

What did Sure Start teach me about leadership?

—Naomi Eisenstadt

Leading Change

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I took up the post to run the Sure Start Unit in February 1999 and left Sure Start in 2006, but nobody really leaves Sure Start. In the intervening years I have thought a lot about what I learned from the most amazing career experience anyone could have hoped for. At the time I said it felt like Lyndon Johnson had just phoned to ask me to run Head Start. Having struggled for years to get the Government to understand the importance of early years, not only was it now understood, but there was serious funding attached. Given the tough times we are going through now, it seems even more amazing.

PEOPLE

Some lessons I learned are clearly about persistence of message. Actually setting up and running a Sure Start local programme, or indeed a children's centre, is an enormously complex job. It is vital that everyone involved keeps focused on some very clear aims and understands what their particular contribution is to those aims. It sounds pretty basic, but in my experience, when trying to put together interdisciplinary teams, it is very easy for mini silos to quickly develop, and the overall aim of improving life chances for children gets lost. These lessons about focus applied to the centre of Government as well. Within the Sure Start Unit, we had civil servants from several different government departments, and some from the voluntary sector and local government. Getting everyone to share their perspectives, understand the different cultures they came from, and most importantly of all, ask questions if things were not clear, were critical behaviours to building Sure Start. There is no such thing as a stupid question was one of my key messages when inducting new staff, and a behaviour that I modelled myself by endlessly asking questions.

Another critical, and very painful lesson is about evaluation. Commissioning the evaluation of Sure Start was probably the most difficult task of my working life. Dealing with disappointing results was another huge challenge. Our initial results were mixed. The real leadership here came from ministers who were tempted to stop the programme, but wisely listened very carefully, and took advice on what needed to change. This paid off, with

“There is no such thing as a stupid question”

much improved results two years later. The leadership challenges over evaluation are immense. On the one hand, there is a real danger of demotivating the people at the front line delivering the programme if the news is not as good as hoped. On the other, if you can't be honest about the results, you can't make the necessary changes to improve things. In the case of Sure Start, we all held our nerve, maintained confidence in the overall programme, but did a huge amount of work to ensure better outreach and better focus on core aims. One of the big problems with research about young children is that real impact sometimes takes years to measure. Ensuring an evaluation design gives timely information that may give pointers to future success or not is vital to ensure that activities can be changed and improved. The temptation to blame research methods when news is disappointing must be avoided at all costs. I still believe the evaluation design of Sure Start was brilliant because it gave us the messages we needed to hear, not the ones we wanted to hear.

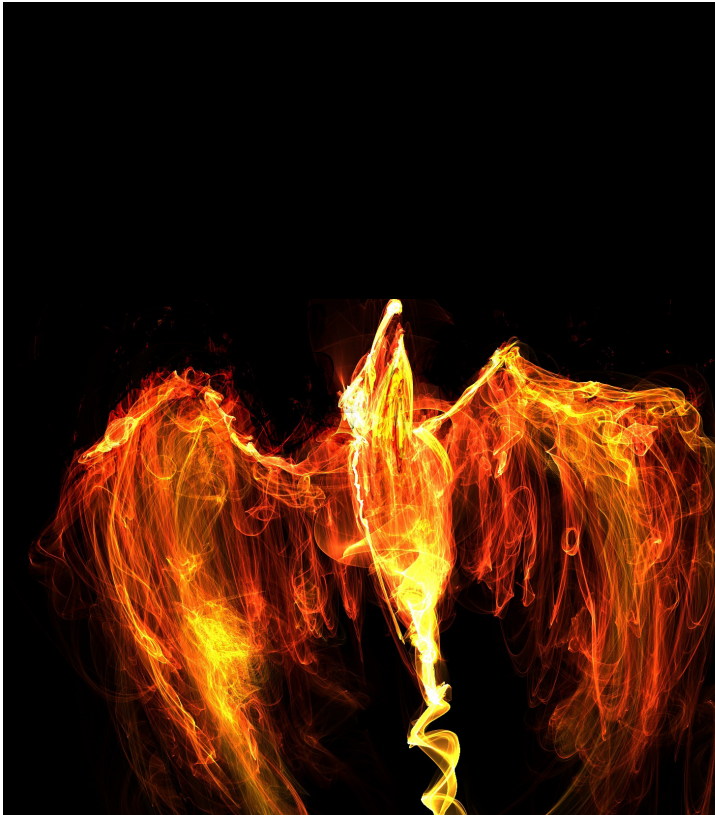
“Evidence has sometimes seriously challenged cherished beliefs”

Finally, the most important skill a leader needs is the ability to communicate at all levels. Complex messages need to be made simple, without diluting the importance of the complexity. I have found that my most effective messages are about what I got wrong, how my views have changed, and how evidence has sometimes seriously challenged cherished beliefs. Being explicit about my mistakes gives people permission to rethink, re-evaluate, and re-consider new ways of approaching problems if the current practice is not working as well as was hoped. We struggled in Sure Start with the key question: was the basic design of the programme flawed, or was the implementation not good enough. In truth it was a bit of both. With five hundred local programmes, and now over three thousand children's centres, there is bound to be variability in quality. The biggest leadership challenge is recognising what could be better and taking the difficult decisions to improve.



