

Many Rooms, One House

Anand Shukla

The economic downturn, which we have lived through since 2008, has stimulated, or in some cases, forced change on many organisations.

It's really important to start with the end in mind

Since 2011, I have led two strategic mergers, firstly in 2011 between Daycare Trust and the National Association of Family Information Services. The second – and much bigger undertaking was the merger with Family and Parenting Institute in January 2013. The newly merged organisation – Family and Childcare Trust – was launched in the spring of 2013.

When you are confronted with change on such a scale, it is all too natural to focus energy and attention on the process of the merger, rather than

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on details of life post-merger. This is a mistake; it's really important to start with the end in mind.

My key tips for post-merger working are as follows:

1 Make sure that you invest time agreeing a shared vision for the new organisation. Inevitably there will be disagreements about process and the best way forward, and to have an agreed vision to guide, especially when you face setbacks, is essential.

2 Ensure that you have sufficient expertise and capacity to lead this major change-management exercise. Undergoing a merger is a hugely time-consuming exercise and takes up significant amounts of management energy. If you are looking to merge or integrate your organisations, but do not have the spare capacity or know-how, then bringing in specialist expertise is crucial.

3 Good communications between all parties are key. It's hugely important that all parties are frank about the stage of internal discussions, and any challenges that are likely to be thrown up.

4 Do not neglect post-merger integration during the planning phase. It is easy to get caught up in the negotiations, but organisations should – at a very early stage – set up an integration working group to ensure as smooth a purpose as possible. Fail to do this – and you run the risk of wasting months of valuable time.

5 Decide very carefully on the moment on when to go public with the discussions. Be very prepared for detailed questions about the rationale, and any potential impact for employees. It is a truism of change management processes, but you can never under-communicate. Staff will understandably have concerns about their own future and role, and may not be receptive to all the messages being communicated. Invest time in staff communications.

6 Post-merger, be prepared for the challenges of bringing together different organisation cultures. Be open about this with staff, and build in review points to ask staff openly about what is working well, and what can be improved. If you are establishing new ways of working, it will take time for staff to get used to this, as well as to new colleagues. It can take time for boundaries to be laid down and agreed.

7 Above all, be prepared for a gruelling process which requires energy and patience. There will be times of foot-stamping frustration which are natural. There are few bigger change processes than merger. During such periods, always keep the vision and bigger picture in mind.

Good luck!



Morphing

—Vicki Lant

What is the organisation we lead? Ten years ago, or even five, it was easier to say what we did and what we aspired to do. Now there is palpable uncertainty about the what, but still a passionate belief about the why and how. Then it was generally one centre, now it may be many; then it was generously grant funded, now they are significantly strapped for resources and seeking networked partnerships to be viable. Reframing the Sure Start core purpose has fuelled debate and enquiry all year, beginning in January with Select Committee evidence panels and All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG). There have been recommendations; there has been a call from all political parties to focus on the essential importance of [the first 1001 days](#) of a child's life, to be discussed further at an APPG in November as the year comes to a close.

Many individuals and organisations are articulating possible solutions and models; the drivers are largely economic and the concern that many have is that a focus on the bottom line will drive the heart out of a service that is about heart,

perception and feeling; caring for the vulnerable when they may not even be able to articulate the real needs they have. Real early help. Hearing, seeing, doing and checking back to make sure that good things are happening as a result. These are critical values not to lose sight of in any change process.

Do you remember Morph? He was a lovable, Plasticine figure created over 35 years ago by Aardman Animations, who animated a children's art programme, by changing shape conveniently to save the day just in time, get out of trouble or blend in with the background. We've been morphing our services to meet commissioner-led needs; we've been checking that what we do matches the Ofsted criteria for good or better performance; we've remained one of the best-kept secrets of the welfare state. These are organisational must-dos. Sure Start was initiated to give communities local capacity to provide a different kind of solution to their local needs, with people at the heart. In reframing there is real benefit in revisiting first principles and adding

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to the mix the benefits of learning and research - mistakes as well as successes.

Just as we're wrestling with appropriate models to reframe what Sure Start Children's Centres offer, a major reframing of American healthcare systems (PORTER & LEE, October 2013) suggests a value-based model that bears some exploration. Not only do we need a common idea, but a common language and potentially a unified channel to communicate more powerfully so that many more people **get** the importance of early help to families to connect, bond, love, talk, listen, play, learn, aspire and become more economically secure - early help that children's centres can facilitate in great measure.

