

Leading a Legacy

Judy Murray

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As a mum of two energetic little boys, I was always looking for ways to keep them occupied. And because I came from a very sporty family, it was pretty much second nature to me to be dreaming up fun games and activities which would not only challenge and stimulate Jamie and Andy, but that would hopefully tire them out at the same time. I never imagined that they would go on to be successful tennis players, but what I did know was that if they wanted to play any sport competently when they were older, they would need to develop good coordination skills in their formative years. We didn't have a lot of money so most of the things we dreamed up involved everyday household items and could be played either in the house or garden.

The boys were learning without realising it because they were just having fun but played regularly, these games helped to develop balance, agility and coordination which are the fundamentals of every sport. As they were close siblings, competition was a natural response so I added a stopwatch, measuring stick or finishing line to resolve arguments – that addition also gave them each a

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“ I have continued to grow and develop alongside my children

challenge to improve their own performance next time!

So our Set4Sport programme is a collection of these very simple games which we have been able to bring to life and share as a free resource through a website www.set4sport.com, an app for ipad and iphone and a book thanks to the support of RBS. If after this wonderful sporting summer, you want to get children and families more active, check out the website and have a crack at some of them. All you need is a bit of space, a bit of enthusiasm and a bit of creativity.

I believe that the more you challenge young children, the better coordination skills they will develop. The best games will be the ones parents and children invent themselves but there's 16 games in the Set4Sport programme and oodles of variations. The key is to start off simple so that kids can achieve success. The success will breed confidence and then you can adapt the games to make them more difficult.

In our family Jamie and Andy became very well coordinated at a very young age so it didn't matter which sports they chose when they were older, they were able to do them pretty well. Jamie had a 3 handicap at golf when he was 15 and Andy had a trial with Rangers

youth squads at 14. Set4Sport is aimed at kids aged 3-8 because I reckon that from about 8, kids start to choose which sports they want to try. Up to that age, it's usually the parents who are doing the choosing. My boys tried everything from pre-school gymnastics to mini rugby to ice skating, a good mix of individual and team sports.

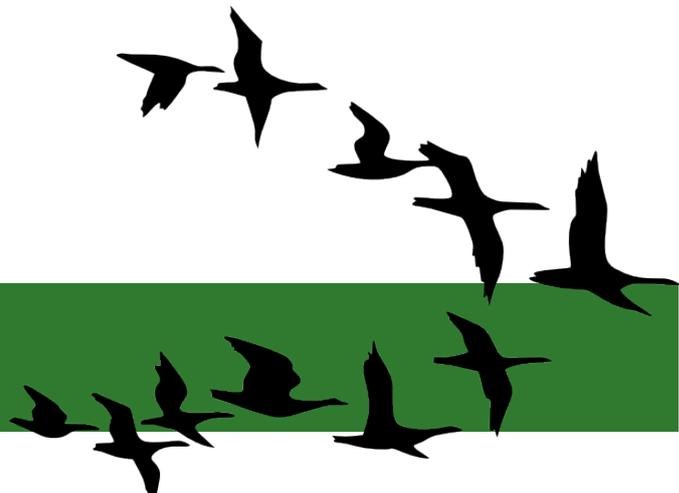
When I grew up, sport was a big part of my life. My parents were both sporty and played all sorts of ball games with me and my brothers. I was also fortunate to go to a school that offered lots of sporting opportunities and I

loved being part of school teams. Community clubs also played a big part in my upbringing. I loved being part of our local badminton and tennis clubs where I learned how to play the game by competing against kids and adults rather than being coached. So I am totally sold on the value of community sport in terms of social development.

Like many parents, I have continued to grow and develop alongside my children. I have been able to share a sport I have always loved with them. I have been a member of many teams throughout my life, as a competitor, coach and captain. My latest and most exciting personal challenge this year is to lead the GB Fed Cup Women's team. In this role I can draw upon

“ One of the tasks I enjoy most about leading a team is the tactical planning required





my life experiences as a teacher, mother and about twenty years of working with young tennis players. While it is vital as a leader to inspire, motivate and challenge players and the wider team that supports them, strategic planning is key. One of the tasks I enjoy most about leading a team is the tactical planning required. The analysis of opposing teams and individual players is a vital component of successful teamwork. As individuals and at all levels of the support team, we study the opposition, their tactics and game plan to ensure that our players are fully prepared for what they will face on the court.

I always try to create a motivational working environment, building a good team spirit where everyone is working - happily - towards the same goal. I never forget that I am working with people, it's people first and the better you know the people you are working with, the better job you can do. For me the underlying factor in coaching others is to create a fun, yet stimulating, learning environment where children, young people and adults develop a working bond. Of course you want everyone to learn but if you work hard in making the emotional environment right, people can learn without realising they are being taught. Furthermore they will learn to love what they are doing and that will keep them in the game for a very long time. I have always tried to create

“A strong network and family support has been key to keeping my kids motivated and emotionally secure

“create a motivational working environment

opportunities with whatever is available. When I began my tennis career in Scotland there was little support, and when I realised that Jamie and Andy had a chance to succeed in tennis I had to try to find that support and create the right opportunities. I had to learn as I went because there was no blueprint to follow, which on one hand was good because I had freedom to do what I thought best, but on the other it is very hard for parents to navigate a path into professional sport and you never really know if you are doing the right thing. Having successful children is lovely but they also need to be tough and resilient, to learn to deal with pressure and growing up and making mistakes in the public arena. For me a strong network and family support has been key to keeping my kids motivated and emotionally secure, especially when the media is critical and intrusive or when results may not be going their way. I try to create a supportive network around any competitive team I am leading. It's important that players feel loved and feel good about themselves. They will perform better if they do!

Today my motivation is to create a stronger tennis culture in Scotland, to give more kids the opportunity to enjoy the sport through the building of more public courts and a bigger coaching workforce. But I also want to encourage other parents to play more actively at home with their kids to develop what I call physical literacy. If it starts at home at a young age, it will

“physical literacy starts at home at a young age, it will become part of everyday life

become part and parcel of everyday life.

How can children's centres help me with this mission for sport? Help us to promote the activities to parents, support them to have a go at the Set4Sport activities with their children. They don't have to be sporty just love fun and playing with their children. My website has all the information you need and there is an **App that can be downloaded** with ideas and video for use out of home too.

Judy Murray
Set4Sport
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Stories of Leadership

—Vicki Lant

When you need to need to dig deep as a leader, where do you mine? Feeding your leadership resilience and nurturing the curiosity that makes you someone that others want to follow, needs personal discipline and sure-footedness, often when paths are at their most muddled and levels of personal certainty are at their most tested. Reflecting on Professor Guy Claxton's challenge, "What do you do, when you don't know

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“What do you do, when you don't know what to do?”

what to do?” (Claxton, 1997), usually takes me back to a point of known comfort to find some principles or practice that I trust and understand, which I can re-interpret to make something new from something known – not necessarily broken, but no longer fit for purpose.

