

Children's Centre Leader



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POLICY

Trading Places

James Hemsall explores how local authorities are trading services in the early years and childcare sector in this time of austerity.

Since 2010, there has been a trend for change in the relationship between local authorities and schools; this has been influenced by government policy and the academisation and free school programme. And with austerity, local authorities have looked at their early years teams and children's centre programmes to examine the options for reductions, restructures, and reviews.

For early years services, various local authorities (LAs) have examined the issue of trading their early years services specifically. There is a wide range of policy positions held, and a variety of services traded already. This has raised several factors that affect the

issue, and implications that must be considered. This is why Hemsall's delivered a seminar in April 2018, to explore this growing issue, and to consider what it means for all stakeholders. James Hemsall, who chaired the event, explains:

Early years and childcare providers became accustomed to LAs providing support and training, often free of charge in the earliest days of the National Childcare Strategy. But this was not always the case. Before then, there was scant provision, which was locally funded and locally determined – with a lot fewer demands on providers than there are now.

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Welcome

Welcome to the June 2018 issue of Children's Centre Leader.

James Hemsall explores how local authorities are trading services, Clare Harding shares a template for childcare sufficiency assessments (p4), Louisa Reeves looks at a key report in communication needs of young children (p6), Nick Skinner outlines research on the benefits of singing for babies (p8) and Dr Marie Lavelle asks what happened to the ideology universalism (p11).

As always, let us know what you think by emailing:

cclr@hemsalls.com

James Hemsall, OBE
Editor,
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(continued from cover)

Fast forward 20 years and there is a growing number of examples of LAs charging for this once free support, training, and other services as their budgets and priorities change. However, this may not be the only reason, I argue we must also acknowledge how the sector has grown, evolved, changed, become more self-sufficient, and ever more diverse in its structure and delivery models.

So, it would seem reasonable to adjust arrangements over time and in response to change. I believe action needs to be considered through the lens of a 'development approach' and one that fulfils the local authority's statutory and moral/ethical role, as well as the role of childcare market manager (as required by The Childcare Act 2006).

And I absolutely urge we all think about the relationship LAs have currently with their early years and childcare sector, and vice versa. And to think about how proposals and arrangements to trade services affect this for now and in the future. There is tremendous power for good and bad in trading services as it affects the dynamics in these important relationships. And given the forces at work between the two partners (LAs who fund settings to provide early learning services, and settings that would then commission a LA to offer a service) there is a new duality in these transactions that has real potential to complicate relationships. This could all become clumsy and confusing, without proper management. On the flipside, it could also lead to greater professionalism in relationships, more

equality, and can increase the accountability of all parties, personally I think this is always a good thing. But for some it is a tricky manoeuvre.

Traded services considerations and actions must be taken within today's changing context. For local authorities this means:

- » There is a government drive for more funding to be passported directly through the local authority to contracted early years providers.
- » Department for Education (DfE) guidance requires local authorities to cap

.....

“There is tremendous power for good and bad in trading services as it affects the dynamics in these important relationships”

.....

their retention of early years funding at 5%, and for this to be spent on supporting their early years and childcare providers.

- » There is a strong financial motivation for local authorities to spend core resources only on securing statutory duties.
- » There must be a sustainability measure in place, as providers are feeling the financial pressures of new funding arrangements, and growing costs in their delivery models. Trading services should do no harm.
- » There has been a government-driven reduction in LA

involvement in quality assurance, given Ofsted's status as 'sole arbiter' of quality, and an expectation resource is spent on less than Ofsted rated good settings to support them to achieve better inspection outcomes.

- » There is some desire from LA early years teams to do more beyond statutory duties, and some expectation from central government, according to local and national need, and this requires financial resource.