Porter and Lee propose a seismic conceptual shift for US health care, from services offered by professionals that sustain their positions of power and prestige, to services that are value-based around the needs of the patient; a move from outputs to outcomes. Familiar? We've been on this path for years, implementing a value-based approach, without perhaps stepping back to view the component parts of successful realisation - here's an interesting interconnected model that has some resonance and bears some scrutiny in a national, regional and local context. **Radical efficiency** models that many centres

have pioneered have community-centred solutions achieved by integrated partnerships; child and parent outcomes are identified and are being measured with greater accuracy, with increasing focus on longer-term impact; we are needing to focus on collective resourcing arrangements to achieve sustainable outcomes; we are planning more fully-integrated solutions delivered through a variety of settings (as part of collective working); we are sharing practice regionally and where possible nationally to spread what works well, faster. Although our collective stumbling block may be an enabling

“a focus on the bottom line will drive the heart out of a service that is about heart, perception and feeling”

References:

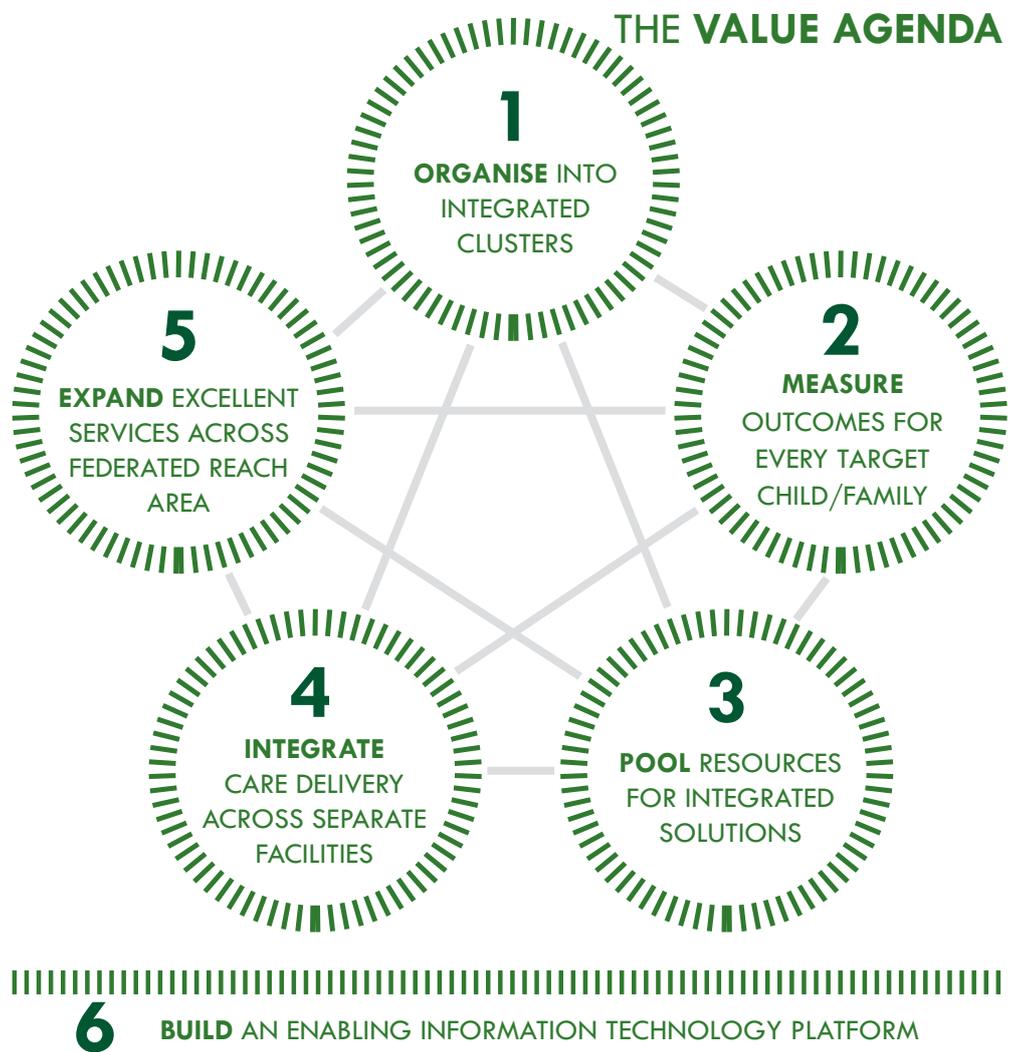
PORTER, M. E., & LEE, T. H. (October 2013). The Strategy that will fix healthcare. Harvard Business Review, 50-70.



information technology platform, there are certainly elements of this Value-Agenda model evident in centres' practice. Trouble is, if we can't visualise it and articulate it to inform commissioning against competing bids for resource in a dwindling kitty, those commissioning will not be able to see a more compelling vision of the future either and may resort to same-old, same-old. Seeing this graphic helps me see that if fundamental underpinning relates to sound and universal information technology systems (available in the schools' sector), should we be calling for investment, alongside reliable information sharing in our sector as a foundation to reframing?

This edition aspires to help us think through ways we can take control of and shape our organisations, with passionate leadership (Maureen Longley's article); collective vision for community benefit across a region (Sarah Birch); a focus on outcomes (Lesley Sanderson); service users at the heart - well-being of children and families (Sue Webster; Margaret Lochrie; James Hemsall) by communicating powerfully and widely to get our message across (Sue Eggersdorff).