When I'm deeply out of my comfort zone I find I stray back to story or poem, (a childhood comfort as well as my academic and first professional heritage), to provide me with a spark, a starting point. Trying to understand where that love of language comes from, given that our family home was pretty barren of books, I have vivid memories of that extraordinary moment of transformation associated with the familiar patterns of repeated words passing between my mum and I. Words tumbling out by heart in sequence as the story unfolded brought the realisation that those same words were there on the page alongside the beautiful watercolours of the two swans that transfixed my attention. Long foggy, damp winters and

long solitary periods away from school, were transformed by reading – anything, everything. I am only now, through reflection, beginning to appreciate the origins of my passion for words and my trust in the creativity of the places of imagination my reading led.

Perhaps I was blessed unconsciously in my earliest years with the enlightenment aspect as opposed to the indoctrination end of the education spectrum (Chomsky, May 2012). Understanding more about my learning journey and my early experience of finding comfort through creative enquiry, asking questions and searching for my own solutions has influenced my adult approaches to learning and seeking alternatives when old answers don't work for new problems. One of the joys as a current leader when things get hard, is that you don't have to fret alone. That dialogue in story or poem that takes us to a place “where we are more ourselves” (Britton, 1977) translates to an astonishing wealth of possibilities via the internet, which at times can threaten to become as confusing as Babel. Whilst I am fascinated by language, I have learned in our multi-agency world, that words can hold powerful barriers for some and become a source of obfuscation for others, so driven into my darkest corners, visual stimuli or representations enable starting points to focus us. In

times of reduction and constraint, there is such a temptation to focus on the performance measures, conforming to the expected and required. Driven to lead a radical approach to think and do differently requires insights, creativity, courage, compassion and resilience.

This edition of Leader Reader offers the generous personal insights and stories that focus on how we all use

experience

challenge

limitations

loss

to create something new. In leading ourselves, all our contributors share with you experience that enlightens and inspires, keeping that personal



light of optimism ignited for others to see when winds of pessimism threaten to extinguish it. The personal leadership stories of experienced and new leaders in the world of children's centres and people beyond it, whose passionate optimism to make more good things happen and less bad things happen, drives their leadership and may inspire yours.

In an inspirational **TED Talk, Four lessons in creativity, Julie Burstein** sets out the key themes of her book, *Spark: How creativity works* (Burstein, 2011). She argues that in all aspects of life the best way to learn is through story; through the stories of creativity enabled by people letting go of what constrains, paying close attention to the world around us, embracing challenge and learning from it, pushing against the limits of what we know and standing in the space between what we see and what we hope for. In describing the pain of loss in stimulating creativity, she refers to organisational consultant, Dick Nodell, who describes occupying this place as like "holding the tension of a violin string in order to

make something beautiful". She also demonstrates that sometimes we have to initiate loss; to break what ceases to work in order to find new solutions.

Faced with real-world challenge, Deloitte and C4EO's study (National College for School Leadership, C4EO, Deloitte, 2011) explores how resourceful directors of children's services help us understand how we need to rethink our ways into problems and use the behavioural and resilient qualities described by Boyatzis and McKee (Boyatzis, 2005) to sustain ourselves to give confidence to others, as we lead the changes necessary. These are valuable resources to aid our personal enquiry in times of financial and policy shock.

But if the written word doesn't spark you, perhaps Julie Burstein's arresting image of the Japanese tea bowl may help? This tea bowl, over a hundred years old, shows the marks of its history, including the fact that it was broken. But the person mending it hasn't tried to hide the cracks but emphasised them with



gold lacquer, creating something new and more beautiful in the re-creation.

Not the written word? Not the image? Perhaps the spoken word ignites you? Does it come back full circle to stories? The stories of children and their families? I was privileged this week to hear Camila Batmanghelidjh speak with unashamed passion about what drives her organisation from top to bottom – stories. The stories of children whose agonising experiences, challenges, limitations and loss shape the purpose and being of Kids Company. As a leader of a children's centre, there is nothing more important to listen to and act upon.

how we all use experience, challenge, limitations and loss to create something new

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As a community worker, I learnt to understand the importance of stories by sitting in people's front gardens talking about their families and neighbourhoods. You can learn a lot from talking like that – how they see the world, what has influenced them, how they want to be seen and what's important. These days, instead of front gardens and brick walls, I tend to sit in lecture theatres or in the offices of Children's Centre leaders, talking about leading others. I am an academic (so I lecture and research) and I mentor on the NPQICL programme, both things I love to do. Sitting on a brick wall talking to people was a good education in the power of stories, and it's an education I still rely on today.

Do you understand your leadership story?

Ian Robson

In some ways, it's still the same stuff: people are making sense of the world, other people and their place in it. However, I do wonder whether we would do as well as the mums in their front gardens in talking together, or being honest about things. The thing is, we all have stories, but we're not always aware of where they come from or how we are using them. We don't always acknowledge ways in which our stories have been shaped or accept things about our stories we might think seem unusual to others. Even though we have been working with stories our whole lives, we can forget how powerful they can be for us and for other people. We can miss out on a great opportunity for learning.

What have stories to do with leadership?

We may have our own stories about how we lead and what we are leading towards. However, our individual stories need to connect with the stories of others, and these in turn weave into a larger story about our Children's Centre and its families. This is not about conforming to the 'party line', but about a diverse tapestry of complementary interconnected stories. Leaders can help make sense of things and focus effort. Along with this 'weaving together', leaders are also in the business of changing stories and writing new ones. People can choose to change their stories instead of living with 'given' stories, so they can be a great source of agency. Stories give us information, but they do so much more than that: they are tools that can help change.

Our individual stories need to connect with the stories of others

What?

Sounds great doesn't it? Actually...for many of us, it's rather confusing. We might ask what on earth 'leadership stories' are anyway, never mind where they come from, how we put them together or how they can be used. The reality is that we tell stories all the time. We have lots of them, and we use them with all sorts of different audiences. In fact, we've spent our whole lives being part of and telling stories, so much so that we can forget about how fundamental they are.



Some thoughts on leadership narratives

Thinking about what stories are, where they come from and how they are used is a passion of mine. I think that this helps me become a better leader, academic and mentor. I've been helped to think about stories (or 'narratives') as I've looked at the work of people who have spent lots of time thinking and writing about these things. To save you some time, I'll summarise some of the thoughts of one of the most famous philosophers who has written about narrative and the self: Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). I think that his work on what he calls the 'hermeneutic arc' (what we might call a journey of understanding) is particularly useful, so I'll use the three parts of that arc to look at our lives, how we put stories together and lastly how we use them.

“Do we give ourselves the time to become more conscious about our stories?”