A Phoenix Moment

Vicki Lant



We are surrounded by make-over challenges to ourselves (Gok Wan, Trinnie Woodall and Susannah Constantine), our homes (Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, Nick Knowles) and our gardens (Alan Titchmarsh, Charlie Dimmock). And this just scratches the surface of the gurus out there who can strip of our cash as well our sense of who we are. There is a cynical imperative implicit in their advice to make us dissatisfied with what we have and buy differently and more. But, as Sue's piece directs us to consider cultivating change as we approach the refresh of spring, perhaps "spring-cleaning" isn't just the preserve of the make-over artists, don't we all benefit from a mental spring-clean check-up on what we're doing and how we are doing it?

We all have different approaches to considering change. We can embrace it, reflecting and reviewing new approaches with colleagues and adapting/absorbing into our systems without too much pain, or at the opposite extreme, resisting, until an imposition comes from on-high that can potentially knock us flying. Where you are on the spectrum can relate to many factors – working style preferences of you and your team; where you are in the evolution of your centre and its governance; how you relate to your sponsoring body and recent concerns of the centre and its teams. But sometimes something major happens that forces change upon us. I'm thinking about [Camila Batmanghelidjh's article](#) occasioned by the summer riots, where she challenged us to do the financial and moral maths: "It costs money to care. But it also costs money to clear up riots, savagery and antisocial behaviour." As centre lead agencies and leaders wrestle with less and less resource, it can seem that international and national evidence has been forgotten or ignored that investment in the earliest years, prevention, can save fortunes spent on crisis management later on.

Looking around, though, there are spring shoots of hope, although they may need careful husbandry by your teams and governance groups.

You will have just seen the consultation document for the draft [Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance](#). In the second Chapter on sufficiency there is reference to public service mutuals aligned to government policy associated with [right to provide](#). There are case studies and guidance to support more

“It costs money to care

flexible approaches to delivering the core purpose that may fire our creativity in approaching our current challenges resourcefully. C4EO and the National College collaborated to commission a [report](#) in 2011 that focused on behaviours and strategies required of leaders in a climate of financial and policy shock. Appreciating the historical context is a feature of resourceful leadership, but identifying existing and potentially new resources to support change are critically important and motivating.

In parallel with the developments on mutuals, the government asked another make-over guru, Mary Portas, to take a critical look at our high streets. She begins her document with her vision:

“I don’t want to live in a Britain that doesn’t care about community

As you progress through the report, she recommends many community-focused challenges to planners that could be synchronous with the defined core purpose, out for consultation. Specifically she recommends that local planners engage with communities far more in defining and developing Neighbourhood Plans. How is your local authority responding to the [Portas Review](#)? Do you invite local planners to your high-level governance group(s) – do they understand how key your services are to communities and welding community well-being?

This is about the time in the performance management cycle for annual conversations and reviews; alongside the regular questions around how much did we do, how well did we do it and who is better off, are there some bigger questions to consider? Are we in the right place and shape to deliver the core purpose? Do we have the right partners to help us? What could we do more of for our community if we were configured differently? There is understandably mourning for the things we believe we can no longer offer in times of fiscal constraint, but we could be looking at a real opportunity for reinvention that has far more lasting depth than a surface make-over – a real phoenix moment?

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower

Steve Jobs
Co-founder/Chairman of Apple Computers Inc



Quiet Epiphanies

Judith Holby

How many of us have found ourselves in leadership positions without formal training, adopting ways of working which felt natural to us, while our colleagues had to adjust, happily or otherwise, to our leadership approach and behaviours? When given leadership development opportunities we often decide we can do things better.

One young leader, who had always led forcefully from the front, experienced a profound increase in self-awareness during NPQICL and went back to her team determined to practice her new skills in active listening. She would 'lead from the middle' rather than the front, inviting their ideas before making decisions. At the first opportunity she utilised her new approach but the team did not react as planned ... "Is there something you're not telling us? Why don't you tell us what you really think? Is everything ok?" It took weeks for them to accept that their leader had genuinely made a radical change to her way of working and that they could respond accordingly.

Whenever I join the leadership learning journey of professionals I ask them to consider sharing their learning with their colleagues from the start. What are the implications of this? Will such shared open reflection undermine their authority if they are already struggling to command respect? As well as leading learning, part of any leader's development is to support the development of other leaders. To do so at the beginning of one's own formal leadership development might seem a bit hasty. But is it?

As Children's Centre leaders we need not only to lead learning but also to manage change. So, as we see the need to adapt and improve the way we lead, we have to understand the implications of that for the whole team. A

Use our passion, thirst for learning and strengths as leverage to move forward

sudden, unexplained shift in leadership style is bound to be disconcerting and we have to find ways to introduce what we have learned which are sensitive to the relationships already existing within the team. This can be a challenge but it is also an opportunity; potentially it provides a model for the whole team as regards learning new facts and behaviour; in other words, embracing change!