So morphing in a positive way may be how we achieve the shape that works for our centre(s) where we are. Morph also learned this week that trusting the community may be a great way for people to vote with their pockets about things they care for. Crowd funding a new Aardman Animations project has generated almost all the capital required for 50% of the new Morph short films in less than a week. The call



reached people who had really good childhood associations with this engaging little character - early experiences shape who we become and touch us deeply. If we know we are value-driven and our early help can make a lasting impact for good - who should we be telling, how and soon?

with acknowledgement to Porter and Lee (2013)

A Leadership Journey through Commissioning and into Hill Valley & Vale Children's Centres

Sarah Birch

A group of local Children's Centre Leaders formed an organisation which bid for and won the contract to run 7 Children's Centres in Gloucestershire – this is how they did it. They have now set up a consultancy to help you to do the same

Hill Valley & Vale Children's Centres came into being in response to Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) decision to tender out all of its Children's Centres. The seven Children's Centres in the Stroud area were offered as a locality group – the requirement was to go for them all or go for none of them – no half measures.

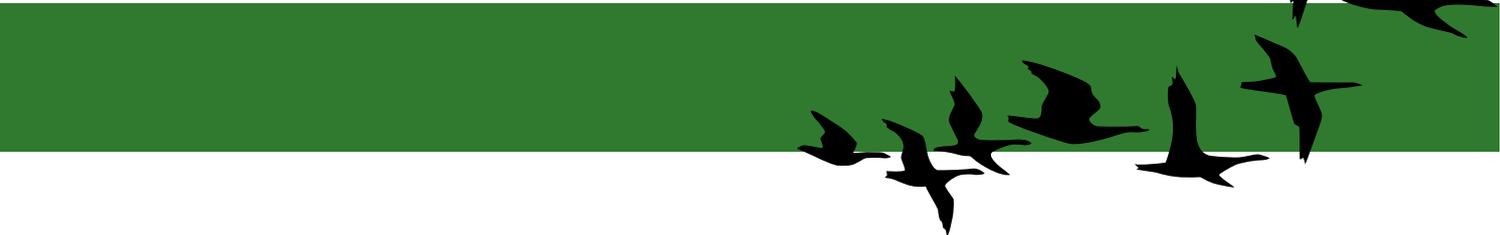
The invitation to tender went live in July 2012 with a deadline for the beginning of September. Two months to write a bid which would convince GCC that

we have what it takes to make a success of running their Children's Centres - and we knew we were up against stiff opposition from national organisations – two months when most people are taking things a bit easy or away on holiday!

Experienced local Children's Centre Leaders are the best people to manage and run Children's Centres in our own local communities

However, the preparation for tendering had begun almost a year beforehand. There are costs involved in setting up an organisation which will meet the stringent requirements needed to satisfy European Union Procurement Law. We enlisted the help of lawyers, accountants, and advisors whose services do not come cheap; funds were needed upfront before we knew whether or not we had won the tender.

On specialist advice, we chose a charity model for our constitution and governance – this required the formation of a company limited by guarantee, registered at Companies House and an application to the Charities Commission for registration and recognition; these are not speedy



processes – neither organisation will be hurried or harried – so plenty of time is needed.

The right trustees/directors need to be appointed - care and time needs to be taken over these appointments as these are the people who will lead the future development of the new organisation. In addition, if the business structure you choose is not properly constituted, you will not clear even the initial hurdles of the tendering process – we know of organisations which have failed at this early stage.

Do your homework! We did a lot of reading around government guidelines, organisational models and the issues involved in tendering, so we were well informed. However, at the end of the day, it is the authority/body offering the invitation to tender which has the upper hand and calls the shots. By engaging with the tendering process, you are agreeing to abide by European Union Procurement Law and the interpretation of that law by the tendering body.

The business of tender writing is very full-on and time-consuming. We downloaded an enormous document over 200 pages long which had to be completed with rigour. Answers had to be restricted to specified word-counts. There were sections on subjects such as data protection law, pension bonds and money laundering to which we

didn't even understand the questions – never mind the answers – we do now! Once again, plenty of time is needed to seek the appropriate advice from professionals to ensure that you and your organisation do yourselves justice – never forget that you will be up against large national charities and businesses which have specialist departments at their finger-tips.

Whilst engaged in writing the tender you must also think ahead to what you will need to have in place if you win it. Setting

up a bank account for a new organisation with no previous track record takes months; insurance premiums, licences, pension bonds and ICO membership (Information Commissioner's Office) could all be requirements of the tender process.

Think about what your council/lead body provides for you now in terms of finance support, human resources (HR) advice, payroll and the provision of pension schemes – you will need to source and appoint companies to do all of this for you in order to independently



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and successfully run your own organisation.