“we've spent our whole lives being part of and telling stories

Experience

Firstly, Ricoeur suggests to us that narrative does not simply 'pop out of thin air', it draws on lived experience, and reflects the sorts of patterns, habits and understandings we have in our lives (he calls this 'prefiguration'). So what? Well, I know in my conversations as a mentor, that we can be unaware of the habits, understandings and patterns in our lives. Thinking back to those garden wall conversations; does our talk match up with our lives?

Building stories

The second part of this 'arc' of understanding is to do with what Ricoeur calls 'configuration' – in other words, what we do to put stories together. This involves putting names to things and giving stories a shape, through the structure of a plot, for example. Again: so what? Are we aware of what we are trying to make sense of? Are we using an unhelpful 'template' for our stories? Do we give ourselves the time to become more conscious about our stories? In my experience, in conversation with others, the answer is: not always.

Using Stories

The third 'phase' of Ricoeur's hermeneutic arc looks at what he calls the 'refiguration' of stories. In other words, how our stories are used in the real world. Instead of stories being written down and 'stored', they are read by others and help others see themselves in new ways. We ask for the last time: so what? Are you aware of the potential of your stories? Do your stories help you to lead?

“narrative draws on lived experience

Some food for thought

This is big stuff. Like all big ideas, we can struggle to find a way to see the relevance to our own leadership and lives. Even if we see that we could benefit from being clearer about our leadership stories and each 'phase' of that arc I described, translating this into practical terms is hard.

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Three lessons

If I've learnt anything from leadership mentoring it's that there is no substitute for three things, things that are also highlighted by our philosopher, Paul Ricoeur:

Stepping back

Firstly, our stories only get put together as we step back and make some sense of lived experience. This is a challenge for those of us who are 'do-ers' and who thrive on the here and now. If we want to be clear and articulate we need to give ourselves the time and the tools to step back. Ricoeur calls this process 'distancation'. Journaling, talking or, yes, sitting on the garden wall may all help here.

Honesty and bravery

Secondly, reflection without honesty and challenge has limited value. In his philosophy of self, Paul Ricoeur talked about the 'ethical life', lived with others. We probably can remember times in our professional (and personal) lives when we have opened ourselves up to new possibilities and have asked whether our version of events is honest and what it should be? Leaders that I mentor who do this see huge shifts in their practice and have a different story to tell.

A sense of purpose

That third phase of Ricoeur's arc, refiguration, directs our attention to what we do in the light of our (and others) stories. Leadership narratives should not be secret diaries (well, not all of them!) but are directed back into action, influencing, encouraging, focusing and so on. We want stories to be told, and to find points of connection so 'we' have a story to tell together.

Stories help others see themselves in new ways

The great thing about stories, as with Ricoeur's idea of the hermeneutic arc, is that they go onwards. This provides the opportunity for things to change. Perhaps you can begin to find new tools that can help you to move your leadership story on. That's a recipe for happy endings.

A Success Story in Five Chapters

Rosheen O'Byrne

Winston Churchill once said that just 'seeing the end is the beginning of a major step forward'...

Thank-you to all those who were part of my NPQICL learning community, to leaders who have shared so many experiences and knowledge with me that I feel humble. Thanks to my tutors for the painstaking tasks they set us to do, yet within these I learned so much about me that on reflection I don't allow others to see, my Jo-Hari window (Luft, 1969). Thank-you to my task-team group for perseverance and commitment to the tasks, especially when I had switched off.

More so though thank-you to my Leadership Learning group for without their support and acceptance, my learning journey would have been unmanageable. They offered me a true reflection of myself and whose experience, passion and knowledge allowed me to be just who I am. My journey with them has been memorable and proves that even at a distance you can feel the support and energy of others. There is a book I have read called Blink (Gladwell, 2005)

that says you know something is right or wrong within the first 10 seconds and I can honestly say I knew I was in the right group to be in for me.

We never really went through the storming stage as Tuckman's (1965) group theory suggests, but we did enter the performing stage. Arguably it could be said that the theory then is not completely justified, but I think it was really down to our focus and vision in wanting to succeed together. This is truly a sign of a good leadership team is it not?

THE FIRST CHAPTER

"progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything"-George Bernard Shaw

We all struggle with change and I did recognise that I needed to change my style of leadership if I was to lead a successful team. The feedback I received and learning on this course allowed me to reflect on this and adapt my attitudes.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

"change your thoughts - change your mind"

We do exist in a system that is so intrinsically governed by what others feel is right; we also lose

“Showing compassion allows you to be a different kind of leader

sight of what it is we really want to achieve. By reflecting on situations and changing the way you operate as an individual as opposed to being led by others, will allow you to be in control of yourself. As you know we can all feel powerless sometimes and question our ability to succeed. Follow your instincts; it is a guidance system that has engineered your life to where you are now, it never fails you. I have and that has led me to where I am now and is the catalyst for my next learning journey.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

"never assume that you know best ... instead of you believing that you know what's best for others... trust that they know what's best for them."

At the end of the day we all have a role to fulfil and there are systems in place that govern processes. Sometimes we focus on what the minority aren't doing as opposed to what the majority is. The theory is that we then invest in the minority and assume that we can change them. Why,



I started to ask myself? After all, we have a majority serving the children and families who need support. I learned to trust with humility, which people will naturally follow.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

"if you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy practice compassion, it is accompanied by a feeling of responsibility"

It is difficult sometimes to show compassion to others and our partners are not exempt. Find ways to embrace new ways of working as we are all trying to do the best that

“feedback I received allowed me to reflect and adapt my attitudes.

we can within the current climate. Showing compassion allows you to be a different kind of leader, one that will be followed by many. I am learning this approach and I feel it is working for me. Maybe future situations will test my ability to practice this at an even deeper level, new lessons learned will show me when I have not.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER “disequilibration”

In governing people and serving others humility, virtue and belief are critical. In a disequilibrated state, we are jolted out of our former beliefs and ideas and become open to new ones. In re-crafting our story practising these three elements, nothing is impossible. If nothing is impossible, then there are no limits

“An ideal way of engaging with more vulnerable families.”

to success. If a person knows no limits, they are fit to lead. Thus unfolds the art of leading with humility, focus and vision. These are simple free ingredients... for any a true leader.

A new beginning...

