

## Promising Catalyst

Eunice Lumsden

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The start of any new year provides an opportunity to reflect, celebrate and shape a different future. As we enter 2014 all of us involved in leading, developing and providing services for children and their families have a unique and powerful opportunity to be catalysts for change.

**Unique and powerful opportunity to be catalysts for change**

We all know that working with children and families, whether directly or through leading and supporting others, is both rewarding and challenging and we often have to dig deep within ourselves. At



# PEOPLE

those times it is really helpful to ask ourselves:

Why do you do what you do?

What is your primary driver?

What has influenced you?

What will you compromise on and what will you **NOT** compromise on?

The World is currently debating the **Post-2015 Development Agenda** which will build on the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs). This provides an opportunity that will not be seen again for at least fifteen years, for Early Childhood Development (ECD) to be a goal in its own right with targets that all countries must meet (see the [University of Northampton short film](#)).

“Investing in children is the best thing we can do. They are the living messages to a time we will not see.” Sir Al Aynsley-Green

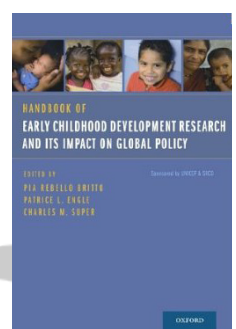
The initial MDGs included halving those living in extreme poverty, improved maternal health, reduced child mortality and primary education for all. There is still a long way to go and the majority of targets will not be met by 2015. The reason why this is important for our work is that while the MDGs have focused on developing countries the Post -2015 Development Framework will be for all countries. As those of you working in children centres will know only too well, there are increasing challenges for the most disadvantaged children and families in the UK as well as globally. We therefore have the opportunity to use this agenda to focus on our own practice, that of our settings, galvanise our staff and those who use our services to

celebrate our children and shape the future we want for them.

However, despite the undisputable evidence from neuroscience the social sciences and economics about the importance of early childhood development and how adverse early childhood experiences impact on later development and achievement, this does not appear to be heard by those developing the Post -2015 Development Framework. Therefore there has never been such an important opportunity for us to come together with our colleagues globally to have our individual voices heard collectively. We need to advocate at all levels for a specific measurable goal on **early childhood development** for the Post-2015 Development framework.

#### References:

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





### Becoming a Catalyst for Change

This agenda has relevance to all our work and offers opportunities to celebrate it and support others to realise the importance of early childhood development. There are many ways in which you can lead children's centres across the UK to become catalysts of change:

adverse early  
childhood  
experiences impact  
on later development  
and achievement

sign the **petition** launched by MPs Dame Tessa Jowell and Ivan Lewis calling for early childhood development to central to the Post -2015 Agenda. 10,000 signatures are needed. Ask all those working in and using your centre to sign as well

watch and disseminate the **short film** by the University of Northampton supporting this UNICEF campaign

invite your local MP (and local press) to your setting or meet with them and ask them to write to the Prime Minister on your behalf and asking him to advocate for ECD as a specific goal in the Post-2015 Development Framework. David Cameron is a Co-chair of the High Level Panel advising on the Post-2015 Development Framework.

Create a Global Promise Tree asking all those using and working in your centre to make a pledge of one thing they will do to advocate for early childhood development

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# PEOPLE

## Mastering Leadership

—Vicki Lant

Displaying leadership weighs heavy when you have serious doubts about where you might put your best foot forward, or worse, if you doubt you even have a best foot, worse still if forward doesn't seem an option. The lone responsibility of leadership feels heaviest when others perceive a clear need for your leadership - your energy, commitment and certainty, yet you cannot define the nature or value of the journey, let alone see a route through. The expectation of a new year and anticipation of unknowns ahead can bring this into sharp relief.

Faced with uncertainty, I tend to revisit something familiar and begin there. Professor Guy Claxton (Claxton P. G., 2004), drawing on the Piagetian definition of

intelligence - knowing what to do when you don't know what to do, explores how learners mobilise and value their curiosity and creativity to keep learning rich and meaningful. In a time of unknowing and uncertainty, developing trust in personal skills of intuition and imagination becomes essential to each of us that leads teams.

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**We can start building resilience by making difficulty more interesting and confusion less shameful, and we can encourage reflection by modelling what reflective learning looks like.**

(Claxton P. G., 2004)

The first step in knowing what to do when you don't know what to do, is reach for the known and look at it afresh with the lens of the new challenging context. I'd love to have Guy Claxton, Professor Sir Ken Robinson or Professor Sir Tim Brighouse as a mentor in tough times, but their writing, TED talks and internet resources are almost as good. Something as everyday as Desert Island Discs, when the castaway is Sir Ken Robinson, can trigger the most surprising starting points:

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**“... learning is an art form, not a delivery system**

Robinson (2013)

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How often are we asked, or explain, how our service delivers? Let's rather consider the creative art or science of developing people, our families, our teams, ourselves.

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**“ knowing what to do when you don't know what to do**

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... if we are to survive and flourish we have to think differently about our own abilities and make the best use of them

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... the single most important leadership competency for organisations to deal with this growing complexity is creativity.