A transformation, often huge, implies that we have changed the way we think and feel about ourselves and others at work and beyond. A very senior leader in a Local Authority told me recently that some way towards the end of his own NPQICL training he had an epiphany not unlike that described earlier; he realised that in exercising leadership in the past he had concentrated so much on achieving the immediate goals before him, he had neglected almost entirely the impact his approach was having on the people he was leading. Six years on, and now in his late fifties, he still remembers that moment of disequilibrium and adds proudly that now, he is naturally more thoughtful and considered utilising a range of leadership strategies with awareness of their consequences for those involved.

If we can manage our own leadership development well (learning to lead ourselves first!) it provides us with a fantastic model for supporting others in their own professional journey. As with any modelling of practice we need to be explicit - sharing thoughts, new understandings from significant research findings and helping others to appreciate why this new knowledge is important to our work. We will model that we are getting good at knowing our strengths but also what we need to change. We will blame neither others nor ourselves for our shortfalls but use our passion, thirst for learning and strengths as leverage to move forward. We will engage in critical reflection and debate, exploring in depth the meaning of leadership and emotional intelligence. Having realised that we have no need to pretend that we are the expert in every way, we may also reach out and share the complexities, ambiguities and vulnerabilities of trying to pioneer new ways of working, pioneering creative leadership structures as we go. If we have begun to feel more confident and strong, we might share our doubts and questionings with others, whilst continuing to instill confidence in our ability to support others and maintaining a focus on what is important to our children and the centre as a whole.

In showing others how we ourselves can move with support and courage through change, we can support them to do the same.



PEOPLE

“ I sailed into work today, fresh as a snowdrop, having completely forgotten that I had been pressured into saying I'd go on a Managing Change course by Jodie Brinksteen from “the team” (a phrase that either written or spoken always seems to need speech marks). Rushed around like a dervish sorting out the usual Monday morning stuff and arrived just about on time in a sweating, tragic, unprepared-heap among a load of cool sophisticated customers-for-change.

After an unusual icebreaker (must remember) and the usual ground rules, we then had to “share” a piece of recent change management. Well to be honest this was a struggle since with me the word change is best linked with the phenomenon bumbling-through rather than management.

However, I was able to recall a recent incident with Rita, one of the centre's cleaners (though oracle is probably more accurate), who has been at the centre for more years than me. She is a guru in the neighbourhood and her attitude to change is akin to Hockney's attitude to the anti-smoking lobby – extravagantly averse.

The centre had been risk-assessed and rationalised and therefore restocked with apparatus. A new vacuum cleaner was placed in the cleaner's cupboard and the old one removed to the boiler room pending “recycling”. Rita was LIVID!

The exchange of views went something like this:

Rita: Mrs B – a word!

Me: O hello Rita, do you like your new cleaner?

Rita: Nothing wrong with the old one

Me: But this one is better

Rita: Nothing wrong with the old one. Where is it?

Me: I'm not absolutely sure ...perhaps it's being recycled

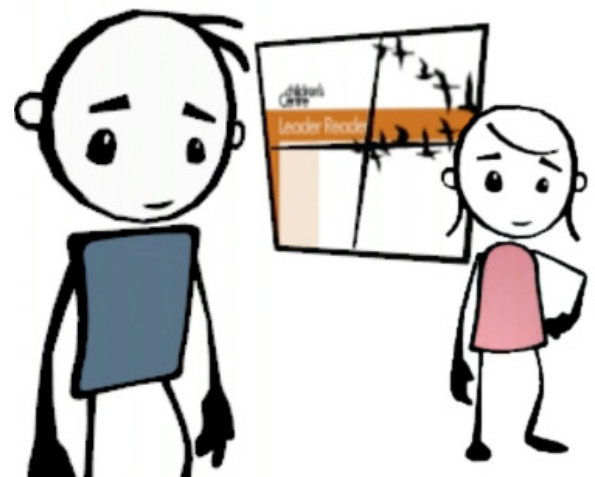
Rita: Well I want it recycled into my cupboard. Nothing wrong with it!

Me: Don't you remember, you said that about the last one when we got it, but you really like it now.

Rita: Yes I do, so what do I want a new one for?

Well that's a flavour of a conversation that went round in circles for several more minutes before I brought it to an end with my usual bit of bumbling-through - that I would have to have a think. In the meantime the old vacuum cleaner had a serious (fatal) accident falling down the boiler room steps.

I think my sharing companions thought this a rather trivial example. However, to me it had all the hallmarks of mismanagement of change – no



Bella's Blather

excerpt, Monday January 30, 2012

consultation, no negotiation, made no sense to the change-victim, unanticipated resistance and therefore unpreparedness by change-agent, change-agent lacking conviction, lack of veneration for the glory days, pathetic resolution leading to loss of trust...