For the early years and childcare settings this means:

- » Some settings in the sector are maturing and becoming more self-sufficient, resulting in them being less reliant upon their contracting local authority.
- » Some parts of the sector are developing their resilience through the growth of emerging chains, small chains, larger chains and 'super chains'. The contrast between individual childminders or small sessional providers, and super-chains (equity fund or internally owned) is huge.
- » There are now multiple options for accessing training and other services in the open market place from the PVI sector, other local authorities and through in-house resource in chain providers (of any size).
- » The change to Ofsted being the 'sole arbiter of quality' has arguably resulted in settings becoming more focused on their inspection outcomes, and taking greater responsibility for their inspection outcomes, in general, than before.
- » Settings are finding it

challenging to access training, and there is a growing need for whole team, onsite training. And teams are getting bigger, in single settings and especially in bigger settings and chains. This is something we have noticed for our safeguarding training, for example.

Training services should not be wholly considered as a financial arrangement. There are many important considerations and aspects for any local authority trading their services, or considering it for the future. Being clear about the aims of trading services is really important – which means there are lots of starter questions for all concerned:

- » Is the intention for the LA to retain and sustain existing resource elements challenged by today's changing budgets?
- » Is the intention to work towards a fully commercial operation?
- » Does trading seek to address a gap in the supply of such services or compete with market providers already in the supply chain?
- » Is the aim to cover delivery costs (full cost recovery)?
- » Or is the aim to attract a contribution to the real

costs of delivery (partial cost recovery)?

- » Is the aim to generate a surplus or profit and reinvest in early years or to return funds to the wider local authority?
- » Does the LA want settings to value the support more highly and recognise the cost of such support by charging?
- » What is the local view on whether traded services be differentiated (prioritised or varied) against strategic objectives, disadvantaged areas, or areas of low supply and high demand?

In the seminar, we recommended a series of essential actions for anyone considering the trading of services. And many of these were corroborated by the three local authorities who provided case studies (Kent, West Berkshire, and Warrington):

- A. Consulting with all stakeholders
- B. Undertaking an advantages and disadvantages analysis
- C. Considering all the options and approaches
- D. Learning from the experiences of others
- E. Having the ability to review and revise arrangements

We concluded that:

1. LAs could and should recover some of the costs of delivering support and services to early years and childcare settings, where it is in addition to statutory duties or when the market is able to contribute. This should be a local judgement.
2. In terms of market needs and demands, it could make sense to charge differently for statutory or non-statutory services.
3. Charging often motivates the purchaser to engage and value the support, and increases their ability to challenge, hold LAs (and their suppliers) to account, and demand a quality service. This will fundamentally affect the LA to provider relationship, these can be both positive and negative effects.
4. LAs could and should facilitate providers' access to support in the open market, delivered by other settings, teaching schools, and PVI providers. There is a thriving marketplace from PVI organisations providing traded services. Competition drives quality, it can also drive unsustainability.
5. LAs could and should look at new commissioning arrangements and contracts with existing support suppliers and quality settings, so they are up-to-date and fit-for-purpose.



James Hemsall, OBE, chairs the board of trustees at Children's Centre Leader. He is also Director of Hemsall's, an executive coach, and a volunteer counsellor/psychotherapist. James acts as the National Support Director of the DfE's support contract for the implementation of 30 hours childcare across England (Childcare Works). James has worked in the sector for over 25 years. He is a former playworker, children's centre manager, further education lecturer, development worker and projects manager for a national childcare charity. Between 2012-2016 he was the National Support Director of the DfE's support contract for the implementation of 15 hours early learning for least advantaged two-year-olds (Achieving Two Year Olds) for which he was awarded the OBE for services to childcare.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessments

Claire Harding shares details about the Family and Childcare Trust template for childcare sufficiency assessment developed to make life easier for local authorities and to improve consistency. Initially produced for London boroughs, it can be adapted for any local authority.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to assess whether there is enough childcare in their local area. But they are given very little guidance on how to do this, meaning every local authority has to invest significant resource to design and deliver their own unique assessment.

Last year, the Greater London Authority asked us to produce a template Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for local authorities in London to support the Mayor's manifesto commitment to make childcare more affordable and accessible for parents in the capital.

The template and guidance are available [free to all local authorities](#).