(Robinson, 2011)

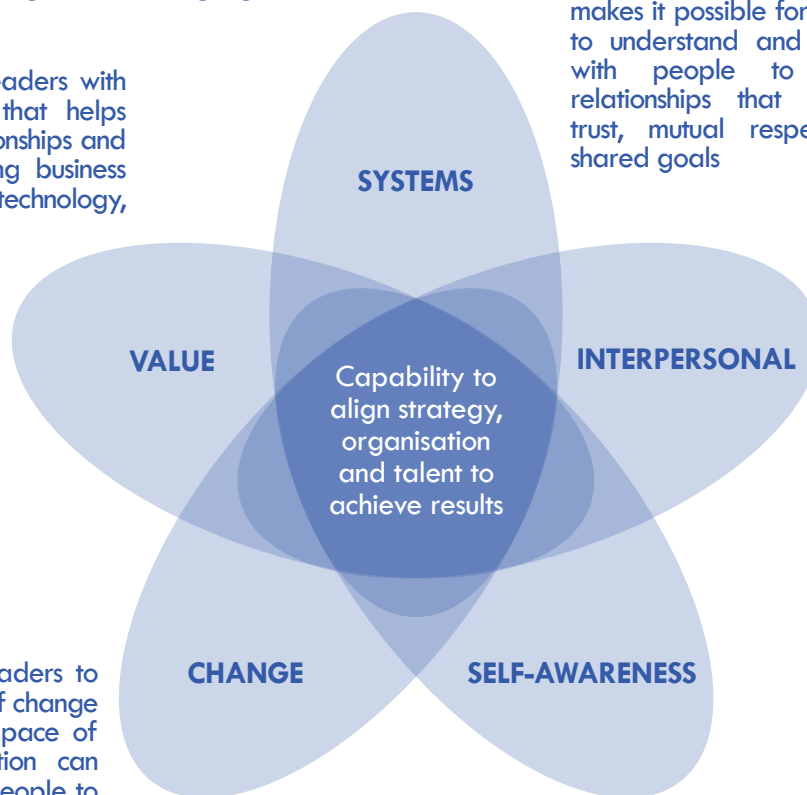


## FIGURE 1: LEADERSHIP LENSES

**SYSTEMS LENS** provides leaders with a panoramic perspective that helps them see the dynamic relationships and connections that exist among business units, functions, processes, technology, people and customers

**VALUE LENS** helps leaders see, prioritise and act on the primary sources of value creation for the business

**CHANGE LENS** enables leaders to understand the complexity of change situations, the degree and pace of change that an organisation can tolerate and how to align people to deliver results



**INTERPERSONAL LENS** makes it possible for leaders to understand and connect with people to create relationships that combine trust, mutual respect and shared goals

**SELF-AWARENESS LENS** provides leaders with the ability to understand their strengths and weaknesses, personality, style preferences, interests and values

with acknowledgement to Axiom Consulting Partners (2011)

As the new year unfolds, my challenge is how do commissioners, providers and leaders of children's centres offer a model of quality that serves children and their families well, within budget, without compromising on family-centredness? Will the wisdom of the sector help?

After a year of evidence-gathering, the government's Select Committee reporting on **The Foundation Stage: Sure Start Children's Centres**, published its findings. (House of Commons, December 2013). It offers 47 recommendations under 28 headings, grouped into five themes:

- Definition and purpose of children's centres
- Outcomes and accountability
- Reaching children and families in need
- Local and central government: funding, commissioning and strategic planning
- Workforce and leadership

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We will explore the summary of these recommendations in **Policy**, but a starting point is offered as defining centres with three new descriptors to reflect **location and management, replacing the service-outcome approach in the national guidance (2013)**:

Children's centres based around nursery schools, offering a full service, with some acting as teaching centres and network hubs, with fully integrated services

Children's centres as part of or managed by a school, usually a primary school, on the extended school model

Children's centres that operate as family centres, offering family support and opportunities for community participation. These offer no childcare or early education but are used by local authorities for targeted prevention services

Is this just one snap-shot? In a changing context, is it even safe to describe locations when our relational work is less about where than how; art more than delivery? Glass half-empty leaders may not see their centres' work in this model. Glass half-full leaders may see potential in literature's rule of three<sup>1</sup>, here. All of the models have relevance and contribute to the needs of families. However, the third iteration may become a model for the future? Led through third-sector organisations, based upon relational, early-help principles, operating effectively through a distributed leadership model with partners, through federated working with schools, early education providers, health services and community partners, this may create much-valued hubs that withstand financial huffing and puffing?

Our contributors describe the impact of their own leadership on others - Eunice Lumsden in an international context, Jude Burgess within a local

authority, and Allyson Cardis on herself in addressing challenge and change. Sue Webster reflects on how we maintain a personal fitness regime for mental agility and self-challenge through our reading, reflecting and professional dialogue with peers. Whilst Sue Place shares the exhilaration of new leadership confidence, leadership mastery is honed through daily reflective practice. Peter Senge describes a concept of leadership mastery that inspires me to meet the test of this coming year:

**“ People with a high level of mastery share several basic characteristics. They have a special sense of purpose that lies behind their visions. . . They see current reality as an ally, not an enemy. They have learned how to work with forces of change rather than resist those forces. They are deeply inquisitive, committed to seeing reality more and more accurately. . . They feel as if they are part of a larger creative process, which they can influence but unilaterally control.**

**They live in a continual learning mode. They never “arrive”. . . they are acutely aware of their ignorance, incompetence, their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident. Paradoxical? Only for those that do not see that “the journey is the reward”.**

(Senge, 2006, pp. 132-133)

May you have a rewarding journey!