What more could you want?

Meet Bella & Ben...



The Friction of Change

Jane Morgan

Utilising Resistance

'Oh that'll never work!' We have probably all heard a colleague saying this in response to changes we propose; indeed we may have said it ourselves. Many of us will have experienced that sinking feeling as we try to put together a positive response to remain afloat in a sea of negativity. Often my automatic response has been to view the resistance as counterproductive and an attempt at sabotage. I would try to diagnose the resistance and then find an approach which enabled me to overcome the protest (Kotter and Schlesinger 1979). However after many years in leadership I have come to the view that resistance might perform a positive role in leading change.

The research into resistance to change identifies it as a complex phenomenon which can be caused by any number of factors; non-rational (Burke 2008), rational (Kotter et al 1986), political (Burke 2008) and organisational and cultural (Graetz et al 2006). Kegan and Lahey's (2009) study reflect this complexity suggesting that our individual beliefs coupled with the collective mindset of the organisation influence our approach to change. Given this wide range of possibilities I wondered that perhaps I needed to diagnose less and seek to understand more.

The Role of Resistance

The assumption is often that change is inherently good. What resistance can provide is a balance between the push for change, whether external or internal, and the need for stability and a level of control (Hultman 1979). It can provide a useful inspection of the proposals to discover whether the changes are appropriate and well considered. The crucial challenge here is getting the balance right so that there is still forward motion rather than a standstill.

Resistance brings energy to the process of change, resistance is not apathetic therefore it can be a powerful motivational force. Apathy to change from colleagues can mean that the change is unlikely to take root whereas the energy of resistance can ask the awkward questions, challenge assumptions and consider at a deeper level, values and ethics. Once again balance is crucial; resistance that leads to serious conflict can detract from the original focus of the resistance.

Resistance can encourage deep and vigorous debate. It can act as an incubator for alternative solutions, innovations and creativity which make the changes work. As Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) identify it is worth remembering that both individuals and organisations are in constant motion, evolving, maintaining and changing. When resistance is present it is pointless to use force and impose the changes, communication, negotiation and discussion are a must.

In the enduring study by Coch and French (1948) the clear message is that to ensure employee, and I would add all stakeholders' commitment, individuals must be involved in every stage of the change process. Nearly 50 years later, Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) suggest that resistance is more to do with the process of change and than change itself. It is within these two theories that I see a way, but not the only way, of utilising resistance. True communication and participation rather than the assumption that these have happened must be the way forward. As a starting point I offer the following suggestions;

The core values and principles of the Children's Centre must be central to any change process – ensure that participants know these and the foundation are firm.

True participatory management and leadership require that the whole organisation is involved.

Transparency about the proposals, process and good information will ensure that participants are supported in the change process. Although be aware that it is information sharing and not information pounding.

Bringing about true participation and communication can be tricky but by ensuring a safe and trustworthy environment, participants will begin to feel empowered to speak freely and to be heard.

Utilising and adapting the principle of the learning contract would be one way of facilitating participation.

The safe environment gives all participants the opportunity to take in the various concerns, synthesise and bring them together into the open.

A shared understanding and perhaps even a common language for the change process enables every participant to engage and brings unity.

The richness of open discussion, although sometimes uncomfortable can bring about the innovative and creative alternative solutions to support the changes.

Through this co-operative process if considered carefully, the whole Children's Centre community is more likely to take ownership of the changes which are often imposed on us. In the current climate of budget reduction and payment by results, participants in change could benefit from seeing resistance as stabilising rather than destabilising. Resistance can remind us of our core values and therefore become a driving force for an agile, flexible and healthy organisation which meets the needs of the children and families.

PEOPLE

Leadership context

Hertsmere Leisure is a registered charity established in 2002 to manage a number of leisure facilities in Hertfordshire and has since expanded its portfolio of facilities and services. In 2006 Hertsme Leisure was commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to become Lead Agency for three Phase 2 Children's Centre areas. Two years later it successfully submitted tenders to become Lead Agency for a further 7 Children's Centres as part of Phase 3.

Leadership challenge

To provide effective leadership during a period of rapid expansion of Children's Centres services and beyond.

Leadership vision

To develop a leadership structure that supported the establishment of a Cluster model of Children's Centres, ensuring the balance between consistency of quality whilst responding to individual community needs.

Evolutionary Leadership

Liz Applin & Lydia Christensen



Leadership action

Based on a Distributed Leadership Model, a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was established. The SLT is made up of eight leaders from a variety of professional backgrounds incorporating the core areas of Education, Health, Voluntary Sector, Phase 1 Children's Centre experience and Early Years. Four of the members of the SLT take a key operational role for a Cluster of Children's Centres, while the others are more strategic.

Key tools that aided with the challenge of implementing the Cluster model included:

The use of **Centre Improvement Plans** that ensured careful tracking of activity as well as clear direction during the fast moving phase of development.

