoping to interview a number of our current Champions and would be grateful if you would agree to be interviewed by me as part of the research.

The interview will be conducted in line with the guidance issued by the university as contained in their “Good Practice in Research Ethics and Governance” guide, and if you agree to be interviewed I will provide and explain summary information on such matters as: the purpose of the study, the research methods, the potential use and dissemination of the results, confidentiality, data storage and use etc. in advance of the interview.

I enclose a short information sheet on how the structured interview, which is planned to last approximately one hour, will be conducted and I would be grateful if you would consider taking part in the study.

I will contact you in the next few days to seek your views on participation and answer any queries you might have. In the meantime please feel free to contact me if you require further information.
“Researching Change Champions”

I realise that there are currently many demands on your time and in particular the increasing time commitment required to implement the RPA recommendations, but I feel that the results of this research will greatly assist the ongoing work of the Champions network and ensure that the success of the network is replicated to address other change problems currently facing local government in Northern Ireland.

Thanking you for your consideration

Yours sincerely

ADRIAN E KERR
Chief Executive

Enc
The Interview Process

The interview will take place on a one to one basis with the researcher personally acting as interviewer and the interviewee providing information and opinions on the interview subject matter.

Content of the Structured Interview

The interview will be structured to gain as much information from you as possible in relation to the role you played as a change champion, the barriers you encountered and your development needs in this role.

You will be asked to provide examples in relation to the above and in particular provide as much information as possible around the how, what, why and when, aspects of the above topics.

The interview will also seek to gain examples (critical incidents) in relation to your role which relate to, when you felt you were most successful, and when you felt you were least successful.

Timing and Location

It is hoped to conduct the research over the next three months at a location suitable to you, which will be comfortable and free from interruption.

Duration

The interview will last approx one hour and, subject to your consent, will be recorded and transcribed for ease of data analysis.

Voluntary Consent

It is emphasised that at any time, you have a choice as to whether or not to take part in the research, to withdraw at any stage and that your best interests will be taken into account at all times.

You will be asked to sign a consent form in this respect prior to the structured interview.

Confidentiality and Data Storage

The collection, handling and storage of the data collected during the interview process will comply with all legal requirements and in line with the University’s guidance on the handling of personal data.

The identity of those interviewed will only be known to the researcher and in order to prepare and reference interview transcripts. The data collected will at no stage be attributed to any named individual.

The data from interviews will only be used to prepare the research report, and may be included in any subsequent journal articles, or submissions to the University.
Appendix 4 - Copy Consent Form Signed by Interviewees prior to the Interview

Participant Consent Form

Researching Change Champions 2008/09

- I agree to take part in this research which is to research the role of change champions in Local Government in Northern Ireland.

- The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.

- I have read the information sheet and I understand fully the principles, procedures and possible risks involved.

- I am aware that I will be required to answer questions and give examples of how I operated as a change champion in practice.

- I understand that any confidential information will be seen only by the researcher and will not be revealed to anyone else.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

- I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used by the researcher for the purposes described in the information sheet.

Name (please print)............................................................................................................

Signed....................................................................................................................................

Date.......................................................................................................................................
Appendix 5 - Change Champions 2008/09 Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself and how you came to be a champion in this change process.

2. In your own words tell about how you championed change.

3. What skills were you able to bring to the change process?

4. Do you feel you have developed in any way in the role and how did this happen?

5. Tell me about the role you played as a change champion in the change process.

6. What do you think was the most important role you played as a champion and can you give me an example of how this worked in practice (Why was it important)?

7. What barriers did you encounter which if removed would have made you more effective?

8. What were your development needs as a champion?

9. Do you feel that any of the champions’ workshops or training were of any help and why?

10. What else could have been done to assist you in your role?
11. Could you describe for me an incident or example where you feel you were successful as a change champion?

12. Could you describe for me a critical incident or example where you feel you were not successful or encountered most difficulty as a change champion?

13. Anything else you would like to add to clarify your role, the barriers you encountered or your development needs or have you any other comments on the role of change champions which you would like to make?
Appendix 6 - Change Champions 2008/09 Interview Structure, Checklist and Notes

Name of Interviewee______________________________________________________________

Organisation and Post held_______________________________________________________

Date, Location & Time of interview_______________________________________________

Pre Interview

- Explain purpose and duration
- Explain recording procedure
- Have consent form signed

Introduction

- Confirm Name and Position
- Unfreezing questions

Tell me about yourself and how you came to be a champion in this change process

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

In your own words tell about how you championed change

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
What skills were you able to bring to the change process?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Do you feel you have developed in any way in the role and how did this happen?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

**Interview Questions**

Tell me about the role you played as a change champion in the change process

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What do you think was the most important role you played as a champion and can you give me an example of how this worked in practice (Why was it important)?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
What barriers did you encounter which if removed would have made you more effective?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

What were your development needs as a champion?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
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Do you feel that any of the champions' workshops or training were of any help and why?
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What else could have been done to assist you in your role?
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Could you describe for me a critical incident or example where you feel you were successful as a change champion?

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_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
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Could you describe for me a critical incident or example where you feel you were not successful or encountered most difficulty as a change champion?

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Anything else you would like to add to clarify your role, the barriers you encountered or your development needs or have you any other comments on the role of change champions which you would like to make?

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Interviewer’s comments

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data set</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7 - Sample Completed Contact Summary Sheet

HR1

Personal Profile

Currently holds a Head of HR post (3rd Tier), in a medium sized Borough Council.

The council is a conservative type council with a good reputation in local government and the appointment of a new Chief Executive approx 4 years ago and changes in the SMT has built on this reputation and further enhanced the work of the council.

HR1 came to local government to the head of HR some 6 years ago and has championed the change culture in the organisation.

She has experience of change at all levels in the organisation. Her participation in major initiatives includes:

- As part of a team moving from a closed paternalistic type culture to a more open and participative style
- Introducing new HR policies and practices (Employer of Choice and work life balance policy)
- Developing a change model to accredit the council as an “Employer of Choice.”
- Together with her role as a change champion for the Women’s Initiative, she advises the senior management team on an ongoing basis with specific responsibility for HR development and elected member corporate management approaches. It is expected that she will continue within Local Government when reorganisation takes place.

Interviewer’s comments at the conclusion of the interview (240209)

HR1 presented a mixed perspective on change (personal, human and organisational) and provided examples from a human personal perspective of her role in a number of change processes namely as a women’s champion, and developing whole system change in the council.

She had utilised her champion role to advance the overall org. change and to promote a culture of openness and trust. She took advantage of the “right time to make the changes” and linked her changes with other initiatives. She worked to a framework for change which included specific action plans. This provided her with the flexibility to take advantage of linked opportunities and to add to her own personal development through practice.

While she identified barriers encountered in the change process, these were general, and she placed great emphasis on her council having a change culture which facilitated the various new initiatives she wished to introduce.
## Analysis Matrix

Commentary completed following the interview and added to following analysis of transcript etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data set</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Had a reforming of HR agenda and used the change objective to open up a wider change objective</td>
<td>Used the women’s change initiative as an opportunity to initiate policy changes for all staff</td>
<td>Page 1 para. 2 “100% directors” para. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sees change as beneficial and utilised for best practice</td>
<td>“embedding it in the culture rather than reacting….”</td>
<td>Page 1 para. 3 para. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person centred</td>
<td>“everybody comes from a different perspective”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking advantage of the cultural change</td>
<td>“I couldn’t have proposed that 6 years ago”</td>
<td>Page 2 para. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“that the culture had changed”</td>
<td>Page 3 para. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“there was a new management team …new perspective and keen to promote the people issues”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“totally different from when I came here”</td>
<td>Page 3 para. 7 final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“moving to best practice”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 6 para. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles</td>
<td>Building ownership and involvement</td>
<td>“you need buy in from others across the working group”</td>
<td>“these issues ……..belong to everyone”</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitating</td>
<td>“when I chair groups on this…what role do you want to play”</td>
<td>“they don’t want to be treated separate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placing the change in an organisational context</td>
<td>“the message comes down every single time”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>“that’s for sure”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influencing</td>
<td>“to find what will hit the spot with each individual”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of individual differences</td>
<td>“it’s not one size fits all”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selling skills</td>
<td>Example of the interview</td>
<td>“trying to sell the whole idea to people”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills (contd.)</td>
<td>Get involved in the process</td>
<td>&quot;you need to get stuck in with people&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;competing with the day to day stuff&quot;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational Skills</td>
<td>&quot;the personality of the person at the top&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;from how they say good morning or do they....&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality (demonstrate that they value people)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>&quot;competing with the day to day stuff&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;when you mention gender as a topic&quot;</th>
<th></th>
<th>Page 2 para. 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People's aversion to the change topic</td>
<td>Management team example</td>
<td>&quot;things getting from the top level down to the bottom level in a language they'll understand&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 3 para. 3 &amp; Page 4 para. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>&quot;I think there is a barrier in communication&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 4, para. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fear barrier in relation to the change</td>
<td>&quot;fear barrier of women going up the ranks&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;still haven't grasped the softer sides of the job and that can lead to conflict&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 4 para. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managers being output driven and not recognising the softer skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 8 para. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers (contd.)</td>
<td>Demands on diminishing resources</td>
<td>“they’re stressed out and there are tight resources”</td>
<td>“yet the demands are going up”</td>
<td>Page 8 para. 3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development Needs</strong></td>
<td>Skills to involve others</td>
<td>“I kind of felt I was responsible”</td>
<td>“how valuable the person is”</td>
<td>Page 3 para. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing support from the organisation</td>
<td>“the organisation needs to be open”</td>
<td>“participating in the award”</td>
<td>Page 5 paras. 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedicated resource to assist with the change</td>
<td>“H&amp;S &amp; wellbeing officer”</td>
<td>“people actually write in to thank us”</td>
<td>Page 8 para. 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding creative ways of doing things</td>
<td>“Line manager example”</td>
<td>“appreciating what you are doing”</td>
<td>Page 5 paras. 3 &amp; 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Looking at best practice and learning from others</td>
<td>“we’ve done an awful lot like Armagh”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 7, para. 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal one to one support</td>
<td>“That was excellent”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 5 para. 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More targeted support on selling and influencing skills”</td>
<td>“you really need to be strong on that”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 6 para. 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident 1 (positive)</td>
<td>Work life balance policy</td>
<td>“for me that was a critical period for us”</td>
<td>“Management were prepared to take the risk and so was I”</td>
<td>“show that we really meant business”</td>
<td>Page 6 para. 8</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident 2 (positive)</td>
<td>Disability where an injured worker was retrained and found suitable alternative employment.</td>
<td>“serious accident at work”</td>
<td>“He will still say it’s a personal thing …what you’ve done for me as an individual and not as an employee”</td>
<td>“today he’s for me an excellent example that encourages you”</td>
<td>Page 6 para. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident 3 (positive)</td>
<td>Chairing the employer of choice group</td>
<td>“external accreditation”</td>
<td>“you’ve genuinely made a difference to their life”</td>
<td>“start changing the mindset of the senior staff”</td>
<td>Page 7 para. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“People actually write in and thank us”</td>
<td>Page 2 para. 1</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 7 para. 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critical Incident 1 (negative)  
Selling the specific change itself
“equality as a subject gets a bad name”
“people don’t jump up and down and say, oh yeah, equality again”