Vicki Lant

Director Cambridge Development and Learning Ltd



# A Foundation of System Leadership

Jude Burgess

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## Strengthening the leadership skills of early years leaders by learning from others through peer-to-peer support, partnerships and networks

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It was not about intervention or imposed support but about choice, collaboration and trust.

So, what is systems leadership and how does it differ from effective leadership?

“System leadership can be summarised as maximising the effect of leadership across a system so that there is a positive impact that creates a system better able to learn and improve for all learners. The success of system leadership can be evaluated in terms of the improvement of the achievement and attainment of all learners, the raising of the bar and the narrowing of the gap within and between early years settings through a shared responsibility.”

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National College for Teaching & Learning, 2013.

This article offers a brief summary of Nottinghamshire’s involvement in the Children’s Centre Systems Leadership (CCSL) national pilot. As one of 13 participating local authorities, we are now in our second year of implementation, having extended the pilot across the early years sector.

The aim of the pilot has been to build on the success of the National College’s Local Leaders of Education programme (LLE), based on an understanding and recognition of the significance effective leadership has on improved outcomes for children and families. It was designed to build leadership capacity and drive sustainable improvement by successful leaders working collaboratively with their peers.

**Attentive to the whole as well as the parts**

<sup>1</sup> Rule of three in fable, literature and parables usually involves the third in a trial context, often the youngest or weakest, succeeding against the odds (examples in Goldilocks and three bears; the three little pigs; the prodigal son)

### References:

Claxton, G. (1997). *Hare brained and tortoise mind*. London: Fourth Estate.

Claxton, P. G. (2004). *Learning to learn: a key goal*. Retrieved January 18, 2014, from [www.qca.org.uk/futures/](http://www.qca.org.uk/futures/).

Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of our minds: learning to be creative*. Second ed. . Chichester: Capstone.

Senge, P. M. (2006). *The Fifth Discipline - The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*. 2nd ed. London: Random House.

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Quite simply it can be best described as being attentive to the whole as well as the parts, or as Heifetz and Linsky (2002) suggested:

“Staying on the balcony ..... and being on the dance floor”

So, how do the core behaviours of effective leaders differ from those of a Systems Leader?

## Core behaviours of highly effective leaders

Having a clear vision to improve outcomes for children and families

engaging responsively with families

using evidence to drive improvements in outcomes

using business skills strategically

facilitating open communication

embracing integrated working

motivating and empowering staff

being committed to their own learning and development

## Core behaviours of system leaders

investing in the bigger picture

focusing on achieving best outcomes for children and families across the foundation years

using key knowledge and evidence across the system

creating partnerships serving children and families across the system

leading and constructing collaboratively across the system

building system leadership capacity

improving practice and tackling underperformance across the systems.

The opportunity to participate in the pilot arrived at a time of significant change, both locally and nationally. Last year, our network of 58 children's centres was in the process of being re-commissioned presenting a huge challenge to all children's centre leaders as they managed the change process. A service review prior to the re-commissioning process had also resulted in a number of staff finding themselves new to the role of children's centre leader, which presented further challenge. The original objective therefore, for participating in the pilot was to establish a model that built leadership capability to support improvement, while at the same time recognising the wider benefits it has proven to have in supporting the change process as we moved to new contract arrangements.

The model developed for the CCSL pilot centred on 1:1 coaching and leadership learning groups (LLGs), led by 4 CCSLs who had met the national college's designation criteria and consequently had attended the required 2 days coaching training. The focus of the LLGs was identified at a launch event held for all children's centre leaders,





and was linked to common areas for service improvement, i.e. Outcomes and Data, Challenging Change, Resource Management, Partnership and Accountabilities. Eight individual coaching opportunities were also provided by the system leaders to both experienced and newly appointed CCLs.

The CCSLs worked with the implementation team to devise evaluation tools in order to measure impact of the pilot over a 6 month period. Whilst it was too early to see a direct correlation between the



CCSL pilot to service improvement there was strong evidence to suggest that there had been personal and professional growth, and that all those participating in it had learned from the experience. Common themes that emerged:-

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### **The loneliness of being a leader in children's centres:**

- “Receiving peer support has helped build my personal and emotional resilience.”
- “I feel much better now I've talked about it with everybody.”

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### **Feeling safe, valued and able to be honest within the bounds of confidentiality.**

- “I've never said that out loud before in front of anybody.”
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### **Permission and time given by senior leaders**

- “Felt appreciated and valued and given time.”
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### **Learning and sharing of practice**

- “It deepened our learning by discussing critical incidents from practice.”
  - “We have learnt so much from this group.”
  - “Able to share practice ideas in a non threatening way and sometimes humorous ways.”
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Feedback from the system leaders themselves highlighted the tensions in maintaining a coaching role when a mentoring style of approach was more suited<sup>1</sup>.