One of the many benefits of being part of a large organisation was that of being able to utilise an existing, robust **Quality Management and Health and Safety System** ensuring clear and consistent policies and procedures across all sites.

A clear **Communication Strategy** allowing local families and partner organisations to 'have a voice' has been central to the identification of local needs, allowing each of the Centres to develop a distinct identity.

A **programme of external and in-house training** has been developed. The model of delivery varies from Centre specific training, across a number of Centres or training to meet individuals learning needs.



Leadership outcome

The specialist support and knowledge of the SLT has proved to be invaluable across all 10 Centres. Leaders are able to work within their skills set when leading projects. The flexibility and mobility of the SLT allows for rapid response ensuring much is achieved within a short time scale in a cost effective manner.

The Centre Improvement Plans enable teams to have a clear focus for their work. It allows the SLT to monitor the vast number of individual projects in progress at any one time, whilst highlighting where a co-ordinated approach is possible. A recent example was the need to develop adult learning opportunities across all centres. Through the pooling of resources a designated Adult Learning Co-ordinator post for all Centres has been created.

Through the Communication Strategy trusting relationships with families and partner organisations have been established. This has resulted in the identification of pockets of need that vary from community to community.

Through the training programme the teams have access to many opportunities for professional development. Taking advantage of the economies of scale presents opportunities to buy-in external training. However teams are encouraged to share good practice and exchange ideas. Both approaches have contributed to the development of a skilled workforce with enhanced quality of services for families.

Leadership reflection Looking back over the past 5 years I can see my leadership role has, in the main, been shaped by the need to grow my own teams. Identifying potential and enthusiasm followed closely by sharing the essential leadership skills such as planning and time management has enabled me to help the teams to be productive, giving pleasing results which not only achieves our aims but also helps to keep the teams motivated.

We have moved away from a scheduled rota of leadership meetings to a flexible 'coaching' approach. This enables us to respond to individual needs. Our one to one time allows us to encourage, challenge, ask questions and identify areas for improvement.

Our aim is to provide quality services and our key resource in achieving this is through people. Through careful coaching it is possible to encourage the culture of producing quality services. The key resource in achieving quality services is people. The time the Senior Team spend with small groups and individuals is the best investment we can make.

Lydia Christensen
children's centres qualified teacher

Liz Applin
director - hertsmere leisure children's centres



PRACTICE

Cultivating Change

Sue Webster

Spring is the season when we are often more aware of positive change, as the darkness of the winter changes to light and more warmth and our environment begins become green with splashes of colour. It's a time of birth, growth and development in nature and it is a good time to consider how as leaders we can cultivate change. Sowing the seeds of new ideas and proactively taking control of the ongoing changes necessary to meet some uncertainty in the changing landscape of children's centres and also to continue to cultivate sustainable and relevant services for 21st century society.

For Charles Handy (1992) 'managing change is wishful thinking', implying that a leader can visualise the final landscape and deploy a skilled workforce of landscapers to do the heavy digging

and excavations necessary. He argues that 'cultivating change' suggests the leader is growing the organization, channeling ideas rather than controlling, and learning as opposed to instructing.

“Can we prevent some of the social ills that have emerged historically without creating a culture of dependency?”

Knowing that you can't please all of the people all of the time is a mantra that is part of every leader's toolkit. It's true you can't and if you could, would everybody be happy in the end anyway? Leadership is about being 'people focused' and many believe that by making people happy, to enjoy their work, we will create a generative learning environment for the children

and families who use our services. Even those who think they thrive on change and development may respond negatively to imposed change on their own work initially. Often we respond by expressing grumbles and dissatisfaction while we





try to understand the process. Developments where there is evidence of long-term benefit, can often involve some short-term pain.

Many of us have attended professional development training where we have learned the tools of 'change management' in the hope that we can manage change effectively in our workplace. But is that enough? The garden tools that hang in my shed do not make my garden beautiful, they just help me to work more efficiently. What helps me make my garden a riot of colour in the summer is the careful thought and time I devote to the task during autumn and winter. It is a long term process where an amazing vision develops in my head, the list of tasks I identify unfolds to inform the careful consideration I give to telling/selling my emerging plan to the 'head gardener'. Then there's discussing and shaping the plan until that he thinks it is his own idea! We understand the task, pool our resources and tentatively mark out our plot.

The process of development may require us to dismantle something that was a key feature last year but did not make the impact anticipated. I am not an expert gardener, just an enthusiastic amateur who reflects, learns reads, observes and changes my approach from time to time. What in a leadership learning context Minzberg in Fullan, (2008, p. 5) describes as: 'some thing instinctive (...) but it has to be learned too, not just by doing it but to gain conceptual insight while doing it'.

According to Fullan, 'the world has become too complex for any one theory to have certainty'. He argues that good leaders are thoughtful people who unconsciously draw upon their own theories of action to make leadership decisions in their organisations. 'Theories of action' are thought processes and are never set in stone because leaders always need to be open to surprises or the emergence of new ideas or information that requires new or further action.