HR1 Data Summary & Conclusions

Conclusions from the data under the research headings

1. Roles of Change Champions

- Utilised the specific change process for which she was appointed to advance an overall organisation change agenda
- Being aware of the human side/how people will be affected
- Advancing the overall change agenda
- Building ownership and involvement
- Facilitating and building trust

2. Related Skills

- Perseverance
- Awareness of individual differences
- Selling
- Getting involved in the process
- Organisational skills
- Knowing the right time and taking advantage of commitment
- Influencing
- Personality that values people
3. Barriers to Implementation

- Time
- People don’t like the topic
- Communication
- Resistance by individuals because of fear
- Cultural problems
- Convincing others (output driven managers)
- Diminishing resources

4. Development Needs

- Learning from others and benchmarking opportunities
- Targeted direct support and encouragement
- Involvement skills
- Dedicated resources
- Selling and influencing capacity building
Appendix 8 - Coding Framework – Organisational (main) categories, sub categories, and colour codes used for analysis of interview transcripts

An initial code was not required as sub-categories were determined by analysis of the contact summary sheets on an individual basis immediately following the interview. The frequency codes were required when individual sub-categories were compared as a group to identify common themes.

**Main category: Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief in the process</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Pink</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting the change</td>
<td>Grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building support</td>
<td>Lt. Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Lt. Blue</td>
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**Main category: Skills**

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<tr>
<td>Utilising your position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage others</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People skills</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with and addressing problems</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/listen and learn</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing</td>
<td>Lt. Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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**Main category: Barriers**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Securing support from others</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of the organisation</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political environment</td>
<td>Dk. Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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## Main category: Development Needs

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<th>Sub-category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources/time management</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence building</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in specific skills and targeted development</td>
<td>Salmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9  Sample Interview Transcripts

LGSC – INTERVIEW 31.03.2009

Transcript Code
[???] = word(s) not clear
…… = indicates a pause or switch of thought mid sentence
Word with [?] = indicates best guess at word
[IA] = several sentences inaudible or indecipherable

Participants:
AK: = Adrian E. Kerr, Chief Executive, Interviewer
MTM: = Interviewee

Recording starts

AK: Could you tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to be a Champion in either the change process for women or any of the other change processes?

MTM: As you know, I’m Director of Development here at [redacted] Council. Long term, all my life involved in transformational things. I could get really psychological and I could start telling you I’m the eldest child, I’m the only daughter, so all that kind of thing goes on. I had a working mother, so I had lots of good models. I had a very encouraging father who believed that everybody could do whatever they wanted – male, female or whatever. So I suppose, in that sense, lots of broken barriers. Went into teaching first but teaching at FE and very much teaching in the dimension of second chancers, people who had been failed by the system in the first place. So right from day one, my working career was always about changing, getting people and helping people to transform and see where the changes were. Then I went into the Youth Service and again I was involved, when I first went into the Youth Service in unemployed work and enterprise work – so again that whole concept of changing where you are, moving from unemployment to enterprise.

So all of those kind of led to where I was going. Then I left the Youth Service and joined the Northern Ireland Civil Service as part of the Making Belfast Work initiative and again the imperative again was about making things happen and change and develop. And coming then eventually to the Council where again I was set the task of creating the Development department because it didn’t exist
when I came in here. I was the first Director of Development and I had to kind of create a department which, at that stage, there were 40 people in it, there’s now 500 people in it, so it’s big.

All my life it’s been dedicated to making change, making things happen. That’s the kind of area that I’ve always been in. So I suppose that’s all played to helping me bring about the change here and then when your initiative started, I suppose I was, by that stage, the only woman Director in [BLANK] Council and so people felt that I was the obvious choice and there will be differences of opinion about that, but I took the job and I was happy to take it.

AK: Was it allocated?

Just [BLANK] decided I was the person to take on the Change Champion for the initiative, but I think that’s probably because he knew what my track record was and that I’d been involved in changing things for a very long time. In fact, to be quite truthful with you, I know people say change is difficult – I’m the opposite. If things start staying the same for too long I get bored, so I’m actually very much a change person.

AK: Could you tell me how you championed change, the things that you would do?

Well, in terms of when you’re asked to make a change or when you see a change is needed, I always think the first part of the journey – and it is a journey – is trying to interrogate what the ideal or what the change would look like. Because I think if you don’t have a clear and compelling picture about what the benefits of the change are, then you’re not actually going to excite people. There’s different ways to do change and there are different models of change. My model of change is, as I say, transformational. I’m about exciting people enough to move them forward and for them to then compel themselves to move. There is the other form of change which is you just bring the big stick in and you make people change but I always think that that takes a lot more energy than doing the other one.

So my starting point for change is always giving people the desire and the want for that change. What is that change going to do that makes their life different and improves it, that makes it better? And that once you’ve got that instilled in people’s minds, it is much easier to move them. It doesn’t take away all the difficulties of moving and changing. The guy who wrote The Little Prince, Saint-Exupery, he says something to the effect that if you want men (and I could add women) to build
ships, don’t teach them how to cut down trees, saw up trees and use nails or whatever, instead give them a desire for the sea, and they’ll build brilliant ships as a result. So I would be in Saint-Exupery end of the market – give people a desire for the sea and they will then want to go in that direction.

**AK:** What sort of skills do you think you’re able to bring to the change process?

**MTM:** Well, I think that I have definitely got a capacity to see things afar, so I have a kind of global strategic view. I’m not necessarily the greatest person on the detail and I know that and I always have to have on my team the people who are very good at the detail – that’s not where I live. I like the blue sky, I like the global thinking, I like the moving forward.

So I think that’s a good skill set in terms of the visioning process but I think I probably also have reasonably good communication skills and, therefore, I’m quite good at persuading people. As some people would say to you, I think I’d be pretty good at selling coals to Newcastle. So I think that that’s a skill set as well that serves me very, very well. It’s one that’s been developed since I went in first as a teacher and you’re teaching, you’re training, you’re learning to communicate effectively and persuade people. So I think those two skill sets actually play very, very largely to helping to drive. I also have a lot of enthusiasm and energy so I think you need that as well if you’re going to try and get people to change.

**AK:** Probably as you go through change processes, do you think you develop in any particular way?

**MTM:** Absolutely. If you give yourself up to change and to making that change, you have to change too. Every change process impacts on you and you learn new skills and you learn new ways of doing it. You learn better ways to persuade people, you learn to live with the rough and tumble, you learn to live with setback. So, yes, I think every time I’m doing something, I’m learning something new and it does change me and it makes me more effective or it sharpens something that needs sharpened, or sometimes it takes off a raw edge that needed also to be moved.

So, yes, if you ask me, am I more skilled now than I was ten years ago, the answer is absolutely yes because everything builds you and strengthens you I think. And I think it’s important also, if you’re going to do that, I think you have to be a person to really learn from change processes. You have to be a person who’s prepared to analyse, so you don’t glibly just go through it and don’t stand and reflect for a while
and say, what worked, what didn’t work, what made that better? I think that a change person, a person who dedicates themselves to change, must also have a reflective ability. They must be able to say that didn’t work and be able to honestly look at why it didn’t work and maybe improve it for the next round. So I think you get better at change if you’re also reflective.

AK: Some of the skills stuff – this is a bit of a repeat but it’s really to try and get a bit deeper into the roles that you played, and I know that you’ve given me the skills set. What about the key role that you would play in the change process, what would that be around?

MTM: Well, the key role you’re playing is as motivator, as persuader, as troop rallier keeping the troops happy, and as a very quick problem solver because there’s always going to be, what they say, get a plan, get started but the plan lasts for five minutes and then you move on. So you have to be an adaptor as well but you also have to make people …… there’s like a mothering role as well. You’ve got to actually make people feel comfortable and make them feel safe in that change, because change is a risk and so you’re in that kind of, it’s nurturing but you’re pushing them now.

Some change people are pushers and they do a lot of pushing and threatening almost in the pushing. Other people are nurturing – they’re still pushing but it’s coming from a different base but it’s that same of you’re driving people forward. So it’s all those skill sets about assisting, facilitating, helping, nurturing, being there and saying to people, ‘look, if you fall I’ll catch you. Don’t worry, it’s alright, get on with doing it and see’ and it is a bit like mothering. It’s like teaching a child to walk, it’s like teaching a child to have more confidence in what they’re doing and moving forward. So I think that those skills and those roles in the change management process are very, very important.

AK: When I finish interviewing I try to put a label on it – it’s really saying that this person has a very human approach to change, this person has a very systematic approach, this person has a very plan orientated and it’s very straight down the line. If you were putting a label on it, what sort of label do you think you’d put?

I’d be more in the less systematic, less planning, more on the persuading, cajoling, compelling. I’m in the performance theatrical – it’s that end of it. That’s what I do and I make sure in a change management process that I’ll have other people with me who are the systematic, who are working with me for the plan because the
plan’s important and you have to have a plan and you have to mix it up - you just don’t go, ‘oh, change happens.’