Rosheen O’Byrne

Children’s Centre Network Manager - Bolton

I’m Starting With the Man in the Mirror

James Hemsall

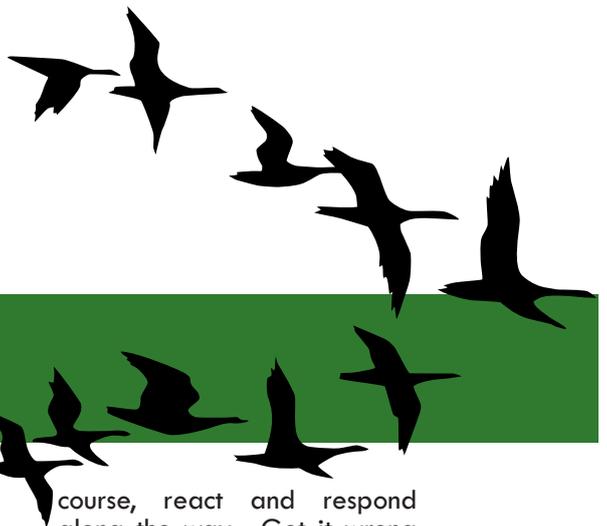


A self-starting approach to management and development is a primary issue for anyone who is a leader, manager or practitioner in early years and childcare. The issue is possibly greater for those who run their own businesses, or are managed by transient management committees. Even those who have formal management structures and corporate systems designed to ensure such support, can frequently find their managers are otherwise engaged with, or distracted by, other activities than those of leading and developing their staff. Even the best manager will be primarily focused on work tasks and performance, so one has to ensure there is a balanced consideration of us as whole people. Few people are better qualified to do this than you – but some help from others

is extremely useful. So, a self-starting and holistic approach is not only desirable but essential in this era of flexible careers, and transferable skills.

Over the 20-25 years of my career I have enjoyed a pick-n-mix early years and childcare career. At the time it seemed more than a little random. Now, on reflection, a clear journey is evident. I have managed a children’s centre, been managed by committees of parents, served on committees and boards of trustees, worked for a FE college, local authority and a national childcare charity, and run my own business for 13 years. In the

“include activities that allow me to let go”



“ reflection never ends

course, react and respond along the way. Get it wrong and it could be perceived as apprehensiveness or even a lack of confidence.

This year, I've been studying the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS). This has provided a reflective structure directly linked to my work and self-development. A requirement of the course, like many others, is to keep a reflective journal. It documents what I learn, how I learn, what works well in practice, and ideas for developments. Its initial scope was training delivery and a review of our CPD training programme. It has been really interesting, a year on, to read it and track the direct links it has made to my personal and professional development.

What I have learned is my reflective practice has gathered momentum, it has spiralled – my ability to reflect has improved the more I have done it, as Bain et al (1999)³ suggest in their spiral model. It is now embedded day-to-day practice for all aspects of my work and development. It makes me feel that progress has been more purposeful when sometimes I have attributed success to chance. Importantly, in my leadership role, it has prompted me to identify growth, change and success and feed this back to colleagues in support meetings and annual appraisals. Their feedback has been really useful too through peer, colleague, and other observations. These have affirmed my beliefs and views and challenged me to consider some of my observations and decisions and these are being used to inform my next 12 month plan. I might know what my career has been, does anyone know where it is going next?

early days, I had 4-5 part-time jobs at the same time. I was not sure what my career was, or even where it was going next. Some twenty years ago, the sector we enjoy now was dramatically different. Many of us have joined the sector in the same way, so this is not a unique position to be in, but what can we learn from these experiences?

Wilson (2009) says that continuous professional and personal development (CPPD) and reflective practice are intrinsically linked:

“Quite simply, CPD is the act of gaining new skills and knowledge; reflection is making sure that the new skills and knowledge have an impact.”¹

Self-development has been a feature of my work and it has enjoyed particular prominence over the past 12 months, with a structured focus on reflective practice. My recent approach has been structured and focused, and driven by values, beliefs, and goals. Whilst there was important business need – we have all had to rethink our work in so many ways recently, and self-development has not been restricted to work either. If you work a 40 hour week, you spend about 24% of your time working. Sleep for 7 hours a night and this is 29% of your time. That leaves 47%, nearly half of your time, for awake living time. Focusing on what you want to achieve in this non-work awake time is often left too much to chance. For me, I include activities that allow me to let go, it is diarised switch-off time, a rest from being the leader or decision-maker. I let others tell me what to do, make the decisions for me, and invite them to stretch my goals.

She also identifies that as learners change continuously, trainers need to constantly refine their skills. This is true for all environs – we all work in ever changing circumstances. I do prefer to take a practical experiential approach and I am prepared to use delivery as the final part of development so the perspectives of others can be included. This is good consultation and participation practice – and acknowledges that reflection never ends. It is what Schön (1983)² identified as ‘reflection in action’ – it can be dynamic and exciting and is essential if we as leaders are prepared to change

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² Schön (1983) in Wilson L (2009) Practical Teaching. Delmar. Andover pp449

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The Land Of Make-Believe Leadership

Kathryn Solly



I recently wrote a letter which was published in *Nursery World*. It was just after the end of the academic year and I was in reflective mode. I was pondering about the complexity of our adult world of education and care in comparison to the relative simplicity of young children's play. The children always inspire me and give me both moments in their play and learning to treasure as well as to challenge me.

I was feeling tired and drained after a particularly challenging school year personally and also irritated that our pedagogical voice, our professional knowledge and expertise about what is best for babies and young children has been somewhat hijacked by political and economic agendas. Has it always been so? Set this alongside my passionate belief in our role as leaders in putting the child first and

you can perhaps understand some of my dissatisfaction. In many ways, even after 16 years of headship my job gets more complex, more frustrating and yet more wonderful! The children are always my inspiration together with my hard working team and emerging future leaders. When things are very hard you come to understand that you are no longer invincible and thus you learn to take a side-step for a while and let others take the helm. You start to think that you may be an imposter and then you realise that you are replaceable and there will be a future without you as those you have encouraged and nurtured will be there to carry the baton and wear those fairy wings as you have done.



So from the make-believe world of children's play we need to take inspiration. We must continue to stand up professionally for what we believe in against the ogres, dragons, trolls, goblins, witches and giants who seek to harm and possibly destroy the rights of young children to the highest standards of play, learning and care. We must seek out wisely the magic wands, fairy wings, pixie shoes, knight's armour, spell books and potions to reinforce the sound foundation of understanding established by those pioneers of early years. Then we must shrewdly join forces as

“When things are very hard you come to understand that you are no longer invincible”



“Together we are an invincible force”



Irritated that our pedagogical voice has been somewhat hijacked by political and economic agendas



magicians, talented jugglers and enchanted beasts such as unicorns to be judicious and strong so we can ensure that all young children now and in the future enjoy a special and enchanted childhood without trickery or illusion. If we act as damsels (or the male equivalent) in distress, everyone will suffer wounds and damage.

Thus in this maelstrom of change and recession we also have some special secret partners and allies - families and carers. They know what we provide each day as they see their children develop and flourish. They remember the times when we cherished progress, engendered hope, fostered new beginnings and ideas and took pleasure in their company and that of their child. Together we are an invincible force to confront and take on any negative force. We can only do our best and honestly question, dispute, contest and face-up to whatever comes because we are together in our belief in the future of young children and morally we have the high ground whatever comes to try us. Be courageous and brave!

