

Quality Enhancement

Professor Cathy Nutbrown

Professor Nutbrown has been asked by the Government to lead an independent review of qualifications for the early education and childcare workforce, considering how best to strengthen qualifications and create clear career pathways; how to create a high-qualified, skilled, knowledgeable and professional workforce; and how to ensure practitioners are child and family centred, as well as confident and ready to work with families.



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I published my Interim Report into Early Education and Childcare Qualifications in the middle of March. It reflects the consistent message that adults working with young children must be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the physical and emotional needs of babies, toddlers and young children, to provide appropriate learning opportunities, and to work effectively with families.

We want all children to be given the best opportunities and support in their early years. This is fundamental to their all round development and learning. The professionals I have spoken with during my review and who responded to my call for evidence are passionate about the important role the early years workforce has to play. For many years, I have focused on what it is to be a respectful educator, because it is crucial that the adults working with young children and their families have the sensitivities, skills and knowledge they need to provide the best possible experiences for young children. Relevant and robust qualifications can make a difference to the quality of the workforce.

Quality early years experiences ultimately lead to better outcomes for children. In early years settings, large and small, the quality of support for children's well-being and learning, and the support given to their families, is dependent upon the qualifications, skills, experience and attitudes of all who make up the early years team. Leading and managing a team to work effectively across education, health and social work disciplines can bring out the best in everyone and lead to positive experiences for children, parents and staff.

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“Clear-sighted and effective leadership is crucial

Association of Teachers and Lecturers –
response to the call for evidence on Early
Education and Childcare Qualifications

Leadership is a key determinant of quality and I believe it is vital that we have excellent leaders in our early years settings. Effective pedagogical leadership in early years settings is recognised as one of the most important elements in raising quality and we need pedagogical leaders working with children in all settings. Effective leadership involves establishing a clear vision for the setting, communicating and sharing that vision with staff and families, and working as a team to realise ambitious goals for children. To achieve this, a good leader will:

Always keep the needs and interests of babies and young children at the centre of decision making

Inspire, support and encourage colleagues

Communicate well with colleagues and carers/parents

Establish priorities for individual families

Involve colleagues in decision making and planning

Ensure a multidisciplinary focus on child development so that children's all round well being and development is central

Monitor progress, suggest ways to improve, and tackle emerging issues of quality

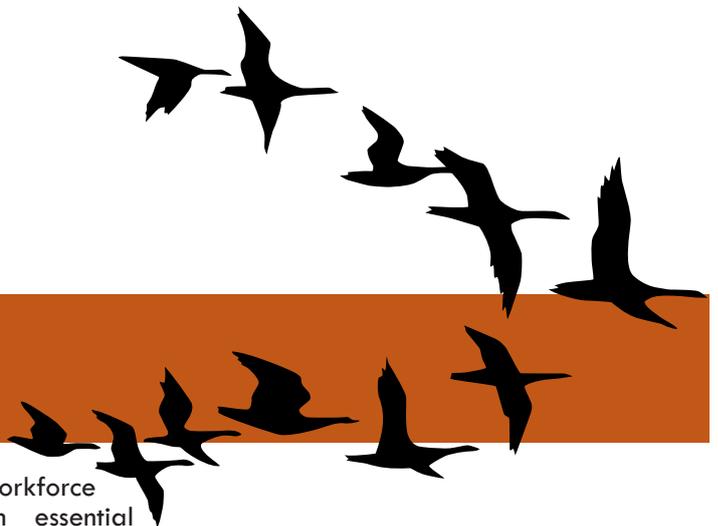
Reflect on practice, learn from what works and what does not, and seek to improve in the future

All early years staff, whatever their role or qualification, can take a lead on something, show initiative, offer ideas. Most good leaders will know that leadership does not happen in isolation but involves creating opportunities for new leaders to emerge from those at earlier points in their early years career. Good interpersonal skills are therefore of paramount importance—emotional intelligence, good listening and communication skills, the ability to inspire trust and confidence, are all essential attributes of a good leader. Qualifications for aspiring leaders and strong continuing professional development programmes for existing leaders are important to develop and maintain high quality early years settings.

Early years practice – with a strongly understood and articulated pedagogical base - must encompass children's holistic development and the roles of families in their children's learning and development. Effective leaders can help early years practitioners to reflect on their practice, understand the impact of their work, and, importantly, make more visible their work, for themselves, for children and families and for others in the wider early years community.

The experiences that children have in their earliest years can help them to develop as confident, powerful, competent young people and adults. We know that children are born with powerful motivations to learn and so they need positive relationships with the people who work with them in order to enhance their intrinsic motivation.

Early childhood education, as in every other stage of education, demands that we live up to the responsibility of articulating not only what we do and the impact of our work, but also how, and



why we do what we do. We need to articulate our practice, to parents and carers as well as to wider society.

working as a team to realise ambitious goals for children

The impact of any setting (be it a nursery, a children's centre, a reception class, or childminder working in a home-based environment) on any child will be largely influenced by the staff who work with them. They are the most expensive and most important resource and it is important to invest properly in the adults who choose early childhood education and care as a career. Part of that investment needs to be in a robust qualifications framework, which offers progression from the outset, with ongoing professional development opportunities. During my Review so far, I have visited a number of settings around the country, held workshops, met with organisations and individuals, and gathered information through my Call for Evidence. I have been hugely impressed by the commitment shown by so many to enhancing the quality of qualifications held by those who work with young children. Getting

qualifications for the workforce right is an essential ingredient to respectful early education for young children. I am considering a number of recommendations to Government including a question around how the qualifications structure and content helps to develop and support strong pedagogical leadership, including good understanding of child development, modern attachment theories, play, multidisciplinary working, work with families and reflective practice.

As I move into the last phase of my Review I continue to listen and think about these important issues. When I report in June this year, my findings will be set on firm evidence and real experience, of what makes for a good qualifications framework and what needs to change.

Early years staff can take a lead on something

You can find out more information about my [Review here](#).