Change happens because you sit down with people and you do systematically plan it but I guess, if I was asking in the round what is my role, I play stronger. My strengths are in the, here’s the vision, let’s go, this is what we can do, let me take you to a new journey, let me take you somewhere else. That’s my strengths but I don’t lose sight of the fact that you do need to be systematic and you do need to be rigorous and you need to have a robust plan and you need to know what your targets are and what your dates are for getting to there, if you actually want to make change happen.

AK: And the most important role that you would play.

MTM: I think the motivational role. It’s getting people to see that there is better than here.

AK: Could you give me an example of how you think that worked in practice?

MTM: I’ll give you an interesting example. I’ve had loads of examples where we got people to move forward and where they didn’t believe they could do things, but I’ll tell you where it has really struck me very forcibly and that has been in the gender programme. When I started, I’m an old feminist so I have no difficulty talking about women and I have no difficulty talking about the difficulties that women have because I believe they do have difficulties and I believe that they do need certain kinds of support. Now I’m not saying that they need a bible but I do think that women need a different kind of support than men, and I’ve no difficulty and no apology in saying that and I’ll have that discussion with men. But I know there are a lot of women who don’t want to be called feminists and don’t want to be appearing to make a fuss about women or saying that women should have special classes or special treatment or whatever.

So when I set up the programme here when we started to look at what we might do, I do have to say that I had a number of women – in fact, to be truthful, I found a number of the Councillors easier to turn on to the concept that women had a harder time, because for many of them, they knew in political parties women did have a harder time. It was really evident to them that being a woman in a political party meant …… I’m not saying all the women in political parties but I got a strong sense from many of our women politicians that they did believe that things were
more difficult for women in making a career path in politics. But what I did find here was that that group of senior women managers that I pulled together and started to work with, I would have said nearly three quarters of those didn’t really want to be associated with doing a women kind of thing or a women only meeting, or that kind of stuff, and there was a great reluctance.

AK: Was this at Officer level?

MTM: This was more at Officer level than Councillors. We’ve had a couple of Councillors who’ve never joined us and who’ve been very honest with me and said, ‘no, we don’t really think we need to be in a women’s group’ – anyway, we’ll live with that. But what has really struck me in the time that I’ve been working over the three years with that group of women is watch that group of women become even more senior managers, begin to push themselves forward and start to really embrace the concept that women actually do benefit from having support mechanisms and that they themselves have benefited from those monthly or bi-monthly meetings that we’ve been having.

Because if I look at the career trajectory of a number of them, they’re all far more confident women and they’re all applying for jobs – this is off the record. But women like Jill Minn are now saying to me stuff like, ‘this women’s group’s been really good for me, I’m applying for…’ She’s being interviewed and she’s at the assessment centre. But what I’m saying is that she would be one of the women, but she’s not the only woman. Rose Crozier, the same has come across, didn’t really want to be doing anything with women’s groups. And the women’s training has been effective.

So I think that what I was able to do with them was make them realise that it was safe and it was alright to acknowledge that there were certain things that women had bigger barriers to climb than men, and that it was alright for women to be together and to discuss constructively. So it wasn’t a moaning, whining session and it was all ‘oh, we’re women and woe is us.’ I think what they learnt from me was, no, I get on brilliantly with men, I love men and it’s not an anti-men stance – it’s a pro-women stance. But I was able to, over that period, I think get them to realise that this was a supportive, comfortable environment and it didn’t set them up against men and it didn’t make them antagonistic. It just actually helped them to develop the skills that they had that were there and that for me was a great measure of change. And, as I say, I’ve noticed it particularly this last six months, I’ve seen a lot of them blossoming and I think that that’s where the proof of the pudding of that initiative has been. And I’ve also seen some of our women politicians really, really blossom in that and begin to be quite assertive in their own parties and I think again, it’s to do with the support mechanisms that we’ve been
able to supply them with. As I say, some women are refusing to be part of the process but we’ll get to them eventually.

AK: What about one where you think you encountered the most difficulty in the change process?

Oh god, where would you even start? Loads of those. I took on [redacted] a year ago. I have not moved [redacted] who would not have been regarded as the top drawer in this organisation. Now we’ve moved them miles but we haven’t moved them to the same extent that I would want to move them and the resistances were that people were in a pattern which had been established over 30 years and they didn’t see the turning of the page as important as I saw it, and so I’ve had to really reflect on my own skills and manners. For example, I found them extremely resistant to ….. normally I’d go in and I’d compel, I’d work with people and be saying to them, ‘what’s the new vision? You can do things better than you’re doing here.’ I found a level of resistance to that message to be much higher than I’d ever encountered in my entire life and I found it a bit kind of ….. and so we’ve had to go at it in different ways and the compelling visionary thing hasn’t really worked for them. We’ve almost had to get down to the bricks and mortar and much smaller things and that’s what I found in the end, it wasn’t the big picture stuff because they couldn’t actually think in big pictures. They were so ground down in [redacted] that all they really thought about was their little tiny patch, and trying to get them to move from their little tiny patch to the kind of big vision was the wrong strategy.

So midway, I had to give up on the big strategy and what we had to do was get down to the bricks and mortar - your job will actually be a better job if you do this; if you make these changes, you’ll have more control over what you do. So, in fact, in the end, we had a bigger bang for our buck than doing small things like giving them PDPs, having team briefings which they’d never had. So I almost had to go into the structural systematic stuff but that worked more effectively.

So what it taught to me was that maybe sometimes I needed – and again we talked earlier about the learning curve and this was a learning curve for me, that my principal methodology in change management, which had worked pretty much over the years, was not really the right strategy for this particular problem and that I had to modify that strategy. I had to actually fall back and rethink the way I was bringing about change. Now the change is happening in [redacted], not as quickly and I think of petrol and ignition and this has been a much slower burn. But I have to now say the changes are happening but for someone like me who likes it to move faster, it has been frustrating.
AK: More incremental and small wins each time.

MTM: Exactly, small wins rather than big wins. So I had to accept that the small wins were actually very significant. They were awfully small for me but they were working but the whole thing was much more incremental. I’ve accepted that but it’s taught me lessons also about, it’s not one size fits all – you have to work to where people are at and how far they want to move at any stage.

AK: You mentioned some of the barriers that you had there – what about barriers in general to the change process?

MTM: Well, I think anybody who’s in the change business is going to encounter huge problems every time they try it. There is always massive resistance to change, and that’s my view, unless the situation is so untenable, and we don’t get that many. There are very, very few - in crisis management, yes. If there’s a massive crisis, a house is on fire, people respond to those kind of things. You’re going to lose your job if you don’t change. You’re going to die if you don’t change. Those are situations where people catch on straight away, ‘right, got to change.’

Most situations of change are not like that, particularly the kind of cultural change we’re talking about in changing organisations and trying to move things or change the way we’ve done business over a period of time. So you always factor in and the starting point is that the majority of people are prepared to sit and put up with what’s there until it becomes untenable. So you can assume that complacency, apathy or the lack of energy to actually make the changes is going to probably be a fairly potent part of whatever you do.

Now the key, in my view, in assessing the level of resistance you’re going to get will depend on how that group is carved up. Because within that group, there’ll be people who are really not changing or not wanting to change simply because they haven’t got the energy or they haven’t really clearly thought of the benefits, and you can catch those people pretty quickly and you can start to motivate and instil in them, ‘look, it could be better if you did this.’ So you can turn them on as a resistance force relatively easy.

There’ll be the next set who can be unconvinced that whatever they do or any changes are really going to change the situation, and they’re the kind of
disbelieving, Doubting Thomases and you really have to work much harder with them because you’ve got to really convince them. It’s like Doubting Thomas, unless I put my hand in the wind, I’m not going to believe it. And you will have a higher road and that’s probably your big block in the middle of resistors.

And then finally for me there’s the other group of resistors and they are not going to change pretty much no matter what you do. And they tend to be people who are invested in the present and who see those changes as detrimental to their position and see the change process as something which is going to make them a loser, and it’s identifying the reasons for that and, in some cases, some people may well be losers as a result of a change process and what you’ve got to do is see if you can find ways around that. And there’ll also be a category within there who are just malicious and they’re not going to change no matter what you do. And some of those people may find themselves cast adrift in the change process but we work in the public sector and, as you know, getting rid of people is not an easy job. So you’ll always have a bit of a rump who are going to give you serious problems in resistance.

And sometimes the resistance is in the culture you’re in. It’s not the direct people you’re trying to change but it’s the stakeholders or the people around the change who will also pressurise you and who maybe for whatever their reasons don’t want you to change, don’t want you to become better because they’ll look worse or don’t want you to become better because you’ll take resources off them – or whatever it is.

So there will always be degrees of resistance and the trick I think in successful change management is being really, really honest and focused about where that resistance is and working on it, because if you ignore it, you’ll sabotage yourself and you’ll leave yourself open to loads of sabotage. So there are ways of getting round it - open communication, making sure everybody feels they’re in the loop, that change isn’t something that’s being done to them, that they’re part of the change, finding ways for them to have ownership. All the techniques and models that you know, that you use - quality circles, getting people involved in problem solving groups, getting them involved, days out where they’re all working on a problem, making them feel that they have control over various aspects of the change, that they’re part of the decision making process for it, that they’re part of creating the solutions. It’s all that – it’s about creating all that ownership, working that through and getting people involved at all times. So change shouldn’t be something that’s done to you - change is something you participate in.

AK: You mentioned all the people barriers, is there anything else in the system itself that from time to time becomes a barrier?
The system itself. In my experience, once a system is up, running and formalised, getting the system changed or the structures around the system can be worse than getting the people. I’ve been dealing a lot with the people equation – get the people excited, get the people ignited and you can move things but sometimes trying to change systems, changing technologies, changing the way people have constructed business and starting again - you’ll get your IT people going, ‘oh, that'll cost a fortune, couldn’t possibly do it that way.’ Or the people who are invested in, this is the way we do invoicing and we’re not going to change it because it would be too hard etc.