For London local authorities, the Greater London Authority has also produced a datasheet which brings together all the statutory sources of information for a sufficiency assessment.

WHY OFFER A TEMPLATE

There are two good reasons to offer local authorities a template for their sufficiency assessment: to help them better manage their local market, and to make it easier to compare the situation of different local authorities.

When we started the project, we found huge variation in

“...time to complete the assessment is becoming harder and harder to find”

.....
London authority assessments – they ranged in length from less than ten pages to more than 150. In some areas, they were pretty consistent: everyone had information on uptake of the free early education entitlements,

and all but one used Ofsted inspection grades to look at quality. In other areas, there was a lot of divergence: some authorities had detailed information on school age childcare and others had almost none, and there was similar variation in the amount of data available on what parents pay for childcare. There were also some significant technical differences: almost everyone includes child population figures, but some local authorities drew these from the Office for National Statistics, some from the Greater London Authority, and some from their own administrative data, usually either hospital birth figures or GP registrations.

WHY THE ASSESSMENT IS IMPORTANT

Local authorities have a statutory duty to manage their childcare market, and preparing a childcare sufficiency assessment

is part of this. This must be presented to elected councillors, but in practice sufficiency assessments are commonly used for internal decisions around childcare, schools and urban planning, and by providers deciding where to set up a business. Many local authorities told us that they found their childcare sufficiency process helpful – particularly if it was well supported by senior management and embedded in their authority's work – but as resources are increasingly limited, time to complete the assessment is harder and harder to find.

Although there is a history of London-wide childcare

initiatives dating back to London County Council's support for childcare campaigners in the 1980s, to date there has been little attempt to assess childcare sufficiency on a city level. Having a standard template for assessment allows policy makers to look at the childcare market across borough borders and on a city level. This is useful because life is rarely lived by borough boundaries with families using childcare a couple of roads away but in a different local authority or perhaps further away near a place of work.

We hope that – together with the Greater London

Authority's other work on childcare and early years in the capital – this project will make management of the childcare market a bit easier for local authorities, and ultimately that it will help parents find the childcare that's right for their family.



Claire Harding leads Family and Childcare Trust's research projects, and supports the impact measurement and evaluation of our programmes. Her recent projects include researching school age childcare and parental employment in London, running the annual Childcare Survey, and co-authoring a report on looked after children's access to early education, funded by the Nuffield Trust and in partnership with the University of Oxford. Previously, Claire was the research lead for national mental health provider Big White Wall, and worked for a specialist consultancy delivering research programmes for local authorities and NHS organisations.

Bercow: Ten Years On

An independent review of provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs in England.

In a hard hitting review of provision for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), I CAN the communication charity and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists report findings and make recommendations which have lots of relevance for children's centres across England. I CAN is working at a regional level to raise the standard of provision for speech, language and communication in target areas and is doing this in a number of ways which involve children's centres and local speech and language therapy services - so this report will really help us put speech, language and communication on the map.

KEY THEMES

Five key themes emerged from Bercow: Ten Years On report:

Communication is crucial to children's life chances.

Children's centre staff are ideally placed to raise awareness of just how important it is for children to have good communication skills – not only because that will help them when they start nursery and school but because being able to communicate helps children develop their independence,

make friends and to talk about what they think and how they feel. Parents and carers need to know about and feel confident in supporting communication skills from a really early age, in fact before babies are born.

We know that before birth a foetus is aware of sounds and can recognise their mother's voice so an emphasis on talking to your baby right from the start is crucial. I CAN worked with Bradford's Better Start team to develop a project supporting early years staff to encourage parents to talk to their babies and young children and to be confident and knowledgeable in how they do this. One of the resources being used in these sessions, is [Early Talk](#).

Strategic system-wide approaches to supporting SLCN are rare.