Professor Cathy Nutbrown
professor of education - sheffield university

Serving Quality

Vicki Lant

One of the joys I valued as a teacher of young children was that buzz of being a co-learner; someone with a bit more experience of the world, definitely, but alongside, on the journey to finding-out. The buzz was and is so often about noticing the patterns in life - from everywhere. Think about the five-ness of five, from the pip-casings in the core of your apple when you cut it in half horizontally, the lobes on a geranium leaf, the arrangement of buttercup and lilac petals, pentagrams, the elements of nature, fingers, the legs on a starfish, the senses, pentacles, toes, the Olympic rings and simple rules for happiness! The whole universe in four letters - magic **five!**

Being around young children gives us a true renaissance-man approach to living, curiosity, excitement and extraordinary freedoms to put unexpected things together to test out theories. This kind of creative connectivity is inspirational when we need to look differently at what we do. It's fascinating to walk in someone else's shoes

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or see things through a different perspective to achieve a greater focus on what we think we see every day.

We find leadership practice everywhere - if we notice and appreciate, true appreciative enquiry. In working with local authority colleagues undertaking the Herculean task to create and populate children's centres and place them in the hearts and minds of communities within five years, I was excited that they were finding new language to describe familiar roles. Passive **receptionists** were swept away to introduce **pro-active welcomers**, role descriptions that talked about hospitality, children and families at the centre of service. When leaders and followers were pulsing at white heat, they didn't turn naturally to reading to inspire. But the stories and images of others **in practice** - surprising others - were powerful and timely.

Commercial guru, **Mary Portas** has very pertinent things to say about quality service - drawing the eye and the person in to an environment that lets you see (not cluttered), breathe (find your own equilibrium), invites you to react (touch, stroke, smile, laugh), invites you connect (offer opinion, request) and then, exchange - personal interaction for some benefit. How do our centres stand up to this audit? They were designed to be non-institutional places - clean, bright, like home, smelling good and invitational. Is that vision still alive? Is that heart still pumping with all the passion for great service that inspired this initiative?

Learning and applying sound marketing principles to test the quality of our invitation, the warmth of our welcome to access our services, should be just as

natural and regular as updating the SEF - in fact using the evidence of family need and data to drive the priorities for what we do is sound and principled business practice. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations has summarised the **eight ps of marketing** in its **Guide to good trading**. The community sector can give us a strong steer on ethical business models to help us sustain the services we value when there is less grant funding to go around.

But I digress. The real leadership surprise came from Michel Roux. I watched his transformational progress of a group of disaffected, disenfranchised young people, into a team, truly in touch with each other, creating joyful service experiences (dining) that made people feel like royalty. Michel's maître d'hotel and mentor to the group, Fred Sirieix highlights the qualities for great front of house service:

knowing when and when not to

character: "You've got to enjoy people ... you've got to enjoy making something come together and enjoy pleasing people." "We recruited on personality and knew we could teach them the rest ..."

have a natural flair: "... there has to be something about the person first; they need to know how to engage with customers and there has to be something about their personality that wants to give that hospitality."

knowing when and when not to show certain sides of your personality is an important quality.

the art of reading guests: "Trying to anticipate customers - understanding when a customer wants to be engaged with and when he wants to be left alone - is largely down to trial and experience."

the art of multi-tasking: "It is a real skill to look after eight groups at a time ... You have to make decisions ... you have to prioritise; it's something only a lot of very busy services can teach you."



the art of reading guests

This could be extracted from the job description of the centre welcomer, or you in modelling family-centred service? Exemplified in the young people's transformation were the following ten tips for great service, which spoke to me in finding new ways to think about interagency working, team motivation, welcoming, enfolding hospitality and an experience that is led and paced absolutely by the customer. I make no apology for retaining the dining service model - it has such resonance with Donna Ladkin's article, Leading Beautifully :

- Ensure there is a good flow of communication between front-of-house and back-of-house teams.**
- Keep that flow of communication going throughout service.
- Make sure your front-of-house team feels motivated before service begins. Ensure they are well fed and happy and that they know everything there is to know about the menu . . .**
- When guests arrive make sure your front-of-house staff recognise them and greet them by name if possible.
- Front of house should anticipate the needs of guests as soon as they arrive. Read their body language and respond to their needs accordingly.**
- Be prompt to offer them hospitality.
- Waiters should announce each dish as they serve it. The way the food is delivered is important.**
- Once the guests' food is served, don't forget them. Keep their wine and water topped up. No guests should serve their own wine and doing so gives you a great opportunity to check your diners are enjoying their meal and a good chance to up-sell. Keep the table clean throughout service, too.
- All your waiting staff should be empowered to deal with a problem as it occurs. Diners don't want to wait for the restaurant manager to deal with a problem. Customers that have complaints dealt with quickly and efficiently can become your most loyal customers.**
- Don't forget to say goodbye: it's the lasting impression that your guests will leave with.**



Michel Roux says, the truly great waiters and maître d's have strong emotional intelligence as well as impeccable manners. Leading practice is not just about the what, it is so much about the how - our articles in this edition challenge us to shape up to "beautiful" leadership.

_____ Vicki Lant
_____programme leader serco partnership NPQICL

References:

[Vaughan, Tom. Friday 11 March 2011 10:46. Michel Roux's service - what happens next? Caterer and Hotelkeeper. Accessed 08 May 2012](#)

[Ladkin, D. D., 2009. Leading Beautifully: How Mastery, Coherence and Purpose contribute to Inspirational Leadership Performance. Exeter: University of Exeter.](#)

A Breath of Fresh... Learning

Annie Davy

Children's centre leaders are often working in places of upward and downward pressure. They are expected to meet the requirements of funders and managers on the one hand, and the needs of their staff and the community on the other. Leaders have daily demands on their time and pressures to contribute to a range of activities. Centres are going through big changes now and for the foreseeable future. The centre leaders I have been working with have found that participating in an action learning set enables deeper thinking. The set focuses on the issues that matter to them most, with people who understand exactly where they are coming from.