The overwhelming response from participants was to continue with the pilot beyond the initial 6 months. Further funding has therefore been utilised to secure additional mentoring and coaching training for additional CCSLs, and the model is now a key feature of the quality assurance work of the new children's centre provider.

More recently, the government's drive for greater autonomy and sector-led quality improvement together has also presented local authorities with a challenge of redefining its role in relation to quality improvement across the early years sector. Whilst 70% of all our registered settings are currently Good or Outstanding, 30% are either Satisfactory or Inadequate, often in areas where two year olds live who are eligible for the government's early learning

entitlement offer. We have therefore, taken the opportunity to learn from the CCSL and extend our approach across the early years childcare sector, to test out a system that supports quality improvement, building on the collaborative arrangements we have established across the sector over many years of partnership working and informed by the Ofsted report : **Getting it right first time- achieving and maintaining high-quality early years provision, July 2013.**

Working in collaboration with colleagues from NDNA, PACEY and PSLA currently we have nine childcare providers, including childminders, who meet our adapted Early Years Systems Leaders designation criteria, coaching/mentoring others who require improvement. Time will tell what fruit this new approach will bear, but there is already an eagerness to embed what we have established so far, engage with local leaders of education, and align with local quality improvement networks.

**Jude Burgess**

locality manager – performance and quality  
nottinghamshire county council

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/1219925968/National-framework-for-mentoring-and-coaching.pdf>

#### References:

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



## Leading Self

Allyson Cardis

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On the 16th May 2013 my career as a children's centre leader came to an end. The new providers had taken up the contract on 1st April, immediately implemented a restructure and I was in the group by the door. I was quite happy to go and in the lead-up had been excited about the possibilities and ready for a change.

Despite that it was a shock when it happened, like being slapped.

As with all public sector organisations, the local authority had been fighting the battle of shrinking budgets on two fronts with less money to provide services and less money to fund staff to monitor services. The resulting tendering of children's centres in

area-based clusters has seen the number of CC Leader positions reduced from twenty to eight, with nine experienced leaders leaving.

**knowing  
what to  
do when  
you don't  
know what  
to do**

So no matter how evident it appears right now that they can't manage without you - the place falls apart when you're on leave, your

phone rings constantly when you're out on a training day - you're not indispensable apparently. Maybe it's time to consider the future.

Leaving a much-loved service is a very personal process, nobody can say what it's going to be like for you but it is a process and there will be some predictable elements.



Working in a children's centre is more than a job, it's about being part of a community. My favourite part of the week was arriving on Monday morning, with parents shepherding children along the pavement and groups of teenagers crowding at the bus stop or wobbling along on bikes. The community was gearing up for another week. So in the future it's going to carry on without you, all those painstakingly-built relationships, all the crises and triumphs.

Letting go of this involves a loss like any personal change and needs

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to be grieved in order to move on emotionally. Some said that this happened before they left. The new contract was mobilising and things were changing all around them like a dream-sequence in a film, leaving them to walk away from a job they already didn't recognise.

For me it was September that did it. I'd given myself the some time off and had a wonderful time, tending my allotment; going out for lunch and generally doing lovely things. Then September kicked in leaving me feeling strange and dislocated.

Alongside this is trying to work out what comes next: what do you want to do, what are you good at, which part of your job did you enjoy most? If it looks as if this scenario might be on the horizon, now could be a good time for personal planning. If you always felt that you would go back to what you used to do before, it's worth checking out if your qualifications need updating and if your experience is current enough. A little research now could open up options in the future.

Perhaps, like me, something different is in order. If this is the case work out your money first and plan it the way you would your Centre Budget. Apparently people do one of two things with redundancy money: they either work out how long it will last them or what they could do with it. Would it be enough to support you if you wanted to re-train or would it fund some fast-track training?

Perhaps the first question though, is where are you in your life and what's important to you now? It may not be same as when you started, you may have had children, got divorced, or you may be in sight of retirement. It really helps to talk this through with someone neutral and objective.

Most crucially, don't lose your confidence. This isn't about you personally it's about you getting caught up in the fallout from changing ideology. You are still the resourceful, resilient multi-skilled person you always were and, above anything else, it's worth holding on to that thought.

So what about me? Working out how much redundancy I was entitled to unfolded the future for me. I came up with a combination of how long it would last and what I could do then had some time off, went on a trip and then embarked on project management training. I decided my life was at a point where I wanted more flexibility, different challenges and another way of contributing. The answer was freelance.

Opting for this path rather than going back to a 'proper job' is one of scariest things I have done but also exciting and rewarding. With feelings akin to unstrapping a parachute before jumping I stepped out. Allyson Cardis Consultancy was open for business.

**Loss like any personal change and needs to be grieved in order to move on emotionally**

**Research now could open up options in the future**



## 21st Century Valediction, Forbidding Mourning<sup>1</sup>

—Sue Place

Here's an elegy to our LLG  
Of Yvonne, Emily, Kerry and me.  
We started off frightened, incomplete,  
unenlightened,  
Now look at us – shifted and gifted, integrated and  
moderated.

North, South, East and West,  
We've come from far and wide.  
Trowbridge, Tiverton, Hatherleigh  
- and Wincanton besides.

