

Nourishing Change

—Jamie Oliver

Leading in Communities

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Thanks so much to Leader Reader for linking you all up with the Food Revolution Day. I hope everyone had a good time, whatever you did on the day. I'm writing because I hope that a little more understanding about my dream will inspire you to make connections in your communities to help families make better choices when it comes to food and change how, when and what they eat when their kids are young.

As you may know, I've been on a mission for more than seven years to promote food education in schools, homes and communities.

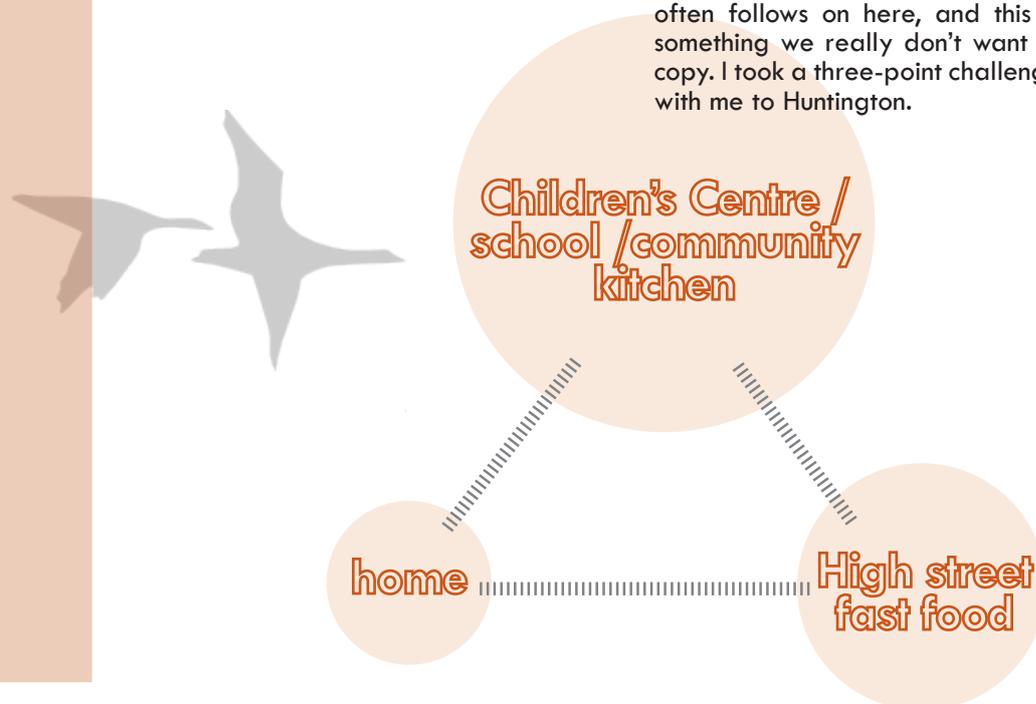
PEOPLE

Sadly, we've lost our way with food over the last couple of generations. Everything used to be cooked from scratch – often by mum, sometimes by dad – but now we live in a world where a lot of people are living off takeaways and processed food. We've got adults who don't know how to cook even the simplest things, and children who can't even tell basic ingredients apart, or how they got to their plate.

A few years ago I had the chance to put a community-centred approach to food to the test, first of all through my Ministry of Food centre in Rotherham, in the north of the UK, then in Huntington, West Virginia, in the US. Their levels of obesity are even worse there than here, and they had the highest mortality rates from obesity in the US. But it's all preventable –

people just need to understand how they can make a difference, put it into practice and get behind sustainable programmes of food education together. That's what happened in Huntington: from small beginnings, local organisations that were spending fortunes on obesity-related issues – more than 10% of all healthcare costs, bariatric rescue, over-sized coffin production, new taxes and measures to accommodate obese people – started to donate. The Huntington Kitchen was born as a place to bring practical, life-changing cooking programmes to that community.

So will that work here and now, with you? Who in your neighbourhood is going to invest in an intergenerational programme to change people's eating habits? In this financial climate, many say there is no money. But we found ours in local entrepreneurs who were persuaded by the common-sense arguments about combatting obesity. You know, the top killers in both the UK and the US are diet-related. It's worse over there, but what happens in the States often follows on here, and this is something we really don't want to copy. I took a three-point challenge with me to Huntington.





Home is where the knowledge and traditions we value most should get passed on but, for several generations, families needing two wages to earn a living have stopped learning to cook from each other, resulting in parents and young adults that can't or won't cook. Instead, they've become reliant on processed ready-meals and fast food that's packed with additives. They've often put on weight and accumulated other diet-related health problems. It's created misery for kids and parents, unnecessary pressure on health services, and the creation of an industry that produces convenience products for people who don't need to be as big as they are.

We learned in Huntington that connecting up with local champions, companies and activists who will spread the word puts **you** in a great place between home and big fast-food retailers. It allows you to challenge what's going on and get people thinking before they buy fast or processed food. Children's centre leaders are in the perfect place to move and shake locally, because dads and mums are great ambassadors for important things that relate to their children.

And it's not difficult. Start small; start at home and at centres. I love cooking with my kids – we talk a lot and we get to eat the stuff we make with Jools, their mum. Lots of children's centres have events for dads – how often does it include cooking lessons? Just think, if one dad shared a new recipe with three other dads and they all did

↳ **you are in the perfect place to move and shake locally**

the same, that could ripple across the country so quickly. It's stuff that can go on outside your centre, inspired by what you do inside it – word of mouth is powerful. For dads that only get to see their kids sometimes, cooking at home or in a centre is much more fun and memorable than going to a local fast food place to eat.

Through the Huntington project, I had the chance to share this idea with thousands more influential people via the **TED Award in 2010** and I could share my wish with them to create a sustainable movement that will:

educate children about food
inspire families to cook again, and
empower people everywhere to fight obesity

This opportunity helped me mobilise the Food Revolution Day. The link is on the Leader Reader website – start by doing things at home with your families, but we're here if you want to link up with others who want to mobilise on a larger scale. The Jamie Oliver Foundation has ambitions to create a Ministry of Food centre in every town – could you help us?