When I left my job as head of early years for Oxfordshire last year I was interested in the movement towards Social Enterprise. More and more people seemed to be exploring how social and ethically motivated services, previously managed by Local Authorities, could be taken on through new forms of governance which were more flexible, and hopefully more closely influenced by the beneficiaries. I joined an action learning set with other individual social entrepreneurs, and I realised that my experience of small charities as well as high level public finance and administration stood me in good stead to establish a Community Interest Company – and I wanted to learn about the process, so that is what I did. My main interest was, and is, bringing people together with the natural world, protecting and developing green spaces and taking family work outdoors. This is what we are now doing in a variety of ways – including work with children's centres and direct work with families.

More surprising for me however was how interesting I found the 'action learning set' process itself. It was tremendously refreshing and rewarding to meet with peers, away from the usual pressures of work and to learn a new group process based on active listening. There was no set agenda or required output or outcome. It was the opportunity to be reflective that I had been missing of late, and needed most. Through a well-facilitated process, we were able to present our ideas, issues and challenges in a relaxed setting conducive to

“I was interested in the movement towards Social Enterprise

creative thinking. We were able to receive support from each other in critically examining our underlining assumptions in an unhurried and non-judgmental environment. Often we got our 'ah ha' moment, where the elephant in the room that we had not dared to look at suddenly became obvious, and we came away knowing clearly what our next steps needed to be.

Action Learning heals the split between thinking and doing and helps us understand how human beings can work together more effectively.

“Action learning is a process which involves working on real challenges, using the knowledge and skills of a small group of people combined with skilled questioning, to re-interpret old and familiar concepts and produce fresh ideas”

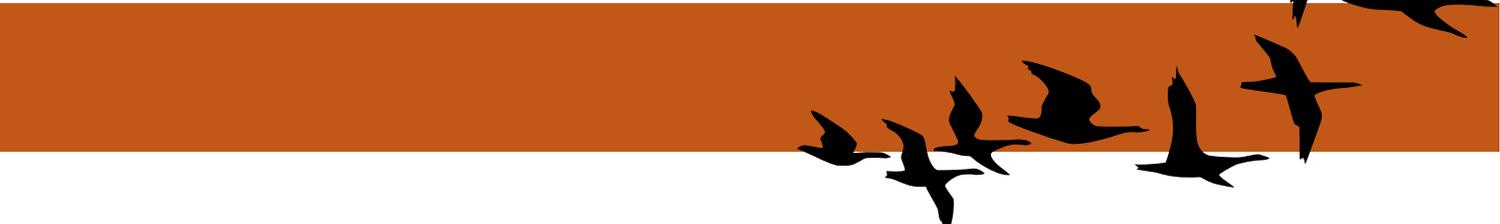
[Action Learning Associates](#)

There is so much I could say about this way of working, its subtlety and its potential to transform lives. For leaders of complex services, it can feel as though we have all the weight of responsibility and we are seemingly accountable to everyone – directors, councillors, children, parents. Once again a facilitator and provider of a space to learn makes me recall what motivated me to become a nursery teacher all those years ago. It was to provide the conditions for young children to learn together and flourish. These days when I am not writing, studying or working with children and families again outdoors, I am using action learning sets with children's centre leaders, headteachers and early years managers - often in my log cabin which has a woodburner and comfy chairs – to support each other, mine our creativity and lift those pressures through fresh thinking.

Annie Davy

former strategic lead for Children's Services & Head of Early Years Oxfordshire

director - [The Nature Effect Community Interest Company](#)



Action Research in Children's Centres

Professor Carol Aubrey

I hope to encourage and tempt you to use action research to generate professional improvement and social change collaboratively in your settings.

You may have already completed the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL) programme. From the first assignment onwards, self-assessment, reading and personal experiences will have led you to practitioner research in an aspect of your leadership that you wished to develop in order to influence better outcomes for children and families. Meanwhile, the second assignment involved you in carrying out practitioner research into an aspect of multi-agency working in order to improve outcomes for children and families. As these assignments suggest, leading a children's centre means taking responsibility for achieving the standard, Leading Learning and Development. This means developing and fostering a learning culture to enable children, families and staff to become more competent and confident learners. This is at the heart of self-evaluation and the framework for inspection of children's centres (Ofsted, 2011 a & Ofsted b).

The action research cycle

Action research is a process of thinking about or observing existing practice, planning for change, creating that change, and then reflecting on the process of change, in other words, 'think, do, review'. We identify some aspect of practice in the centre or think about some aspect of our own practice; do something to create change; then reflect on what we have done and the effect of this on centre practice. Very often this becomes a cyclical process because there is more than one cycle of 'think, do, review'. Moreover, each step may contain several actions.

For instance, at the 'think' stage in deciding what to change you may be asking a specific question –

What are the barriers to parental involvement in a 'play, talk and listen' programme for a group of teenage mothers?

What are the goals for working with artists-in-residence and how, if at all, can these be transferred successfully to other early years settings?

What do children at Bushy Tails nursery think about the play and learning opportunities available in their setting?



It may involve planning to gather baseline data and working out the details or practicalities involved. The 'do' stage will then involve gathering that baseline data – for instance, conducting informal interviews with young parents and staff; scrutinising learning logs of artists and practitioners; preparing questions that would allow children to voice their views about the nursery to 'Harrod' the teddy, a 'newcomer' to their setting who needs to know how to have a good time there.

In the 'do' stage, data collection and analysis will be careful and rigorous – different methods may be used, for instance in the 'play, talk and listen' programme, observation of 'baby talk' sessions, ascertaining what young parents would like to gain from the project through use of keepsake journals, use of disposable cameras and professionals reflections on working with vulnerable young people may also be involved. In this way, diverse methods can be used and diverse perspectives (of parents and professionals) may be considered. Common themes, issues and surprises will be identified and systematically tested. Assumptions and interpretations can be checked by seeking the agreement (or disagreement) of the

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participants in your project. This may lead to further reflection on the processes of data collection and analysis that are sufficiently robust to capture dissenting voices as well as other voices that might be 'silenced' by your approach.

This leads to 'review', not only of the outcomes or conclusions of your action research cycle but review of the way your action research was guided by ethical principles. This goes way beyond codes of ethics that refer to conduct to avoid harm and maximise the benefits; your protection of the privacy of the participants and access to information they reveal; and consideration of specific issues and responsibilities associated with young children and vulnerable families. It entails respect for their views and understandings of what is involved in participation; acknowledging that decisions at every stage of planning and implementation are shared; ensuring that all views are taken seriously throughout the stages of the project; that this includes influencing the direction and development of the project; and finally, it means helping to shape lessons to be drawn from the project. High levels of participation, collaboration and trust across participant groups

Processes that are sufficiently robust to capture dissenting voices

therefore create joint planning, implementation and evaluation of work carried out.