Journaling, now there's a thing,  
Did we get it right?  
After degrees of angst, we've been amazed to see,  
That our prose has yielded insights.

Mezirow, Allman and Knowles (1983)  
Were big on Andragogy.  
Gardener and Goleman expanded this quite a bit,  
While Harris, Blackmore and Day gave us Passion in  
Leadership.

We've trusted the process,  
It's sometime s been hard,  
Protector, participant, prisoner and passenger,  
We've gone the full nine yards.

Motivation's been key, lots of tea and coffee,  
But with Maslow nipping at our heels,  
It's finally starting to feel,  
That we've become the best that we can be.

Looking through Joe and Hari's windows, what do we  
see ?  
Apart from some distinctly Donald Rumsfeld  
undertones  
(With the unknown unknowns)  
This one completely foxed me !

Look out ! Observable and unobservable data !  
Here comes an iceberg,  
If we hit a submerged bit, it'll cause a critical incident,  
Requiring a process review sheet.  
That'll need some analysis  
My guess is it'll be either existential, relational or  
praxis.

<sup>1</sup> *Valediction, forbidding  
mourning; Songs and Sonnets*,  
John Donne. *The Complete  
Poems*, (1976); Penguin Classics;  
London

# PRACTICE

Did you know that Chichenmihalyi's Flow works  
for everyone?  
Whereas disequilibrium and Cognitive Jar  
Are rarer by far.

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Research at Level 7 proved fascinating  
We've nurtured our nutrients and diminished our  
toxins  
Forcefield Analysis maps change through this  
recession  
And now Kotter's 8 steps are more of a  
balancing act than a linear progression.

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Poor little Craig and his mum Jackie,  
No perspective transformation for them,  
Trapped forever in the Fishbowl.  
Just endless interpretations of their unhappy  
roles.

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Leading beautifully (Ladkin – Mastery,  
Congruence and Purpose February 2008)  
Is what we've aspired to do.  
It's possible that making a 'high quality mobile'  
helped in some undefinable way,  
But nothing prepared us for the mental torture  
of the paperwork of the CBA.

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It was Handy to get to grips with Charles and  
his Empty Raincoat,  
but Stephen Covey, I have to say- I love you -  
and your habits - which I now emulate.  
Clearly, Trying Hard is not Good Enough,  
But if we get our baselines, partners and  
curves sorted, we may yet call Mark  
Friedman's bluff.

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So it's goodbye to the Ramada (now aka  
something else) and the Mercure,  
to Ang, Sue and Jude, SERCO, WOLF and to  
all of you here.  
12,000 words each under the bridge and  
changed perspectives and lives.  
We face uncertain futures in the world of  
nought to fives.

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So, I give you my elegy to my LLG  
We've been through this together,  
NPQICL you've taken us out of our comfort  
zone - and applied quite a lot of pressure.  
We've become good friends and given  
support to each other,  
But perhaps best of all, and very  
appropriately –  
Emily's soon going to be a mother!



## Leading is Reading

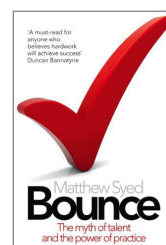
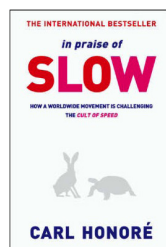
Sue Webster

Moral confidence helps us to understand ourselves and others and is not a skill that can be learned; it is developed over time and is “an intellectual and spiritual struggle that moves us towards personal authenticity” (p6).

As 2014 begins, you may be undertaking some academic study and have taken a new interest in the ideas of those who write about leader-related topics. Or while not engaged in formal study, perhaps you are looking for new ideas and motivation. You could consider working alone or with others to develop ‘moral confidence’.

The first strategy for developing ‘moral confidence’ is, according to this paper, to continue to read and think about what you read. With this thought in mind I was drawn to an article in a Sunday paper recently which discussed self-help and reading for personal and professional development. There are literally hundreds of self-help books published each year but it is always difficult to know whether they are worthy of investment. Through some sound personal recommendations from trusted friends I have found some books that have provided me with mental models that informed aspects of my work and behaviours. Here are three of my favourites with direct links so that you can ‘look inside’ before you make any purchases.

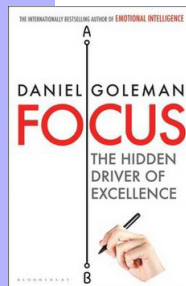
“ **How do we design institutions within systems that are ethical in the way they work as well as in their outcomes?** John West-Burnham (2006).



# PRACTICE

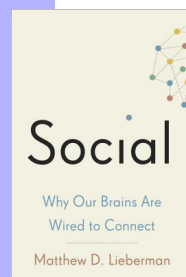
I know that time is a key driver that determines whether you engage with any ideas. A children's centre leader's time is at a premium so I have explored four recently published books to recommend to you.

These are personal recommendations, I am sure that you have read other fabulous texts worthy of note. We are always happy to include your recommendations that you send to us on our [website](#).



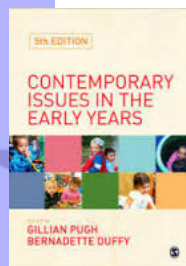
This book contains a 'the recipe for self-control' and analyses three levels of 'focus' that competent leaders demonstrate.