People invest in systems, they invest hugely in systems and structures and getting those dismantled and finding better ways to do things can be …… we don’t laugh about the Luddites for no good reason. People do resist things which will, ultimately, make their life easier but the system always takes on a life of its own. The system can’t be changed, we can’t stop the way we do the rates collection, we can’t stop the way we lift money at the market, and therefore we can’t change the way we deal with each other because if we did that, this would be the impact.

And then there are other institutional barriers I would say with the change management process. We’ve got to take into consideration issues like trade associations, trade unions. So those are all system structures that we have to work with and that we have to convince and they can be great barriers to making change.

AK: Anything particular in Local Government terms in our environment?

My sense of our environment – and I think the RPA will really change that – is that we have been in our past a bureaucratic process. Now if you ask me, we’re not as bureaucratic as the Civil Service. I think the changes in the Civil Service they’re going to find are going to be far, far worse. On the continuum we’re not on that end, but if you’d asked me when I came into Local Government in 1999/2000, then I would have said to you, ‘we’re a bit fuddy-duddy and we’re bit a olde worlde and we’re a bit bureaucratic. We need to become more entrepreneurial, we need to become more adaptable, more innovative.’ And it’s probably an argument in Northern Ireland in general. What makes it a particular issue for us is that we, probably of any sector I think in Northern Ireland, work extraordinarily up close and personally with politicians, to a much greater extent than the Civil Service does. Because the Civil Service works with one Minister – alright, occasionally they have to go into a committee or whatever but you know here we live in a land where day and daily …… I’ve 51 Councillors here, I would say I would have regular contact
with at least two thirds of them through various means and ongoing contact with the whole 51 of them. There’s not one Councillor in this building that I haven’t had some relationship with, some dealing with, some question with.

So I think that in Local Government, we are also dealing with the exigencies of the political process and dealing with political parties and dealing with the needs of politicians, and politicians do inhabit a different kind of world. Politics is personal, politics is demanding, politics is about the here and now. I know we have great politicians who see things in visions but politics when it comes down to it is about my constituents and what I need done on my street or the street that I represent. So that kind of pulls us down from the visionary and does make us crisis and reactive and I think the values that I’m talking about, the need for us to be more visionary, more innovative, more adaptable, sometimes is counter to the area we have to move in. So I think we do have difficulties but my sense is that we’re up to it. I think that as public servants, my sense now of the public servants I’m meeting in Local Government is that they’re more up for it than some other public servants I’m seeing.

AK: Have we got an extra dimension to deal with in the change process?

Yes, we do. We have an extra dimension because, as I say, if any public sector organisation, I know Health’s going through it at the minute, Education’s going through it, eventually the Civil Service will go through it, but I think we are the sections of the public sector who are extraordinarily closely aligned with the political sector, to a much greater extent I think than any other part of the public sector and that does give us …… it gives change management, it’s not alright, it’s harder but if I’m in the Health Service or if I’m …… he’s had to bring together two Trusts, invent a new Trust and the hospitals but he didn’t have to go into committee every month and weave that change through and get a political ……

If I was …… I would not have had to do what I had to do last year. Last year when I took on the new department, the new sections, I got the …… Hall, the …… Hall and I got the ……, I had to start root and branch to change the way they operated, to bring them up. They were coming into a department that was IAP, a department that had Steps to Excellence – Gold. …… were so far away from ever being anywhere near IAP – the very basic things that they would have required to even start the process of IAP weren’t there. Now if I was ……, I’d have got stuck in straight away, do this, do that, do the other. I had to restructure, which he had to do, but in the end, I had six months and then I had to present that to committee. Now in order to get that through committee, I had meetings with 51 Councillors, I had party briefings, I
had a huge amount of work to do in order to convince Councillors that that was good.

Now that’s good for me in the sense that, in that process, I was so robust in my arguments in terms of why we needed to do the things we needed to do because I had to convince them. Now that brings in extra robustness to my arguments, it makes me sharper and that’s good, but it also means I’m slower in terms of how quickly I can effect change and how quickly I can do things. So there’s good and bad in that but I would say that we are in the public sector and it’s going to be the same as we move into bringing three and two Councils together – it’s the same thing. We’re going to have to bring the political process along with you. So it’s not just a matter of Officers sitting and saying, ‘here’s the best way, this is the best way to move forward, let’s do it.’ What I have to say is, ‘this is the best way, I’ve all the evidence to back it up and now I have to go in and convince the political cadre that this is the best way.’ So I have a double convincing to do here.

AK: Some of your development needs then – if we were going to get a programme up for people involved as Change Champions, what sort of things should we be doing?

MTM: Well, for me I have to say that I am always inspired by other people who have created huge change and I’m the girl who reads. I read a lot of biographies, I watch television programmes, I go to all these Leaders for the UK or London. I try and do one of those every year because I actually love hearing how other people do it. I have an MBA, you want me to do an MBA course and I can tell you all the things that are in the textbook but it’s the interaction. That’s dry and dull and that’s the kind of methodology but when I hear a person who tells me their story and I see how they made change, then that’s what I find …… if you were asking me what could you do for me in terms of training, I’d say to you, ‘no, for me it’s not training.’ Yes, I can pick up more techniques but for me I pick those techniques up from hearing people who have themselves created change and that’s where I’ve learnt.

And my biggest icons, the people who I appreciate, the people who I study and look at how they’ve done change are those big change masters. And for me, if you were providing, that’s what I would want you to do for me. I’d want you to give me access to learning around people who had really …… so either dealing with those people directly, but some of them are dead, or talking to people who’ve studied them and who say to me, this is how they made that change. My change icons are as diverse as Martin Luther King and there’s currently Obama. If anybody wants to see how someone who was a no-hoper, and he was a no-hoper, ignited the world, then you’ve got to go and see how this guy seriously turned
round what should have happened, because what should have happened was he should still be sitting in Chicago. How he even got to be a senator – people were going, how did that happen? But it did happen and it happened because he is a man who is very, very dedicated to change and he thinks long and hard about how he achieves it. But you’ve got Martin Luther King and whoever but you’ve also people like, if you look at Patten during the Second World War and how he changed things, Roosevelt how he changed things, the suffragettes and how they changed things. These are all models for me of how you move forward and you couldn’t bore me in terms of giving me more examples of how this person achieved that, how that person achieved major change, studying them and being excited and inspired by what they do. That for me would be …… if you organised a course or a session, I’d be there, number one.

AK: What about the Champions Workshops that we’ve had from time to time in the women’s, and I know it was very targeted at that, were those of any use?

MTM: I found them partially of use but I think we do have to recognise that for me, people are at different starting points in the change process and if you’re you, then you understand that what’s needed in X Council and what level they’re at and what they’re working at is different from what’s in Y Council. And it’s always very, very difficult in those circumstances to create something that every one of the 26 Councils are going to think is great and is useful. However, I’ve always found something of interest at those.

So, for example, I remember the one we did at Antrim and we had Denise Cranston who came and talked and I knew quite a lot about Opportunity Now so I still found it interesting because I think what Denise had to say that day was good. But do you know what I found really interesting was the women who came from [??? 38:12] and told us how they had achieved change management. So you see, I think you had that day engineered a situation where the ones like me who were way ahead, they had done work, they got as much out of it as the wee Councils who were maybe starting and didn’t really know. So I suspect they got quite a lot out of that day. So for me there was an example of change management and issues around women and it was new information to me and it was an interesting take on it. So, yes, I do think the women’s Champions workshops have been, and certainly the ones I attended …… I couldn’t say there was any I attended where I didn’t learn anything, where I came away going that was a waste of time; that hasn’t been the case.

AK: In terms of your committee where you got the Members and Officers working together, what about that as a bit of a dynamic?
That has been absolutely terrific. I have to tell you it has been terrific on a number of bases and it’s back to what I said to you earlier about some of our senior women. Some of our senior women Officers spoke to Councillors pretty much for the first time and actually did it in a safe environment, not the normal which is a Councillor asking you a question and wanting the answers. They found themselves sitting with other women, some older than them, some younger than them, who had taken on through becoming politicians pretty strong political structures and had survived it and, in a sense, thrived because they were now Councillors.

At first, when we came up with the idea, I thought this could be …… and there’s some things Officers don’t want to say in front of Members but actually that disappeared really quickly and the joint training has been very, very good. We ran a women’s training programme which Anne McMurray did for us and we had women Officers and women Members, and she pitched the programme so that it was about personal development for women, so people could deal with it from their own point of view. But when they got into the general discussions, then what we discovered was it was the same problems, it was the same issues, it was the same thing about being confident and speaking in a meeting, it was the same thing about finding …… and in Local Government you will find the intercourse is often quite aggressive – it’s not assertive, it’s aggressive at times. Members do shout at each other, politicians say absolutely incredible things to each other and then go out and have a cup of tea and a glass of wine with each other afterwards. Normal discourse isn’t like that – you and I don’t have …… and then we go that was just because we were at the meeting, let’s go out and have a wee cup of tea but that is the way politicians work, or some politicians work.

I think that the interaction of women Members and women Officers has strengthened both and I find my women Members will actually say to me, ‘if you hadn’t have done this or if we hadn’t have sat talking with the other women, I would never have went for that or I would never have stood up and spoke, or I would never have raised that motion in Council.’ I’ve had women Councillors say that to me and say, ‘the women’s group’s great, we really love it.’

AK: Your budget’s the biggest is it, how much is it?

The budget for the whole Council?

AK: No, for your budget within Development.
About 30 million.

AK: And is that quite powerful?

Well, it is powerful in terms of when you say I can do this, I can do that and obviously I don't want to be advertising this but we do shave a bit off here and we do that. So we can probably do it easier than some Councils. I'd say the fact that I'm a Director, the fact that I have that budget and that I'm the women's Champion means I can pull resources together that maybe some other people can't or who have to really argue very hard for it. If we want to do a women's training course, we'll do a women's training course.

When we did the International Women's Day, we found the budget for International Women's Day, which I have to tell you this year was phenomenally successful and I'd say it'll go from strength to strength. It was actually getting round to doing it but we had such a successful morning. We had about 300 women this year and when you consider we only really started to organise it about six or eight weeks beforehand, I think next year we'll have double if not more – we'll have nearly every woman down.

AK: What did you do there?