Lessons learned to inform future projects

In our projects, artists, young parents and children spontaneously introduced a range of media that drew on the senses - sound, vision, movement and touch, expanded our understanding of research and broadened our horizons in terms of data collection and analysis. We found that new technologies could be used to explore and record in ways that exploited forms of communication of young parents and infants used, for example, using a mobile phone to play music, take pictures and send text messages. Recorded observations showed some young children immersed in new technologies from birth and young mothers helping them to develop understanding of a range of media possibilities. A wide range of engaging and imaginative activities were introduced by artists that allowed non-verbal as well as verbal responses from young children and parents with English as an additional language and/or low confidence in their own verbal competence. Artists introduced digital cameras and camcorders to generate images that might represent significant aspects of

High levels of participation, collaboration and trust across participant groups

experience later to be followed up in group and individual discussions. Exploration of the use of photographic methods saw their application in photographic diaries, video interviews, visual 'story boards' and records.

A three-way balance was retained in responsibility for planning, implementation and reflection on research among the research leader, professionals and artists, parents and children. The result was a blurring of the stages in the action research cycle process through centre activity that promoted purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all.

Finally, what we learned was that the world had become inter-connected as well as interdependent and as leaders of learners/educators we could not afford to ignore this new reality. We felt that we all needed to extend our knowledge of the world and learn to understand the changed contexts within which learning and development was taking place. These new contexts provide us with wonderful new opportunities to examine and research the changing forms of our global interconnectivity and interdependence.

Professor Carol Aubrey
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Led By Learners

Dr. Elaine Wilmot



Personalised learning first appeared in the public arena in a party conference speech made by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair in autumn 2003. It was supported by the advent of 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003a) and 'Excellence and Enjoyment' (DfES, 2003b) and was at the heart of the 'Five Year Strategy' (DfES, 2004). Resources were developed by the National College for School Leadership to support personalised learning; Schools for the Future were being built to accommodate these new ways of working and the National Remodelling Team supported schools in developing greater flexibility within the school's workforce. The infrastructure was developing to support one of the biggest changes to the education system since the 1870s. Personalised learning was talked about as if it were something that can be done, finished and ticked off as completed. I much prefer the term 'personalising learning' because I see the process as a never-ending journey of discovery about what works for each individual child.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to personalising learning. The very essence of it is that learning should be different for every learner. It should reflect their needs, their wants, their dreams, their developing skills and abilities and develop their talents and excite them with new interests. There

should be a whole-setting approach to putting the learning needs of every individual child first, so that a solution can be found to empower learners to manage their own learning.

In reality, personalisation of learning has been taking place for decades in early years' settings where child-centred learning or learner-focused learning had been the norm. Early years' practitioners understand that young children are naturally inquisitive and curious about their world and that children will readily explore and experiment in order to understand it better. In most early years' settings, children's interests are stimulated through a rich and interactive environment. Their learning is observed, recorded and extended through planning for possible lines of development by experienced practitioners. No child is labelled as a failure as the practitioner will continue searching for new ways to engage and motivate them, building on what they can already do well. Practitioners will support the learners to develop the skills of learning, e.g. the five Rs of resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness, remembering and responsiveness (Lucas, 2001). Practitioners will support the learner to develop their vocabulary so that they can describe their learning and their preferred ways of working. This begins with simple questions such as:

What have you been doing?
Can you tell me about...?
What will you do next?

You can introduce children to the concept of planning for their learning by asking simple questions such as:

Who are you going to work with today?

Are you going to work inside or outside?

What materials will you need for your work today?

Will you need some help or do you want to work on your own?

You can also engage them in reviewing their own learning by asking:

What did you like best about what you did?

What did you find hard or difficult?

Who did you like to work with? Why?

Would you do anything differently if you were going to do it again?

How did you feel whilst you were working?

We need to encourage children to take risks, try out new things and learn from their mistakes. This can only be done when children feel safe and supported as learners and do not get 'blamed' when things go wrong.

The benefits of personalising learning are that children are motivated to learn, incidents of 'bad' behaviour are minimal because the children are truly engaged in their learning, staff are motivated and excited about their work, parents become engaged in learning about their child as a learner and standards will improve.

Dr Elaine Wilmot
—programme leader NPQICL newcastle university

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Life is never dull at Greenfields; each and every day is a surprise. It's akin to the British weather which is continually changing. Some days a gentle breeze blows in to sweep us steadily along and the next minute a storm looms on the horizon catching all of us by surprise!

At the entrance is a water feature, it is calming. It is where the children and families enter into the atrium, a place to meet, greet and absorb the vitality, harmony and promise of each new day.

We are a creative community dealing with life's challenges and always looking at change as a window of opportunity, always evolving. In the complexity of life with its political, national and local agendas it never ceases to amaze me how we all survive, adapt and learn to live with it all.

Our strength lies in the passionate belief, value and importance of early childhood, it underpins all we do, never losing sight of the child and acknowledging that each of us carry our early memories into adulthood. The children and families inspire us, keep us going and they very much contribute to the Centre becoming a rich microcosm of a sustainable and tolerant society, inclusive and culturally diverse in Old Southall in the London Borough of Ealing.

Our energy comes from every individual, both child and adult being a leader in their own life, a strong sense of identity and an open and listening culture embraces everyone. Our vision and ethos is about taking everyone where they have never been before, empowering them to be autonomous creative thinkers and learners and narrowing the gap in achievement for children and their families unlimited in their potential.

We are willing to take risks and let go of traditional roles and explore other routes of learning,

Leading Spatial Possibilities

June McHugh



“Our strength lies in the passionate belief, value and importance of early childhood”

often a leap into the dark but supported by a programme of continued professional development.

I work with an amazing team of staff and a very pro active Advisory Board and Governing Body all of whom share and work tirelessly for children and families.