Jamie Oliver
jamie oliver foundation
www.jamieoliver.com/foundation/

In Praise of Doubt

—Vicki Lant

“In praising doubt,” says Caroline Bourgeois, curator of the **exhibition** of the same name, “we are referring to intimacy, to the idea that questioning and doubt are required to be able to move forward.” I am not a comfortable journaler, despite several years of practice, yet in the cross-over to personal space, particular installations in this exhibition compelled me to sit down and capture my feelings and thoughts about being in the space, what's real or perceived. Donald Judd's powerful installations arrested me most. The impact of the first exhibition space unsettled me absolutely because the pieces were a total challenge to my fairly traditional concepts of art - something representing something else - what he calls illusionism. Judd's approach is to create pieces that occupy space so that we become part of the whole as we explore.

PEOPLE

As you look through the installation of rectangles and see through it to the open steel boxes you can just imagine the young child's delight in being absolutely in the space, diving through and around, sensing and feeling the cool brushed steel. Adults may want to, but the programmed *don't touch* restrains and constrains our curiosity and bravery to question and explore. Of course I wanted to dive in those spaces - but I let rip . . . and journaled!

Bourgeois suggests that "art is also a way of self-doubt and doubting is a method for thinking and being". Not only was I in the physical space to be challenged, but my uncertain professional world was challenging my inner world for different truths, new directions, possible alternatives. **Judd's approach** to creating his installations was founded on three principles:

These principles resonated with me in the context of leadership in diverse systems. Now more than ever, children's centres must see themselves, and others must see them, as a foundation stone to community health and well-being. If children and families are central to the space, we move in and through the space with others responding to the changing dynamics of all that unfolds for those families. In her piece (p11), Sue describes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of the physical and emotional systems in our lives. In our *moment to shine* we lead the coordinated response to improving families' lives, when the moment is right for them and not convenient to us or our partners. Many of you reading this will have experienced or



respect for the potential of space - the object and all the space around it and within it

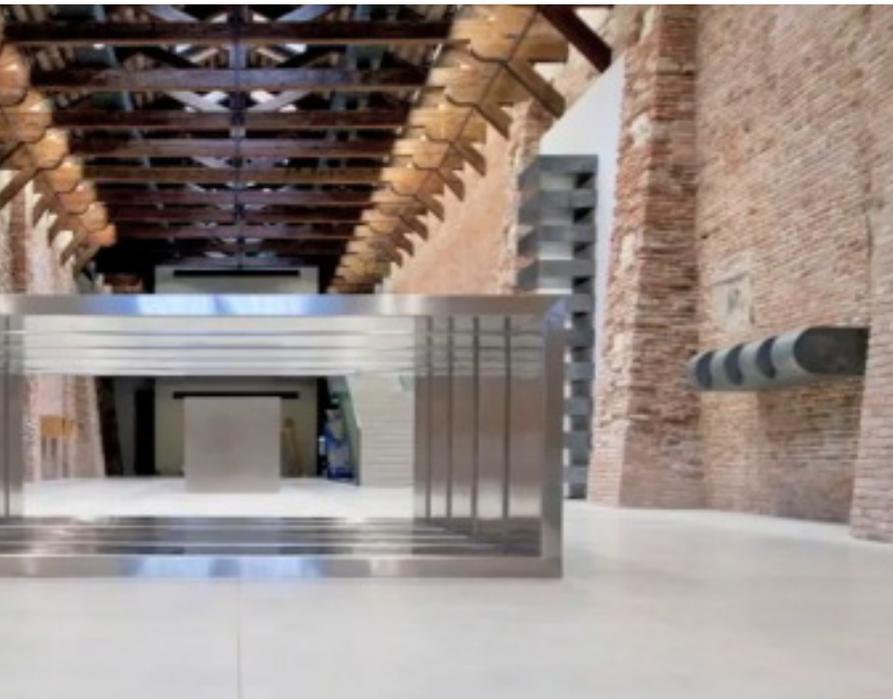
the reality of the object in its own right (not purporting to be something else)

the engagement of other specialists to craft and deliver the vision

heard about the fishbowl activity within the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership programme (NPQICL) that demonstrates how easy it is to lose sight of the central focus in our space.

Judd's objects are entirely what they are or what they do. The reality of the object in its own right reminds us that each family is unique. We meet and interact anew each time; we see and hear afresh rather than viewing with yesterday's prejudicial lens. Margaret (p7) explains the importance of asking widely in order to hear what people are, do and need. When resources are so constrained child and family voices are central to ensuring

questioning and doubt are required to be able to move forward



centres help communities to fulfil their aspirations - we need to declutter our view of its collective professional perceptions.

The other arresting feature of Judd's work is he is clear that the charisma or aura of the artist has no place in his pieces. Once designed, specialist craftspeople create the pieces bringing all their skill to produce something of infinitely greater quality than Judd working alone. Wendy (p9) demonstrates that trusting others to support your vision liberates greater energy, skill and power to achieve and deliver more appropriate and

“doubting is a method for thinking and being”

impressive outcomes, whilst Jamie, Jill and Rebecca (p1, 14, 6) make clear that harnessing the understanding and enthusiasm from a wide range of champions can only enhance the nurturing spaces we seek to create - communities within a space - Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model. Our contributions in this edition celebrate the diversity we attract within centres. Perhaps we now need to be braver in championing what we are and what we do in others' spaces to create a truly diverse system that works to benefit children and families?

“time spent on common cause is never wasted”

Christopher Kelly - Chair NSPCC

Much More Than Food

Dr Rebecca Chicot

Looking after and feeding our babies has changed radically in modern times. Our ancestors lived in small communities where everyone lived and worked alongside one another. Young girls would see their cousins, aunts, big sisters, Mums and Grandmas looking after babies and toddlers, day in day out. At a young age they learned lots of practical parenting skills, would have seen babies being breastfed on a daily basis and would actually be helping to soothe and care for their own little brothers and sisters.

In the UK today things are very different for new and expectant mums. Until they have

their own babies new parents have generally spent all their formative years in schools, colleges and work and have generally spent very little time seeing babies being breastfed and learning the practical skills needed to look after a baby. We essentially spend our pre-parenting days in age specific ghettos; nursery, school, college, workplace and eventually old peoples' homes.

Feeding a baby is also often sadly treated as a purely functional affair and all about getting nutrients into a baby. However, a mother feeding her baby soon begins to realise that there is much more going on



between herself and her baby than simply the transmission of nutrients.

Breastfeeding in particular is like a fast track to an intimate bond between mother and child. Mothers who bottle-feed their babies can make feeding times intimate and by copying what happens during a breastfeed they can also enjoy a wonderful bonding time with their baby. Mums and babies in close skin to skin contact, looking into each others eyes whilst feeding both release oxytocin which promotes bonding and calmness.