Well, what we did was we took the theme of wellbeing and health and we were also doing things for men so that they couldn't say the men's health's not important because men's health is important. But we thought it in the context of looking after yourself in stress and the second issue was wellbeing and we hung that on debt and so we did actually a lot of debt counselling that day and money management. We did nutrition for wellbeing and we also used [redacted] to do a really big session with them which was about image and maybe doing things cheaper but thinking about how you wear clothes and how to maximise the way you deal with things. So the kind of orientation was on women kind of helping themselves but dealing with hard issues like debt, nutrition, like looking good on a budget, as well as taking care of yourself – so we had massage.

But then we also in the middle of that, we ran two women in politics seminars which were really well attended and in which the women Councillors and myself talked about how did we come to where we were, and that was really interesting
because I didn’t realise Marie Hendron was one of the founder members of the Alliance party, and then she’d been in the background for years because she was a teacher and it was only on her retirement that the party pushed her then and said, ‘will you stand for Councillor?’ She said that happened by happenstance, they didn’t think they were going to win the seat and then suddenly she found herself a Councillor, and she talked about that background, she talked about working in a girls’ school.

Bernie Kelly told a completely different story of how she found her way into politics. She was laughing, she went with her friend to an SDLP meeting, her friend said ‘I’d like to join the SDLP’ and she was too scared to go on her own and so said, ‘I’ll go down with you for the night’ and she said her friend never went back and she got hooked and she suddenly thought I’m going to go to the next meeting. So a completely different journey into politics and then I talked about how I’d become Director. And then the women who were there – and we had women from all across the Council, they weren’t all senior women, some of them were middle management, some of them were just secretaries who’d come in, but they all started to talk to us and say, ‘and why did you do that? And how did you do that?’

So I think the word of mouth will go out among the women because we would have had the barrier this year and it’s a barrier I’ve alluded to again. At all levels in the Council there’ll be women who’ll say, ‘I won’t go to that women’s stuff, I don’t go to the feminist stuff.’ Whereas they all went – the less risk averse they went down but they’ll go back into their offices because I know because Bridget sits out there, she’s one of our Clerks and she was down, got a massage. So she was back and she was saying to them all, ‘you all should have come, it was great and I got this and I went to Billy Dixon and no now I know how to wear my dress.’ So the word of mouth went round and I could see a few of them going, ‘I should have gone, I’ll go down next year.’ So we’ll do it next year and having that wee bit of extra money to do a few things like that has massive dividends, because really whatever it cost, 4/5000, to do that whole day when we’ve paid everybody’s fees, the benefits you’re going to reap – it’s pennies in terms of the changes and the investments that you’re making.

AK: Is there anything else you want to add?

No, I hope that’s of use to you.

Recording ends 46:48
Appendix 9  Sample Interview Transcripts

LGSC – INTERVIEW 04.06.2009

Transcript Code
[???] = word(s) not clear
…… = indicates a pause or switch of thought mid sentence
Word with [?] = indicates best guess at word
[IA] = several sentences inaudible or indecipherable

Participants:

AK: = Adrian E. Kerr, Chief Executive, Interviewer
EC: = Interviewee

Recording starts

AK: Could you just tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to be a Champion in the change process for women or any other one?

EC: I’d like to make it clear from the start, I’m very, very interested in the topic of change. I’m currently doing an MSc in executive leadership which is looking after the changes for the Councils after 2011. I’ve always been involved in a constant change management and I’ve always changed my job every five years. This is the longest job I’ve ever been in – this one’s for eight years but up until that, I’ve moved from every single department inside of the Council. I was a teacher first and then I came into the Council in Community Services, went into Community Economic Development, into Tourism, into Leisure and into Economic Development and now in Admin. So I’ve been involved in an awful lot of change.

The Council through the Chief Executive, [IA], has allowed me to become involved in change within the Council. Over this past three to four years, we have implemented a fairly substantial period of change for the leadership side of the Council and we’ve brought in the performance monitoring and we started with the Management Team and we’re now down to fourth tier staff on change of style of leadership from the transactional style, which would have been the former style used by most of the Councils, down to a transformational and a coaching style. The reason for that being was to give the skills and the confidence to our staff at all of the levels, to understand that they had a responsibility to change whatever
they thought needed to be changed within the Council to achieve better service for the rate payer.

So in that sense, I have been involved in a lot of change and the implementation of a lot of strategic change for the Council as well, with the Council’s economic development and development of tourism. And even now, when I moved into this post here within Admin, changing the Council from a paper organisation to an organisation that doesn’t use an awful lot of paper. For example, I’ve introduced the DMS system where we would scan all of the post that comes in. So every bit of literature or the correspondence that is sent to the Council is now scanned onto the computer, so you don’t need to file it any longer because there’s a shared system on that; the maximum for you to find anything would be three seconds. So if you need a letter that came in or you need a report of a Council meeting, just type it in and up it comes in front of you. Councillors don’t get their agendas any more, they get them sent out by email and they use their laptops at all of the meetings. So we’ve been involved in an awful lot of change. One area then obviously which is of interest to yourself is …… do you want me to talk about the Champion that I was part of for the women?

AK: Yes, as an example and how you’ve used that and what you’ve done there.

The first thing we did when we got the correspondence from yourselves on the item, it was tabled out to the Council meeting, the Chief Executive and the Management Team, plus the Council asked me to be the Champion on it. The first thing I said to the Chief Executive and to the Council was if we want to take this seriously, what we have to do is get a commitment on a corporate basis that we’re going to do this, and that was given to me. Immediately then, what we did was we started out with the development of the agenda action plan, and again that was integrated into all of the departments through to the Management Teams and down into the group meetings that each of those hold.

Then met with different organisation and, as part of the agenda action plan, we agreed to do the development of a domestic violence policy for the Council. So we’ve done that in association with Women’s Aid in Newry and all of the unions, and that’s been fully adopted. We have trained all our staff and provided information to our staff and then realising that that is an issue obviously in every organisation, we also brought in then Staffcare. Staffcare offer a confidential 24 hour service for counselling for all staff, not only on issues when it comes to work but issues outside of work as well and we will pay for that, because we believe that the health of our staff, if you have a healthy staff, it means that all your sickness levels are going to go down etc and that has worked significantly. As you know, we’ve gone from 10.4% to about 4.6% on our sickness.
So that has been part of that wider issue for the Council. The other thing we’ve brought in fairly substantially is a work-life balance opportunity. The introduction of flexitime and all of that and that has been a tremendous success again. And on the female side of staff, that has been of tremendous benefit for their families, coming into work a bit later in the morning. The core hours are from 10.00 to 12.00 and from 2.00 to 4.00 and that has worked out very, very well and staff are utilising that to its full extent. And that has had a big assistance for the reduction in the sickness as well because the fact if a child is sick, you didn’t need to come into work at 9.00, you could stay on till 10.00, you could take the child into the doctor. Simple things like that but from speaking to female members of staff, they’ve said that that has been a big issue for them.

We also did a number of other things. For example, we spoke to staff and asked them what they thought would be for the benefit of themselves and one issue that was raised at an open forum meeting that we had was that they requested that the Big Bus could come down to the Council on a regular basis – the Big Bus is for the cancer screening. That has happened and again it’s been very, very successful. Members of staff have been picked up from that and obviously have been successfully treated.

So things like that have worked very, very well. We’ve also done a review of the committee structure in terms of the gender and the party and who’s going to be chairing meetings, and the small number of female Councillors that are on, their profile has been raised significantly and the parties have accepted that. For example, the third biggest post for the Council is Chair of District Development and that is currently a female Councillor doing that; the Chair of the Equality Committee was a female as well. So we’ve tried to push that agenda as well and we’ve actually held a series of workshops which was introducing females to the political work. So we’ve got some of the female Councillors down to meet with some of the staff and some of the agencies from outside of the Council to talk about females and their involvement for the political group in the future.

AK: Is that a huge cultural change for Newry?

EC: Big – all of this is a huge change. It would never have happened at all. And we have also been pushing significantly the training opportunities available for female members of staff who want to go to training to move themselves forward for the future. That’s why, when I said to you earlier on, the work that we’re doing with Ricky O’Raw. For example, in my department Admin, there’s only three men in this out of nearly 60, and we have been pushing Ricky to work with the female
members of staff to provide them with the necessary skills and for the confidence that they need to move forward for the future, especially in light of 2011, for the opportunities that are going to come after that.

We also did a survey of the female Councillors on their requirements for the workplace. In other words, what about a crèche, what about for the children etc when they are at meetings. So we’ve done an awful lot of work on that and we’re currently working with the College of Further Education on the possibility of both of our organisations running a crèche in the Newry Sports Centre for the staff and for the Members and for all of the children; so for the staff and the Members of the Council, the children could end up being made aware of it. And not only that, if we were to do that with them, the cost of it could be obviously reduced significantly as well.

AK: What sort of skills do you think you were able to bring to the change process that you have that helped on this?

EC: I think the very fact that my style of leadership is very open and I make myself available to staff on a regular basis, and obviously communicate with my staff and have a communication of strategy that ensures that all of the staff are made aware of every single opportunity. So staff see me as a very different style of manager. The door is always open, it’s very friendly and not only that, the business plan for Admin is agreed with all of the staff. I do have regular meetings with my staff to inform them about the RPA, about what’s happening inside of the Council but not only that, we meet on a regular basis to discuss the business plan and for the services that we have, and how the staff can actually help me to achieve all of the aims that have been set down by the Council.

So it’s that very transformational coaching open style and most of the staff have known me now, because I’ve been here since 1984 and they’ve always been aware that I’ve been involved. In any of the departments that I’ve gone to, I’ve always tried to bring about an awful lot of change. For example, a lot of them would be aware …… we talked about community planning, we have got community planning here since 1995. We had what was called the Socioeconomic Forum which was a group of individuals from all of the different agencies, from the road service, education, and they actually wrote the economic action plan for the Council. So there was that involvement.

So people know that I’m very upfront, very involved and like people to be involved with me. One other thing that I do which a lot of Directors don’t do – for example,
if a member of my staff was to do something very well and it was to be accepted for doing something very good, I don’t take the plaudits. If there’s a photograph to be done or there’s a launch to be done, it’s up to the members of staff to do it, it isn’t me. It’s that hands-on to hands-off approach at certain times as well. So that’s the sort of style that I bring to it.