Have you ever considered forming a local reading group lunch-club in your centre, for your team or within your peer group of fellow leaders? One simple model is when one person reads a text and shares the key points then leads a discussion with the rest of the team. I know some children's centre leaders that have successfully tried variations of the book club idea. It takes some time to organise, but think distributed leadership and be motivated by the potential benefits of providing activities that are both professionally developmental, with opportunities to develop emerging leaders in the team or locality.



Find out more about 'counterintuitive takeaway' and embrace social distractions at work.

Furthermore it would be really good if you send us your ideas that we can share in future edition of the CCLR. A simple way that you as individuals can make a contribution is to share a recommendation with other leaders in our field. Let's continue developing the philosophical ideas of those who have gone before us and make local connections to create some firm foundations of the emerging Institute for Early Years.



Especially see chapter 9, Sure Start Children's Centres, an excellent contribution from former Chair of the Children's Centre Ministerial Reference Group, Ann Crichton



This new and updated book with a new model for career development and ideas about how to take 'vision into action'.

Sue Webster  
early childhood studies, lecturer,  
university of warwick





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## SUMMARY

**House of Commons Education Committee (2013); *Foundation Years: Sure Start Children's Centres*; London; HMSO**

The summary of conclusions and recommendations is given here.

Definition and purpose of Sure Start children's centres

### What is a Sure Start Centre?

For the purposes of this report, we have identified three distinct types with different roles and functions:

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Children's centres based around nursery schools, offering a full service, with some acting as teaching centres and network hubs, with fully integrated services

Children's centres as part of or managed by a school, usually a primary school, on the extended school model

Children's centres that operate as family centres, offering family support and opportunities for community participation. These offer no childcare or early education but are used by local authorities for targeted prevention services.

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It is the responsibility of local authorities to determine what is required on the basis of need and to adopt the model of delivery, including the number and pattern of centres, which provides the best outcomes for children and families. We recommend that the DfE collects data from local authorities on the pattern of centres commissioned based on the model set out above.

### The core purpose

We recommend that the core purpose be reviewed and reshaped to focus on achievable outcomes for children's centres to deliver for children and families, and to recognise the differences between the three types of centre.

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### Universal or targeted services

... universal services play a significant role in removing the stigma from attending centres and in encouraging families to engage with centres. . . local authorities should have regard to the relationship between universal services and the effectiveness of targeted prevention services when planning local provision.

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### Priority services: children or parents

Clarity is needed on who children's centres are for and the balance between the needs of parents and those of the children themselves.

The 0 to two year olds are a key group but not the only one. Local authorities are best placed to decide the age range to be served by the services they commission through children's centres.

Centres are required in legislation to provide activities for young children and it is not acceptable for any centre to operate without direct contact or engagement with children: local authorities should ensure that the statutory requirement is met

## Childcare and early education

... it is essential that all centres build close links with high quality early education/childcare providers.

The Government was wrong to remove the requirement for a link with a qualified teacher and we recommend that the decision be reversed.

## Working with partners

The priority should be integration of services, and the quality of that integration, rather than co-location. . . professionals must share information and develop a seamless integration of services, wherever those services are delivered.

We welcome the new integrated 2½ year old health check as a demonstration of closer partnership-working with shared objectives. We recommend that the Government incorporate joint training between the different agencies involved into the implementation of this policy.

## Working with childminders and other education providers

... it should be a matter for individual decision whether taking on the role of a childminder agency would help to achieve a centre's core purpose.

Where the children's centre leader is part of the senior management team of the school as a whole and seen as an equal partner, there is likely to be more focus on realising integrated benefits.

The Government's proposals for a new baseline assessment of children upon entering reception may lead to improvements in primary school accountability, but a better procedure is needed for passing on richer information on individual children from children's centres to schools and nurseries. Clearer guidance is also needed on how schools should use this information. This applies equally to assessments of individual children passed on from childminders to children's centres and schools. We recommend that the Government examine how this can be done.

## Outcomes and accountability Measuring outcomes

We recommend that the Government develop a new national outcomes framework, in consultation with the sector. . . . Any framework must be usable by staff and include meaningful, achievable outcomes and be capable of adaptation to the different kinds of centre.

## Inspection

It is important to distinguish between early education and children's centres in terms of inspections. Ofsted needs to act on the research which questions its expertise in inspecting provision for the under-threes and address other concerns about its inspections. It also needs to demonstrate that its framework is adaptable enough to allow a meaningful assessment of a centre offering a few, targeted services as well as of a centre offering a wider range as identified in our three-part structure at the beginning of this report. Ofsted must also make clear to centres that a good or outstanding rating does not mean that they have no need for further improvement.

Ofsted does not have the resources to assist improvement in all 3,000 individual centres. We recommend that the Government clarify who is to fill this gap if local authorities are no longer able or empowered to help with improvement. The Government should recognise the role in sector improvement of Early Years Teaching Centres where nursery schools that are also children's centres assist leaders and staff in other centres, and the Early Years Teaching Schools, where nursery schools help other schools.



### Evidence-based intervention programmes

Establishing a culture in which centres expect to use evidence-based programmes is key. This needs to be done alongside consideration of other factors which are known to influence outcomes such as graduate and teacher trained staff and access to high quality early education experiences.