Bonding is really important because that closeness is the foundation of good mental health in babies.

Babies are not passive creatures and it is amazing to see their instinctive behaviour to search for the breast. Infant feeding councillors now encourage mums to be observant about the little signals her baby is making for feeding. Often the cultural norm is to think that babies cry when they are hungry but actually they give lots of other little signals before they get desperate and cry. And it really works well to





look for these “early feeding cues.” This is an intimate non verbal conversation between baby and mother. Babies will start to move and open their mouths, lick their lips and begin rooting for the breast. They might suck on a blanket or a finger. They are quite obvious signs and each mum should be encouraged to know her baby and know what her baby’s cues are.

In the early days and moments after birth ideally all mothers and babies should have the opportunity to have skin-to-skin contact. Not only can this be a lovely bonding experience for baby and Mum but the skin contact really helps to calm the baby and reassure the baby and help make the transition to the world outside gentler for the baby.

Having their baby lying on their chest, skin to skin, also really stimulates mums emotionally and hormonally which helps them to become a mum to their new baby. If feeding can lead on from this close time both baby and mum benefit.

Mums who bottle-feed their babies should not relinquish this precious time with their babies. I would urge mums and dads to be the ones who bottle-feed their babies. Like during breastfeeding they can also learn their baby’s feeding cues, including signs of fullness rather than attending to how many millilitres they drink. If friends and family want to help, they can help with other domestic jobs and aspects of baby care but feeding your baby should be encouraged to be a bonding time for all babies and all parents.

**feeding
your baby
- a bonding
time for all
babies and all
parents**

Dr Rebecca Chicot
Co-founder of the Essential Parent Company
and producer of the Essential Baby Care Guide
www.essentialparent.com

Leading across professional boundaries

Which professionals? Which boundaries?

—Margaret Rostron

In these complex fiscal times it has never been more important to bring services and resources together. We need to use what is available to us, avoiding duplication, working efficiently and effectively, whilst remaining advocates for our youngest children and their families and ensuring we impact positively on their lives. In the wider context local authorities are developing their Community Budgets¹ and services are becoming increasingly contributors to local investment agreements and neighbourhood developments.

Having many years experience working within early years, I have seen excellent services, provision with outstanding Ofsted grading, accolades for integrated partnerships and joined-up services developing to provide the seamless services we strive to create, but somehow we fall short. Many young children continue to start school not ready; lacking confidence and dependent, constrained by some of the inequalities we see daily.

I was delighted that early years and ‘school readiness’ was part of the Greater Manchester Strategy, recognising that improving outcomes is fundamental to the health, wellbeing and economic growth of communities, forming part the community budget developments. As part of the Greater Manchester early years work, four local authorities were funded by the Local Government Association to develop a ‘Customer Insight’ project² to look at the situation from a community perspective, understanding the world from the way they do things and why they see it in the way they do, ensuring the people’s voice influences service redesign.

PEOPLE

National and local policy was on our side, pointing towards early intervention and prevention. Field (2010)³ and Allen a:b(2011)⁴⁵ identified interventions during the first 3 years of a child's life are crucial to make lasting improvements, prevent persistent social problems and intergenerational issues and provide a platform to make long term savings from the public purse.

Our element of the project concentrated on two geographical areas. The core aims and objectives were two-fold, firstly to gather and collect existing research and evidence including: ethnographic case studies, customer profiles, service mapping, area profiles, social network analysis, data on the values of local people and other relevant datasets. Our second objective was to analyse the data holistically to identify implications for families with young children. We were then able to highlight the key characteristics of families, how local services might be shaped differently and key drivers and motives for families to engage with services.

Alongside the socio-demographical and area profile data, the values mode work was carried out by The Campaign Company. Values Modes is a segmentation system designed by Cultural Dynamics in the 1970s⁶; 1436 face to face values modes surveys were undertaken across 9 communities that made up geographical areas. Researchers undertook in depth interviews of 6 families

for qualitative research and service journey maps for the same families were carried out. Ethnographic interviews were carried out with 46 residents on streets and in community places. Two workshops were facilitated with 20 local practitioners.

This valuable experience has raised my awareness and my understanding continues to grow, realising the importance of examining the relationships between core service delivery and the outer ring of services that impact on both the early years services and young children and their families e.g. police, fire, substance misuse, housing, employment and skills, public spaces and transport.

I recognise a frequent disconnection between service delivery and the perceptions and experiences of families. Looking at statistical data in isolation, organisations and services fail to connect with their communities or develop an understanding of the

community cultures within them. I feel the same can be said of working across professional boundaries. We tend to connect well with the organisations and services we know and understand, whilst disregarding those who may not cross our path or are less familiar.

This work has led me to reflect on my own core values and motives, observing my own social networks and the influences they have on me. It has caused me to examine my own perceptions and experiences of services my family and I have received and caused me to consider that disconnect between what I and my family needed and what was offered with good intent but inaccurate evidence.

I thought I worked well across professional boundaries before stumbling across a whole new set of professionals and regional policy developers that left me with a healthy appetite for more questions than answers.

Margaret Rostron
—NPQICL facilitator and mentor



It and caused me to consider that disconnect between what I and my family needed and what was offered with good intent but inaccurate evidence.

References:

- ¹ Community Budget for further information: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/communitybudgets/>
- ² Customer Insight Project for further information: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=8998885>
- ³ Frank Field 2010: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110120090128/http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>
- ⁴ Graham Allen 2011a: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/early-intervention-next-steps.pdf>
- ⁵ Graham Allen 2011b: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/early-intervention-smart-investment-massive-savings>
- ⁶ Values modes for further information: <http://www.cultdyn.co.uk/valuesmodes.html>

Developing an appetite for community capacity

Wendy Martindale

As Children's Centre Leaders we are all aware of the fact that we need to change the way we deliver Children's Centre services, to enable our activities to reach and engage with our more vulnerable families. Whiston Area Children's Centres within Knowsley have been part of a project called **Transforming Early Years (TEY)** in partnership with **The Innovation Unit**, which enabled the Children's Centre team, partner agencies and families to come together and examine how we could radically change our services to improve outcomes for children, families and the community.

