

## A Foundation for Change

Graham Allen MP

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Over the last couple of years I have invested a lot of time listening to the views and concerns of people who work with children and young people. I have travelled to many parts of the country and spoken to those involved in running our children centres, to teachers, care workers, youth workers and policy experts.

And wherever I went, the message I received was the same – when it comes to children, getting it right from the start is of vital importance for them, their families and for society as a whole.

How babies and toddlers develop emotionally and socially determines their life chances – how they grow up, reach their potential and the sorts of parents they become themselves.

Because the impact of social problems goes wider than the individual and family concerned, we all have a stake in intervening early to bring significant change for the better.

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## “a child’s development score at just 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of education outcomes at 26 years

Every taxpayer pays the cost of low educational achievement, poor work aspirations, drink and drug misuse, teenage pregnancy, criminality and unfulfilled lifetimes on benefits. But I’m sure you will agree that it’s not just about the money, it is about social disruption, broken families and unmet human potential.

It is a salutary lesson to remember that a child’s development score at just 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of education outcomes at 26 years.

So I hope you will agree with me that the time is now ripe for leading the change in how we support children and families in a more systematic and comprehensive way.

And it is because of what I heard from you that I have been campaigning for the foundation of a charity to be the vanguard of this change in how we support children and families; a proposal I am pleased to say that was accepted by the Government.

## The Early Intervention Foundation,

a new, independent charity will champion and support the greater use of early intervention measures to tackle the root causes of social problems amongst children and young people, aged from 0-18.

The Foundation will provide a single source of independent, comprehensive and authoritative assessment, advice and advocacy on early intervention measures – to government, local service commissioners and investors – helping grow and improve the UK evidence base.

In conducting its initial review of existing early intervention resources, the Foundation will focus on answering the questions local commissioners

ask – what early interventions work for particular groups (age, ethnicity), what works in the use of particular resources (such as outreach workers in children’s centres), what works in particular policy areas (such as reducing the number of children who are taken into care, or offend), and what tools are available to estimate the return on investment and what guidance is available on public sector accounting issues.

## “a single source of independent, comprehensive and authoritative assessment, advice and advocacy on early intervention measures

We will share this learning in a transparent and accessible way so that we can take proven projects from niche to critical mass - helping break the inter-generational cycles of dysfunction that are sadly still a feature of modern life, reduce the costs of failure to the taxpayer and strengthen local communities.

I know this sounds ambitious. It is. But as Chair of the Early Intervention Foundation I am determined to ensure it completes its mission to make a fundamental, long-lasting difference to our children and young people’s lives for generations to come. Because as we know, it is better to tackle the root causes of persistent social problems rather than having to deal with its symptoms, at which point it is often too late effect a positive change.

Working in children’s centres with families whose children may be approaching or just beyond 22 months, you have a pivotal role in helping to secure lasting

change for the better for some children and families. Effective examples of your practice may go on to influence the advice that is passed to commissioners, in order that service improvement is influenced nationally and sustainably. Keep in contact with our work through our website or through any links you have with the organisations that support the consortium involved within the Federation.



Organisations backing The Early Intervention Foundation Consortium (click for more information on each) include:

**4Children** **3SC**  
 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy  
**Barnardos** **NCT** **Action For Children**  
 Best Beginnings Achievement for All 3As  
 Big Issue Invest **Family Action** Community Links  
**I Can** Family and Parenting Institute  
 Local Government Association **Institute for Public Policy Research**  
**NSPCC** **London Early Years Foundation** National Institute of Economic and Social Research  
 National Association for Voluntary and Community Action **National Children's Bureau**  
 Save the Children **National Day Nurseries Association** **Nesta**  
 Public Health England **The Children's Society**  
**Seven Social Care** The Football League Trust **Turning Point**



The EIF is being established to champion and support the move to greater use of early intervention approaches. The EIF will:

**Assess** what programmes work – to determine both the best Early Interventions available and their relative value for money.

Translate this into practical, evidence-based **Advice** to local commissioners, service providers and potential investors to enable them to make the best choices for supporting children and families.

**Advocate** for Early Intervention as a serious alternative to expensive and ineffective late intervention;

The EIF will open for a first phase of business on Monday 4 March and will be formally launched later in the spring.

**Graham Allen's reports to HM Government 2011**

**Early Intervention: The Next Steps**

**Early Intervention: Smart Investment: Massive Savings**

The organisations will support the new Foundation in its infancy before handing over responsibility to the Foundation's trustees and management once it is established as a charity in its own right in the summer.

## A Real Sense of Urgency

Vicki Lant

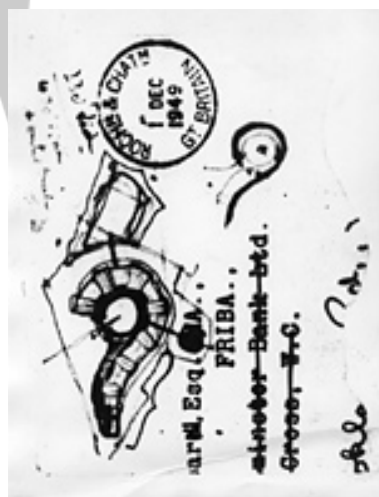
At the end of March 2013 the BBC's iconic Television Centre closes after 53 years. Its architect, Graham Dawbarn, doodled on the back of an envelope in a pub over a pint to get a different perspective over the curious shape of the site of land the BBC had purchased for its television factory. The question mark he drew in the centre of the space sparked the idea that became the core design of the building. The TV centre changed the way television was conceived and produced, generating innovative programming and influencing lives and society for half a decade. As an innovator, Dawbarn understood that everyone feels anxiety when familiar things change:

“Change is usually sad, but it is dangerous to live too much in the past and to overstate the past at the expense of the future”

What would he think as this wonderful focus for creativity ceases and the learning and processes are spread all over the country? We mourn its passing, mixed with some disbelief (because we can't comprehend the logic), which may be tinged with more than a little anxiety that future output can possibly be better. But, looking back to go forward, there will be important bigger context questions of which we are unaware, alongside the same challenging fiscal environment that will have led the Corporation's Trustees to come to this view of the future. In children's centres our past is very recent and our future appears open to question. How do we grasp the agenda and make it ours? This is a national question of re-consideration as well as many local ones - if *our iceberg is melting*, what do we do?