The EIF should issue guidance on how programmes can be used and implemented in the context of children's centres. . . . Centres which have developed their own evidence-based programmes should also be encouraged to have them validated through the EIF.

Local authorities need to be clearer about the outcomes they expect from programmes and how these can be monitored. . . We recommend that this is set out by the Government in its statutory guidance.

### Payment by Results

We agree with the Minister that Payment by Results is not appropriate for the type of services offered by children's centres and we are pleased that the Government does not intend to pursue this approach.

### Decision-making & governance

The governance of children's centres must become stronger and more formal like an effective school governing body and linked to their statutory duty. Parents need to be more involved . . . . We recommend that the DfE take the necessary statutory steps to bring this about.

Local authorities should improve the quality of data given to advisory boards and put more effort into encouraging all sections of the community to contribute to boards.

### Research into effectiveness

We recommend that the Government continue to fund the ongoing research into children's centres and commission more work into what makes children's centres of the three distinct types effective in improving outcomes for children.

### Reaching children and families in need Disadvantaged groups

Local authorities and health professionals should seek out the most vulnerable children and also do more through their websites and other services to raise awareness of children's centres.

We recommend that the DfE restore the national collection of data on the reach of individual centres.

Barriers to involving disadvantaged groups and others, such as fathers, who are reluctant to engage with centres must be addressed in practical ways. . . . Early Years Teaching Centres, have an important part to play in this.

### Involving parents in children's centres

It is important that centres involve parents through parents groups and in other ways. . . . Practical support, such as training, childcare vouchers or transport, could make a significant difference in encouraging this kind of involvement.

### Data-sharing

We welcome the Gross report on information-sharing in the foundation years. Datasharing is vital: the DfE must strengthen its guidance on health services and local authorities sharing data with children's centres. We recommend that the DfE and the Department of Health audit where this is not happening and ensure that the appropriate protocols are put in place.

## Child protection and children in need

Local authorities need to ensure better co-ordination between children's services and children's centres. Information on children and families known to social services should be passed on where possible. . . . Local authorities should ensure that this is done even where the named social worker model is not adopted. The DfE should revise its statutory guidance to reflect this.

## Registration of births

Registration of births at children's centres is a powerful engagement tool . . . We recommend that local authorities should be permitted to adopt the practice but not obliged to do so.

## Use of data by centres

Children's centre staff need appropriate training in collecting and interpreting data and centre leaders need to be taught how to use the data to drive interventions. . . We recommend that the DfE includes this in its statutory guidance on children's centres.

Local and central Government: funding, commissioning and strategic planning

## Funding

In principle, we would welcome the end of ring-fencing for early intervention as a whole to give freedom to local authorities to respond flexibly to needs in their area . . . There should, however, be more transparency on Early Intervention Grant spending by local authorities so that it is clear how much has been spent on different services. We recommend that the Government ensure that this is done.

Research evidence shows clearly that investment in early intervention reaps rewards.

## Commissioning

We believe that multi-agency commissioning makes for the best use of resources and the most informed service delivery. We recognise the difficulties caused by short-term funding decisions and recommend that the Government examines how a longer term view of children's centre funding can be taken within current spending decision cycles.

## Reconfiguration and closure of centres

Closing centres is not popular but we accept that the current pattern of provision may not be the best model to meet the needs of different areas. . . . New patterns of provision will require fresh responses from centre workers and their partners.

An existing centre should be closed only where there has been proper consultation with the public and where the local authority has made a strong case for a better way of achieving outcomes.

## Local authority accountability

The accountability framework must ensure that the lead member and Director of Children's Services remain focused on early years. . . . We recommend that the Government consult on a new accountability framework for local authorities' children's services that puts as much weight on early years and children's centres as on schools and children's social care.

Government policy

## Two year old offer

We welcome the two year old offer but have concerns about the funding, the quality of providers, the availability of places in effective settings and about the impact on places for other age groups.

There is a clear disparity in how funding is being used by local authorities. We recommend that there should be flexibility in the use of the funding by local authorities to offer direct support or parent intervention where families are not just poor but also vulnerable.

## Central Government policy on early years

There has been, and continues to be, too much short-term and disparate government policy in the area of early years. Too much reorganisation of services impedes professional relationships and communication. . . . Changes in funding streams also lead to short-term contracts and distract centres from their crucial work with disadvantaged children and families. We recommend that the Government set out coherent, long-term thinking on early years and the place of children's centres within that, including funding, responsibility across Whitehall and accountability.

. . . maintained nursery schools . . . offer capacity and a recognised level of expertise which needs to sit at the centre of the Government's proposals on Early Years Teaching Schools. We recommend that the Department for Education set out a strategy for ensuring the survival of those that remain and for encouraging the further development of the network of nursery schools with children's centres throughout the country.

Workforce and leadership

## The workforce

The Government is right to want to increase qualifications of the workforce but. . . the message that Early Years Teachers are not equal to teachers in schools is strong and unjust. . . the Minister. . . has to set out a course of action with milestones on the way to a position where equal pay attracts equal quality.