Nurturing and inspiring staff creates a collaborative culture and creates an atmosphere of children and families feeling emotionally safe and secure, a place where they wish to spend their day, where they can be themselves and feel at home.

I believe education is central and key to a children's centre reaching out to the most marginalised and encouraging a partnership of dialogue, going beyond the obvious always seeking creative solutions.

“Two roads diverged into a wood, and I ...”

I took the one less travelled by, And that has made a difference.

The Road Not Taken, Robert Frost (1874-1963) Mountain Interval 1920



As a leader, for me it is crucial for everyone to feel welcomed, that they are unique and belong, are accepted and respected, understood and all engage in meaningful experiences in a genuine spirit of inclusion.

How this happens is complex, it has been a fascinating journey from occupying a very old building, managing the move into temporary accommodation and then filling out the inner skin of our beautiful new building inspired by the thoughts of the children and in consultation with parents, staff and community.

Research has shown that buildings affect the way individuals feel,

behave and perform. The Centre's vision and philosophy is reflected in its design, mediated through values, there to challenge, provoke, absorb and engage whilst at the same time have an overall softness, kind and non aggressive. Space is not just a container; it also promotes human opportunities so we can grow in mind, it becomes another teacher, another resource.

How do we make visible our vision and philosophy in the physical?

By way of example let me focus on the outdoors to give a small flavour of the importance environment plays on well being.

Children thrive outdoors! How do we construct knowledge with space? How do we view the way we live? For me it is about not how we prepare for life, but to live life and savour the here and now!

A schematic approach to observing and assessing young children developed our thoughts on promoting aspiration and high expectations into an innovative Six Hole Golf Course Academy with a clubhouse. Removing barriers is life changing and as adults we have a responsibility to reflect, renew and give our children and all adults a sense of hope.

For most, details are so important in each of our lives and to complement our golf the door handles in the Centre are club shaped. They are ergonomic, they feel welcoming and gentle to the touch, and they exist because they reflect our vision and values and play a harmonious subliminal part of our day.

At the close of day when the building empties and all is quiet we are reminded for it to come alive again we need the participation of children and families the next day.



Addiction to Learning

Juliet Doswell

'I hadn't realised how much I love learning' is a common reflective statement from many children's centre leaders who have just completed the NPQICL programme. Many participants become addicted to learning, and as competent reflective learners, they yearn to continue their learning journey but often without having a clear view of which route to take. How can their continuing professional development be sustained and the positive feedback, which has been experienced through the NPQICL programme, be maintained? There are options, many of which are agency specific, such as education, social care, community development or health, although generic leadership and management skills can be transferred across these sectors. However, what is available for continuing

“I hadn't realised how much I love learning”

professional development for those in the unique inter-professional role of children's centre leadership. Can we assume that there is a learning route map, directions or even a GPS 'sat nav' available for these self-directed learners wanting to continue their leadership learning journeys? I think not.... Nevertheless, children's centre leaders have a range of opportunities from which they can select to continue their learning journeys.

Some options may include scholarly activities such as action research in practice. Aubrey (2007) clearly identifies a lack of leadership research. She states that, 'there is a clear need to identify what effective leadership practice is in terms of processes and outcomes within integrated children's centres.'(p13). Now there's a challenge for leaders who are addicted to learning more about the leadership in their own children's centres! Outcomes from research can lead to innovation and can change a culture to new

“Outcomes from research can lead to innovation and can change a culture”



ways of thinking and working. For examples, Research in Practice (RiP) from SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) is a development network of agencies that experiment and evaluate a range of approaches to integrated research and practice.

There are academic modules, which could lead to further post-graduate qualifications. Higher Education Institutions offer modules and dissertation options for those wishing to follow the academic route through Masters programmes, with the possibility of aspiring to a doctorate. More and more universities are offering universal courses that look beyond the specific professional agencies, from exploring the concept of childhood to understanding distributed leadership, and many courses include international comparisons between services provided by a range of agencies that are offered to children and families.

Perhaps opportunities to network with fellow children's centre leaders can be arranged for peer support, continuing the concept of leadership learning groups, which are so appreciated by NPQICL participants. Professional



knowledge, experience and enthusiasm can be shared as well as the possibility of visiting centres to observe good practice, and to 'pinch' ideas from fellow leaders! **Connectivity** can dispel the isolation that can be experienced by some leaders having experienced a collaborative learning community through the NPQICL programme. Other routes might include attending regional **Children's Centre Leaders' Network** meetings or join the online network through the National College.

Connectivity can dispel the isolation that can be experienced by some leaders

Professional journals such as this publication, the Children Centre Leader Reader, and some academic journals offer access to ideas and exemplars of good practice. Readers can be introduced to relevant theory, concepts and current research on which to ponder and improve their leadership knowledge and to support their leadership practice, sustaining their academic prowess of children centre leadership.

Effective leaders aspire to create cultures of discovery and learning within their teams, much like early years practitioners who, through their pedagogical leadership, encourage young children to experience and reflect on their world and become autonomous and competent explorers and discoverers. Learning through being, experiencing, doing, communicating, listening, discussing, testing, hypothesising, creating and thinking are only some of the ways young children

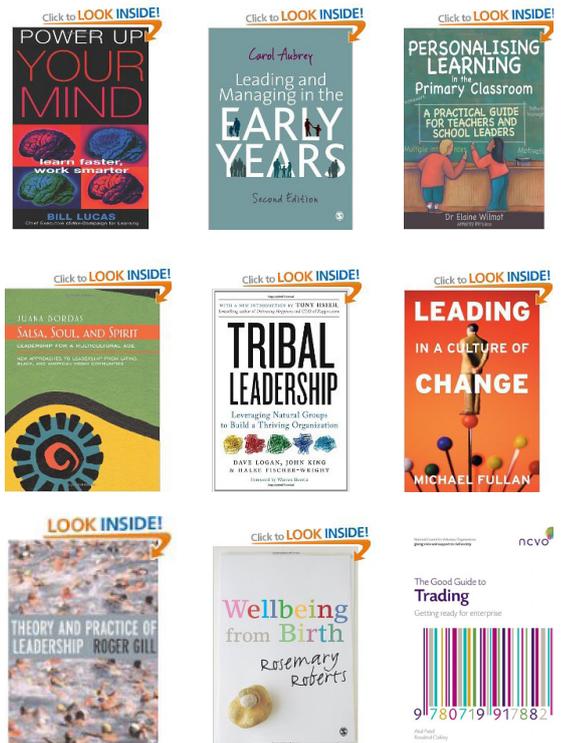
are encouraged to learn. Yet these transferable skills can be equally employed by adult learners and leaders.