“So what is a theory of action



So what is a theory of action and can children's centre leaders use them to cultivate changes in their children's centres? Many of us are familiar with Argyris and Schon's (1974) work and ideas about double loop learning. This is when we reflect on our leadership experiences and consider how we can improve by changing our own approach. In other words we don't keep going round in circles by repeating the same mistakes.

We are familiar with the diagram but don't need to physically see the map to be able to use it in our work. Once we know and understand the principles we use a mental map in our head to aid our reflections. Frequently deployed is Iceberg theory where we consider what might be going on below the surface of what we see. These are two well-used theories in action.

But there are other theories of action we could consider when leading change in our centres? Peggy Holman (2007), has developed key three questions that inform her leadership approach when promoting change in organisations. The questions are set within three central themes about working collaboratively:

PRACTICE

A shared world: Are we spending any or enough time understanding what we collectively aspire to do?

We are equally human: Does every individual identify areas of their work that are personally meaningful to them?

We need open dialogue: Is there room for all voices?

Holman argues that change is built from these three foundations because the leader creates an open climate of trust where ‘new think’ is possible.

Michael Fullan (2008) shares what he calls his ‘Six Secrets of Change’ as a theory of action:

**“We are
equally
human”**

See

Love your e

Connect peers with

Capacity building

Learning is

Transpare

Syste





Secret — questions for leaders

employees	Enable team members to continuously learn, find meanings in their work and from their relationships with others and the centre as a whole?
a purpose	Provide good direction and pursue to implementation by building on peer to peer interaction and learn from the results?
g prevails	Invest in building individual and whole team efficiency in a non-judgemental way?
the work	Consider how team members can learn as they work through reflection and dialogue?
ency rules	Exert positive pressure which is; fair and reasonable; actionable with solutions; yet unavoidable?
ems learn	Have a working environment where meanings and motivation are stimulated and deepened. 'Are you humble in the face of complexity?' (p.14)

Fullan argues that these secrets are not the definitive answer. Surprisingly, yet wisely he cautions all leaders to not believe everything they read. His wise advice calls for leaders to:

Look for the argument and evidence behind any claims

Go deep in trying to understand the meaning of any advice offered

Develop your own 'theory of action' by constantly testing it against situations and ideas

Test the 'six secrets' or any theory of action against your own experiences and intuition

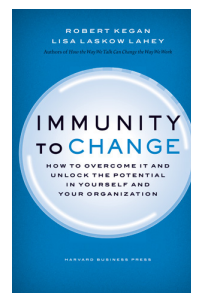
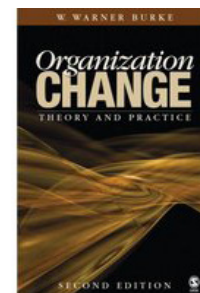
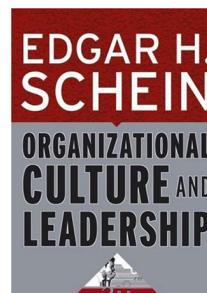
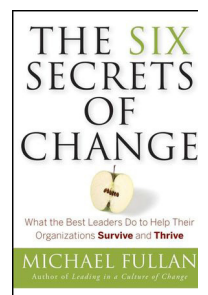
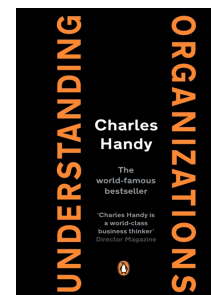
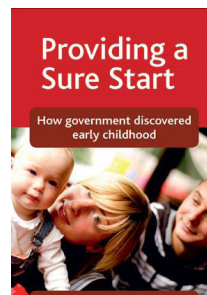
As this new season develops this year we could consider one final theory from Kurt Lewin and take advantage of the increase in temperatures and attempt to metaphorically 'unfreeze' our old ideas and practices by role modelling enthusiasm for change and lead a new process of reflection, innovation and challenge to cultivate new and sustainable organisational structures (Lewin, 1947, in Schein, 2010). Sewing seeds doesn't necessarily have to happen in a familiar garden plot. Sure Start was often described as being the best kept secret – who wants a secret garden?

Sue Webster

early childhood studies, lecturer, University of Warwick

children's Centre Leader Reader

recommended reads:



Click any of the titles to find out more

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February and March have seen the publication of a number of important and inter-related documents associated with the Foundation years sector arising out of the reviews by independent advisers last year, Dame Claire Tickell, Professor Cathy Nutbrown, Frank Field MP and Graham Allen MP and the government's policy [Supporting Families in the Foundation Years](#).