From pregnancy to children age 5

### Training and development

We recommend that the Ofsted inspection framework include checking that each centre has a training plan and that the plan is being implemented. We support the development of Early Years Teaching Centres as an effective way of passing on best practice and promoting workforce development. Nursery schools with children's centres should be at the centre of these hubs. The NCTL should take on a role in developing this and should also set out a career structure for children centre staff, including how the new qualifications and other CPD match to this pathway. The NCTL should also continue their work on systems leadership in early childhood education and their work on leadership standards in the early years.

### Leadership

The NPQICL needs to be overhauled to reflect current practice in children's centres and

then offered widely to new leaders. The course should retain the much valued elements of professional exchanges and time for reflection. It is vital that practitioners are involved in reviewing and designing the qualification.

The NCTL should take on the role of promoting locality leadership to spread best practice and encourage innovation, as it does in schools.

Please take time to read this edition of the **Children, Families and Maternity Bulletin for January 2014** which contains a link to Jean Gross's important report, published in November 2013, concerning

information sharing between agencies associated with children's centres. The executive summary makes important reading for everyone as we urge our commissioning partners to adopt approaches that facilitate early intervention.

The model for information sharing on p35 is especially welcome as it illustrates a clear stepped process that may be followed by partners supporting families.



### Have your say:

Inspecting childminder agencies The closing date for the consultation is **21 March 2014**

The Children and Families Bill 2013 includes provisions for the creation of childminder agencies. The Bill also includes a range of regulation-making powers that will set out how childminder agencies will operate. Assuming the necessary legislation is passed by Parliament, agencies will be able to operate from September 2014. Ofsted will need to be ready to register and inspect childminder agencies from this date.

The consultation seeks your views on proposals for Ofsted's inspection framework for childminder agencies. Ofsted wants to use its existing knowledge of the sector to ensure

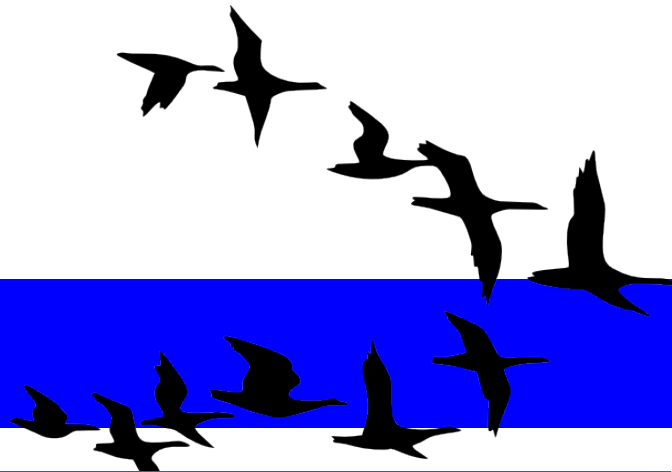
that the regulation of childminder agencies supports improvement, is proportionate and efficient, and is centred on the needs of young children and their parents. The proposals aim to:

keep children safe and improve the quality of childminding through a robust inspection process

ensure that clear judgements are made through inspection by incorporating a range of information from different stakeholders

improve information for parents and childminders by making inspection reports user-friendly and accessible.

# PRODUCTIVITY



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

Achieving Two Year Olds (A2YO) is the national DfE support project for providers and local authorities.

From September 2014, over 250,000 two year olds will be eligible for funded places and with the support of Government funding, settings have new business opportunities to consider.

A2YO information roadshows will provide you with:

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

3rd February 2014 - Manchester

10th February 2014 - Bristol

13th February 2014 - Liverpool

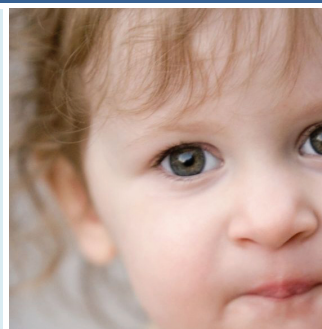
28th February 2014 - London

3rd March 2014 - Exeter

4th March 2014 - Peterborough

11th March 2014 - Birmingham

Afternoon roadshows (1.00pm - 4.30pm) and evening roadshows (6.30pm - 9.30pm) at all locations



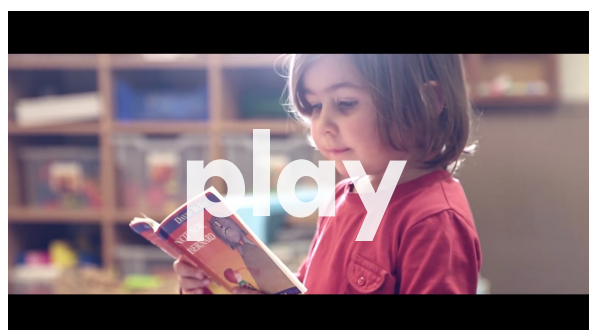
FREE event. Places allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Download a booking form by visiting the A2YO section at [www.hempsalls.com](http://www.hempsalls.com)  
**All enquiries to:** Julie Crookes on 0844 824 3083 or [bookings@hempalls.com](mailto:bookings@hempalls.com)



achieving **2** year olds

hempalls

“ children are our best resource. They are a living message to a time we will not see. ”  
Sir Al Aynsley-Green



sue webster



vicki lant

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Leading the Organisation

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