Learning should be built into the culture of an organisation, especially in relation to change (Fullan 2001), which is endemic in children's services. What skills and knowledge are needed to underpin effective practice as a leader of learning within a team? It is often worth waiting until one can recognise a 'need to know' something. It will then be more relevant to the professional contexts within the team. Professional development needs to support existing roles and responsibilities. Time to reflect on where one has been, where one is and where one might want or need to be to become more effective, clarifies one's thinking and awareness of current learning needs to improve outcomes for children and families. After all, supporting children and families is the primary purpose of children's centres.

Whatever route you chose to continue on your learning journey, take time to reflect on what skills and knowledge are required for the next stage of your professional journey. Draw on your resilience and courage to continue your chosen path to new discoveries about your leadership. Then, perhaps you can programme your learning 'sat nav' for your next learning experience. Bon voyage and enjoy the trip!

Juliet Doswell
NPQICL Academic Facilitator and Consultant

children's Centre Leader Reader recommended reads:



Click any of the titles to find out more **13**

PRACTICE

Insights

Professor Philip Gammage

Leading learning and development: Children's Centre Leaders lead a culture of critical reflection engaging with others to identify, share and promote effective practice that is evidence based? (National Standards, DCSF, 2007)

Professor Philip Gammage shares his international review of practices that appear to work in the first decade of life

There is a large body of research that shows that **quality early childhood programmes benefit society and save money** (usually termed benefit/cost analysis).

The ten studies noted by **Rand Corporation** are among the most important in that they largely demonstrate that investing in the early years is sound economic sense, as well as giving unparalleled social and intellectual advantage.

Demographic and cohort study research show significant gains in language acquisition and social skills among those targeted minority groups/underprivileged who are provided with good Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). **Oracy is especially important** and stressed in many countries and cultures. The total 'experience' of language is far greater by those children in 'middle and upper classes', such that, by three or four years they have had exposure to millions more words; a distinct advantage in later schooling /achievement. Girls generally do somewhat better than boys and have more constructive attitudes towards reading.

FACTORS

What the research tells us...

Implications for practice:

How often do you use this argument to sustain your services?

Does your team know about current understanding of brain development?

How do you reach the most disadvantaged children?

Could you use this evidence to inspire new partners to work with the centre?

Is practice informed by knowledge about social and emotional literacy?

Systematic, well thought through programmes (like that of High Scope, or like the Abecedarian Project) appear to have clear benefits for the growing child, the later adolescent and the adult, such that investment pays handsomely. The High Scope Study is the source of, 'For every dollar invested, seven are saved by the age of seventeen'. (The sample was small; 120+, but the message is invest upstream, rather than downstream)

PROGRAMME



Conclusion

In many countries and states **education and care** is unified from the start (Both UNESCO and OECD now using the all-embracing term Early Childhood Education and Care, ECEC, covering the period from birth to age eight years).

The international markers of quality in such centres of ECEC are:

- Leadership, with well qualified staff and good adult child ratios
- Frequency of parental commitment and involvement is noted as an ABSOLUTE key
- Homes with books = Readers! Escaping income poverty can sometimes lead to time poverty; a critical factor in child-rearing

Professor Philip Gammage
emeritus professor

Research in neuro-science and child development demonstrates that the **very architecture of the brain is affected by levels of attachment, stimulation, consistency and language** facility during the first three or four years of life. **Attachment, boundaries and consistency** seem important as the **most vital features of early nurturance**. Perhaps we should call these the 'real' ABC? Such a view is well supported by a plethora of research in Child Development and such dispositions/features are major 'ingredients' in **wellbeing, resilience and reasonable self-esteem**. (Roberts, 2010, sees 'companionable learning' as an essential factor in all this.)

Literacy and the effects of learned social competence (a softer, not so easily documented variable) seem some of the key elements in a good quality programme and which pay well in later stages of education. **Social competence and wellbeing have strong links to early attachment and companionship** (a virtuous circle).

What is Your
Leadership Brand
Sue Webster

“Engage the mind, touch the heart, feed the soul”

(Edinburgh International Festival, 2003 cit. Gill, 2011)

In the modern world everything has a brand, as leaders of early years services we are conscious of the power that corporate branding has on the very youngest children. M for McDonalds is frequently cited as an example of the power those golden arches to inform early literacy skills. We know and understand the way that this is used by advertisers and are recognising the relationship between branding and negative consequences like obesity.

As leaders we have used branding to promote our children's centres, making them stand out with logos and signage in communities. Nationally, Sure Start is an umbrella brand, highlighting a location where families with young children know they can source information about services, support and new opportunities. Some Local Authorities have adopted a corporate brand

PRACTICE

for their children's services, similarly to signpost and demonstrate an integrated approach. Many centres have a logo and colour scheme and within many centres individual services have a distinctive brand too. Service branding helps families to navigate the overall centre and provides a physical and emotional map using symbols and colours to welcome children and families.

Branding in individual services may range from an overt symbol, the Health Trust logo for example or more subtly visual in wall-displays, web pages and leaflets. Perhaps, most skillfully, is how practitioners demonstrate a clear branding message 'high quality early years' healthy lifestyles' or 'trust us, we can help you'.

But do you and/or your senior leadership team have a brand? What is the brand of leadership in your children's centre? Applying Roger Gill's (2011) ideas about leadership branding in business to a children's centre, the brand is the sum of the collective leadership behaviours across all functions of the centre and at every level of the centre's work.

Furthermore Gill's ideas suggest that brands are a way to develop stakeholder commitment to the centre, not just to individual services. The development of a brand loyalty promotes higher team engagement in the overall work of your children's centre and promotes leadership as a professional attribute. These leadership attributes being 'the knowledge and skills that reflect how leaders behave in relation to the results they achieve (Gill, 2011:378).