Kathryn Solly
Headteacher Chelsea Open Air
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A tale of two countries

Leadership in children's centres: a comparison between England and the Netherlands

Merel Steinweg

England and the Netherlands have different approaches towards leadership in children's services, although other aspects of their social care services show many similarities. For example, both countries aim to provide universal, low-threshold and community based facilities in the form of children's centres. In fact, the recent development and implementation of children's centres in the Netherlands was inspired by the Every Child Matters programme. In the concept of leadership however, the countries differ significantly. In England, strong leadership is acknowledged on a national level as a crucial factor for the success of the children's centres. In contrast, in the Netherlands leadership is rarely mentioned explicitly as an important factor. In addition, in the Netherlands there is neither a specific leadership development programme such as the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) nor there are

any national standards for children centres' leaders. This results in great local variance in interpretation of children's centre leader roles in the Netherlands. Knowing these differences in approaches to leadership I was eager to find out whether this resulted in a different role interpretation of children's centres' leaders in England and the Netherlands.

To study this, I conducted in-depth interviews with leaders in England and the Netherlands. The findings were surprising. They showed that leaders in both countries have similar role interpretations. Networking, coordinating, facilitating and innovating were among the most mentioned strategies. However, on the level of explicitly and implicitly mentioned personal visions and values, leaders showed significant differences on two major topics: parental involvement and focus on children's outcomes. In most cases leaders in England mentioned parents as influential partners

PEOPLE

whereas in the Netherlands parents were often mentioned as more passive clients of the services. Parental involvement was something leaders in the Netherlands knew they wanted to improve, but they were still developing ways to do so. Secondly, and this was the most remarkable finding, leaders in England mentioned children three times more often than their colleagues in the Netherlands.

More in depth analyses showed that English leaders did not only mention children more often, they also talked more about keeping the children's outcomes as a focus point for their daily activities. Children in the Netherlands were often mentioned as service users but the effect of the services on their outcomes was rarely mentioned. Leaders in the Netherlands therefore seemed to have a greater internal focus on the professional structure of the children's centres.

So how can these differences be explained? As in every cross cultural research, cultural and historical contexts can partly explain the findings but this is hard to prove. One thing I have experienced- in particular during the Olympics this summer- is that leadership is an often used word in England and sometimes even seems hyped. Athletes are talked about as leaders in England whereas in contrast, the Dutch term for leadership (leiderschap) can have a somewhat negative connotation in certain contexts and is not always accepted in the Dutch egalitarian culture.

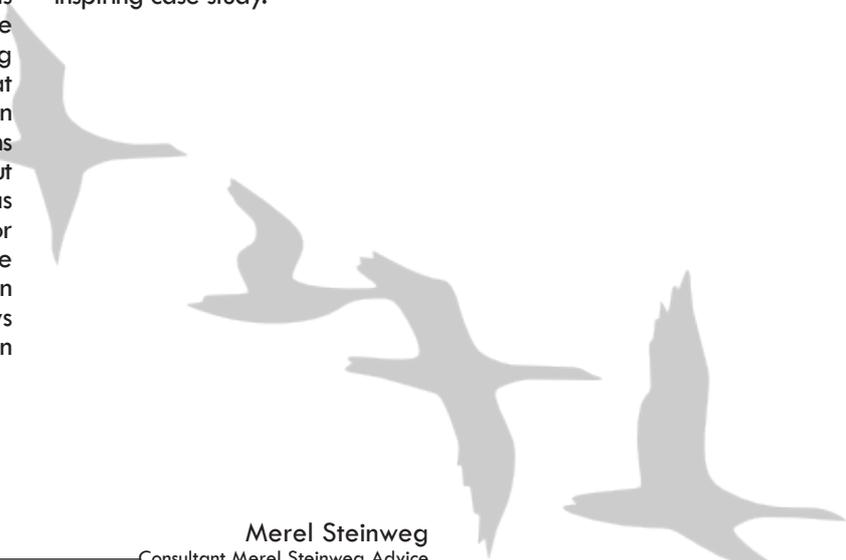
“In England, strong leadership is acknowledged as a crucial factor for success”

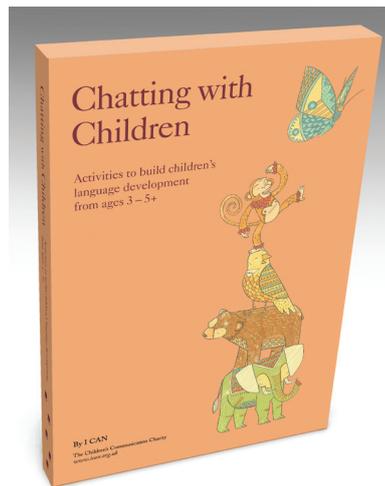
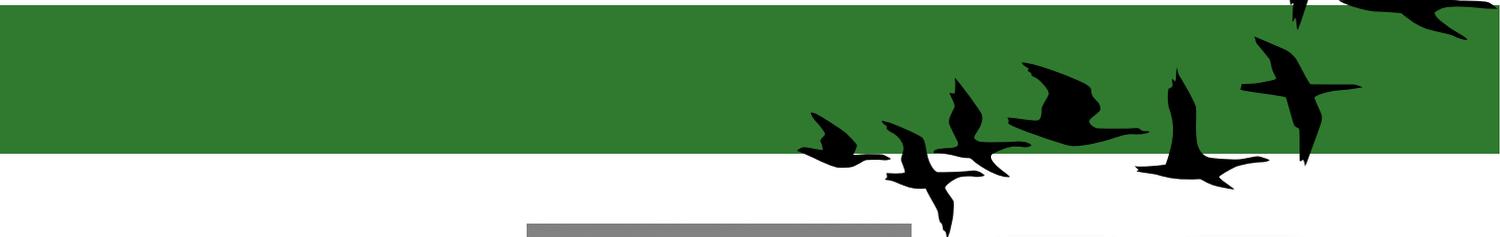
However, even though cultural factors might influence the findings, some issues are worthwhile to further analyse, specifically the greater focus on parental influence and child outcomes in England. Possible explanations can be found in different historical origins of

the children's centres, the implementation phases, the ways children centres are evaluated, the statutory guidance and the NPQICL

development programme. If you are interested how these factors might explain the findings you can read the full thesis by following [this link](#).

This research added to the current debates in The Netherlands now that children's centres face the challenge to become well-known, solid and trusted places for children and parents with extensive integration of services. How to further professionalise staff and management and how to increase participation of parents and youth are seen as important topics and England will also in the future be looked at as an interesting and inspiring case study.





helps children communicate

REGISTERED CHARITY 210031

Chatting with Children

Diane Leath

Our Children's Centre is linked to child care providers, and one of our providers Heather used ICAN's **Chatting with Children** with her 3 to 5 year olds. Heather is from Coliseum Kids linked to Whitby and District Children's Centre.