Many children's centre leaders are navigating new paths of relationships with commissioners, whose contracts have seen significant reduction in resource, requiring great creativity in structures to deliver services along with improved outcomes for families - to do more with less. With the publication in January 2013 of *More great childcare*, the subsequent critique of the government's response to her recommendations for the children's workforce by Professor Cathy Nutbrown, *Shaking the foundations of quality*, and the publication in March of the *Ofsted handbook for the inspection of children's centres*, children's centre leaders may be forgiven for wondering where the direction of travel is leading. The stakes and the aspirations for high quality provision seem extremely high and possibly beyond reach.

This could so easily be a duvet moment, but when it all seems very hard, consider a story instead. Professor John Kotter (Leadership - Harvard Business School) who is well-known for his theories about change processes, has, like the best teachers, created a story to help us "get it". This parable relates to a colony of penguins in Antarctica, faced with the unthinkable - their iceberg is melting. Through the story we meet characters who exhibit all the traits of resistance, encouragement, fear, enthusiasm and willingness to give-it-a-go that we meet in our lives and work every day. The fundamental truths in the story lay with the penguins reaching understanding they have a real problem and finding creative ways - not the old tried and tested ones





- to transform how they live, safely but differently in the future. A parable for our time - Kotter's Eight Step process for successful change is morphed into an easily engaging format that will speak to everyone:

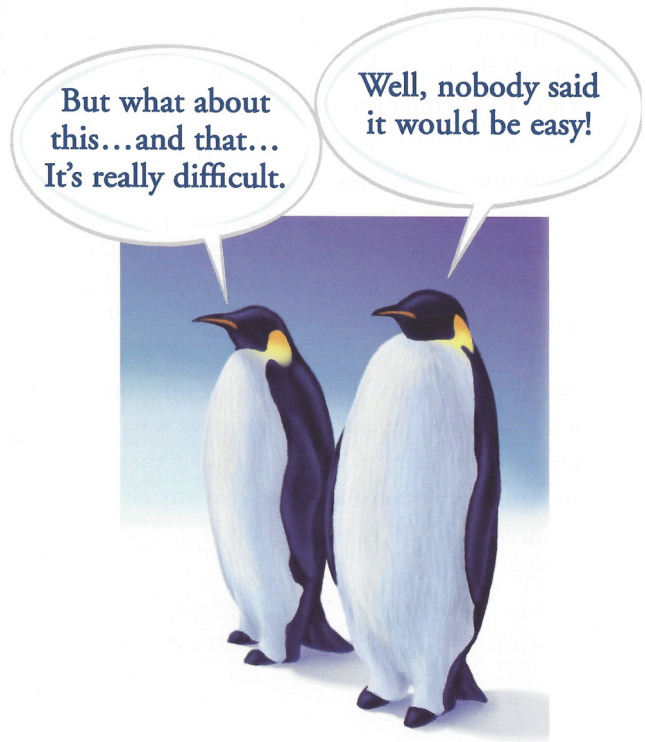
**Set the stage**  
**Create a sense of urgency** (really important!)  
 Help others to see the need for change and the need to act immediately  
**Pull together the guiding team**  
 Make sure there is a powerful group guiding the team - one with leadership skills, credibility, communication ability, authority, analytical skills and a sense of urgency

**Decide what to do**  
**Develop the change vision and strategy**  
 Clarify how the future will be different from the past and how you can make that a reality

**Make it happen**  
**Communicate for understanding and buy-in**  
 Ensure as many others as possible understand the vision and the strategy  
**Empower others to act**  
 Remove as many barriers as possible so that those who want to make the vision a reality can do so  
**Produce short term wins**  
 Create some visible, unambiguous successes as soon as possible  
**Don't let up**  
 Press harder and faster after the first successes. Be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality

**Make it stick**  
**Create a new culture**  
 Hold on to the new ways of behaving, and make sure they succeed, until they become strong enough to replace old traditions

The Eight Step Process of Successful Change  
 John P Kotter: *Our Iceberg is Melting* (2006); pp130-131



Our iceberg is melting - we have to do something. Ideally not panic, but think (collect/ analyse data to generate logical ideas to change minds and behaviours) **and feel** (create visual experiences that help people feel and behave differently about things). Look carefully at the recent documents and map the opportunities for change - they are there. Our contributors have done this - helping families to change direction, their behaviours, hearts and minds, life habits, environmental perceptions and systems. We hope their stories will encourage and inspire you and your teams to take hold of part of the agenda where you may now feel most vulnerable and with urgency and resolution take each step of the change process with increasing confidence to reach creative solutions.

References:  
 Kotter, J P and Rathgeber, H: *Our Iceberg is Melting: changing and succeeding under any conditions* (2006); London. Macmillan  
 Kotter, J P: *Leading Change (with a new preface)* (1996; 2012); Massachusetts. Harvard Business Review Press; 2nd edition  
 Kotter, J P: *A sense of urgency* (2008); Massachusetts. Harvard Business Review Press

## Time for a Change

—Margaret Lochrie

“All serious educational movements have been also social movements.”

RH Tawney

Some years ago, the Pre-school Learning Alliance ran a campaign called *changing lives: changing life*. It was both a celebration of the achievements of playgroups and pre-schools and a reminder that, by coming together around a shared identity and purpose, people can change life itself. Important as it was for children, the playgroup movement also inspired countless parents to study, to contribute to their communities or to embark on new careers. At a time of little or no childcare, it met a fundamental need.

Many of those who shaped the early Sure Start programmes had a similarly broad vision, often based on experience of the community sector. There was an understanding that services had to be meaningful and relevant to the lives of users; that non-hierarchical structures were more inviting and there was an explicit intention of empowerment. Among those who adopted this approach, Pen Green is a particularly distinctive example, but there are many others.

I have had the privilege to be part of a number of studies and evaluations of children's centres. Across all of these, the responses of parents are highly consistent. In a study of outreach in 2009, parents described their relationships with children's centre staff as qualitatively different from those with all other helping agencies and in terms which are normally reserved for friends. Asked about the benefits of children's centre involvement, while many talked about changes in their children and their own well-being, a number felt that their lives had been set on an entirely new track.<sup>1</sup>

These kinds of transformations were described by other parents in many other centres and often included the resolution of a crisis, a return to education or the ability to work. But, in almost all cases, interviewees talked at the same time about wanting to help others, the sense of identity they shared with other families facing similar issues and adversities, and the continuing attachment they felt to the children's centre and its aims.