In addition there is also parallel research and ideas development focusing on creative ways to do more for or with less, which resonates with our lead article last time relating to social entrepreneurship (see our Productivity page)

Seeing the bigger picture The straight bits of the jigsaw

[Consultation on Revised Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance](#)

In line with a strong drive to simplify central direction and empower local decision-making, the draft guidance sets out the legislative requirements and presents five clear outcome focused chapters identifying duties that local authorities must ensure, must operate or must consider related to:

Chapter 1: What a children's centre is – including a statement of core purpose

Chapter 2: Sufficient children's centres – including guidance on commissioning and significant changes to provision

Chapter 3: Providing services through children's centres – including links with proposed health reforms; there is a link to an excellent Department for Work and Pensions report related to the Work-focused services in children's centres pilot; there is clear focus on centres supporting families most in need

Chapter 4: Quality and accountability – includes inspection legislation and local authority responsibilities following inspection; enabling roles and responsibilities of an advisory board may offer more flexible models of governance that connect with community mutuals, social entrepreneurship and in the schools-linked provision, clusters, federation and chains

Chapter 5: Safeguarding – including essential operational requirements and recommended practice. A helpful summary Annex connects Core Purpose with statutory duties placed upon local authorities and relevant partners.

The [consultation](#) opened on 5 March 2012 and closes 1 June 2012 – ensure you contribute.

Payment by results

Payment by results is being trialled in 27 local authorities (forming 26 trials) supported by C4EO and Serco. The

aim of the trial is to:

Get a real sense of the challenges payment by results poses
Inform the national measures
Determine what meaningful measure at a local level could be

Further developments are anticipated this summer – the [Foundation Years](#) website links to a range of questions that may inform you

Getting ready for the new EYFS—

Announcements are expected at the end of March and the Foundation Years website is counting down to publication with a range of activities and issues to consider on its [dedicated webpage](#).

You will find links to:

Week One: [The top ten frequently asked questions](#)

Two: [Mythbusting](#)

Three: [Top tips for getting ready for the new EYFS](#)

Four: [Getting Ready for the Revised EYFS – Time to Reflect](#)

update: [New framework](#)

Review of early education and childcare qualifications: Interim report

Professor Cathy Nutbrown has issued an [interim review](#) that sets out reflections from consultation arising from the three major themes of:

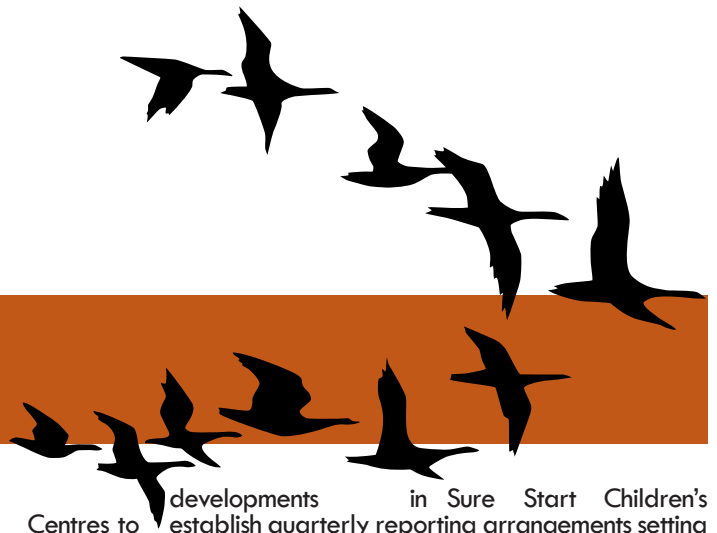
Content and tuition – is this relevant?

Quality – are the right systems and processes in place to ensure quality teaching and learning on award-bearing courses?

Recruitment, retention and progression – how are people recruited? How is their status in the workforce perceived? How do we ensure diverse and inclusive practice in managing career progression?

Further focused consultation will address the following, before a final report is published in the summer. Important questions will be addressed that challenge the status of the workforce:

How do we ensure that the complex historical, current, and future qualifications picture does not act as a barrier to those who want to train and learn?



What should be the expectations for the content and age-range for early years qualifications, and the preparation demanded to achieve them?

Should we seek to raise the minimum level of qualification required of the workforce, and if so, to what and by when?

What levels of literacy and numeracy should we expect of the early years workforce, and how can we secure these?

What is the best way to ensure that tutors have up-to-date knowledge and skills and are qualified to the right level?

How can we ensure that settings are supported to play an effective role in the training of their staff and students on placement?

How can we best establish clear progression routes for all members of the sector (including black and minority ethnic groups), and support less well qualified members of the workforce to progress?

Is there a strong case for introducing an early years initial teacher education route, and how might the practical obstacles be addressed?

Is there a case for a licensing system and, if so, what model might be best?

Use our [link](#) to stay in touch with the next stages of consultation.

Ofsted changing framework for inspection of children's centres

Liz Elsom recently joined one of the National College's Winter Warmer webex sessions to talk through new proposals for change, which reflect amendments to judgment-making being proposed for school inspections and the changing ways in which lead agencies and local authorities are organising centres. Consultation is planned in late spring. You can find the current revised framework (February 2012) on the Ofsted site, but if you would like to hear Liz, connect to the National College [Ofsted WebEx](#).

The bigger picture Wiggly parts of the jigsaw?