Chatting with Children, for 3 to 5 year olds, is part of I CAN's *Early Talkers* box set, to develop children's communication skills from birth to five years. *Early Talk 0-5 years*, is I CAN's flagship communication and language training and accreditation programme for practitioners working with children and families.

Our child care providers really enjoyed using the pack. They enjoyed the activity cards because they give good, clear succinct advice on different aspects of children's communication development. They had been using some other materials to develop children's skills but we had

come to the end of those resources, and the *Chatting with Children* pack allowed them to develop the children's learning.

We found it a very easy resource to use. There are specific activities on different aspects of communication and for example, the *Shopping List* activity which focused on listening, was thoroughly enjoyed by the children. The booklet that is included with the pack is really easy to access because it is so clear and it helped our staff with their planning.

Chatting with Children is also good because it differentiates within the activities which allowed us to tailor the activities to meet children's individual needs.

This ensured all children enjoyed the activity and were interested. It helped us to focus our communication development work with the children both in groups and for individuals.

Within *Chatting with Children*, it sets out the 'Aim of the game' before each activity. This helped our staff because it tuned them into why they were doing this activity and it helped them in the planning of their own materials. It helped them to understand what the activity was all

It helped us to focus our communication development work with the children

about. The pack helps to develop staff's support for children's communication development as the activities give suggestions for differentiation and this helped our staff to think more about each individual child's needs.

We are planning to take *Chatting with Children* to our local practitioner groups and share it with other professionals around the Whitby area so this tool is shared with other settings. We absolutely loved *Chatting with Children*, especially as we have used *Babbling Babies* and *Toddler Talk* in the past. This now completes the set and we will continue to use them in the future.

Chatting with children - available at www.ican.org.uk/bookshop

Diane Leath
Children's Centre Manager - Whitby
and District Children's Centre

The Chimp Paradox

Sue Webster

During that glorious Olympics period, I heard a short interview with Dave Brailsford, the Performance Director of the GB cycling team who at the time was leading a phenomenally successful team. Brailsford's comments on leading winning teams, are I think, transferable to our work in children's centres and in terms of strategic planning, our task or process decisions. Like Judy Murray, Brailsford leads a collaborative support team and elite competitors who plan their tactics collaboratively. There is a strong focus on continuous improvement; working together to achieve what Brailsford terms 'marginal gains'. Continuous improvement in performance is achieved by identifying small technological, human and tactical changes that will create an overall improvement in performance. In human terms they focus on relationships, motivation, physiology and physical fitness. One key investment is psychiatric expertise from Dr. Steve Peters, to use the most recent knowledge about brain function and mind management.

As practitioners in children's services we increasingly draw upon the emerging knowledge about brain development, it is embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). But have you considered how your brain functions impact on your skills and performance as a leader?

Peters' bestselling 2012, book **The Chimp Paradox** provides an insight into the approaches he used with the Cycling GB Team. His mind management tool can be used to explore our inner emotional reactions to the situations we face in the professional arena. According to the book human brains have three independent functions:

Human (frontal lobe):

is you and operates from the frontal lobe of the brain

Chimp (limbic lobe):

is the emotional thinking machine and acts independently of you. It is a separate entity within the brain and like a gene it sets your dominant emotional reactions and behaviour

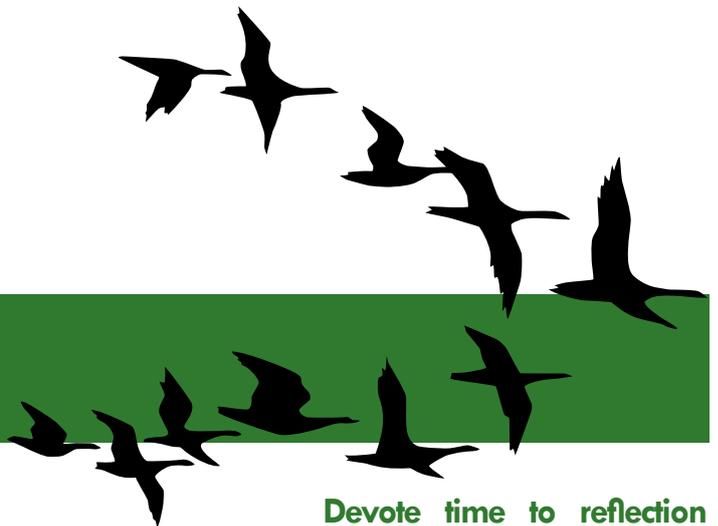
Computer (parietal lobe):

is the psychological mind and stores all thoughts and behaviours from both human and chimp. It provides a memory of previous experience and acts as an emotional reference point.

Have you considered how your brain functions impact on your skills and performance as a leader?

Our 'inner chimp is our best friend and our worst enemy at the same time' (p. 8). Most of the time the three brain functions work together in harmony, but sometimes when you are under pressure or facing a new challenge, human and chimp brain functions may compete for dominance. The information entering the brain is interpreted in different ways, emotionally and logically and the resulting confusion impacts on our performance.

The chimp uses emotional thinking



and interprets information through feelings and impressions, substituting logic for guesswork and assumptions that can, if left unchecked, become feelings of paranoia and defensiveness. These negative feelings can dominate the human functioning by leaving little capacity to search for facts and truth or for rational interpretation

and judgement. The human function applies logical thinking and supports a leader to respond efficiently.

The chimp can take control, particularly at times of high anxiety or stress when we need to perform well or when we face a personal or professional dilemma, Peters suggests that the chimp is five times more powerful than the human function. A leader who recognises and understands the chimp paradox can learn from experience and apply logic to regain emotional control of a situation they fear. Some of the activities in Peters' mind management system may be familiar, but the metaphors may to help you to learn more about your own chimp. Peters offers a clear rationale for leaders to make time and space to improve their performance as a leader and to actively reflect on their emotional behaviours when leading others. The Chimp Paradox offers a range of examples and strategies to develop your own mind management model, but a good starting point could be:

Devote time to reflection and consider how and when your chimp hijacks you.

When does your mind feel overwhelmed with emotions? Particularly which thoughts would you prefer not to have and which behaviours would you prefer not to have? Reflecting in this way will support you to begin to make a distinction between your chimp and human responses. Regularly record your feelings and responses to challenging situations.

Audit and review your reflections to focus on the aspects of your behaviour you would like to address.

When does your chimp take over? What does it look and feel like? When you are logical or irrational, are there patterns? What advice from the human function does the chimp function need? What small changes or strategies could you try, to deal with situations where the chimp takes over?

Implementing changes and finding support.