This is something which we are really aware of through our regional work. Parents and practitioners told the authors of the report that too often services were fragmented and it was hard to know how to access them. I CAN's Regional Managers are working with local service providers to develop a strategic approach to services and to build robust models of cross agency working

which will help improve access to services. Through the Regional Manager's work our target areas have realised that SLCN is a crucial life skill for their children and young people and are beginning to develop policies which will support services and provision for them. The Communication Trust has produced [commissioning guidance](#) for early years settings to help them with this strategic approach.

Services are inaccessible and inequitable. Access to services is a particular issue for the sorts of vulnerable families children's centres work with. The review heard reports of children being discharged from speech and language therapy for not attending appointments. For many parents opting in to services and making their way to unfamiliar health clinics can be a real challenge. If parents don't recognise that their child has a need they may be reluctant to engage with health services. Children's centres have a vital role to play in supporting families to access specialist services and to signpost them to information and support. I CAN's regional managers have worked with local services to help provide information and support for vulnerable

families. Along with this, parents around the country can access a free [Enquiry Service](#) that serves as a first port of call for development queries relating to SLCN.

Support that makes a difference is based on evidence of what works.

We hear a lot about evaluation and measuring outcomes these days but sometimes its a challenge for children centres to show the impact of the work they do. Regional Managers have worked with children centre staff and speech and language therapists to look at how they might measure the changes in children as a result of the interventions and support they put in place. One project in particular will be robustly evaluated in children's centres. I CAN's Tots Talking project has been co-designed with parents from children's centres in Kirkby and is being

rolled out and evaluated by the I CAN Regional Manager and Children's Development and Learning Officers.

Too many children are being missed. 42% of parents surveyed said their child's speech, language and communication needs were noticed too late. Understanding what speech, language and communication needs are, what abilities children should have at different ages and how to spot when things aren't developing are all vital skills that the early years workforce need to have. Early identification and access to the right support at the right time are vital in preventing children from failing at nursery and at school and in developing the emotional and social skills they need to thrive.

It's not all bad news though, the report recognises areas of

good practice including the children's centre service in Knowsley, where a long term commitment to supporting speech, language and communication skills has resulted in 72% of children now reaching expected levels of development. This kind of focus on developing staff skills, knowledge and confidence, making parents aware of the vital role they play and timely, evidenced interventions as well as access to specialist services when needed has really paid off for Knowsley and is a model well worth looking at for any children centre service which realises the essential role speech, language and communication skills play in the 21st Century.

For more information please visit [bercowtenyearson.com](#). To engage with the conversation, search **#Bercow10** on social media.



Louisa Reeves is a Speech and Language Advisor and Regional Manager at I CAN. A speech and language therapist with 30 years experience, she has been involved in large scale projects developing evidenced solutions for speech, language and communication needs.

Her work for I CAN includes: ICAN's Early Talk and Primary Talk programmes and project lead for the A Chance to Talk Reception and KS1 project as well as the Early Talk Boost and Talk Boost KS2 language interventions. Currently she is working on the co-production and evaluation of an intervention for parents of two-year olds and is part of the team developing I CAN's new regional approach.

Sing To Your Baby

Nick Skinner from London Borough of Enfield shares their Sing to Your Baby project as well as the research backing up the importance of singing for babies.

I am confident that the importance of music and singing in our children and young people's social, emotional and academic development is now widely accepted and researched.

In the London Borough of Enfield, the council and local community work well in partnership to promote our Music Hub and the wide range of activities available in our schools, children's centres and community settings stand testament to the work we do. We believe that music and particularly singing are important for early language and skills and for building strong relationships between parents and their babies and young children. Many parents already sing at home with their babies and we know that many of our early years settings and play groups include adult-led singing sessions to encourage parents to learn simple songs. We want all babies to have access to these opportunities and all parents to see themselves as 'singers'.

Sing to Your Baby is an initiative in Enfield aimed at encouraging parents who maybe don't feel confident to sing to their babies or think that they are not good singers or just don't know what to sing. The initiative focuses on the age range

from birth to 26 months. The idea behind the project is to show parents three simple ways to start singing or how they can build on what they are doing already:

1. By learning and singing a well-known nursery rhyme or song. Choosing one that has actions and is short is a good start.
2. Changing the words to include their own child's name or actions that they are doing at home or when they are playing.
3. Make up a tune to fit to any activities the baby or the adult is doing.