A key part of engaging with our tendering process involved the installation of a new information and communication technology (ICT) system – the local authority system was to be removed. We therefore had to set about a tender process of our own, approaching ICT companies with a specification, comparing and costing the bids which we received in return – as well as understanding them!

What sustained us through the steep learning curves, the nail-

biting months of bid-writing and the nerve-wracking wait for the outcome? It was and still is the passionate belief that as a group of experienced local Children's Centre Leaders we are the best people to manage and run Children's Centres in our own local communities.

Our passion, belief and hard work paid off – Hill Valley & Vale won the bid to run the Stroud family of Children's Centres. Following our success, we have now set up our own consultancy – **Brilliant Bids** – to work with other Centre Leaders and groups who aspire to run their own Children's Centres.

If you feel the same way as we do and would like our support with any aspect of preparation, budgeting, or bidding to manage and run your own Children's Centres, please contact us:

brilliantbids@hvv.org.uk



Sarah Birch

—centre leader for hill valley & vale children's centres



Sustainable Leadership Learning:

The impact of the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL)

Maureen Longley

Journal entry - **September – NPQICL Day One Module One**

“What have I let myself in for? What am I doing here? How did I get myself talked into signing up for all this work and even scarier is being asked to talk about myself and how I lead my team. It’s so busy I just get on with it and don’t have time to think about the how or the why.”

Journal entry – **July – Symposium Day**

“I cannot believe that I have to leave this learning community, what will I do without this amazing support? Reflective practice – feels that I have a highlighter in my head that underlines the things I need to re consider and challenge myself about. Journaling has become my best friend, a place to park ideas, concerns and check out on going themes. Am I a different person now? I am certainly a different leader”

There is nothing like asking a convert if you want an enthusiastic response, as these extracts from my journal show. I joined the first roll-out of the programme, somewhat reluctantly, but became so engaged with the learning process that I went on to be a mentor and now programme leader.

Having worked alongside so many children’s centre leaders and seen how their confidence, skills and ambitions (for themselves and others) have grown as a result of being part of the NPQICL, I still find it hard to acknowledge that beyond the early years sector there is still some scepticism about not only the quality and relevance of the learning embedded into the programme but the impact that this has on outcomes for children and families. Traditionally in early years we are not good at letting others know about our successes and how others need to value what we achieve.

I wanted to find out if the NPQICL learning opportunities really made a difference in the years following completion of the programme, so we invited children’s centre leaders from cohorts 1 to 7 to share with us their reflections via questionnaires and case studies. In this report we have only been able to give a snapshot of the many and detailed

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accounts that have been shared with us but they unequivocally show how given the right opportunities, skills and support children's centre leaders have been set on a pathway of continuous personal development that does have direct impact on the outcomes for the children and

families that we are all passionate about supporting.

What have I let myself in for?

There needs to be greater recognition of the complex and crucial role that children's centre leaders and their teams play in really addressing the issues within the early years sector:

grappling with the challenging situations around working collaboratively with other professional agencies

working alongside other early years providers with the same targets to improve educational outcomes

truly engaging with parents to help them make sustainable changes in their own lives, and

many other remits that come and go depending on political agendas.



So what helps to sustain them, to prepare them to take necessary risks and allow them to face the new challenges of reduced budgets and re-commissioning? I think **this impact study** shows some of the answers and how important effective sustainable leadership is for the future – everyone's future.

Let **me** know what you think.

Maureen Longley
programme lead - NPQICL eastern leadership centre
early years associate - national college for teaching and leadership



Organisational readiness

A pragmatic approach to preparing and planning for a future children's centre inspection

Lesley Sanderson

Yes, one day, one fine day, if it hasn't happened already then most likely it will and whether you want it or not, the telephone will ring and, yes, a voice, the voice at the other end of the 'phone proclaims what you have possibly been dreading for some time - the announcement of your impending Ofsted inspection!

But fear no more! This article is here to offer you 'ten top tips' to help in your hours of need, to fight the fear and forge through the process. Be prepared, enjoy and don't be caught like *rabbits in the headlights*!

So what are these 'ten top tips' you may ask, to help me through this tricky time?

Adopt the right frame of mind.

See it in a positive light, recognising the process to be what it should be, a generative one, as a quality improvement tool that will inform best practice with the key purpose being how we can lead our centres more effectively to ensure children and families get the services they need and deserve.

'Start with the end in mind'.

(Covey, 1999) Reflect on Stephen Covey's second habit for highly successful people and consider what you ultimately want to achieve. Therefore, in preparing for Ofsted there are some basic questions that are the **foundations** of the framework and which all staff should be able to answer.

These are:

What are you doing?

(Reflect on where you are now, do you have a clear overview of what is and isn't in place and where you want to be)

Why? (Identify need and understand how it fits with your priorities for the reach)

What progress are you making? (How are you tracking this?)

What difference will it make? (What will be the impact?)

How will you know when you get there? (What evidence do you have of the impact?)

Look out over the horizon to see what's coming.