Sure Start delivery in 2011/2: An Inquiry, Interim Report [The All Party Parliamentary Group for Sure Start](#) has conducted a review and reported on its findings related to reductions and contractions within the Sure Start Children's Centre Sector (February 2012). Emerging recommendations are:

- The DepartmentThe Department for Education should produce nationally applicable guidance on numbers of Sure Start centres, and the services they provide, should be reported.
- The Department for Education should closely monitor local

developments in Sure Start Children's Centres to establish quarterly reporting arrangements setting out the number of Sure Start centres locally and nationally and the level and range of services delivered.

- When consulting on changes to the provision of Sure Start services, councils should follow best practice principles for consultation.

- Local authorities take note of the conclusions and recommendations of the 2009/10 Children, Schools and Families Select Committee Report on Children's Centres (attached at Annexe A) and consider the best ways to deliver the broad and varied benefits of Sure Start to their constituents to further early intervention, support public health, further educational achievement, reduce family crisis and the number of troubled families, support employment, and reduce poverty.

- Local Authority Bodies should work with Government and the voluntary sector to co-produce a clear set of best practice guidance on the delivery of Sure Start following budget reductions, and make it freely available to local authorities.

It concludes:

The APPG is very concerned over the lack of clarity and uncertainty about the future of Sure Start Children's Centres in some areas and the difficulties that families are having in understanding what is available in their area as a consequence. The group urges the Minister to take up its recommendation to closely monitor changes in the provision of Sure Start Children's Centres locally and nationally, and report back to the APPG on a six monthly basis.

Multiple risk factors in young children's development

Ricardo Sabates and Shirley Dex (February 2012) Institute of Education London reports on the impact to well-being and educational development of multiple risk factors in children's lives. The paper's authors found that those who had grown up with two or more risk factors had poorer behavioural development scores at ages three and five. They also did worse in standard vocabulary tests at these ages. The report, published by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, said: "Children living in families with both multiple risks and low income fared the worst across most developmental outcomes."

Transforming Early Years: different, better, lower cost services for children and their families

Learning Partner's [Final Report](#) on the Transforming Early Years Programme January 2010 – July 2011 Caileen Goddard and Julie Temperley (2011) Innovation Unit
If you are not aware of the work of the [Innovation Unit](#), its documents are worth exploring and they have a developing area on co-operatives and mutuals. This document focuses on effective working principles to enable managing more with less.

POLICY

“Radical Efficiency points to five general principles for innovators and policymakers seeking to deliver different, better, cheaper public services:

Make true partnership with users the best choice for everyone

Enable committed, passionate and open minded leaders to emerge from anywhere

Start with people's quality of life, not the quality of your service

Work with the grain and in the spirit of families, friends and neighbours

Manage risks, don't just avoid them

These principles underpinned the design for the Transforming Early Years programme which was led by Innovation Unit (IU) and NESTA and which ran between January 2010 and July 2011.” Could these principles work for you?

An idea

A recent post on the Foundations Years website lamented that reductions to local public transport meant that a significant group of needy children and their families could no longer access their children's centre. Could the kind of tendering approach that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council has taken to supporting its Sure Start programme be a model for other rural areas?

“The Children Centre Programme now requires a streamlined and centralised approach to transport. The provider will therefore develop a ‘whole borough’ transport solution offering a co-ordinated and managed model to provide dedicated support to meet the transport needs of the Children Centre programme by:-

facilitating access to services for families living in rural communities

facilitating access to services for families who are disengaged from or generally wary of professionals.”



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

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PRODUCTIVITY



Sue Webster



National College
for School Leadership



Vicki Lant

NEW COHORT FOR NPQICL APPLICATION ROUND OPENING

During April and May the National College will be recruiting for places on the 8th Cohort of the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership. Please [follow this link](#) to take you to the page where the application process will go live at **9am on 2nd April and will close at noon on Friday 18th May**. Follow the guidance on this page to ensure that you apply within the window of time and have secured the support of a sponsor in your organisation.

Building a community of practice

Communities of Practice - a **“community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise”** (Etienne Wenger, 1998)

Our idea

We are keen to explore with a small group of leaders, the potential to develop community mutual approaches to governance and management of children's centres. There are many drivers that are encouraging us to move that way, but it requires understanding of legalities, clear planning and sure-footed leadership together with a dash of pioneer spirit.

Your contribution

We seek 10-15 leaders, keen to move their centres in this way that would have the support of their lead agency to explore this approach. If you would like to be involved, visit the [website](#) and register your interest.

Our support

We plan to work with a self-identified group to develop some self-help guidance and networks in a field wider than Centres, to offer some sustainable models for the future

Wenger, E. (1998) Communities of practice. Learning, Meaning, and Identity. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Early Years National Conference 19 June 2012

Visit GovNet's Early Years 2012 conference for a chance to meet key decision makers and find out about leading frontline foundation years strategies that are achieving real success. This year's speakers include former government adviser and Oxford University senior research fellow Naomi Eisenstadt.

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