We are making short videos/film clips in community languages showing that singing to babies is a highly effective form of communication that is perfectly natural and instinctive, and not at all dependent on the quality of the singing itself. We want every learning opportunity to be a singing opportunity and to be fun for the adult as well as the baby. The videos will be shown in children's centres, on school and early years settings' websites and on other Enfield social media sites and in a variety of waiting areas and foyers used by the community. Once the videos are finished, our 'Sing to Your Baby' project team will

offer sessions across Enfield early years settings using the three steps described above and hopefully encourage parents to become singing leaders for other parents.

Before coming to work in the London Borough of Enfield, I spent thirty years teaching music in primary and secondary schools. I explored some of the great and established methods of teaching and learning the subject, including tonic sol-fa, Suzuki method, and Dalcroze Eurhythmics. I found these approaches worked very well and that they were all based on assisting the internalisation of music. Singing and interaction with others often held the key. I gradually began to wonder what would happen if these key elements were highlighted in the first years of life. Back in 2012, the concept of 'Sing to Your Baby' began to emerge.

When the parent sings to the baby there is interaction, emotional security and love. There is the start of language acquisition and other developmental skills. Music is there too. In this broad context, music can be seen to serve greater, more fundamental purposes.

In Enfield there is a strong tradition of partnership working across our services

for children and our 'Sing to Your Baby' initiative is no exception. We have already held a promotional/ launch event at one of our children's centres that included councillors, Enfield music service and members of Chickenshed inclusive theatre company. We will also be working closely with our Educational Psychology Service as Enfield is involved in a partnership with PIP (Parent Infant Partnership) UK to support parents and their babies who have had difficulties in forming attachments after birth.



Sing to Your Baby launch event at Wilbury Primary School featuring Cllr. Ayfer Orhan and on her left, the then Mayor of Enfield, Cllr. Bernadette Lappage

SING TO YOUR BABY RESEARCH

Sing to Your Baby has undertaken a basic survey of research in this field and identified five important areas as follows:

1. The use of singing to the baby as a tool of language acquisition and other developmental skills

The Genius of Natural Childhood by Sally Goddard Blythe, published by Hawthorn Press in 2011

This is evidence to show that children are more likely to develop advanced language skills if they are exposed to their 'innate' form of language (i.e. music and song). The link is made between the experience of the human voice within the womb, and the experience of the parent singing to the child once born. Improved language communication is also linked to emotional and social benefits for the baby.

"The parent doesn't need to be musically talented to communicate with the baby in this way: he still will enjoy and learn from the sounds of the parent's voice - the voice has unique characteristics comprising range, rhythm, resonance, register and individual time patterns: it is as individual as your fingerprints."

2. The use of singing to the baby as a way of providing physical and mental benefits to the baby and mother

Research from Great Ormond Street Hospital in Central London, led by Nick Pickett and published in the Psychology of Music, August 22 2013 (cited in The Times, article by Tom Whipple (Science Correspondent), October 30 2013)

Study by principal investigator Dr. Rosie Perkins and author Dr. Daisy Fancourt, from University College London, on post-natal depression, published in the British Journal of Psychiatry (Reported by BBC News, 9 January, 2018)

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This is evidence to show that singing lowers the heart rate and pain levels of children, and could help mothers recover from post-natal depression more quickly.

3. The use of singing to the baby as a social tool (to create a closer connection between mother and baby, or baby and wider family, or baby and community, including the introduction of the baby into its wider cultural background)

The Genius of Natural Childhood by Sally Goddard Blythe, published by Hawthorn Press in 2011

This is evidence to show that singing to the baby involves them in a larger social network, learning songs which have distinctive elements of the family culture.