Understanding your chimp is useful but will only improve performance if you learn how to nurture it too. Peters argues that you should not attempt to control the chimp; rather you must take a long-term approach to review and adapt your chimp. Peters refers to this as exercise, box and bananas for your chimp.

TRAITS OF THINKING

CHIMP: Emotional thinking

Reaches a conclusion without the whole picture

Polarised thinking

Paranoid and vulnerable

Over reacts to danger

Irrational reaction

Emotive judgement

HUMAN: logical thinking

Evidence based

Rational

In context and with perspective

Multiple perspective

and balanced

judgement

Adapted from Peters, 2012 p. 20 & 24

“Our ‘inner chimp is our best friend and our worst enemy at the same time’

PEOPLE

Exercise is to acknowledge and articulate your feelings safely, perhaps using your journal or with a mentor. In a safe and private space tell share your anger, confusion and feelings no matter how irrational.

Box Once you feel ready visualise putting your chimp (and the behaviour) away in an imaginary box.

Bananas these are the metaphorical rewards and distractions you can use to manage your chimp. They are short-term tools to use until you get a better strategy to understand and manage your emotions. For example, procrastination can be a chimp behaviour, so rewarding yourself when you begin a stress-inducing task can help you learn to face difficult tasks and situations. Recurrent chimp behaviours like anxiety before important meetings could be counting to ten as you walk to your seat. Patterns of behaviour will help you to enable your human function to catch up with the chimp anxiety.

Key questions for professionals to consider if they want to improve their performance are according to Peters:

**What do you want to achieve?
What is your belief system around this?
What are you trying to achieve and is this realistic? (Hard Talk 2012)**

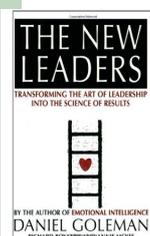
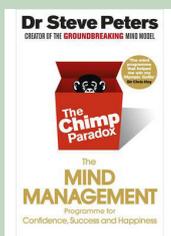
While we often think we understand our professional objectives, we can sometimes take a more global rather than detailed approach. Returning to Dave Brailsford's notion of 'marginal gains', we need to take an incremental approach to our own development too. The inner chimp can contribute to imposter syndrome or of 'feeling a fake'. The emotional chimp may act as a driver to achieve or a barrier of anxiety and self-doubt. Uncomfortable experiences

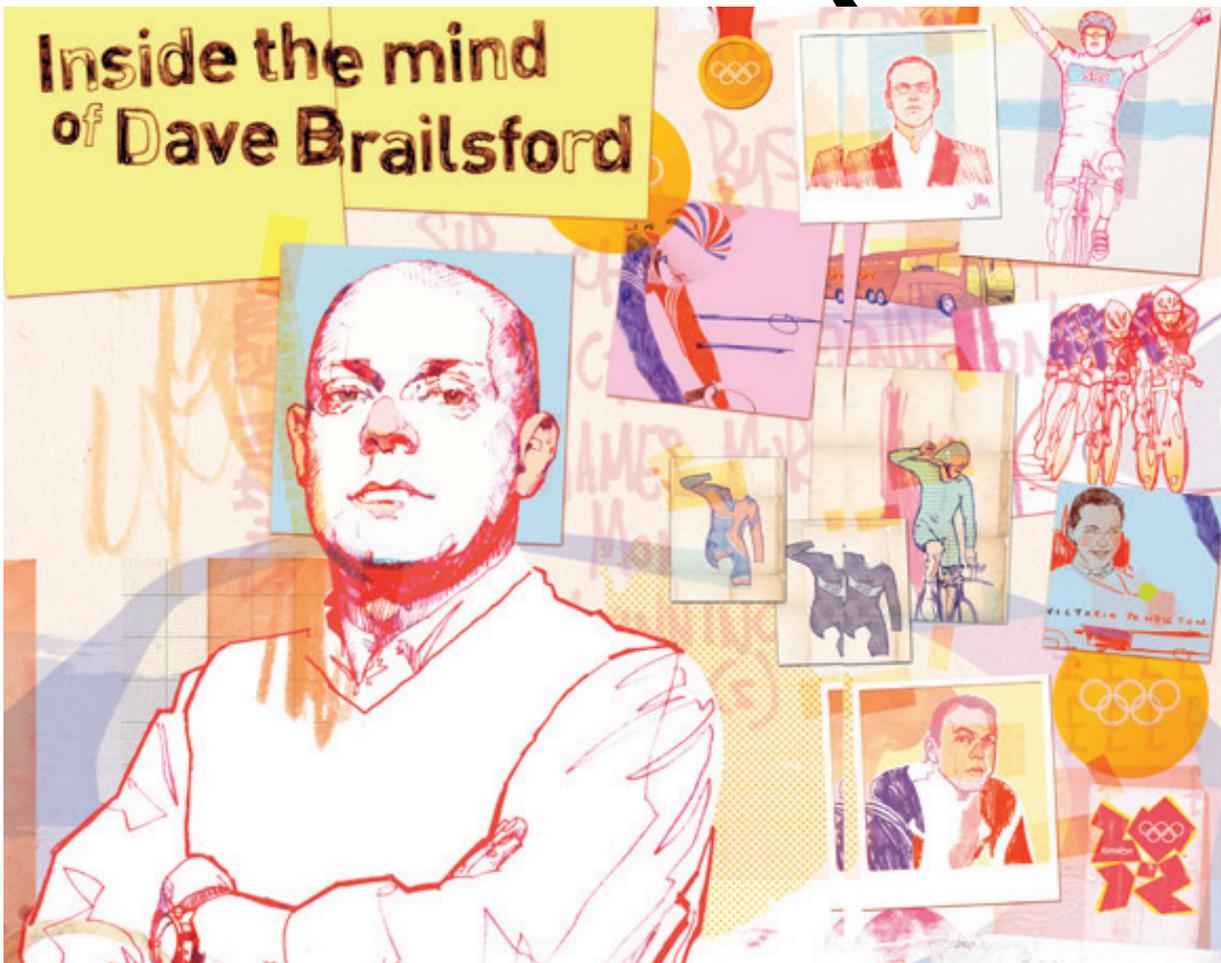
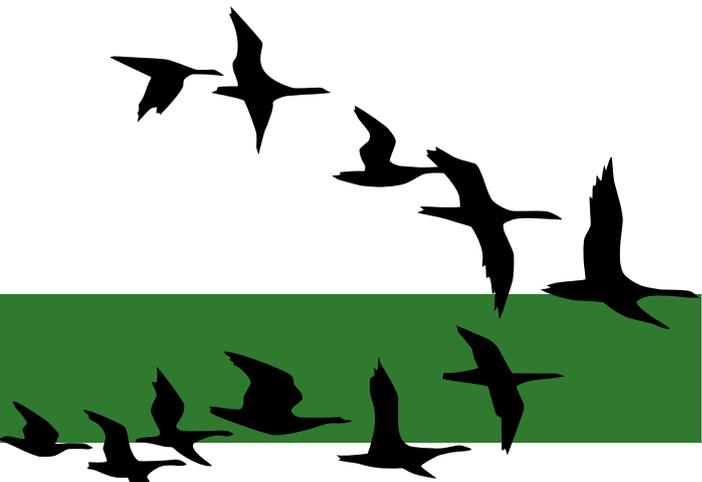
make us less confident to lead others and make decisions. An honest review of our behaviours and emotions improves self-knowledge, emotional intelligence (E.I.) is often defined as a soft skill, but that does not mean it is a weakness, Daniel Goldman (2002) offers compelling arguments for leaders to learn more about it.