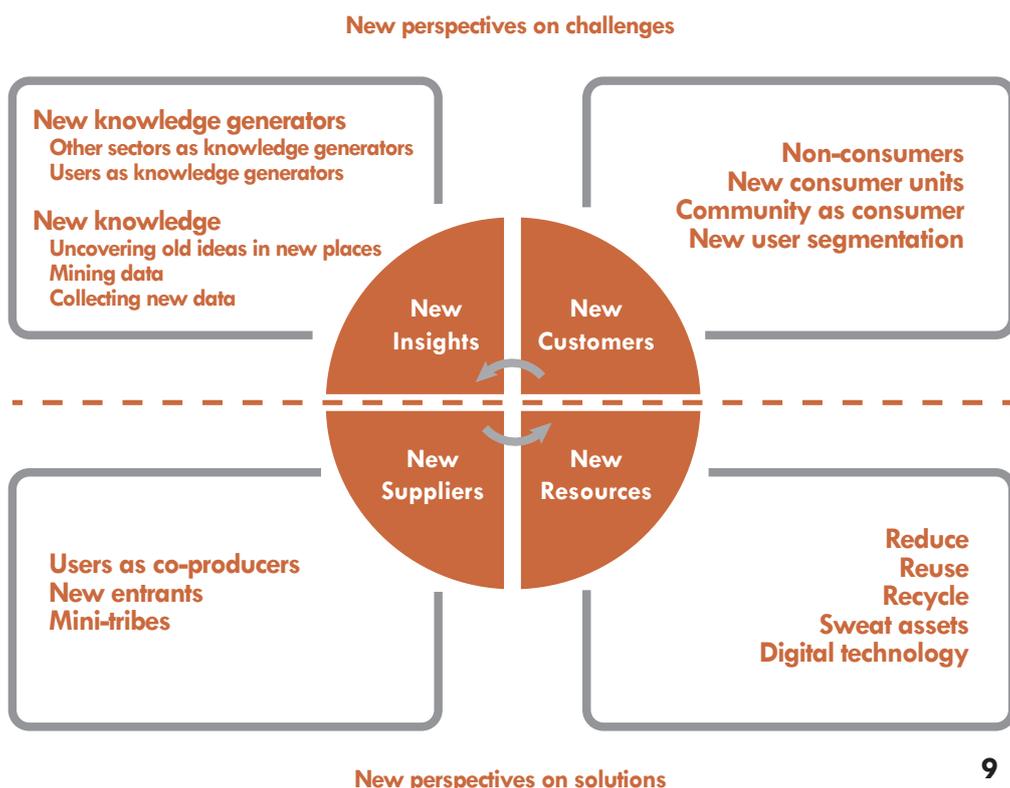
Together we embarked on a journey of reflection, evaluation and change. This journey enabled leaders within the Children's Centre team to gain new insights into their very familiar problems, realising that the work they did needed to empower families to support themselves - this being the key to behaviour change. To help us on our journey we followed the Radical Efficiency Framework (developed by the Innovation Unit).

As a team we started to work on ideas that would build upon developing community capacity, which would radically transform the role of the Children's Centre being the hub of the local community. The ultimate aim would be to work more quickly and directly with families to enable the community to own the responsibility for creating parents who are confident within their roles as first educators of their children.

“To help us on our journey we followed the Radical Efficiency Framework (developed by the Innovation Unit)”

What did we do differently?

We pulled together two existing constituted groups *Whiston Area Dads Club* and *Family Voices = Family Choices* to become a social enterprise. After consultation they agreed to call themselves *Family Voices = Family Choices* (known as **Family Voices**). This social enterprise is the supportive arm of the two Children's Centres in our area, which is governed by parents, Children's Centre staff and community members.



PEOPLE

Our motivating vision is that the community leaders within **Family Voices** will use their intelligence and insights into the lives of families in the locality to promote and provide quality early years provision to the whole community. **Family Voices** is now a commissioned agency that offers services and activities for the Children's Centre that are more user-driven, co-constructed, community based and targeted towards priority groups.

Since the Children's Centre has been involved within the TEY project, **Family Voices** has gone from strength to strength. Children's Centre staff have been key in providing quality training to all members of the social enterprise to ensure they have knowledge and experience around safeguarding, Every Child Matters, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and relevant legislation. **Family Voices** now facilitates Stay-and-Play sessions, Dads' Club sessions and infant massage; they conduct outreach work within the community, home visits and a buddying service, as well as undertaking fundraising activities.

As a Children's Centre we are now engaging local parents/carers and residents into our volunteer programme with the support of **Family Voices**. We are developing local people's life skills, raising levels of skill and capacity in the community, improving employability and raising aspirations.

The Children's Centre team now see their role as working alongside **Family Voices**, developing the skills and knowledge of volunteers which is in turn increasing access to families and expanding capacity for Children's Centre staff to work in a more targeted and appropriate way with vulnerable families.



Family Voices have put together the following mission statement:

“The People's Centre is a place to meet friends and make friends, to pass on your skills and knowledge and gain new ones along the way. We are here to improve the lives of every person in the community, regardless of age”

Family Voices = Family Choices

This encompasses our vision that *Whiston Area Children's Centres* will be at the heart of the communities they serve.

By working together with the community we are more likely to give them what it is they actually want and not what we 'think' they want. Although this is a challenge when reflecting on old ways of working and bringing people and staff through a system of change – this can be a very rewarding way forward for everyone involved. Throughout this project we've had a shared vision with the Children's Centre staff team, **Family Voices** and community members, which has been instrumental in exploring challenges and developing solutions together.

The investment of time and resources in developing members of the local community Children's Centres has benefited not only themselves but the community as a whole. The project has enabled the community to support one another and develop community networks.

For any Children's Centres wanting to embark on the same journey as Whiston Area Children's Centres, having a clear vision, enthusiastic people and a willingness to innovate and try new things will help you get there. You can find more case study evidence and ideas within



Pageant Master?

Sue Webster

When I first heard of the Diamond Jubilee River Pageant, I had no idea about its enormity, did you? I was aware of the Canaletto painting but could not imagine what a 21st century re-creation could look like. Despite some controversy about the overall television coverage, I learned a great deal about leadership from my observations and subsequent reflections about the day.

The river Thames passes through the centre of London, it is a very a prominent feature when you are riverside but once you are in other locations in London, you can be oblivious to its proximity and functions. Historically this river system has fed and supplied the population and acted as a major transport route to and within the City. Like many major rivers, the Thames is a major system in itself. It is also part of many other systems that feed and nourish London. It both connects and acts as a barrier to development, it has stimulated innovative developments, first bridges and more recently the Thames Barrier in our attempts, as humans to control and use the force and systems of nature.