'Getting on the balcony,' (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002). A good leader steps back to achieve perspective while remaining fiercely engaged.

Are you aware of what may be looming over that horizon that may affect what you do now and how will this knowledge determine how you shape future services?

Be prepared!

Know your community, know your data and importantly, ensure that you are very familiar with the latest **Children's centre inspection handbook for inspections from April 2013** and reflect on how you are able to meet or plan to meet its requirements. Have key information ready that Ofsted will want to consider such as planning documents, policies and procedures, data, evaluation of services and assessments of impact. Is your SEF really telling the story accurately demonstrating that your judgements are sound, based on evidence available and providing a secure platform from which to develop further? Remember to ensure that your website is accessible, welcoming and up to date.

Don't blame others!

It's all too easy to *point the finger* at others for lack of data or cooperation for example. The question is how proactive have you been, what YOU have done about it and with whom you have raised your concerns?

A team approach.

How engaged are others and how do you know? Ideally, they need to be participants, not prisoners,

protesters or passengers, (Fletcher, 2007) which may happen if they feel they have not been part of the development process of the centre. Therefore, ensure partners are briefed well BEFORE they meet inspectors as it is vital that partners understand the Ofsted inspection process. There will be time implications for them and they need to understand that their contributions are vital.

To that effect, consider preparing well in advance, perhaps at a Local Authority (LA) level, general briefing notes for a variety of partners agencies that can be downloaded electronically and adapted for individual reach areas that all centre managers can use which highlight the purpose of the inspection, the partner's role in it and the sort of questions that inspectors may well ask.

Cluster arrangements.

Are you collaborating with your partner children's centres and co-ordinators and are you all up to speed with national and local development? Do you have a co-ordinator to collate information on behalf of individual centres where there is a cluster agreement and, if not, who is co-ordinating information, especially for those who may be disadvantaged in some way and need to get the best start in life, to demonstrate that you are providing seamless and appropriate services and offering value for money?

↳ maintaining your focus while taking the heat, managing your personal vulnerabilities and learning how to anchor yourself and sustain your spirits through tough times are key leadership attributes

Don't change or put off activities.

The centre needs to keep running smoothly. Last minute changes may cause confusion and frustration to all concerned as well as, and most importantly, to children and families. Don't be worried if everything is not in place. Show how you have tried to reach a family even if there has been no impact and what your next strategies for engagement are. The key point is that you KNOW what still needs to be done and have a plan about how to get there.

Don't panic and be yourself!

'Hold steady' (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002), maintaining your focus while taking the heat, managing your personal vulnerabilities and learning how to anchor yourself and sustain your spirits through tough times are key leadership attributes. Your calm manner and controlled behaviour will have enormous impact on others, helping to reassure them that everything is under control! Don't forget, you all work very hard and have some good stories to tell. And remember, if you consider some of these pointers, then there will be no need to panic anyway!



Some further practical steps at children's centre level

Familiarisation with inspection schedule. Working through judgements and evidence base

Familiarisation with Briefing Papers for partners (LA) and share with them in advance

Consider who should be invited to meet inspectorate team

Case studies, paper work generally accessible



Staff briefing on what to expect

Arrangements for briefing and debriefing partners and staff during inspection

Contingency planning; what if the centre manager is on leave?

Practicalities of where inspectors will park/ sit/ coffee etc

Ensure that the LA and your lead agency is aware of inspection

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Covey S, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. (1989 London: Simon & Schuster UK)

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Heifetz R.A and Linsky M, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, (2002) Harvard Business School Press

Surowiecki J *Wisdom of the crowds*, (2005), Anchor Books, New York

Websites:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources

Children's centre inspection handbook for inspections from April 2013

The framework for children's centre inspection from April 2013

Inspection of your children's centre from April 2013



You only have one chance to make a good impression a personal reflection

Sue Webster

There is nothing like a personal experience to heighten your awareness of what leadership looks like from the operational end of the organisation. Recently I became a third party consumer of service within the care sector, a member of a family that needed an urgent intervention. In my attempt to survive this experience emotionally, I have spent some time considering the leadership of an organisation from the perspective of a resistant consumer. The focus of the service I have experienced is not dissimilar to that in children's centres:

very busy places working alongside many partners

well-trained and professional teams who offer a friendly welcome and genuinely try to accommodate individual needs

teams that reach-out to families experiencing challenging situations

people who are feeling vulnerable and threatened because of the changes they will inevitably need to make.

My academic interest in leadership and the similarities I perceived related to leading a children's centre enabled me to make allowances and understand some of the complexities faced by those leading in a hospital or a care home. But, without the benefit of this knowledge, it could be difficult to understand or to make allowances, if you feel unheard and resistant. When leadership within the family is disorientated, there is a clear need for strong leadership from every member of the team engaging with that family. Good hierarchical leaders are not enough; each member of the team must lead the family skilfully. Families can feel publically exposed and need to know they are in a safe place before they can accept and, importantly trust, any interventions required.