In France, the Association Collective – Enfants, Parents et Professionnels (ACEPP) is an extended network of childcare centres and other projects, the common feature of which is that they are set up and led by parents with the support of professionals.



As one strand of activity, ACEPP, with partners from Belgium and Germany, has established Parental Universities where groups of parents, with the help of researchers and academics, study selected issues about parenting. The findings are presented by parents to policy makers and administrators and parents may also contribute to the training of teachers and other educators.

In the UK, the term children's centre can be a misnomer. Many more closely resemble learning villages, or family or neighbourhood colleges, less a defined intervention than a community of interlocking relationships and approaches. In the small town of Bromyard in Herefordshire, the **H.O.P.E. family centre (holistic opportunities for play and education)** has also established itself as a successful social business, acquiring an additional nursery, running a charity shop and opening a High Street shop for crafts and other goods designed and made by parents. More recent additions include a business centre for small enterprises and home workers, IT room, workshop space and a community café.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of these achievements has yet to be fully

“their lives had been set on an entirely new track”

<sup>1</sup> DCSF (2009) Outreach to Children and Families: a scoping study. DCSF Research Report DCSF-RR116

<sup>2</sup> Capacity (2011) Hope and change for families



to this in just a few short years?



assessed. The main evaluation of children's centres is underway but will not be completed until 2017. However, in the meantime, the policy and funding environment has changed.

Economic pressures are the most visible sign of this. Irrespective of whether children's centres actually close, their resources are more thinly stretched, either limiting the range of what can be offered or, because there are fewer people, rendering them less effective.

Perhaps more disturbing is the shifting policy emphasis. The discourse is still about change but the use of terms such

### ↳ a community of interlocking relationships and approaches

as "parenting poverty" is stigmatising and can only increase the sense of disconnection that many families feel towards the services that are supposed to help them. So too, does the over-use of terms such as "troubled" where it appears to locate problems within individual families without analysing their structural causes.

As austerity measures deepen, as more families find it hard to feed, clothe and house their families, that disconnect between them and the rest of society can only intensify. Without public services which provide voice and ownership, change becomes unlikely or very different. Where's your place in this?

## Change - a Step at a Time

Colleen Bilton & Jane Harmer

**Addaction** is one of the UK's leading drug and alcohol treatment charities. Its **First Steps** programme provides training for professionals working with children and families. The unique package combines an intensive one-day training workshop with e-learning modules and other helpful resource, to build the skills and confidence of practitioners; so that they are able to deliver more effective support to the families they work with who are affected by substance misuse.

Admitting to a personal problem is always tough, and families struggling with drugs or alcohol can find it extremely difficult to share that fact with someone. Particularly, fear of repercussions, or of being judged, will lead to many hiding the true extent of their problems from the services that can help them. This has been a major 7

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“a highly effective, collaborative way of working that’s been welcomed by commissioners and services

obstacle for one of the government’s key priorities – of ensuring that families from the most vulnerable backgrounds (and where substance misuse may be prevalent) are given the right support, at the right time.

But Addaction’s *First Steps* programme gets past that. It recognises that Children’s and Sure Start centre staff are the most likely to come into contact with vulnerable families, and builds their skills and confidence in identifying and supporting those that need it most. *First Steps* is different because it builds strong relationships with the treatment sector, furthering frontline practice and improving services for families.

Since the programme began in 2011, it has helped establish a highly effective, collaborative way of working that’s been welcomed by commissioners and services across the country. Not least because it has helped address many ingrained and persistent local problems (such as in areas where the majority of child protection

cases have a ‘substance misuse’ element, or where there have been high levels of anti-social behaviour because of drugs and alcohol)

What’s more, Addaction’s *First Steps* team has already begun to embed this work into national practice. We’ve been supported by key leads from the *National Treatment Agency* as it recognises *First Steps* can mobilise their guidance on the safeguarding of children, shared information and improved integrated working. We’ve helped advance joint local protocols between family and treatment services. And we are working with some local authorities throughout the country, to ensure that families with substance misuse problems are supported as effectively as possible (by ensuring a Children’s Centre presence on any local substance misuse strategic group, and by setting up further groups, attended by all drug and alcohol service managers and those of domestic violence agencies).

The practitioners already trained by

*First Steps* have told us they feel far more able to deal with substance misuse problems. Those in the treatment sector now feel far more informed about how to support parents, and the issues of which they need to be aware. In essence, real and lasting partnerships have been established, where each professional feels confident in making referrals and in sharing expertise.

Addaction is extremely proud of *First Steps*. We believe that it’s helped transform the landscape of family support in the UK. Where there were no direct referrals from Children’s Centres into treatment (apart from through the occasional ‘safeguarding’ route), a range of joint working protocols now exist (and vice-versa). Where family workers felt unsure about broaching the subject of drugs and alcohol with their clients, they now feel confident in doing so. And where parents felt misunderstood, or stigmatised about the problems they were having – a more joined up, compassionate and informed support network exists.

“it’s helped transform the landscape of family support in the UK

To find out more about *First Steps* and the other training packages that Addaction provides, visit the charity’s website at [www.addaction.org.uk](http://www.addaction.org.uk)



## Bright Beginnings Childcare Centre

# Coaching For Change

Gill Dickers & Angela Foley

**Bright Beginnings** is an award-winning childcare centre which provides high quality childcare to students and staff members at the University of Leeds. The centre offers day care for up to 80 children aged between three months and five years and play schemes for children between the ages of three and eleven years.

This is a story about change, about how coaching and the values of coaching helped Angela Foley, the General Manager of Bright Beginnings change the culture and enhance the confidence of the staff team, whilst continuing to provide a quality service to parents and children.

“the values of coaching helped change the culture and enhance the confidence of the staff team”

In 2010, when Bright Beginnings moved from a medium sized property to a larger purpose-built setting, the demands on the General Manager multiplied. Angela had a new staff team, a new building, with associated teething problems, a new governing body, increased financial expectations, together with an increasing number of children attending day care. Additionally, she had to respond to changing government policies and quality requirements, for example, the Early Years Foundation Stage, e-Quality Counts, and Ofsted.