AK: It brings me nicely into the roles that you think you played and you’ve mentioned the visibility associated with change etc, and again about pushing those forward who’ve actually done work. Any other role that you would play in terms of making the change happen?

EC: Well, I think what my role for the Chief Executive here was to come in to change the Management Team, to change the way that the Management Team thought so that the Council staff would see that we had changed. As you know, even now if you go into some of the Councils, as I am amazed at, which happened to me last Thursday for example, the Directors were called by their names, it was Mr [redacted] or Mr [redacted]. We don’t have that. It’s a very open style of leadership from the Chief Executive down. Some of the Directors wouldn’t have been like that but over this past two years, there’s been a tremendous change and a tremendous openness about the Council. And there’s a tremendous friendliness in this Council that you don’t see in an awful lot of the other Councils.

So it’s that open style that I think that I bring and the very friendly and everybody’s on the same level here. Nobody says the Chief Executive and they would respect him for that, but [redacted] is seen as a friend of everybody in this place and I think it’s that style that has opened us up. And, as you know, we won the Best of Project this year for the NILGA Awards, we won the Best of Project for the Police Awards there recently. So I think that in itself is showing that the Council staff are going that extra mile now by doing things a wee bit more in an innovative way that is bringing the Council name to the fore. And that’s something that I would push at every meeting.

The responsibility for staff is the professionalism of the Council. In other words, you are the face of the Council so you have to present yourself like that and that’s an ethos that we push out all the time. Don’t be negative, don’t be a cynic, don’t be a cancer in this organisation. If there’s a problem, you should be telling us about it and it should be changed but don’t go out there and bad mouth us. That’s something that [redacted] asks for all the time.
The other thing that I bring as well is the fact that I've been training a lot. The fact that I went to Jordanstown to do this MSc and it gave me, I have to say, a tremendous insight into leadership styles, knowledge management, corporate. All of these different topics that have been talked about has opened up my mind, and with working with the private sector and with the rest of the Councils and there's people out of the Health Board on it, there's people out of the Education Board - you're continually learning about models of good practice that you're able to bring here.

AK: Do you think you've developed in any way in your role as a change person over the years?

I have, I've changed dramatically. I feel because I took the route to change every fifth year, I said I need to change and I think that has left me a very open and fresh person. So I wasn't going to be stagnant, caught in the same job. I taught for five years, I was a Community Services Officer for five years, I was a Community Economic Officer for five years, I was a Head of Economic Development for five years. I changed all the time, so change was in me all the time and I think that freshness brings about something that shows that I want to change on a regular basis. The other thing is that I'm not afraid of change and I don't be looking over my shoulder all the time; you know the way some of the managers sometimes …… someone's doing that well, I'd better not push that person. No, I push my staff.

The meeting before this was I meet with all of my staff on a quarterly basis. That folder there, that's all of my meetings on a quarterly basis and we discuss the person, the workplace, the resources they have, their action plan for the next three months, what is it they've done for the corporate plan, what they've done for the business plan. It's just to have a chat with them, so that's happening on a regular basis. We don't call it a performance review, it's just a meeting of the team and I just meet with the team and they will sign that off at the end of it. Then when I meet them again when it comes round, I will say to them, we've met, we've agreed, we've agreed that and that's a really nice example of it.

AK: Is that your commitment to develop others?

That's my commitment to the staff development and one of the things like that meeting I had this morning was to talk to Carmel about saying to her, what are your training needs now coming up to the change in 2011? Because she was telling me she wants to get into the GIS? this morning, there's a course coming up.
and I’d arranged to push her. So those are the senior staff and I go down and I meet them and you see these meetings.

AK: Are they like personal development plans?

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Yes, very much like that. This is the form that we use and I can pull out an example of one that’s not typed up, you take that example and then they will sign that off and when I meet them for the next quarter, I’d say well, at the last meeting, there was such-and-such a problem or such-and-such an issue was raised and you see down at the bottom personal development plan update. Where are they in their training, how has it worked, do they need to change and then for the other items etc. So I will spend about an hour with that member of staff and I’ll tell you what it does as well – we do these sorts of surveys with them and then I get reports and on a confidential basis – I don’t know who filled them in. But I would go to meetings and say, at such-and-such a meeting, the following items have been raised and ask them for the problems or ask them more essentially for the solutions. Do you have the materials you need to do your job properly? So all of those and those are the results coming through, and you can see some of them are not sure if they have enough.

I think it’s that openness that works and you have the opportunity to do what you do best. These are questions that they have set, I asked them for any questions and then I’ve all the results and for the feedback, there’s one from the personnel section - strongly agree, agree, in between. So I would meet with the team – I don’t know who filled these in and we will talk about all of those issues. So it’s that very open style that we have. One of the reasons that I do it on a regular basis as well, I’ll also say to them show me where you have done that with all of your staff? You do the same as I do.

AK: Trying to cascade it.

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Yes, the whole way down.

AK: What about the barriers that you would have encountered along the way in trying to change? What sort of barriers did you come up against?

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The biggest barrier for me was the Management Team. There was the old silo, I don’t want to do this. Even still there’s one of the Directors doesn’t want to do
those meetings with their staff but now the Chief Executive does them, does them. Quarterly meetings are set in advance for a year in advance and you know when it is you’re going to meet them; you’re not allowed to change that date or that time, you have to work round it because he’s setting the standard. He’s saying, if I can do it and we’re trying to cascade that down.

For example, we had a very frank meeting with Ricky at the very start and there was very difficult things said at those meetings. There was challenges made to different Directors ‘but you do the following and you know people don’t like that, why do you do it?’ So it was trying to at the same time accepting there was Charterhouse rules, the respect was held in and we said in that room there were going to be difficult things, but what did happen at the end was we came out a stronger team.

The other barrier was the Councillors – the Councillors didn’t like it. They thought the Management Team were off doing things that they shouldn’t have been doing and you had to change it now. But I think that they accept now as well that that change in style has led to a better format of corporateness. In other words, if you were to ring me now and ask me about another department if the Director wasn’t there, I will have a damn good idea what is happening in that department so I would be able to answer and it’s that sharing of information and breaking out of the silos.

The other major item of change that came out of that was the Management Team agenda changed dramatically, from all these stupid nit picking things. I was saying, ‘why do you need to take this, you are a Director, you get paid £70,000 a year, why do you need to ask me? Go do your job and we’re talking about strategic performance, financial, where we’re going as a Council, major capital.’ So the whole style of leadership has changed and the style has been not forced upon them but accepted by them that for us to manage in a better way, this is the way that it should be done for the future.

AK: Is it like a people performance culture, so setting the people but within the performance culture all the time and the change is working in that direction towards improvement?

Yes, and the other thing that we do now as well, which we did just last Thursday, each of the departments come in and present their business cases to the Management Team and we will question them on it. And that now, you’re seeing a sense of ownership that that’s given to the second and third tier level Officers – it’s
tremendous. I actually asked one of them in and they were so nervous about coming in to meet with the Management Team to discuss their plan, but they felt proud that the work that they were doing was being acknowledged and accepted. And that’s why I’m saying to you that that style of leadership has changed from one with where the Management Team wrote the corporate plan but didn’t say it to anybody; nobody down there knew what it was. Now it’s taken from the very bottom of the Council and it’s brought up to the Management Team and that’s that style; and it’s working very well I think personally.

AK: You mentioned your development needs and obviously you’re studying at the minute, that’s given you new ideas, new approaches.

It’s opened up a whole lot. Being really upfront about it, that style of leadership and the different styles that were available, I actually wrote a paper on it. So I had to research on it, so I got into very good models of practice and thought that would be a good idea for us to try. And then you were debating those, as I said to you earlier on, with the Head of the Wealth for the Northern Bank; there’s a fellow who’s responsible for all the shopping centres in Belfast, he was there; there was another guy from the Chamber of Commerce; there was a person who’s the Head of a section in Health; there’s a person who was Head of a section for Education. You were getting that opportunity of debating good models of practice that were happening elsewhere and copying them.

But I have to say one of the things that I did find was, there was more good practice inside of Councils, I have to say. They were astounded sometimes - like knowledge and for the management of it. When they found out how we did it with the DMS system here and how everything is circulated and made available, they said, ‘we can’t do that, we have to wait weeks for paper files to get sent out.’ We don’t do any of that stuff any more, we were trying to explain to them. So they came down here for a day and we introduced them to what it was and how it was set up etc. It was just nice for us a Council to be able to say that we were taking it down to organisations and they could learn from us.

AK: The Champions’ Workshops that we had in relation to the women’s development thing – were they of any use?

Yes, because you were again learning models from other organisations and sharing the experiences that we had. Can I give you an example? When we got this, the Champion of Change, we said we either do this seriously or we do it half hurriedly but we actually pushed it even further. For example, the rural
development programme that was administered by [??] 23:01] and we've got some of the Councillors sitting on it. I was the Chairman of that group for the last five years. Within that programme, we actually encouraged them to write a programme for the development of business women in rural areas, and [???] I won the Northern Ireland award and we really did milk it at the time. But we actually pushed it into every strategy and every area of work that we were involved with, not only inside of the Council but outside of the Council. So there was very good examples where we were pushing for the women's issue the whole time and feeding it back up and saying, this is what we have done. In Economic Development, there was a women's business scheme in it as well. So we were trying to push that agenda the whole way down. But I did find all of the workshops very, very good I have to say.

AK: If you were given a blank sheet of paper and said, here's the things I think you could do a bit more of to help people in this, and even in the RPA in terms of the change process, what sort of things do you think we should be doing?

I think the mistakes that Councils are making now, and it's basically a financial thing and maybe it could be helped out with the training that you're involved with – it's that Councils are pulling back on the amount of money that is available for training and particularly the female staff are feeling that. There is a need for a dedicated budget, and whether it comes from the RPA or the Capacity Group or whatever it is, to ensure that training is going to be made available and the development of the female staff is brought to the fore. Because you and I know the number of CEOs who are currently females is very, very small. The numbers of Directors are very, very small. There's a need to keep that agenda that females can achieve and not only that, the flexible working side as well. Not all of the Councils are using that I would doubt very, very much; most of them aren't. If you're going to be serious about making opportunities available for the female workforce, those are the sorts of changes that need to be done, to the work-life balance, to the training that's going to be made available on a regular basis; and currently that is not being done.