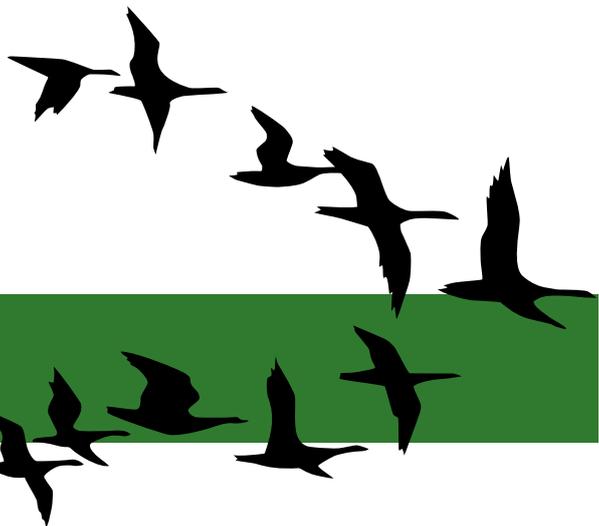
As professionals we all know a great deal about the challenges of engaging with people that are resistant to our services. My own experiences, from the perspective of the family, have amplified my

thinking. There are two key factors that I would like to highlight:

internal tensions between different family members can be a key barrier to a quality induction process for the person who is the focus of the intervention

the degree/ severity of intervention may mean that the family by-passes some of the key induction processes. This could include key information about your organisational practices and policies.

Clearly, the size of a children's centre dictates your ability to engage with every new family who arrives. If capacity factors mean that it is unlikely that you meet families in person, how do you ensure that your values are communicated through other staff in your team? With many forms and assessments required to induct a new family, do you have a



mechanism to ensure that the shared values are evident in the process even with most junior or part-time staff who may be on duty when the family arrives?

We all know that personal warmth is essential when leading teams, to establish good, trusting relationships. When leading families with diverse expectations we also need to deploy warmth together with emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). My reflections suggest that during the early days of the relationship we are being tested and assessed too. While warmth is essential, it can be perceived as patronising, particularly if we are not passing the efficiency test. Simple mistakes are translated as incompetence in the early days.

I am not suggesting that we undertake any more formal assessments, but rather we ensure that teams understand the value of using different styles with different family members. Perhaps knowing about more about how people behave in groups would be helpful. For example the four behaviour types shared by Colin Fletcher and discussed during the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) would be worthy of discussion in a team meeting or development day.

Equally, an understanding of Iceberg Theory (Freud, 2004) offers valuable prompts. What is going on beneath the surface? Does your team observe and share observations regularly? Are any toxins, conflict or mental health issues preventing effective interaction? Conversely are there any observed nutrients that can be used to drive positive interactions and behaviours? (Whitaker, 1997).

There used to be an advertisement that said 'you only have one chance to make a good impression' and if you don't, resistant families have already decided they don't need you. My experience has helped me to understand the importance of a quality induction process. In my case we were an out-of-hours emergency. All the staff I met were wonderful people, but circumstances meant that basic information about the service was not shared as a foundation to the process. The problem this created was that after 24 hours it was assumed that we

knew how the service worked. As carers we felt highly disorientated. Clearly it would be a great folly to postpone emergency access in favour of ensuring that information is communicated. But it is vital that this is addressed at the earliest possible

“Good hierarchical leaders are not enough; each member of the team must lead the family skilfully”

opportunity. The onus must be on the organisation, as welcoming good hosts, to pave the way rather than relying on families to pick

up information as they go along. As a benchmark, consider what the Protester will be thinking and feeling and how their behaviour will impact on the emotional well-being of the family and your team members. Protesters and Prisoners begin from a negative standpoint; even the tiny mistakes we make become forgivable incompetence. The more positive Passengers and Participants soon become worn down by the negativity and stressed environment. The benefits of the services are no longer the priority as relationships between the organisation and the



“You only have one chance to make a good impression and if you don't, resistant families have already decided they don't need you”

family can spiral out of control as optimism and hope become clouded by anxiety and despair. Almost psychologically the service becomes the problem.

Research in the commercial sector (Rawson et al (2013) *Touchpoints matter, but it's the full journey really counts*), suggests that rather than concentrating on users' overall satisfaction at the end of an intervention, when perhaps it is a little late, each process should be evaluated individually. This has two benefits; firstly services can address issues more quickly. Secondly and perhaps more importantly the individual evaluations when brought together as an overall journey through the organisation, identify the bigger organisational challenges to ensure customer satisfaction. It is interesting that Rawson et al, (2013) conclude that all the solutions can be found within the organisation by the staff involved. Leaders do not need to employ consultants, rather they need to gather local intelligence and devote precious time for staff to lead together.

Finally take some time to consider whether any aspects of my recent experiences resonate with you? Do some families resist support and disengage too quickly? Perhaps the topic is worthy of deeper discussions in your staff team.