How could the General Manager tackle these issues and continue provide quality childcare?

### Learning from staff

A senior staff member attended an Institute for Leaders and Managers (ILM) Coaching for Leaders and Managers course and, influenced by the positive feedback and the possibility of match-funding support by the Skills Funding Agency, Angela arranged to have an external coach. She wanted time to think, be challenged from outside the organisation, and, above all, have some space for herself. With the additional support of the coach, she felt she could successfully manage the transition to the new setting, meet the needs of staff, children and parents, respond to concerns about finance and occupancy, and maintain some work-life balance. 9



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## Executive\* and Business Coaching\*

Over a twelve month period, Angela's coach, helped her to set personal, professional and strategic goals and priorities, and supported her to take action to achieve these. For example, 'staff attendance' was identified as an issue that needed to be addressed, and a strategy was put in place to tackle this. Coaching gave Angela 'time to think, and time to reflect'. Away from the pressures of the centre, she could let off steam, and see things with fresh and strategic perspectives. Using the balanced score card technique\*, she led a workshop in the centre and an away-day with the board of governors to develop a vision and holistic action plan.

Coaching sessions were then used to review the business plan, and set targets for growth and development. Within a year, finances were healthy. The centre and staff won several quality awards, for example, Nursery Management Today, Design Award in 2011 and also runner-up 'Individual Nursery of the Year' in 2012. Angela also received the award of 'Member Champion of the Year' in 2011 and a Senior Care Practitioner, Fiona Nealon, received runner up for 'Nursery Nurse of the Year, 2012' (both from the NDNA).

## What next? The Senior Management Team and Work- place Coaching\*

Through Leadership Coaching, Angela identified that she 'could not do it all', she needed to trust, delegate, and grow her senior team to be leaders themselves, support each other and use their skills to develop the whole staff team. Work-place coaching training was introduced and this enabled the senior team develop their listening skills, ask incisive questions, and encourage staff to take responsibility. The Action Learning training that followed helped them to work independently as a group, use coaching techniques to explore, and successfully manage complex situations, and support each other. Unusually for any organisation, coaching was also encouraged upwards. The senior team would use coaching conversations to support the manager. For example, if Angela said she was unsure how to tackle a query from a parent, a member of the senior team might ask, 'What have you done so far', or 'What do you think?'

## 'executive coaching'

facilitates the learning and development of the person who has managerial authority and responsibility. The aim is to improve performance and increase the effectiveness of the organisation. Strategic, 'big picture', and day to day work situations will be discussed, along with more personal issues. (See O'Neill M.B. 2000)

## 'business coaching'

promotes the development of vision statements, business plans, and strategies to achieve the business goals of the organisation. (See O'Neill M.B., 2000)

## 'workplace coaching'

supports and facilitates the learning of colleagues and managers. It can be an 'on the go' corridor conversation, or a sit-down coaching session. The essential elements are: active listening, asking questions that aid understanding, and focusing on goals and actions that will achieve results. The coaching can be down the hierarchy, peer to peer, or upwards. (See Tolhurst, J., 2006)

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**‘coaching’** is working alongside someone giving them the opportunity to set goals and support them to achieve these. (See Tolhurst, J.2006)

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**‘action learning’** A group of like-minded professionals regularly get together, and by actively listening, using open questions, and an Action Learning structure, they help each other share, reflect, learn new ways of approaching problems, and develop a network of supportive relationships. (See Pedler, M., 2008)

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### Creating the ‘Going Forward’ programme

There were concerns that staff were not ‘stepping up’ and taking responsibility, and that morale could be improved. The ‘Going Forward’ programme was designed to help Senior Care Workers and Room Supervisors celebrate the values of Bright Beginnings, contribute to their own appraisals, value their role, and help them develop group skills to support each other: it was also intended to be motivational. The programme had three parts and was spread over about six months:

A **job description workshop** where the senior team reminded staff about the details of their job descriptions and staff shared aspects of their role they found challenging;

A three day **coaching skills workshop** developed listening, questioning and coaching skills;

An **Action Learning** experience day, where action learning techniques and coaching skills were used, helped small groups support each other.

**What did the staff think?** Here are some staff responses immediately after the training sessions:

#### Coaching Skills\*:

‘I built on the skills I have already and developed my listening skills’;

‘The course made me assess how I speak to people and deal with situations’;

‘I have learned how to hold back and not make the conversation about me’;

‘It helped my confidence within the team’

#### Action Learning\*:

‘I have more confidence to speak in a group’;

‘I learned new ways to discuss and listen about issues and find ways of resolving them’;

‘Sharing ideas with other staff is really supportive’;

Following the programme, the Senior Management Team and Senior Care Practitioners each met as Action Learning groups to discuss problems and find ways forward. Here are some staff responses a few months after the ‘Going Forward’ programme ended:

#### Coaching\*:

‘I learned to listen without interruption’;

‘As a Senior Care Practitioner I have been able to use listening skills when talking to other staff members: we can now move forward when issues are discussed’;

‘I have learned new ways to listen to the children’;

‘I am more confident when dealing with parents’.



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## Action Learning\*:

'We are more confident in dealing with challenges and conflict';

'There is more communication between staff and the rooms';

'We are working better as a team';

'Action Learning groups have brought the team closer';

'It is good to share our thoughts';

'We feel more confident to discuss important and challenging issues with parents';

'The training helped us think about our job role and how we tackle situations'.

The programme evolved in response to changing circumstances and pressures and was led by a General Manager who had a vision and goals for the centre. The impact of coaching (and Action Learning) has been to release the manager from day to day activities so that she can concentrate on more strategic work, and have time to think. Increased delegation, and dispersed leadership has strengthened the staff team and enabled them to take more responsibility for the day to day issues and project work, for example, further developing the outdoor area. The confidence of the staff as child care practitioners and as communicators with parents has improved, as has morale (as evidenced by sickness records). Occupancy has increased to 97% out of 144 places from April – July in 2012, and finances are secure. The quality service to children and their parents has been maintained (as evidenced by parents' evaluations and quality standards achievements). The children are happy and safe. The staff team is fulfilling the mission statement: 'Excellence from the beginning: opening the door to a brighter future. Embracing opportunities to ensure each child achieves their true potential'.