“we are part of many physical and emotional systems in our lives

As individuals we are part of many physical and emotional systems in our lives. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) analysis of an ecological model has been highly influential in our work in integrated services for children, the *macrosystem* (culture and beliefs), the *exosystem* (political and educational institutions), *mesosystem* (children's centre and community) and the *microsystem* (family or neighbourhood). Systems within systems identified as concentric circles influencing, containing and developing the overall system, the shape and formation clearly focused on the centre where children are located.

Everyone within the system has a part to play in maintaining it. How do we maintain a perspective of the system we work within? If you watched the Pageant you may recall the challenges this task posed for the BBC director of this complex outside broadcast. Tasked with the role of involving us in a national day the director had to meet multiple demands and expectations while maintaining the integrity of the BBC as the nation's lens, educator and informer.

That is not unlike the expectations faced by a children's centre leader, who balances the expectations of a community and a local children's workforce with the policy and legal requirements and the professional cultural, principles and values of early years practice. Constantly zooming inwards and outwards to focus on the different aspects of the system ensuring that the overall focus, whether bird's-eye

Child

**Microsystem:
Family or
Neighbourhood**

**Mesosystem:
Children's Centre
and Community**

**Exosystem:
Political and
Educational
Institutions**

**Macrosystem:
Culture and
beliefs**

PRACTICE



or microscopic, spans the needs of the foetus to child or adolescent depending on the local priorities.

According to Rosabeth Moss-Kanter (2011:112) 'the lens through which leaders view the world can help or hinder their ability to make good strategic decisions, especially during crises. Zoom in, and get a close look at select details - perhaps too close to make sense of them. Zoom out, and see the big picture - but perhaps miss some subtleties and nuances.' The critique of the River Pageant coverage was that the TV director chose to focus on the minutiae of the event. It has been stated that during the planning for coverage there was a fear that viewers may have found the coverage 'boring' if the focus was directed mainly on the events afloat. So cameras were deployed widely in an attempt

to capture and involve the viewer in every detail, using a range of familiar faces to inject energy and enthusiasm. Sadly, the grandeur and overall spectacle of this unique event was lost in an orgy of professional vanity. Contributors and viewers felt undervalued by the focus on celebrity appearances, some saying that even the Queen's role was under-represented overall. This was perhaps a result of the scope that the occasion offered and the huge range of technical tools and skills available on the day. One of those circumstances perhaps, when a leader may feel the pressure of *we can do this*, so *we will do this*. They lose sight of the overall objective and fail to give due consideration or in some cases respect for individuals they aim to serve.

The best leaders know when to focus in and when to pull back

(ibid: 112). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model has the child clearly focused at the centre of the lens. But as leaders of services within this system, we may frequently need to zoom in and out of the circles to monitor the different aspects of the model and increase our own understanding or undertake some maintenance from time to time. We must exercise our leadership lens to avoid getting stuck, gazing too closely or too strategically within the ecological levels of the children's centre system.

According to Maggie Farrar (2012), 'to continually become better, you need a growth mindset - to invite challenge and feedback, to be enquiring. You learn most from those who think differently to you.' She advises that children's centre leaders must 'seek out hard

“the lens through which leaders view the world can help or hinder their ability to make good strategic decisions”





messages, do 'deep dive' reviews, welcome scrutiny, dissent and peer challenge. For Maggie this is all part of building a collaborative self-improving system.

Moss-Kanter (2011) has identified some characteristics for leaders who may be zooming in too closely or have zoomed out too far. Have a look at the questions and think about your own lens, focus and zoom. Just imagine what it must have been like for Adrian Evans, the person who conceived the idea of the 2012 Diamond Jubilee Pageant. Can you imagine the reaction of the committee when he first broached the idea?

Sue Webster
early childhood studies, lecturer,
university of warwick

References:

Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979 *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN 0-674-22457-4

Farrar, M, (2012) The potential and power of collaborative leadership Closing speech at 'Children's centres: supporting families in the foundation years' Conference 4th July 2012. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership
<http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/events/childrens-centres-supporting-families-in-the-foundation-years/childrens-centres-supporting-families-in-the-foundation-years-coverage-farrar.htm>

Moss-Kanter, R, (2011), *Managing yourself: Zoom in, Zoom Out*. Harvard Business Review: March 2012 pp112-116

Too far in?

You are often overwhelmed by detail

You always look for the personal angle in your work and relationship.

You focus on a transactional leadership approach and heavily rely on others sharing the load.

You find yourself constantly making exceptions and agreeing to special circumstances.

You volunteer to pilot or try out every new initiative/idea that comes along.

You deal with every incident as unique.

You are ignoring minor changes or variations from your overall business plan or agreed vision for the children's centre.

You avoid dealing with small local problems and challenges and focus on the wider theory, policy or inspection requirements.

You hold back to wait for research or evaluation evidence before making changes or introducing new ideas.

You always follow the same routes and established pathways.

You know what works and ignore the poor attendance at services and lack of engagement at staff meetings.

You focus on the major themes and priorities

Zoom out

by asking

What is the context of the information?
What is important to your work and how can you prioritise?

Are there more important considerations?
Would others gain, even if you lose?

Is your rationale convincing or really worthy of their support?

Is the rationale for your decisions rational?
Are there policies, frameworks that could/should be used?

Does this fit in with you overall plan/vision for the centre?
How will new idea fit in with existing or future practice?

What are the similarities to other situations in your work?
Are there themes or categories that would help you to interpret incidents or events?

What are the consequences for the long-term impact or sustainability of the centre?
Are there internal weaknesses that need to be addressed?

Will failure to address these problems have a significant impact on your ability to improve the lives of children?

Will ideas lose momentum or enthusiasm for change be lost if you are too cautious?
What are the implications for being too slow to change or innovate?

Are there different approaches with the same outcomes?
Are they better, cheaper, more engaging, than yours?

It may be the best approach but is anyone coming to your services?
Why are the team not talking to you?

What are the small events in your work that make a big impact on your workload or time management?
How important are they in influencing morale, motivation, energy, teamwork or effectiveness?

by thinking

Who else is involved or responsible?
Do I distribute leadership or do I hold onto control too tightly?

Am I too egocentric as a leader?
Do I prioritise the needs of others above my own enough in my work?
What could be gained from my being more objective?

Do I delegate or distribute leadership?
Are there other leadership approaches that may be more effective?

Do you need to be needed?
Do you ever feel exploited by others?
Is this a fair and equitable approach?
Do policies/frameworks need to be reviewed?