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- Rawson A, Duncan, E, & Jones, C, (2013) *The truth about customer experience*. Harvard Business Review (September, 2013 pp 90-98)
- Whitaker, P, (1997) *Primary Schools and the future*. Buckingham: Open University Press

When did you last consider the following questions as a team?

How much do you know about the quality of your welcome, induction and transition processes?

Have you an agreement about the style and content of communication with new families and what you need to do in exceptional circumstances?

Can you make time to analyse the conditions that led up to critical incidents, complaints or negative behaviours?

Does your organisation need more leaders who have the skills and the emotional intelligence to build warm, trusting relationships with each member of the family and understand the potential barriers to participation?



Family Learning Works

Margaret Lochrie

Could family literacy and learning be the key to closing the divide between the most disadvantaged children in the UK and their better off peers? A new report, **Family Learning Works**, from the National Institute of Continuing Adult Education (NIACE), the result of a year-long inquiry, suggests that family learning is so crucial to parenting that it should be part of the core offer of children's centres and other community provision.

The Inquiry, chaired by Baroness Howarth of Breckland, reviewed evidence from within the UK and

abroad demonstrating the considerable impact of family learning programmes on the skills, capabilities and aspirations of children and parents; and on the ability of parents and carers to assist in their children's education and development. Of

particular significance is the evidence that family language and maths impact on children's attainment while at the same time yielding wider benefits for parents,

in terms of self-esteem, parenting confidence, improved health and employability.

The report of the Inquiry was published on 18th October, just days after the release of a major study, **Skilled for Life?** by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showing that England's 16 to 24-year-olds are falling behind young people from other developed countries. Within the study, England came 22nd for literacy and 21st for numeracy out of 24 countries.¹

Very many children's centres already offer family learning activities or adult learning opportunities for parents. Stay and Play sessions are attended by young children with their parents and evidenced-based programmes like Breakthrough to Literacy and Early Literacy and Learning also have opportunities for family involvement.

However, the current national evaluation of children's centres found that among children's centres in the most deprived areas, whilst 87% offer adult learning, those opportunities

“family language and maths yield wider benefits for parents, in terms of self-esteem, parenting confidence, improved health and employability”

are the least well attended and are more reliant on staff employed by other organisations.²

In addition, in 2011, a national survey by the National Literacy Trust of 500 local providers working with families found that nearly half rarely or never signposted parents to support for themselves and more than a third rarely or never talked to parents about how they could support their children's literacy.

Literacy is the foundation for all other learning, for full citizenship, for finding and keeping employment and is crucial to effective parenting. Parents functioning at very low levels of literacy and numeracy may find it difficult to understand safety instructions relating to medicines or to understand nutrition labels on packaged food, quite aside from supporting their children's learning. If all children are to achieve their full potential, the gap between parents who have both the skills and the knowledge to support their children

Adult learning opportunities are the least well attended and are more reliant on staff employed by other organisations

in their literacy development and those parents who do not need to be closed. Those parents who do not have strong literacy skills need targeted support as part of the core work of a children's centre, with family learning integral to outreach programmes. With the right support, all families can become learning families.



footnotes

¹ Skilled for Life? Key findings from the survey of adult skills, OECD 2013

² Evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE) Strand 1: First Survey of Children's Centre Leaders in the Most Deprived Areas, DFE RR230 2012

Margaret Lochrie
director of capacity



Achieving Two Year Olds: statutory duty comes into force

James Hemsall



**an opportunity for
leaders to develop
new provision to
reach the least
advantaged two
year olds and their
families**

September 2013 saw the statutory duty on local authorities to provide up to 15 hours per week of early learning for the 20% least advantaged two year olds. We are pleased to report progress has been growing steadily over the past 12 months. Local authority confidence in delivery has been high overall for 2013 and this is reflected in the current numbers of children funded.

We have seen tremendous progress since funds have been available to local authorities in April in advance of the duty coming into place in September 2013. In April, the Achieving Two Year Olds self-evaluation forms estimated 70,000 funded children in April 2013, we expect this to have risen gradually in summer term, as we believe around 30,000 more children are funded each term, which is in line with targets.

Most places for 2013 have been found in unused capacity, remodelling of settings' routines, rotas, staffing, and spaces. This has mainly meant that the existing workforce, with some modest growth and response has been able to meet the new demand.

POLICY

Some new provision has been developed and this will grow further towards September 2014, and training and recruitment activities are underway across the country. Involving schools and childminders will again support such a need. The focus for 2014 will be to also respond to the growing interest in schools, children's centres and childminders offering two year old places.

At A2YO we have been able to spread lots of good practice and ideas (through regional and national network meetings, and our online knowledge hub). A2YO is also running a series of provider roadshows this year for settings, schools and childminders to find out more and outline how to get involved. This aims to complement the efforts of local authorities.