The process of change has been supported with a 'top down' programme, from the leader through the organisation and is a cost-effective investment in the development of staff who feel valued, listened to and developed by the organisation.

**Leadership coaching**, the focus is to support leaders, at different levels in an organisation, understand their leadership style and develop skills appropriate to each situation, i.e. situational leadership skills. Through coaching they may develop coaching skills, develop visioning techniques, or their assertiveness skills. (See Tolhurst, J. 2006)

**Balanced score cards** The process attempts to translate the sometimes vague hopes of a company's mission statement into the practicalities of managing the business better at every level, i.e. finance, business processes, learning and growth, and client satisfaction. (See [www.businessballs.com](http://www.businessballs.com))

Over the three years, with a supportive governing body, a motivated staff team, and, by being coached herself and then using a coaching approach, Angela has managed the process of change, responded to new demands, and successfully developed many happy children in a safe environment. As change is continuous, the process will continue.

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Kline, N. *Time to think: Listening to ignite the Human Mind*; (1999) Cassell  
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Pedler, M. *Action Learning for Managers*; (2008) 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Gower  
Tolhurst, J. *Coaching for Schools*; (2006) Pearson/Longman  
O'Neill M.B (2000) *Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart*. Jossey-Bass

## Web sites

[www.brightbeginningschildcare.co.uk/](http://www.brightbeginningschildcare.co.uk/)  
[www.ndna.org.uk/events-campaigns/awards/winners/2011](http://www.ndna.org.uk/events-campaigns/awards/winners/2011)

Angela Foley  
Centre Leader at Bright Beginnings

Gill Dickers  
Director GDC Coaching  
[www.gdcoaching.co.uk](http://www.gdcoaching.co.uk)

## Change for Life

Sarah Scotland

As a nutritionist, I work at Green Lane Children's Centre in Hemel Hempstead to support healthy eating and provide guidance for changing diets and lifestyles. Having run some very successful groups, South Asian families in the community wanted to try and understand more about diet and health related issues.

Heart disease is the largest killer in the UK, averaging around 65,000 deaths a year. As a population we are all prone to eating the wrong types of foods and not exercising enough. Some ethnic groups are far more prone to developing health-related complications due to their dietary preferences.

**Being overweight also plays a big part in the probability of developing a heart or diabetic condition**

Families from the South Asian population are up to six times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes and are one and a half times more likely to suffer from heart disease than white European groups (**Diabetes UK and British heart foundation**). The reason for this increased risk is unclear but research has pointed to a mixture of genetics (family history), lack of exercise and eating habits. Being overweight also plays a big part in the probability of developing a heart or diabetic condition that can further lead to stroke or renal failure.

The aim of the sessions at the children's centre was to introduce the concept that less oil and salt could be used when cooking as well as promoting the idea that more fruit and vegetables should be eaten. Sugar was also a priority to be reduced, as many South Asians have a sweet tooth. Indian restaurants may not be well known for their desserts, however at home there is a tradition of preparing delicious desserts that can be full of fats and sugars.

Using lots of oil and salt in cooking is a big factor in South Asian culture. Initially the mothers who joined the group at the children's centre were against the idea of using less oil or salt. Tradition is powerful and change is not easy as South Asian women described needing to please not only their husbands but often their mothers-in-law too. The greatest worry was that the taste of



the food would be altered. To get over this barrier it was suggested that they gradually reduced the amounts used so their family's taste buds would get used to the changes gradually.

During the programme food was cooked using healthier methods. The group was keen to try this and there was limited resistance. The biggest success was making a carrot halva where the milk used was skimmed rather than full fat and the sugar was cut by three quarters.

To support the programme, material from the British Heart Foundation was used. We ordered handout books in a variety of languages, mainly Urdu, which proved very useful. Members of the group who lacked confidence in English found these useful and also took them home for their mother-in-law to read.

The evaluation of the course which lasted for five weeks, took place on the last week with healthy dishes being cooked and shared. All the families who joined the group felt they had changed their cooking methods to use less oil and salt.

## Transformation

—Lesley Hollinshead

The Early Years System Leaders' Programme (EYSLP) offered by the National College has been the catalyst to change our approach to working with partners for families in Knowsley over the past year. Like many strategic leads in local authorities, I have responsibility for the strategic management of early intervention and early years services across 17 Children's Centre sites, 12 of which are designated. We needed to find ways to maintain and improve quality and capacity through maximizing resources creatively, otherwise valuable early intervention services provided for families could be in jeopardy. The opportunity to promote self-improvement, reflection and evaluation seemed both timely and relevant.

As a strategic leader, I recognised that the EYSLP was an opportunity to collaborate across our service to focus on self-improvement. Leaders could explore improvement in their centres, and most importantly, we could develop our knowledge and performance across the whole local network of centres - system. Our initial intention was to build on existing system leadership developments in schools, and improve our capacity to target Children's Centre services at families who were most in need, and we estimated that a significant proportion of our population would fit into this definition. We have a very strong commitment to giving children the best possible start in life; which is a significant challenge for local Children's Centres.

The Pilot began with leaders attending peer-to-peer mentoring workshops at the National College in Nottingham. Each leader was asked to identify a project around an area of their local system that warranted improvement. At this stage, there has been limited requirement to deploy peer mentoring. In my role as strategic lead, I recognised that my role could define the enabling environment in which the individual projects could be developed. In addition, I could ensure that the benefits and learning could be widely shared.

We have only worked as system leaders for 12 months and on reflection I can see that the approach we adopted to the work has been appropriate. The pilot began in a semi-structured way, although we were unclear about how or when we would implement some of the approach locally. However, each area has developed with a level of autonomy. Like many new initiatives,

we had a number of false starts, but these really enhanced our learning about our responses to different perspectives, ideas and approaches to solutions. I have learned that within the current climate of change and increased pressures, I must be realistic. Sometimes progress seemed slow, but this was inevitable under the circumstances.

**“ I have learned that within the current climate of change and increased pressures, I must be realistic**

So what have I learned about developing system leadership in our local context, that I could share with other strategic and local leaders? System leadership has the potential to deploy the strengths and skills

of high quality managers to most flexible effect. We still need to build on the systems already developed, for example with schools, to greater effect by developing new local solutions and innovations. We are now further on our journey of working as system leaders, but there are relatively few immediate rewards.