Do you volunteer for you own or the children's centre priorities?
Do you consult with you team, line manger or Advisory Board first?

Are you spending enough time reflecting about your work?
Are you reflexive?
Should you spend some time reflecting critically with other leaders to help you to develop some 'theories in action' support you to make connections between theory and action.

Does everyone involved own the vision for your children's centre?
Does everyone understand the business plan?

How seriously do you take performance management?
Do you need to work on relationships

Are you following the theory to rigidly and not reflecting enough?
Are you implementing change too quickly?

Are you too focused on personal success rather than the organic development of your centre?

What kind of evidence do you need to inform you decision-making?
Are you too rigid?
What are the consequences of failure?

Have you looked at the work in other centres recently?
When did you last visit or reflect about your work with another children's centre leader?

Do you need to be more flexible?
Do you need to find out more about the needs and motivations of the children and families in your community?
Are you actively listening and observing what is going on in your centre?

Are you being too strategic?
When was the last time you spent the day, walking around the centre/reach area, exploring the environment, getting to know the children and families, observing your team and partners in action?

PEOPLE

Banbury Sunshine Children's Centre

Jill Edge

Following the promotion of the Food Revolution Day, 2012, in the last issue and on our website, Jill Edge contacted us:

“We are working on building a community café. At the moment we have a set of draft plans but would really appreciate some advice on what we need to have in the kitchen in terms of equipment and also what types of healthy foods we could offer to the community from the size of the kitchen/building? Any help anyone could give us would be fab!”

We contacted Jill to find out more. Jill leads the Sunshine Centre in Banbury, Oxfordshire. Like many leaders she regularly consults with children and families using the centre and families made a recurring request for a social space where they could meet and eat together. Whilst a purely social venue may not be a key

priority for the families, targets to improve health and reduce obesity make a community café a logical aspiration on the centre development plan.

The centre is located close to a small shopping precinct and the local health centre and there is a small patch of land next to the Centre entrance. Developers are about to commence building 400 houses and, as part of the planning agreement, are willing to fund a two-storey building. The Sunshine Centre is a community company with a board of Directors and they have approved the preparation of plans for the building.

Like many effective leaders Jill can turn her hand to most things and her entrepreneurial spirit has resulted in many commitments to support this venture. The local catering college will support with student led projects to manage the café. Food handling is regularly offered to families and the café will provide opportunities for parents to gain confidence in catering, working as volunteers before they seek regular employment. The café will provide healthy snacks and lunches for nursery and centre activities. The overall design of the building also provides an





extra room that can be used for further community activities with the youth service, for example.

At this stage of the venture, Jill needs a community café mentor: someone who knows about community catering and can design a simple healthy menu that is easy to prepare with costs the same as a typical

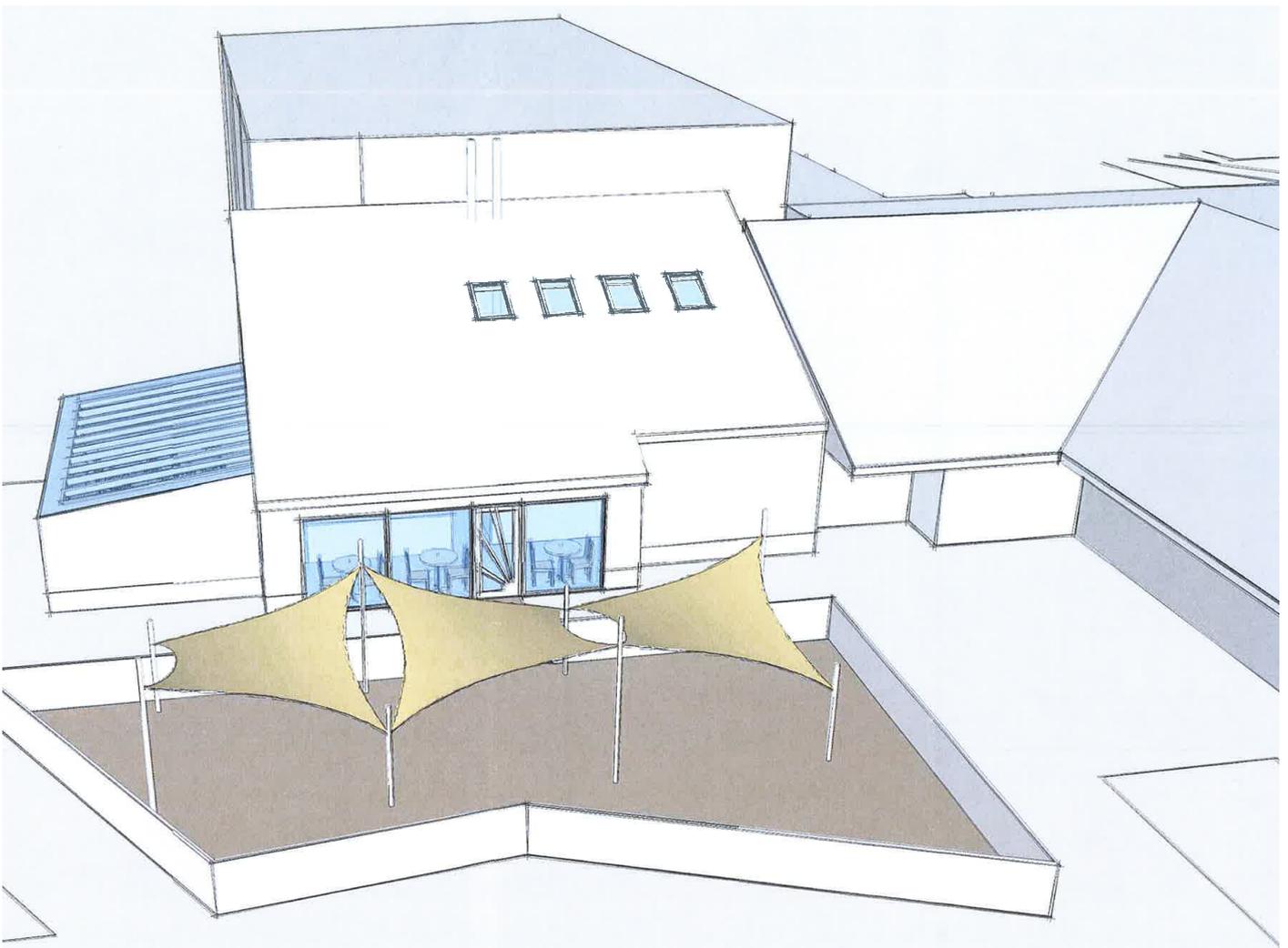
fast food outlet. She wants advice on catering equipment and the resources needed for this community venture. Whilst everyone thinks of Jamie because of his credibility with families and can-do spirit and sparkle to motivate the community in engaging with projects like this, there's only one of him and his Foundation Team is small . . . so

Can you help Jill?