Leadership brand = leadership attributes x results

Ulrich and Smallwood, 2000 in Gill, 2011:378)

How you think about leadership branding would reflect whether you think that leadership is a professional heritage, or just a task within another professional role. As children's centre leaders, we lead across professional boundaries and as we gain greater experience we are drawing from our knowledge of universal leadership and organization skills identified and applied universally in business, education, commerce and industry.

Leaders aspire to grow leadership at all levels of their centres, what Caroline Jones, 2008 calls being

a 'leader of leaders'. If we consider leadership as professional practice across the centre, how is it practiced, experienced or understood in and beyond the centre? What are the leadership attributes in your children's centre? The overall task is more than just cascading leadership by empowering others in the team, rather is about the approach taken by those at the top of the organization to encourage others to behave like owners. Acting as entrepreneurs, taking responsibility and promoting the centre's aims and using initiative to lead the centre's work in the community (Gill, 2011). Perhaps, looking beyond professionals and including the potential of parents and children too.

Thinking about leadership in terms of branding will create more work in already busy schedules, it is always easy to dismiss an idea that creates more work, but think of it as an investment, turning followers into leaders to maximize leadership skills across the whole community. According to Ulrich and Smallwood, 2007, five key principles are required to build a strong leadership brand:

- 1 Introduce the basics of leadership: by setting a strategy and identify and begin to develop potential leadership talent
- 2 Create opportunities for everyone who works in the centre to understand and value the things that children and families care about
- 3 Use observations of these discussions to understand the gaps in leadership skills and knowledge
- 4 Evaluate leadership of the centre by listening to families and stakeholder perspectives.
- 5 Offer broad based leadership skills development training informed by the external expectations of stakeholders and children and families.
- 6 Ensure that the development of a leadership brand is a key feature of the centre's development and self-evaluation strategy.

(Adapted from: Ulrich, & Smallwood, 2007)

Robert Greenleaf, 1979 introduced the concept of 'servant leadership', a commitment to make a difference, rather than leading for one's own self-interest. Greenleaf argued that leadership is a collaborative and participatory process where responsibility is delegated, benefits shared and all people in the community are engaged in the process. Developing a leadership brand helps us to focus on the potential, development and learning for each person associated with the children's centre.

Servant leadership is expanded by Juana Bordas, 2012, who explores the leadership models in Black, Latino and indigenous American communities. For Bordas, 2012, a flat leadership structure where leaders act as 'community stewards' to develop leaders within and outside the confines of the centre has been a strong model ignored for too long in a corporate culture focused on financial gain. While financial acumen is a key leadership task for a children's centre leader, our role is largely to save rather than make money. Engaging the skills, knowledge, hearts and minds within the larger community has always been one of our priorities in children's centres. Leading leadership, as a team of community stewards, captures new and existing leaders and engages, touches and feeds overall leadership knowledge and skills with a clear benefit for the sustainability of your children's centre.

Developing a leadership brand improves leadership practice and offers a real opportunity for the whole community to learn leadership together. Leading a children's centre is always about making a difference. Listening, learning and leading together means that 'when many serve, a community of leaders develops, cultivating the critical mass needed to construct a good and equitable society and creating a legacy of leadership' in our professions, centres and most importantly in the communities where we work. (Bordas, 2012, p.134)

Evaluate your centre's leadership brand

How does your children's centre rate on the following statements, on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high)? (Adapted from Ulrich and Smallwood, 2007)

If you score 24 or less, then you should start by working on the fundamentals of leadership.

A score from 25 to 34 means that you should pick one or more dimensions where you are not yet strong and focus on improving them. A score from 35 to 44 means that you are well on your way to becoming a leadership brand company.

If you score 45 or higher: Congratulations, metaphoric golden Ls should shine brightly above your main entrance!



We know how we want leadership to be viewed by children and families.

Our leadership approach is clear and connects to the overall identity of the children's centre.

There is a clear relationship between our brand and our leadership actions.

We identify leadership development needs for the next generation of leaders in our centre.

Individual leadership development plans include acquiring skills, knowledge, and perspectives that are relevant to supporting children and families.

Leadership development is informed by consultation with stakeholders, children and families.

Work experiences are available for all staff to support their understanding of the perspectives of stakeholders, children and families.

Time is invested to ensure that leaders in the centre understand and have the relevant skills and knowledge about the centre's reach community

Overall leadership effectiveness is included as a measure of the centre's progress against targets.

All stakeholders understand how, why and how much time and effort is invested in building the children's centre leadership brand

POLICY

Policy

Health reform is the major policy area to explore, ahead of the suite of changes that are imminent for the early years sector in summer.



The passage of the **Health and Social Care Act** which received Royal Assent on 27 March 2012 will have a major impact on the relationship between all health services and the public. Particular sections of the Act relate closely to work in children's centres in promoting public health:

Health and Social Care Act Chapter 7

Key items for centre leaders to note:

Insertion after Section 2 of the National Health Act 2006

2A Secretary of State's duty as to **protection** of public health.

(1)The Secretary of State must take such steps as the Secretary of State considers appropriate for the purpose of protecting the public in England from disease or other dangers to health. .

(2)The steps that may be taken under subsection (1) include - .

(c)providing vaccination, immunisation or screening services; .

(d)providing other services or facilities for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness; .

(e)providing training; .

(f)providing information and advice; .

(g)making available the services of any person or any facilities.

2B Functions of local authorities and Secretary of State as to **improvement** of public health.

(1)Each local authority must take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. .

(2)The Secretary of State may take such steps as the Secretary of State considers appropriate for improving the health of the people of England. .

(3)The steps that may be taken under subsection (1) or (2) include - .

(a)providing information and advice; .

(b)providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living (whether by helping individuals to address behaviour that is detrimental to health or in any other way); .

(c)providing services or facilities for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness; .

(d)providing financial incentives to encourage individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles; .

(e)providing assistance (including financial assistance) to help individuals to minimise any risks to health arising from their accommodation or environment; .