AK: You gave me some very good examples, I've called them critical incidents, where you think you were successful in terms of change in the whole area of work-life balance, again the review of the way the Management Team operated; all sorts of things and trying to change that within Members. Have you anything that you think here's an example where I tried it but I wasn't successful and here's the sort of things that I ran up against?

I did try through the Good Relations budget to make a sum of money available to the [???] Women's Group. That was a group that we set up to push
the female agenda etc and the mistake we made there was that we gave it to a group that had been set up, that were established and said you can do all of this work, this is the type of work you do when you give out small grants to women who should want to train or want to go back to education and because it didn’t have our fingerprints on it, it fell apart, it collapsed on us. They didn’t know how to manage it, they didn’t know how to control it. We possibly failed in our own way by not ensuring that they had a strategic plan. We gave them the money because of the type of individuals that were involved in it but sometimes, as you know, somebody can have a profile but when it comes to actually doing something, they’re not very …… they just can’t do it enough. And that failed and that was a big annoyance to us because we had great hopes for that group in the future and it just did not work.

The other one that we did do very well, we hosted events for the travellers, women travellers and that worked very, very well. We introduced them to the childcare, to budgeting, to the lifestyle, the alcohol abuse we brought in, and that actually worked very, very well that programme. They find it excellent and they’ve come back looking for more and we’ve run about two or three more of the courses as well for them and that worked very well.

AK: I’ve finished all my formal questions, is there anything else you think you want to talk about barriers or development needs or any comments on the role of Change Champions in general?

I just think the Councils need to probably do what [Name] is doing now, is to put that theory of change out to the staff and I don’t think that happens enough. You would know more of the Councils than me but I don’t think that Councils promote change to the extent that it’s needed. For example, I was at a Council the other day. We took [Name] down to talk to all of the staff in Admin, I said to him the staff were worried about their car loans, about their houses and what’s going to happen in RPA and it was taking people to have a chat with them and do all of that, letting them know that change is going to happen. The majority of Councils aren’t even doing that.

We took [Name] over and we took all our staff into the Town Hall for a day and asked them to explain about the Scottish model and how could the change affect them and opened it up to the trade unions and they come in and asked questions. We’re doing things and trying to push the communication down the line. I don’t think Councils are doing that to the extent they should be. I think [Name] handled it very, very badly with the communication group that they have, because I went to the first meeting and the lady who was the Director of Communication, who’s left now and there was a meeting and people travelled from every Council in Northern Ireland to [Name], not under our guise, and come down here to a meeting that
lasted 15 minutes. It was absolutely dreadful. I knew people left disillusioned because they thought they were going to come down to this new idea and plan and strategy, to get information flow going. What do you want us to do? That was the question and it fell apart. So I think that side of it, we have been successful but more and more of the Councils need to do that.

Recording ends 29:15
Appendix 10 - Change Champions – Primary Drivers and Perception of Change

1. Chief Executive

Primary Driver – Committed to the change itself

Perception of Change – People make change

This Chief Executive cited his motivation to accept the champion's role and the change challenge as rooted in his family background and personal belief that the change process was beneficial. He was encouraged by a progress which was visible and where he could celebrate, with others, the gradual success. He sought to build coalitions to achieve change through people and was disappointed when others did not share his enthusiasm. He accepted resistance as inevitable within the elected membership but worked to overcome it within the officer grouping.

2. Chief Executive

Primary Driver – Part of an overall strategic improvement agenda

Perception of Change – Improving processes and systems

This Chief Executive cited his motivation as improving the performance of his organisation and saw the change initiative as a natural addition to his incremental improvement agenda. He viewed change as continual and set in a strategic framework. This change process fitted with the overall change agenda. He encouraged others to implement the change and had the backing of officers and members. When resistance was encountered he worked to overcome it but on occasions “changed the people,” when he felt all other methods has been tried.

3. Chief Executive

Primary driver – Developmental organisational and people

Perception of Change - Human and personal

This Chief Executive presented a very personal, human and developmental perspective on change. He was committed to the change process and believed in the change itself. His attitude to change was evidenced in the examples where he helped develop others and also where he took the difficult decisions to get the required results.

He is self motivated and sees change as ongoing people centred improvement.

His unique view on improvement goes beyond his current role and organisation in that he views himself working to improve the public service as a whole. This attitude means that he can accept that people will be developed in his organisation but will move on as new development opportunities and challenges arise.

He accepted the Women's Change Champion role when he was a director and held on to this when he became Chief Executive. This reinforces the notion of continuing the change
process and his personal commitment. He also utilised his position as a change champion to initiate another more organisation wide initiative. (A second tier reorganisation programme).

4. **Chief Executive**

**Primary Driver – Performance and standards driven**

**Perception of Change – Improving systems and people**

This Chief Executive presented a very strong desire to advance a quality improvement agenda in implementing change. He was committed to the change process but believed that it was well in hand having introduced many support polices, gained investors in people standard, and won awards for advancing the equality agenda. He preferred to concentrate on his perspective on change in general and provide a wide range of examples of his leading involvement.

His attitude to change was evidenced in the examples provided where he introduced quality systems and brought people with him in order to provide better services within Local Government.

He is self motivated and provided information from outside his current role where he had taken major initiatives in the absence of any determined vision or joint plan. These included his development of the leisure quality standards at national level where he is the recognised expert, his private consultancy role, and his private museum which he has built and stocked at his own expense and which provides another dimension to his thinking and management style.

He is rooted in quality and effective service delivery and respects expertise. In 1992 he was Leisure Manager of the year in GB and takes pride in training others and passing on his skills. He also seeks additional challenges outside his Chief Executive role and sees these as providing additional expertise, personal fulfilment and a release from the less self fulfilling aspects of his work.

5. **Chief Executive**

**Primary Driver – Make things better and the change itself**

**Perception of Change - People make change**

This interviewee presented a very human approach to change and emphasised the need for an involvement model where people were seen as the real change agents. He saw his role as very “hands on” and leading the change process through his role as Chief Executive. He had been involved in major change in his former post and the change was not successful due to the “big bang” approach adopted by the sponsors. This, he cited, as providing him with the learning experience to move forward incrementally in implementing the change process. As a trade union representative at local level in the Civil Service, he developed people skills which provided him with the experience to value opinions and differing perspectives in problem solving.
1. **Director Post**  

**Primary Driver – Personal development**  

**Perception of Change – Through people**  

This Director, together with advancing overall organisation performance, put primary emphasis on how she had used the change process for her own personal development and to assist with her promotion within the organisation. She gained the Director’s post while performing her role as a nominated change champion. She viewed the change from a personal perspective and changed herself as part of the process.

She shared the development process with others and is now permeating the learning throughout the organisation. She built coalitions and is convinced that her development will have positive benefits to the organisation and she can be a role model for others aspiring to increase personal and organisational effectiveness.

2. **Director Post**  

**Primary Driver – Committed to change for the better**  

**Perception of Change – Rooted in systems and people change**  

This Director presented as an individual committed to change. She is a self starter who believes that change is to be welcomed and can be positive for all concerned. Throughout her career she has changed people, systems and organisations.

She believes in transformational change and the need to recognise the people dimension in the change process. Although committed to selling the vision for the change process, she recognises, and utilises, the situational leadership model and adapts her championing style depending on the needs of those involved.

She committed to the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative and experimented with differing unique methods to implement the change process.

As a strong leader in a large council with a high level of resources, she utilised her position to move the initiative forward. While centring on people at the heart of change, she also has a strong improvement agenda which is advanced at every opportunity. The Director describes herself as a change person and rooted more in the persuading, cajoling and visioning change methodology.

3. **Director Post**  

**Primary Driver – Performance improvement**  

**Perception of Change - Through people**  

This Director presented as an individual committed to change in an improvement context.

He evidenced how he utilised others and coalitions to develop support for new initiatives. His critical incident examples all included emphasis on developing people and promoting an open culture based on good communication and employee relations. His attitude to
change is evidenced by his career to date where he has led a wide range of departments and utilised this experience to move up the grading structure.

He described himself as interested in, and always being involved in change processes, and being comfortable in a change environment. He volunteered to become the council’s gender champion and has worked with his staff and the senior management team for the last four years to promote a welcoming environment within the council and the political parties to promote the equality of opportunity action plan.

4. **Director Post**

**Primary Driver – Improvement**

**Perception of Change – People drive change**

This Director presented an example of the introduction of change in a very stable and conservative environment. He utilises one change to introduce another when he has the opportunity to do so. He is very aware that he works in a political environment and seeks to either utilise this to his advantage, or accepts that the change is often a step too far, as it may cause precedents for other changes which are unacceptable to a particular political party. He quoted many examples of having to consider the human side of change and the need for timing in the change process. He sees this human element as being set within an improvement agenda and the need for a strategic approach to change and a project plan for implementation.

1. **Head of HR**

**Primary Driver – Organisational improvement**

**Perception of Change – People and human relations approach**

This head of HR presented a mixed perspective on change (personal, human and organisational) and provided examples from a human personal perspective of her role in a number of change processes namely as a women’s champion, and developing whole system change in the council.

She had utilised her champion role to advance the overall org. change and to promote a culture of openness and trust. She took advantage of the “right time to make the changes” and linked her changes with other initiatives. She worked to a framework for change which included specific action plans. This provided her with the flexibility to take advantage of linked opportunities and to add to her own personal development through practice.

While she identified barriers encountered in the change process, these were general, and she placed great emphasis on her council having a change culture which facilitated the various new initiatives she wished to introduce.
2. **Head of HR and Administration**

**Primary Driver – Improvement**

**Perception of Change – People drive change**

This champion presented as an individual who was committed to the change process but saw herself as part of the change process rather than leading it. The leading was down to others and the main barrier was the culture of the organisation.

Everything flowed from the “boss” (the Chief Executive).