We have set up a community forum page on our website for you to raise questions and offer advice and information about your experiences of community cafés and community healthy eating initiatives.

Have a look on [our website](#)

Jill Edge
Centre Leader - Sunshine



POLICY

It has been an industrious two month period with a number of reviews publishing key findings and reports and legislation refreshing the diverse landscape in which we work.

Consultation closed on 29 June 2012 to gather views about the nature of Wellbeing Boards, specifically if they should be exempt from legislation on political balance and conflicts of interest, so that their policies could be set locally or whether they should be governed by legislation that applies to council committees, requiring that political groups are represented in line with their overall membership of the council. Senior leaders across local government, representatives of clinical commissioning groups and of patients and members of shadow health and wellbeing boards have been asked to consider if government should empower boards with the freedom to determine their own arrangements. Informal views are being sought to help develop proposals for the technical regulations that will apply to health and wellbeing boards from April 2013. These outcomes will influence the models of governance and reporting routes that relate to children's centre services and outcomes within local authorities - watch for further developments during the autumn.

Support for families

Following publication of outcomes (November 2010) from an online survey for parents, the government announced a three point support strategy to support families. Funded trials will run from May 2012 until March 2014. Information is available via an overarching [website](#):

[A new online and multi-media offering \(text, video, email and facebook \)](#)

[Trial areas offering free Parenting Classes \(voucher linked\)](#)

Middlesbrough;
High Peak in Derbyshire and
Camden in London

CANparent website guides families on how and where they may use their vouchers

Relationship Support - the trial will be managed by the National Childbirth Trust and access to the services provided in each area begins in July in:

York and Leeds (online only - Fatherhood Institute; online/face to face - Relate)

North Essex (online only - Fatherhood Institute; online/face to face - Relate)

Hackney and City of London (online only - Fatherhood Institute; online/face to face - Tavistock Centre)

Islington and Westminster (online only - Fatherhood Institute; online/face to face - Tavistock Centre)

The DfE published a Discussion paper *Increasing parental community involvement in Sure Start Children's Centres*. The aim of the paper was to see how parents and communities could have more of a say in shaping and delivering children's centre services; it invited expressions of interest from groups of parents interested in developing their own community management models for centres. The Department is seeking local authorities who would like to be involved in developing new parent-led models. The consultation closure is imminent, but different models of governance are worth exploring alongside Wendy's article (p9) and practical guidance may ensue?

Sure Start Children's Centres - impact and leadership

A number of important evaluation and review studies have been published that merit close attention:

[Johnson, Steve; \(2011\) Impact of social science on policy: sure start case study](#) - Report to Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); Hull; University Hull Business School

- explores the impact of social research upon the Sure Start programme
- is a mix of history and analysis but affirms the place of evidence-based policy making and co-production as key factors in style and delivery of the programme

[NESS; \(2012\) The impact of Sure Start Local Programmes \(SSLPs\) on seven year olds and their families](#); London; University of London Birkbeck College

- summarises the impact of SSLPs assessed upon sampled children and their families via a longitudinal study commencing in 2005
- considers the original aspiration to break cycles of disadvantage resulting in developmental handicap, whilst acknowledging the change from Local Programmes to Children's Centres posed challenge to analysis and comparisons for impact
- analysed 15 key outcomes across SSLP and non-SSLP family groups with four major benefits consistently emerging from the SSLP families:

**engaging in less harsh discipline;
providing a more stimulating home
learning environment for their children;**



- additionally for sub-populations, mothers in SSLP areas reported:

providing a less chaotic home environment for boys (not significant for girls);

having better life satisfaction (lone parent and workless households only)

- identified three further aspects of beneficial functioning reported consistently:

mothers showed a greater improvement in the home learning environment;

mothers reported a greater decrease in harsh discipline;

- additionally for sub-populations, mothers in SSLP areas reported:

greater improvement in life satisfaction (lone parent and workless households only) than counterparts not in SSLP areas.

In conclusion:

“All this suggests that Sure Start Children’s Centres are well-placed to provide improved integrated services that will help support the most disadvantaged children and families and in a way that can contribute to narrowing the gap between the children of disadvantaged and more advantaged families. However, they will need to focus more directly on improvements to young children’s daily experience, which is a primary engine of child development, if they are to improve child outcomes.”

Sharp, C; Lord, P et al. (2012) **Highly effective leadership in children’s centres**. Nottingham; NFER Publications. reports on the qualities and behaviours associated with highly effective leadership in children’s centres and offers interconnected recommendations for policy makers, local authorities/lead agencies and centre leaders to ensure leadership approaches develop, leaders thrive and their development programmes keep pace with the fast changing environments in which they work. Particularly important is Chapter 4 on system leadership (pp 34-50) and exploration of apposite current challenges and potential solutions, including:

Remaining positive in a time of great change

Improving status and training;

Ensuring positive impact and improved outcomes

Practical barriers to developing system leadership

If you can’t read the whole document, consider carefully pages 58-60 and share it with whoever needs to know! If you’ve just finished NPQICL, this is definitely one to ensure you keep faith with your resolution to continue reading . . .



Child Poverty Action Group. (2012). **Ending child poverty by 2020 - Progress made and lessons learned**. London; CPAG

One of the biggest problems still facing our society is the impact of children born into and living in poverty. There is still no settled consensus about relative and absolute poverty but we recognise the respective data sets and see around us the implications.

This well informed commentary by guest writers from CPAG is an excellent publication to remind us of both context and the outstanding challenge.

Naomi Eisenstadt’s chapter (p47) concludes:

Government has two main aims in supporting parents: improving parenting capabilities and reducing pressures on families. Much of what the current coalition is encouraging could improve capabilities, and result in improvements for children in the longer term. However, as pressures are increased through benefit changes and higher unemployment, more children will be in poverty. It is unlikely that their parents will have the time, inclination or motivation to participate in programmes. Moreover, high entry barriers and targeting of services will miss some of the non-poor families who may need them. To be really effective, children’s centres need to be welcoming to all, while particularly alert to different needs and different solutions. A fragile and valuable infrastructure is at risk.