(f)providing or participating in the provision of training for persons working or seeking to work in the field of health improvement; .

(g)making available the services of any person or any facilities.

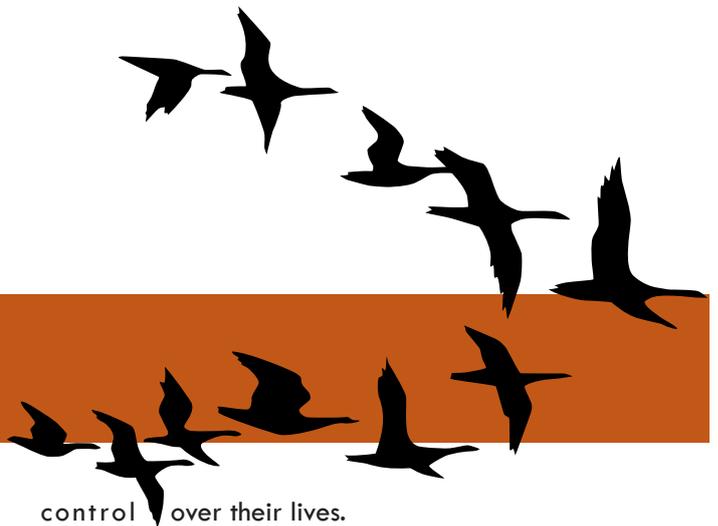
The Department of Health has issued a **special bulletin** to summarise the impact on the national service which contains some very helpful milestones in the transition to new arrangements, which may help you navigate your relationships and activities with health colleagues over the next 24 months

New SEN legislation

It looks like the planned parliamentary Children and Families Bill will contain new regulations and requirements for SEN, Adoption and some aspects of Family Law as presaged in the Queen's Speech 9th May 2012.

The SEN focus will enact measures set out in the previous Green paper and are likely to be the most significant changes for 30 years or so.

We are unlikely to see the legislation enacted until at least Summer 2013.



The key measures expected in the new legislation include:

- replacing SEN statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (for 16- to 25-year-olds) with a single, simpler 0-25 assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan from 2014
- providing statutory protections comparable to those currently associated with a statement of SEN to up to 25 in further education – ensuring 0-25 consistency
- requiring local authorities to publish a local offer showing the support available to disabled children and young people and those with SEN, and their families
- giving parents or young people with Education, Health and Care Plans the right to a personal budget for their support
- introducing mediation for disputes and trialling giving children the right to appeal if they are unhappy with their support.

The DfE is expecting to learn from the current 20 local pathfinders set up in September 2011 and expected to provide interim analysis around July 2012 and later in autumn 2012 with a final pathfinder report in Spring 2013.

Have your say

on children and young people's health outcomes

The Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum is gathering views from children, young people, parents, carers, doctors, nurses and other professionals involved in providing care to children on the health outcomes that matter most for children and young people and how the different parts of the health system will work together to deliver these.

It wants to hear views on four particular areas including acutely ill children, mental health, children with disabilities and long-term conditions, but especially relevant to our work, **public health**. You may recall the **Marmot Review on health inequalities** set out a framework for action that has at its centre the recognition that disadvantage starts before birth and accumulates throughout life. This is reflected in the framework's top two policy objectives: starting well – giving every child the best start in life developing well – enabling all children, young people and adults to maximize their capabilities and have

control over their lives.

To offer your views on improvements for public health and the place of children's centres in this:

- get involved in conversations on this site using the link (**public health**) above
- send comments on our **online form**
- send comments by downloading and returning **this feedback form**
- email **childrensoutcomesforum@dh.gsi.gov.uk**

Please send your views and comments by **31 May 2012**.

Ofsted Children's Centre consultation

Ofsted will be consulting on adjustments to the inspection framework for children's centres. From seminars hosted by Ofsted and the National College webinar, the changes proposed are likely to reflect the evolving organisational and leadership landscape of the children's sector. Consultation opens 01 June 2012 and runs until 01 August 2012 – please ensure that you contribute.



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

terry.connolly@mac.com

PRODUCTIVITY



Sue Webster



Vicki Lant



[Register here](#)

DATE	REGION	VENUE
Tuesday 19 June 2012	Central	IGEM House, 28 High Street, Kegworth, Derbyshire, DE74 2DA
Thursday 21 June 2012	South	The New North Academy, 32 Popham Road, Islington, London N1 8SJ
Wednesday 27 June 2012	North	Holiday Inn Leeds-Garforth, Wakefield Road, Garforth, Leeds, LS25 1LH

NEW COHORT FOR NPQICL APPLICATION ROUND

If you haven't yet undertaken the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership - NPQICL - the application period has been extended until 8 June 2012. The College, now associated with the Department for Education, has a new link through which you can [apply](#).

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Now, more than ever, those working in care need great managers. In these times of pressured budgets, having the right people who can drive improvements and inspire change will lead to better outcomes for everyone – the carers and those being cared for.

At CACHE we have the perfect qualification that will develop your full potential in this critical area.

The: CACHE Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services (QCF) (England)

This qualification has been developed to provide you with the skills and knowledge you need to lead and manage others. It has six pathways to choose from and a wide range of optional units, allowing you to tailor your learning to suit your needs.

To further enhance the management skills in your setting, we also offer a range of short professional development qualifications at Levels 4 & 5.

- [Providing Information to Support Decision Making \(QCF\)](#)
- [Obtaining Additional Finance for the Organisation \(QCF\)](#)
- [Providing Leadership in Own Area of Responsibility \(QCF\)](#)
- [Managing Finance in Own Area of Responsibility \(QCF\)](#)

For more information on all our qualifications - whether you are thinking of your own professional development or looking to up skill your staff - visit www.cache.org.uk



Centre Leaders have always sought high profile for their work and we have secured a link with [Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution on 18-20 May](#) - to harness passion and lead local practice in growing, harvesting and creating healthy food - more on this in the July edition.

Contact us at
cdeaderreader@gmail.com
 Click through and follow us
[@ccleaderreader](https://twitter.com/ccleaderreader)
 Find us on
www.ccleaderreader.com



Next issue:
July 2012
 Leading in a diverse system