Progress to date has been significantly dependent on the support of the National College; I would estimate this supportive role is important for future development. The expertise in early years has



been immensely valuable, and whilst specific to the pilot, the effect is wider. The EYSLP has provided an opportunity to reflect as a team, within our local system, about how resources and skills are deployed to generate improvement in quality of provision. It has also provided the opportunity to engage with other strategic leads nationally, and promoted new insights into chronic challenges. Again, the significance of the National College as brokers of this, as well as active facilitators, is relevant.

One of our local leaders is working on a project to improve school readiness. In a recent discussion, he shared his thinking around life readiness. His proposition is that there are a number of issues to be challenged. Firstly, that Schools should be ready for children, not vice versa, and that life-readiness is a more appropriate endeavour than school readiness; which is too narrow. This was a light bulb moment

“Life-readiness is a more appropriate endeavour”

“Deploy the strengths and skills of high quality managers to most flexible effect”

for me, but more importantly, the idea has found purchase within the local system. Given the importance of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and educational attainment/lifelong learning for families,

this issue is highly significant and potentially can influence approaches more widely than the local authority area. We have also engaged local partners differently around new areas of work.

Given the volume of change in local delivery, projects of this nature can be very supportive to Senior Managers, who may now have very wide spans of responsibility, and not necessarily confident in all of it. Local and National networks provide the potential for sharing the expertise that exists, standardising best practice, but most importantly creating greater coherence of service to children and families. I am a keen advocate of the system leader approach as an element that contributes to this.

This programme was influenced by the work of David Hargreaves' work on self-improving schools. [Download his paper on the Maturity model here.](#)

Have a look at the [June 2012 report about Early Years System Leaders in the LDR magazine](#)

## Fluid Change

Richard Scott

Having visited the Children Centre Leaders' Network in October 2012, with a provocation to consider space and colour and how children interact with their environment, the proposals to deregulate space in *More great childcare* set us thinking.

Perhaps you were in Preston, or London at some point over the last few years and happened across Jeppe Hein's summer installation *Appearing Rooms*? A great fun piece with several walls of water that switch off and on to an unknown sequence, creating rooms. What's fun about this, is watching how, both adults and children, decide to use and move between the walls as they appear. When it's not so windy, clusters of children sit together in one of the rooms, as one wall falls they'll be grouped together with another room and the dynamic changes. It's about adapting, working with what you've got and constant change. It's such a simple instinct to occupy a space, to make it YOUR place, you don't need four walls and a permanent structure to learn, purely stimuli to respond to.

# PEOPLE



With the unveiling of **More great childcare** and the proposed removal of required space-per-child - we set about questioning what was the space deemed so necessary for in the first place? Now that we needn't focus on how much space we're required to provide **internally**, it shifts our focus to another potential, possibly already existent but less frequented... **externally**?

Jan Allen, Headteacher at Pastures Way Nursery (incorporating Meadows Children's Centre) has been using forest schooling to maximise the space they have allotted to them. Prepared to the hilt with waterproofs, wellies and cosy jackets, children are outside whatever the weather every Friday learning and gaining a new understanding of the great outdoors - something that the built-up surroundings of Pastures Way doesn't take for granted. More often than not, it's child-led, children become self-motivated to learn

and even begin factoring in risk for themselves. So on a chilly march morning, they've decided nothing sounds better than making a fire to make hot chocolate and whittling sticks ("being careful of the pointy end" says safety-first Ryan) on which to toast marshmallows.

What forest schooling teaches is common sense and respect for the outside space. After all, outside is the one longterm environment that everyone can rely on; where better to encourage self-development and learn to adapt to change than somewhere you'll always be able to depend on being familiar?

In thinking about this potential extra space (if not formerly used to the maximum) this perhaps allows smaller, more remote centres to be a bit more innovative with what they have. Now that inside floorspace is not governed so closely, funding could be juggled and focussed elsewhere, instead of

building three new walls to create another play space, perhaps using an existing wall to project a live link to and from another local outreach centre? Gaining the atmosphere of a larger space whilst acquainting children (and adults) with technology, would then provide a greater understanding of the difference between reality and virtual experience. For something costing considerably less than building one wall, let alone three say, it would transform the apparent size and instantly engage and introduce children to this concept whilst creating stronger links with the usually more isolated communities. Perhaps allowing funding reshuffling for the training of forest school leaders...

Let the wild rumpus start!

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Huge thank you to Jan Allen, the staff and children of Pastures Way.

Video can be found at:

[www.vimeo.com/  
sophielant/  
moregreatchildcare](https://www.vimeo.com/sophielant/moregreatchildcare)

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Current regulations can cause a preoccupation with relatively trivial issues, such as the amount of floorspace per child

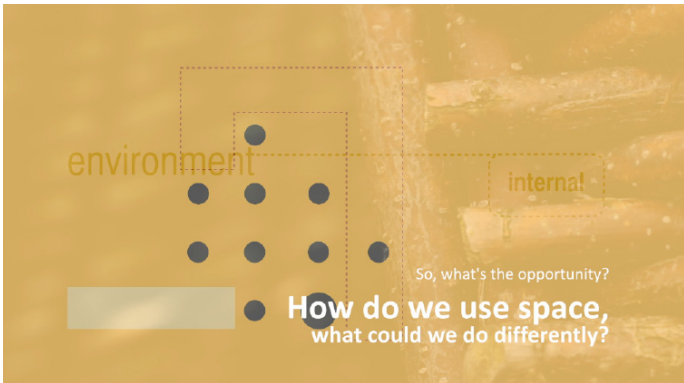
This gets in the way of allowing staff and inspectors to concentrate on the most important consideration: how well adults are interacting with children.