Her perspective on change is very human and personal. This is evidenced by her example of coaching others to change and her belief that change is down to the culture and the people involved. Her personal change is within the limits of the system where she has achieved promotion on the basis of suitability for the post, hard work and reliability. She lacks confidence to move outside the system and her style is one of persuasion and mediation. She plays a very human part in making change happen and relies on her softer skills to help her do so.

The main barriers are perceived as personal and organisational (confidence and the controlling results driven culture)

3. **Head of HR and Administration**

**Primary Driver – Performance improvement**

**Perception of Change – Human relations approach**

This interviewee presented a real personal, human perspective on change rooted in people development. She saw the open culture of the organisation as her biggest asset in change management. There was considerable acceptance of change in the council with management and elected members encouraging new initiatives.

She has developed as a committed local government officer over a 32 year period due to the encouragement and support of her managers and the organisation and utilises the same attitude, which worked for her to bring about change in others and to promote OD initiatives. Her attitude to change is also set in a performance culture where staff are made aware of their role in implementing council objectives and are held to account for their results.

She received a national award for her work as a change champion in relation to the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative for her women’s development programme. This award was contested by leading UK local authorities, management consultancies and learning institutions and received national recognition and acclaim.

Her commitment and determination to make things better in her council area was evident in the examples she provided and the critical incidents verified her account of how she worked in practice.
In discussion she identified her desire to leave the service at reorganisation or perhaps contribute to the RPA change process on a part time or consultancy basis. This was due to her desire to spend more time with her family, having contributed a life time commitment to enhancing local government in N.I.

1. **Elected Member**

**Primary Driver – Representative role**

**Perception of Change – People drive change**

This change champion while having a belief in the change process as the right thing to do, and a belief in the change itself, placed great emphasis on the representative role he carried out and his obligation to be a champion based on his nomination by his organisation. He built coalitions with other elected members, often from different parties to advance the change at local level, and organised joint awareness events.

He saw himself as a positive champion with visibility and commitment and since his nominating body was an umbrella representative organisation for all those involved in the change process this dominated his thinking and actions. His major problem lay in devoting time to the champion’s role as he had so many other commitments.

2. **Elected Member**

**Primary Driver – Self development**

**Perception of Change – People drive change**

The interviewee overall presented a very personal view of the change process and how she had developed herself and raised her profile. She identified a barrier in her party structure as preventing the change progressing at a greater speed. Her primary driver was rooted in her belief in the change itself and the fact that to date she felt she had developed personally from her involvement in various change processes. She had developed new skills, built new networks and gained in confidence in her role as an elected representative and increased her knowledge of the local government system.

She perceived change as happening through people and provided many examples of people assisting the change process or putting up barriers.

3. **Elected Member**

**Primary Driver – Belief in the change itself**

**Perception of Change – People drive change (hearts and minds)**

This elected member presented a very caring approach to change based on her belief that society would have to change in NI if peace and equality were to become the norm. She devoted her life to this cause and endured much criticism and had to stand up and be counted in the change process. She came from a mixed family background (mother Jewish, father Protestant) and had many catholic friends in her childhood and later years. The political party is a non sectarian party established as an alternative to the perceived polarisation of Nationalist/Unionist traditions.
Her current role as a councillor in a predominant Unionist council places her in a difficult political environment. She is a person who has, under personal, often physical, risk championed the cause of equality and the pursuit of social justice. Her philosophy on change is based on active involvement and the real pursuit of change to make a notable improvement in people’s lives and the community she serves. Her interview evidenced her lifelong commitment to change society for the better with the earliest critical incident quoted to evidence this commitment being at the age of eight years. She has now been married for forty one years and is a grandmother.

4. **Elected Member**

**Primary Driver – Commitment to the change itself**

**Perception of Change – Human approach to change**

This elected member presented as a very committed and determined champion, having volunteered for the position, with a strong interest in the change agenda dating back to her research at university and throughout her career. She emphasised the need to change the culture to accept new ways of working and to develop a more welcoming environment. She came to politics reluctantly having been assured by the party that she would not be elected but having taken on the role has worked hard and advanced significantly. This interviewee demonstrated a strong commitment to the development of the area she represents and to harness change with herself and other women “to give something back” to the area. She repeatedly emphasised her “interest in people” and in developing them for new roles and to bring about change. She perceived herself as having a human approach to change and a commitment to the change process.

5. **Elected Member**

**Primary Driver – Improvement**

**Perception of Change – Work with others**

This elected member presented as a very committed and determined champion, having been appointed by the National Association of Councillors to carry forward the ‘Women in Local Councils’ initiative. She is rooted in the belief that she can help the community she serves and feels that her drive to change society for the better is shaped by her background. She constantly strives, against the odds; to do what she feels will advance the improvement agenda even though she accepts that she may not be successful. Her belief in the change process appears to drive her forward and strengthens her enthusiasm. In examples she emphasised her commitment to change which she feels may be related to her family background with an older sister and brothers she felt she was always competing and this helped her assertiveness. She builds coalitions and believes in promoting change in conjunction with others.
6. Elected Member

Primary Driver – Improving service to the community

Perception of Change – People make change

This interviewee identified personally with her role as a change agent/campaigner based on an improvement agenda and human relations approach. She valued the role of people in the change process both at a level where she could build alliances and the need to convince others of the benefits of change. She came to politics at the time of a by-election and was chosen to stand due to her successful campaign on behalf of the community, to retain and old peoples residential home which was under real threat of closure. At that time she had no political allegiance and only became involved in politics at a later date.

The critical incidents and examples of change provided during the interview demonstrated real involvement with community groups and underrepresented sections of the community to improve their quality of life. She feels comfortable in introducing change at a local level, where through relationship building and encouraging enthusiasm for the change process she can really make a difference. Her involvement at a more central policy making level enables her to contribute to development of policy from a local first hand perspective and at the same time make a contribution to future effective strategy development.

She welcomed the opportunity to become a change champion in the women’s initiative and has driven the initiative at council level.
Appendix 11 Research Recommendations by Topic

8.1 Roles

Network Composition (1)

Recommendation: In order to maximise the advantages of this multidisciplinary approach, the Commission should continue with the structure of the network as currently constituted, but should also consider increasing the number of individuals in each category of change champion to maximise their scope for increased influence and support.

Appointment Procedure (2)

Recommendation: The current method of self selection by individuals to populate the champions' network should continue as the network needs to be refreshed, updated or expanded.

Partnership Working (3)

Recommendation: The change champions should be encouraged to work in partnership, form alliances and cross traditional role boundaries in an effort to increase effectiveness.

Structured Action Planning (4)

Recommendation: Central level planning needs to take account of the creative responses required by change champions at local level, and build flexibility, traditional role switching and cooperation opportunities into the planning process.

Maintaining Champions' Commitment (5)

Recommendation: Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure ongoing commitment by champions to the change itself, including; improved information systems, and motivational/recognition events.

8.2 Skills

Utilising Previous Change Experience (6)

Recommendation: In order to maximise the change skills base within the local government system, the Commission should retain, as far as possible, the existing network of champions and when necessary recruit further experienced change practitioners, who demonstrate commitment to the change process.
Succession Planning (7)

**Recommendation:** In order to ensure continuity in the work of the network and provide for possible expansion, a succession planning system should be developed, based on informed self selection and the dissemination of the results of this research.

Supporting Other Change Initiatives (8)

**Recommendation:** The Commission should investigate a mechanism to ensure that the experience gained by the network of champions is fully utilised to maximise the effectiveness of other similar change initiative across local government.

Coaching and Mentoring – Management Development Programmes (9)

**Recommendation:** In order to develop future change agents in local government, management development programmes should be redesigned to incorporate coaching and mentoring by experienced members of the change champions’ network.

8.3 Barriers

Encouraging Support (10)

**Recommendation:** The Commission should review the range of awareness raising events currently undertaken and place greater emphasis on events at central and local level designed to increase support, involvement and commitment to the change process.

Resource Provision (11)

**Recommendation:** The Commission should develop a methodology to target support to individual change champions to effectively utilise their time, and provide direct assistance where practicable. A system should also be developed for the equitable distribution of available funding resources and additional sources of funding investigated.

Communications strategy & Readiness for Change (12)

**Recommendation:** The Commission should develop, in conjunction with current change champions, a central/local communications strategy to help overcome the barriers identified in the research. A parallel sectoral ‘readiness for change’ project should also be initiated to help address the cultural change barriers inherent in the NI local government political system.
Member/Officer Relationships (13)

**Recommendation:** The Commission should investigate the establishment of a development programme, designed to enhance Member/Officer relationships’ and to build a culture based on trust and increased confidence, to address the increasing change agenda, across local government in N.I.

Trade Union Consultation and Commitment (14)

**Recommendation:** The Commission should consider the establishment of a permanent Trade Union/Management forum, to consult and negotiate on future planned change initiatives, in order to gain increased involvement and commitment to the change process.

8.4. Development Needs

Building on Existing Development Interventions (15)

**Recommendation:** Existing development interventions should be redesigned by a cross-section of change champions to reflect the improvements suggested by the research findings and the redesigned programme evaluated and endorsed by the champions’ network.

Work/Life Balance (16)

**Recommendation:** The champions’ development programme should include work/life balance training, stress management and personal support mechanisms, which should be provided on an ongoing basis and made available as part of the overall programme or on a confidential basis.

Support Groupings (17)

**Recommendation:** A pilot initiative should be introduced, to bring together a small group of self selecting change champions, in an informal environment which facilitates discussion, shared learning, support, and joint problem solving.

Mentoring and Coaching – Change Champions (18)

**Recommendation:** Following detailed awareness training, a mentoring and coaching programme should be introduced utilising experienced change champions, with participants given the opportunity to select appropriate mentors with direct experience of their particular operating environment and council culture.
Development Plans (19)

Recommendation: A formal system of personal development planning should be introduced for all change champions, with regular review and update planned as part of the personal development process.

Supporting Development and Learning Experiences (20)

Recommendation: The Commission should highlight the suggestions made by research participants that increased self development; confidence building and ‘learning by doing opportunities’ should be introduced and encouraged throughout local government in N.I.