School readiness

A challenging [report on social mobility](#) in English speaking countries/continents of the world from the Sutton Trust suggests the UK still has a very long way to go in preparing its children for school:

"The US and UK are characterised by stark school readiness gaps among 4 and 5 year olds. Children from the poorest fifth of homes in the US are nearly 22 months behind children from the richest homes in vocabulary tests. In the UK the equivalent gap is 19 months."

Excellent data and graphs.

Government programme to support provision of funded places for two year olds - expansion to the programme will begin in 10 pilot areas from September 2012:

**Blackpool Cornwall Greenwich Kent Lambeth
Lancashire Newcastle Northamptonshire
Peterborough Rotherham**

Additional funding is being provided to local authorities rising to £760 million in 2014-15. The Government is also investing over £5 million in 2012-13 to help build capacity, fund places and trial new approaches, including a series of local authority trials and a national contractor to support local authorities and providers to prepare for the expansion.

From September 2014 the number of two-year-olds who will be entitled to a place will rise to around 40 per cent of two-year-olds – some 300,000 children. The Government is consulting on which children should be eligible for a place under this extended entitlement. (see consultation link below)

Health and healthy choices

New and not so new documents - worth a careful look as we consider how we support each other as professionals in helping and strengthening families.

Protecting children and young people: the responsibilities of all doctors. (2012) General Medical Council

This guidance is welcome and overdue. It will also be useful to a wide range of professionals working with (or managing and leading services for) children and young people not least to be aware of the role for which the medical profession needs to be held accountable. It's full of common sense and well thought through requirements.

Government Office for Science. **Foresight - Tackling Obesity: Future Choices - Lifestyle Change - Evidence Review;** October 2007. Department of Innovation Universities and Skills.

As Jamie and Rebecca explain, creating good nutrition habits when people are in the right place to want to make change is central to the drive of this government document, now available through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The reports over time summarised the key actions for Government Departments to promote changes to healthier lifestyles via large-scale strategies. The concluding table (below) that summarises most effective impact is probably known to many of us on a smaller scale, but helpful to reiterate and share with partners:

Across these types of large-scale intervention, there are crucial roles for both personal and environmental factors: people can't attain lifestyle change without the motivational, cognitive and emotional resources to drive change and an environment that facilitates it (where children's centres step in . . .)

Examples of potential lifestyle change approaches Centres clearly have a pivotal role to play.

Upstream (persuasive marketing)

- 1 Advertisements illustrating the formation of implementation intentions
- 2 Local publicity for walking and cycling routes
- 3 Sport celebrity endorsement of exercise (e.g. as a goal for London 2012 Olympics)
- 4 Government minister participation in walking and cycling for transport

Downstream

(legislation, environmental changes and educational efforts)

- 1 Elimination of food advertising to children
- 2 Early years education for children
- 3 Education for new parents about child nutrition
- 4 Higher-quality school meals and pre-school meals
- 5 Design of safer pedestrian and cycle routes



Workforce development

Professor Cathy Nutbrown published her final report **Foundation for Quality: Review of early education and childcare qualifications**. There are 19 recommendations that encompass:

- improving qualifications to make them more rigorous and demanding, with a stronger focus on child development
- improving the delivery of qualifications so that tutors have the support to improve their skills and maintain the current experience of the sector
- Asking the early years sector to lead on mentoring new staff, to support them as they enter work and make sure students learn from good practice
- require higher access qualifications to enter the profession and building on progress to encourage graduate leadership in the sector, through Early Years Professional Status, as part of the move towards more teachers in the early years.
- no licensing system for the sector at this stage.

The government will respond to these recommendations during autumn 2013.

Have your say

Two year old funding - eligibility consultation

Launch Date: Thursday 5 July 2012
Closing Date: Monday 15 October 2012

The Government plans to introduce a legal entitlement to free early education for two-year-olds. Following a previous consultation, it has been decided which children will be eligible for the first phase of the entitlement from September 2013 - around 20 per cent of two-year-olds in England. This consultation seeks views on proposed eligibility criteria for the second phase of the new entitlement from September 2014 - for around 40 per cent of two-year-olds.

Social care

DfE - **New Safeguarding Approach** for Children

Launch Date: Tuesday 12 June 2012
Closing Date: Tuesday 4 September 2012

This consultation seeks views on three statutory guidance documents:

- **Working together to safeguard children**: draft guidance on what is expected of organisations, individually and jointly, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- **Managing individual cases: the framework for the assessment of children in need and their families**: draft guidance on undertaking assessments of children in need; and
- **Statutory guidance on learning and improvement**: proposed new arrangements for Serious Case Reviews, reviews of child deaths and other learning processes led by Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

It is proposed that the three guidance documents which are the subject of this consultation will replace over 700 pages of guidance currently issued through:

- **Working together to safeguard children** (2010)
- **The framework for the assessment of children in need and their families** (2000)
- **Assessing children in need and their families: Practice guidance** (2000)
- **Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004** (2007).

You can download the consultation response form from the associated resources section, and submit your completed response via the **online form**.



Thanks to **Terry Connolly** (former Together for Children) for regular updates on Government Policy and national guidance alerts.

terry.connolly@mac.com

PRODUCTIVITY



Vicki Lant Sue Webster

Leader Reader met you at the National College on 4 July 2012!



See video clips and download transcripts of the conference presentations

A difference today, a future tomorrow: National College Director of Early Years Sue Egersdorff

Someone else's baby: Railway Children Head of UK Policy and Affairs Andy McCullough

A new approach to service delivery: Sarah Gillinson, Innovation Unit, and Melani Oliver, Reading Borough Council

Supporting families in the foundation years – one year on: Sally Burlington, Department for Education

The potential and power of collaborative leadership: National College Executive Director for Leadership Development Maggie Farrar

Children's Centres: supporting families in the foundation years



Moment to Shine
If you are hosting your alternative games as many centres are this summer - may the sun shine on you!

National College events in the summer and early autumn - dates to put in your diary

24 July 2012	18.30-19.30	<u>Foundation years online seminar: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), part one</u>
11 September	18.00-19.00	<u>Foundation years online seminar: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) part two</u>
3 October	18.00-19.00	<u>The Two Year Old Offer</u>
1 November	18.00-19.00	<u>Models and Partnerships</u>

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Sept 2012
Leading the organisation