**internal**

permanent point of contact  
routine  
passive supervision (open plan reliant)

//PROVIDES//  
safe environment  
reliable  
group learning

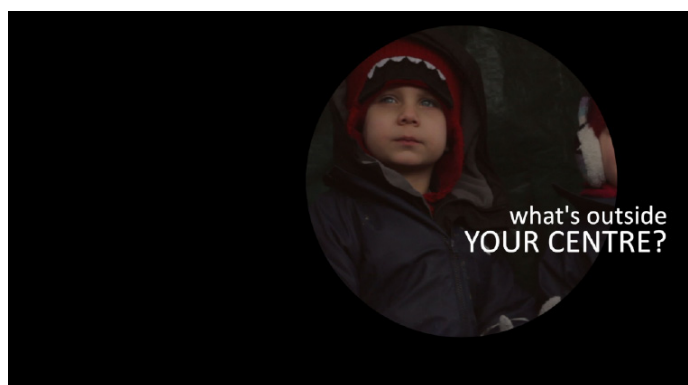
supervision inspired play...  
**CONSTRAINT OF A BUILDING?**



**external**

higher adult:child  
child-led play ... adults purely facilitate

//PROVIDES//  
self management + independence  
Learn RISK  
Adaptation



## Don't see red in the future, look for gold in the past.

Sue Webster

This year is a tough one for those of us who have a passion for the idea that children's centres make a positive contribution to the educational, health and emotional well-being of all children and their families. Perhaps, we have become used to the adrenaline rush of continuous rapid growth and development in our short history, so that as the initiative has slowed, changed and in some cases stopped, we find it difficult to find the reverse gear. While it is natural to feel frustration and anger when it feels like our efforts are challenged and our capacity to work directly with all families is slowly decreasing, rather than getting angry it is time for us to collectively share the success stories? Should we ask what is missing from our impact picture?

A set of coincidences in my own life, recently highlighted a long-term impact of our work that is seldom discussed. Within the University, I have been delivering a 10-week module on leadership; a student approached me and asked whether I remembered her. Becky (not her real name) is a mother of three and was member of the Sure Start Local Programme Board, where I had been the manager. Like many programmes at the time, Becky and other enthusiastic volunteer parents were supported by community development practitioners to articulate the hidden voices in their communities, to represent parents' views at meetings, bring new perspectives to service planning and engage in a multi-agency context at meetings.

After Becky's children began school, she moved on and completed a

level 3 childcare qualification at the local college and then through the widening participation programme at University of Warwick is now studying for a BA(Hons) in Childhood, Education and Society. If I had not now moved on to work in the University I would never have known her story. A working class woman who had used her Sure Start experience positively, she was using her recent educational achievements to support her own children with homework and to be a role model for them to embrace and value learning.

Since that day I have shared my delight about meeting Becky again and I have heard many similar experiences from other colleagues in the children's centre world. Many of us have experienced the same kind of 'lollipop story' that **Drew Dudley shares in his TED talk 'Everyday Leadership'**. He describes his simple act of kindness to engage new students in their new world that had a profound effect on a fresher student, who came to thank him before she left university four years later – which he could not remember. He debates our inability to thank others and celebrate profound things people do for us, for which we rarely thank them – what holds us back? We seldom get a chance to learn about the long term effects of our leadership work. In a professional world where we are driven by targets and outcomes, it is so easy for us and more importantly for our paymasters to ignore the long-term benefits in economic and

social terms for individuals and groups as we seek short-term results.

In the initial days of Early Excellence one of the impact activities asked mothers using Hillfields Early Excellence Centre in Coventry, to reflect back on their lives and predict what would have happened to them and their children if they had not engaged with activities in the Centre (Pascal and Bertram, 1999). The research findings included powerful stories where the

mothers predicted that their children would have been taken in care because of the effects their heavy reliance on alcohol, illegal and prescribed medication. The relationships and

guidance available at the Centre supported them to change their behaviours. The findings were even more significant when the research team calculated the potential costs of the external support each family would have needed, if the Centre had not been so visible in the local community. This study was thoroughly researched and evaluated. However, even when the impact of our work is not evaluated with such care, we can still be making considerable changes for family functioning and community development.

As professionals in early years, we are frequently challenged about whether we are making a

**Enthusiastic  
volunteer  
parents were  
supported to  
articulate the  
hidden voices**

difference in communities. Have children's centres have made an impact and can they prove it? We have all listened to talk in the media about the families in the communities we work within described as lazy, troubled, and a drain on society in this era of austerity. Yet when I visit children's centres, I, like you, see the hope of a new generation of children with curiosity in their bright eyes. Most parents want the best for their children, but do not always have the intrinsic motivation or intellectual capacity to make the best decisions on their behalf. That does not make them bad people. In an era of quick fix solutions to poverty, blindness to disadvantage and deafness to expertise and collective knowledge, the stories we have accumulated could be a valuable resource. Hundreds of stories could create a powerful argument and provide a new dimension of impact.

Seeking out families, whose children came to centres between 2000 and 2007 and gathering their stories to analyse, could help us collect some powerful evidence to use alongside the statistical data and case studies from our current families. How have families used their experiences at the children's centre to shape their futures? A large undertaking perhaps, but Pen Green's Tracer Study with children

provides a good starting point. They have invited older children back to the nursery to reflect on their nursery experiences, and their findings suggest that children and families know what worked for them and can make sensible recommendations about how practitioners could be more effective in their practice (Whalley et al, 2012).

Their research questions were:

**What were the things that we did that were significant to children and their families?**

**What was significant about our engagement with the children and their families?**

**What continues to be significant to those young people and their families?**

**How are the nursery's shared beliefs and ways of working manifested in our dialogue with parents and children now?**

(Whalley et al, 2012: 524)



A recent paper by Verity Campbell-Barr (2012) argues that the focus to measure the impact of investment in early years provision should shift away from just the educational attainment on the child. Without a focus on the 'social outcomes' for family relationships, and the service's contribution to community capacity building, she argues we cannot assess the true value of any of our services. We are frequently being tasked with being 'value for money' but Campbell-Barr, 2012 reminds us to also ask, value for whom?

With this in mind and the theme of this issue 'leading change', I am challenging you to look backwards as well as forward as you consider your justification for the future sustainability of your children's centre.

**Where are your leadership lollipop moments?**

**How many parents have embraced new opportunities through their engagement with your children's centre?**

We are very interested in documenting and collecting these stories, if you are interested in becoming part of a life historical project to collect them, please contact us.