The dates and locations are:

25th November 2013	Newcastle
26th November 2013	Birmingham
3rd December 2013	Nottingham
5th December 2013	Dorset
6th December 2013	Leeds
11th December 2013	London



Collective Voice

Sue Egersdorff

Globalisation is a trend affecting many things and early childhood development is no exception.

Exposure to events, practice and outcomes in far away places broadens our vision, heightens awareness of what works and improves our thinking about the needs of babies, young children and their families.

Over the last year, a group of early years practitioners and academics have been working together across children's centres and early years teaching schools to explore the concept of developing a global digital platform through which practice can be discussed and shared, new initiatives signposted and professionals connected within and across communities, regions and ultimately countries.

The concept was launched on November 14th at a London Early Years Foundation Event to celebrate

social enterprise day and since then there has been an encouraging buzz of interest both nationally and internationally. The Institute will initially work alongside the University of Northampton and UNICEF to support the creation of a UNICEF Rights of the Child goal for Early Childhood Development.

The focus will be on finding ways to challenge the universal BIG 4 threats facing babies and young children in varying degrees across the world, particularly the most vulnerable.

- Child poverty**
- Poor health and disease**
- Neglect, abuse and violence**
- Unsatisfactory educational provision**

“If you want to understand the tiger don't go to the zoo, go to the jungle”

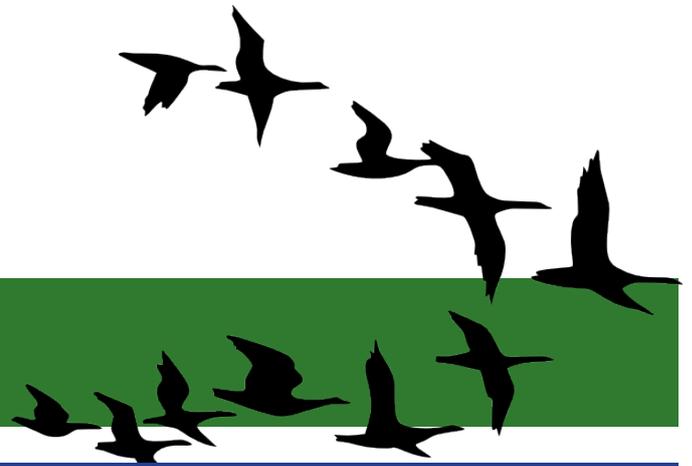
The platform will be available to anyone with an interest in

making a positive difference in outcomes for babies and young children. It will promote integrated, multi-agency involvement and engagement at a range of levels but with one collective and serious intent – to enable and encourage practitioners to lead and learn from each other. After all, “If you want to understand the tiger don't go to the zoo, go to the jungle.”

Over the coming month the Institute will launch a holding website where further information and expressions of interest can be logged – so watch this space – more detail in the next issue including an interview with the two of the founders Doctor Eunice Lumsden, Head of early Childhood.



PRODUCTIVITY



Providing free early learning for two year olds - Information Roadshows for group settings, childminders and schools

Achieving Two Year Olds (A2YO) is the national DfE support project for providers and local authorities to support the creation of sufficient quality places for the estimated 260,000 least advantaged children in England from September 2014.

Over 100,000 two year olds are already eligible for funded places and with the support of Government funding, settings have new business opportunities to consider.

Aims: A2YO information roadshows are FREE and will provide you with:

- Ideas of what you could or should be doing to create places for eligible two year olds
- Guidance on how to work with your local authority to become a provider
- Examples from other group providers, schools and childminders

25th November 2013 – Newcastle

26th November 2013 – Birmingham

3rd December 2013 – Nottingham

5th December 2013 – Dorset

6th December 2013 – Leeds

11th December 2013 – London

All half day roadshows from 9.30am-1.00pm



This is a FREE event. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Download a booking form by visiting the A2YO section at www.hempsalls.com

All enquiries to: Julie Crookes on 0844 824 3083 or bookings@hempalls.com



achieving **2** year olds

hempalls

monday 25th NOVEMBER 2013

The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1H 0DG

The National Literacy Trust would like to invite you to the prestigious annual **Talk To Your Baby conference, Giving babies the best start: what we know works and what's new.**

Delegates from across the early years sector will hear in-depth and engaging reviews of policy, research and practice.

Just like previous years, we have secured a great line-up of experts for the conference. **Carey Oppenheim, Chief Executive of the Early Intervention Foundation** will deliver the keynote session. Other contributors are **Julie Revels**, developer of the **Inspired by Babies programme** and **Nabiah Sohail** who is a Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and will share her expertise on bilingualism. Presentations will include **Child Talk: What works**, by the States of Jersey Language for Life programme and the new **Talk to Your Baby quality setting award**. The **National Literacy Trust** will present its new findings following its first national Early Years survey.

This year's conference will also have a range of exhibitors sharing products and practice, which delegates will have a great opportunity to explore these and network with colleagues across the sector.

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Leading Self