In some public spaces, critics argue that children's centre leaders can be overly fixated on the emotional side of their work and insufficiently focused on the hard skills. While it is true, that leaders in some sectors of industry or politics, are reified for the fearlessness and speed they display, making quick decisions and demonstrating efficiency. Too often, the negative consequences for this leadership approach are ignored. Ken Robinson in his book 'The Element' (2009)

Exercise, box and bananas for your chimp

children's Centre Leader Reader recommended reads:





with thanks to Cycle Sport May 2011

suggests that we are all shaped by the cultures we reside within. Working with children and families is about leading human development not leading an industrial production line; so cultural appropriateness should be considered too. Commentators who argue that a focus on emotions is indulgent or too soft are perhaps the ones who don't get the value of culturally appropriate

behaviour. Perhaps research would tell us that some leaders who use their angry chimp to get their own way would call it rational thinking. It seems to me that the angry or anxious chimp should never be obvious in a children's centre leader but understanding and adapting chimps can be a useful tool for improving performance.

References:

Goleman, D (2002) *The new leaders: Transforming the art of leadership into the science of results*. London: Time Warner Books

Peters, S. (2012) *The Chimp Paradox: The mind management programme for confidence, success and happiness*. London: Vermillion

Robinson, K, (2009) *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything*. London: Penguin

POLICY

Support for families

The **Institute for Public Policy Research** has a number of relevant and challenging documents that may be of great interest to you and your teams which have been published in the last few months:



The relational state: How recognising the importance of human relationships could revolutionise the role of the state

The purpose of this collection is to introduce and discuss the idea of the 'relational state' – a new intellectual and political perspective on statecraft and the public services.

It incorporates an article by Duncan O'Leary *One nation Labour and the lessons of SureStart*



Shifting the Dial: From wellbeing measures to policy practice

This joint IPPR North and Carnegie UK Trust report explores how to put wellbeing measures into policy practice here in the UK, and explains why GDP alone is not a sufficient measurement on how society should progress.



Double Dutch: The case against deregulation and demand-led funding in childcare

This report critically engages with the arguments and ideas put forward in childcare minister Liz Truss' paper Affordable Quality and the deeper ideological approach that underpins them, casting doubt upon that paper's recommendations for deregulation and demand-led funding.

Frontline: Improving the children's social work profession



This paper argues that a graduate fast-track programme, drawing on the success of the Teach First scheme, could help to address the problems facing the children's social work profession. This new programme – Frontline – would help to attract the best people into one of Britain's toughest professions, and in the long term create a movement of leaders to challenge social disadvantage.

Documents To Support

The foundations of effective outreach

This document is intended for those working directly with families and their children in any early years setting. It will be of interest also to policy-makers, local authorities, Early Years Foundation Stage leaders and practitioners.

It provides a focus on some examples of best practice and the challenges overcome, in order to help development and strengthening of multi-agency working. It has helped to identify barriers and suggests creative and innovative solutions for those who work with the most vulnerable families in communities.

The findings will also inform the review of the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) programme and in the development of system leadership work.

CONSULTATION - Make your voice heard Inspection of Sure Start Children's Centre consultation – closes 11 January 2013

In late October Ofsted opened an on-line consultation to seek views and test opinion about radical changes proposed to the inspection framework for Sure Start Children's Centres. Proposals take account of changing organisational and operational arrangements for centres across the country as well as the continuing need to focus on improving outcomes for children and families.



Proposed revisions include:

development of a flexible framework that allows inspection of a group of centres who share leadership and management, and separate inspections of those that work collaboratively or alone

reduction of the number of key judgements made from twenty to three during inspection

amendment of the inspection criteria to:

how an individual centre or group of centres identifies the families with young children who are most in need of intervention and support

how centres decide on the needs of those families and the types of services and activities that will best meet their needs

the appropriateness and quality of the targeted services and support being offered

how centres encourage families who are most in need but least likely to access services

how centres safeguard children and vulnerable adults

the quality of the partnership working, for example with parents, health, adult training and employment, other centres and any other partners who provide essential services

the quality of leadership, governance and management, including the effectiveness of self-evaluation of a centre or group of centres

the contribution of the centre or group of centres to improving outcomes for young children and their families in the community(ies)

the use of appropriate and ambitious performance and outcome measures. These will be based on evidence and data for the community(ies) being served and any national and local performance measures agreed with the local authority.

use of a four-point grading scale for each judgement inspectors make. The four grades are outstanding; good; requires improvement and inadequate

targeted re-inspection of centres judged to 'require improvement' in those local authorities that have the highest proportion of centres at this grade and to focus those inspections on the effectiveness of the centre's action plan

production of one inspection report covering a group of centres so that parents, centre leaders and staff, and local authorities can see how well the group works as a whole

requirement for some form of self-evaluation by centres, continuing to make a self-evaluation form available for children's centres to complete individually or as a group of centres if they wish.

There are a number of routes into the consultation, via the [National College Centre Leader network pages](#) or directly via the [Ofsted consultation](#) page



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

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PRODUCTIVITY



Events led by the National College

This autumn, whilst offering foundation years leaders the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue and exchange ideas and thoughts on practice, the CCLN events will focus on several key themes for foundation years leadership. These include:

Ofsted – consultation on the new children’s centre inspection framework

The Teenage Pregnancy Unit – what’s working well, and less well, in engaging teenage parents in children’s centres?

Two year old provision – why leadership really matters



National College led events - dates to put in your diary

27 November South

Aztec Park Hotel, Bristol

[Register here](#)

4 December Central

LCC, National College, Triumph Road, Nottingham

[Register here](#)

5 December North

Everton Children’s Centre, Spencer Street Liverpool, L6 2WF

[Register here](#)

URGENT DEADLINE for submission by 30 November 2012

The **Government’s National Prospectus Grants Programme 2013-15** for voluntary sector organisations was published in late October with submissions required by 30 November. Local Authorities and national voluntary sector organisations have guidance published across many sites to support the application process. There is a clear timetable for application and notification on page 7

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Next issue:
Jan 2013
Leading others