#### References

Verity Campbell-Barr (2012): Early years education and the value for money folklore, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 20:3, 423-437

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Whalley, M, Arnold C, Lawrence P & Peerless S (2012) The voices of their childhood: families and early years' practitioners developing emancipatory methodologies through a tracer study. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, (2012) 20:4, 519-535

Sue Webster  
early childhood studies, lecturer,  
university of warwick

## Achieving Two Year Olds – early learning for two year olds

The roll out of early learning for two year olds continues towards the first main milestone of September 2013, when the 20% least advantaged children will become eligible. Local authorities report that by April approximately 70,000 places will be available, with the target for September being 130,000.

Most, if not all, local authorities have their plans in place, and funding has been allocated by government for statutory places, building capacity (trajectory) and capital. Encouragingly, the tried and tested referral routes and targeting provision for the most vulnerable families are being protected. Alongside this, there are new systems for applications from eligible families through local publicity on online processes.

There's so much energy and amazing work being done to make necessary changes, establish delivery partnerships, design new systems and enable providers to deliver, and parents to access these important new places.



We are delighted to announce a national network meeting on 6th June 2013 at the QEII conference centre in Westminster, with two free places per local authority.

We aim for the day to be crammed full of practice examples to reflect on and learn from. For more information contact [bookings@hemsalls.com](mailto:bookings@hemsalls.com).

James Hemsall  
director Hemsalls

## The Achieving Two Year Olds online group on the LGA Knowledge Hub

now has 299 members – you could be the 300th. Registration is open to all and the site is packed full of useful case studies and resources – it's also a great forum for discussion and questions.



## Children's Centre inspection handbook

(21 March 2013)

The new Ofsted inspection guidance for centres summarises the core purpose of Sure Start children's centres, to provide support for parents and help them to access:

- health services for children and their parents
- integrated childcare and early education
- information and advice about children's services, parenting support and a range of family support services
- training and advice so that parents are helped to gain skills and find work.

All the different organisations that offer these services through a children's centre need to work together to give the best support possible to all children and families in the community. This will help children, especially those who may be disadvantaged, get the best start in life.

Inspection is designed to check that centres:

know their community and the types of services, activities and courses that families who live there need

deliver the services most needed, to a high standard

do all they can to help families use the services they need most, especially the families that find it hard to do so, making sure that no groups in the community have been overlooked

and the new framework follows through the proposals set out in the consultation (January 2013) to develop arrangements for the inspection of groupings of centres.



In line with the schools' inspection framework, the bar has been set high. Only good and better centres are good enough. Centres not reaching that grade are deemed to *require improvement* or be *inadequate*. There are three key judgments:

- access to services by young children and families
- the quality and impact of practice and services
- the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

that inform one overarching judgment of **overall effectiveness**.

Data capture and its analysis, to inform service provision and identify impact in the short term and over time, will drive:

greater Local Authority accountability to put in place strategic data sharing agreements to ensure that the correct data is provided to all children's centres and their Lead Agencies

more rigorous outcome targets set between commissioners/commissioned services to raise levels of sustained engagement with families who most need help and support

greater governance challenge to require partners to use all opportunities to engage with families within the centre's reach to promote relevant services and connect purposefully with the centre

focus on service planning that achieves positive, evidenced outcomes

reflective practice and quality improvement approaches

a requirement for professionally qualified staff and volunteers

To prepare for the new framework, centre leaders and Local Authority (LA) strategic leads need to:

check current centre data is up to date on the EC Harris website (new data-screens go live in early April)

review and update records to show children's centre groupings (April)

check new Unique Reference Numbers (URNs) created by Ofsted (May)

check the Ofsted website for *Additional Guidance*, as inspections under the new framework begin (May)

ensure centres are resourced to provide support, advice and training to linked early years provision in the local area

ensure centre leaders can access sources of funding to professionally develop and qualify the range of practitioners in centres



## Department for Education

### Have your say

Two consultations are open that relate to proposals within [More great childcare](#)

#### Consultation on Teachers' Standards (Early Years)

The Government wants to make sure there is more great childcare available for parents and children. The introduction of Early Years Teachers (Graduate) will support early years providers to ensure those who work with babies and young children become increasingly skilled and professional. The Teaching Agency has been asked to develop the Teachers' Standards (Early Years) in order to start training the first Early Years Teachers from September 2013. The Teachers' Standards (Early Years) will underpin the training and assessment of Early Years Teachers. Trainees must demonstrate that they meet the standards to achieve the award of Early Years Teacher Status.

[Read the consultation document on-line](#)

[Respond on-line](#)

Launch Date: **21 March 2013**  
Closing Date: **30 April 2013**

#### Consultation on the criteria for Early Years Educator qualifications (Level 3)

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) currently sets out the requirements for staff: child ratios for all providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage and the qualification levels that practitioners must hold. It is the role of the Teaching Agency to define the Level 3 'full and relevant' qualifications that practitioners included in the specified ratios must hold. This consultation seeks your views on proposed 'full and relevant' criteria to underpin new Level 3 qualifications from September 2014 that will qualify individuals to become Early Years Educators.

[Read the consultation document on-line](#)

[Respond on-line](#)

Launch Date: **26 February 2013**  
Closing Date: **22 April 2013**

# PRODUCTIVITY



## Events led by the National College

### The National College 'Leadership for Learning' Conference, Thursday 9th May at the LCC, National College, Nottingham

This Learning Event will bring early years leaders together from across nurseries, children's centres and schools and will include learning more about the Government priorities for early years and childcare as outlined in More Great Childcare and Children and Families Bill. Key note speakers include:

**Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford** – Professor of Early Childhood Education Institute of Education, University of London

**Dr Janet Rose** - Senior Lecturer in Education Studies: Early Years, Bath Spa University

**Melani Oliver** – Director for Local Government Innovation NESTA Innovation Lab

**Susan Gregory** - Director for Early Childhood Ofsted

**Sue Egersdorff** – Director for Early Years Leadership National College

Registration and details are now available on the **National College website**. For further information please contact [CCLN.TEAM@nationalcollege.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CCLN.TEAM@nationalcollege.gsi.gov.uk)



achieving **2** year olds

hempalls

## Achieving Two Year Olds National Network meeting

6th June 2013 at the QEII conference centre in Westminster, with two free places per local authority

### National College led events - dates to put in your diary

25 June	Central	<u>Kegworth</u>
2 July	South	<u>Bristol</u>
4 July	North	<u>Liverpool</u>

Registration will open in April.

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



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