4. The use of singing to the baby as an emotional tool (soothing and comforting the baby - beneficial for both parental satisfaction and the baby's emotional wellbeing)

Research from the US, led by Gunter Kreutz, Stephan Bongard, Sonja Rohrmann et al., published in the Journal of Behavioural Medicine, December 2004

This is evidence to show that singing strengthens the immune system and improves the mood of the singer.

Wave Research Center

There is evidence to show that empathy is developed between parent and baby, which forges an emotional bond between them. Related to area 5, below, there is interest in finding solutions to the root causes of damage, before it happens – 'primary' prevention.

5. The use of singing to the baby as a crime prevention strategy (in that development of empathy and communication skills has been shown to make the child less susceptible to violent or criminal behaviour).

Applegate and Shapiro, published in the Neurobiology for Clinical Social Work book, 2005; Ellis, Beaver, Wright et al., published in the Handbook of Crime Correlates, April 1, 2009.

This is evidence to show that a lack of empathy and altruism in a child is a significant indicator of future violent, criminal or anti-social behaviour. In this way, the project is focusing on broader societal implications, as opposed to merely focusing on the child-parent relationship.

Project partners include Chickenshed theatre and the charity Enfield Sounds Great. If you are interested in finding out more please do contact Jenny Tosh, Project Lead, jenny.tosh1@ntlworld.com , and/or Nick.Skinner@enfieldmusicservice.org .



Nick Skinner is currently Head of the Enfield Music Service in Enfield Council. The service leads the Enfield Music Education Hub, providing high quality opportunities in music to young people of the borough.

Previous posts have included Head of Performing Arts at the Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Music at St. Christopher School, Letchworth Garden City.

Support Seeking And Stigma

Dr Marie Lavelle from the University of Plymouth asks what happened to the ideology universalism.

One of the fundamental principles on which the original Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) and later Sure Start Children's Centres was built was the importance of opening the doors to all. Both SSLPs and the initial Sure Start Children's Centres sought to encourage all parents with young children to engage with a range of services. Replacing highly selectivist, professional referral only parenting support, a universal approach sought to reduce the stigma often associated with support seeking. Central to offering universal services was and remains the concept of 'proportionate or progressive universalism'. Allocating services using a proportionate rationale is underpinned by recognition of the 'social gradient' within society, where those most socially disadvantaged tend to have the greatest need (see the work of Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). However as this is a gradient, there is always need at every level of society albeit proportionately less and hence the need for greater proportions of resources to meet the needs of those at the bottom end of

the social gradient. This is important as there is always need in some proportion and therefore makes universalism a key driving factor in reducing inequalities. The consequences of targeting services explicitly and only on those who are most 'in need' is labelling and subsequent stigma, and as a result, 'targeting only those at highest risk misses much of the problem' (Marmot, 2010, p.295).

Yet as the numbers and reach of centres expanded under the Labour government, concerns were raised for the dilution of quality. Questions were asked whether centres had the capacity to meet the demanding range of targets being set them and whether this was contributing to a lack of understanding of the core function of centres. All of this contributed to the image that centres were failing to engage those who most needed them and instead were only attracting, as David Cameron in 2010, once described, the 'sharp elbowed middle-classes'. The claim many of you will no doubt be very familiar with. Given Marmot's concern with the social gradient, it is

not hard to see why centres were keen to enable all parents to access support.

Against this backdrop, in 2007 I began work on a PhD study exploring parental participation in two Sure Start Children's Centres (Lavelle, 2015). Part funded by the local authority, the study initially aimed to investigate why Centres were not being used by families who most needed them; those families who 'ought' to attend. Over the next 18 months I sat, played, listened and observed, in two centres in the South West of England trying to work out what these spaces meant for those who used them, those who worked in them and those who walked by them. Despite anxieties by the local authority, the two centres were extremely well used; there was a waiting list for some groups and on very busy days families were turned away from the open stay and play groups. However walking out of centres into local communities, it was clear for many parents who did not use the centres, they were often

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unaware of their existence, what they offered or who they were for. Whilst those who did know of them they were often associated with being for those 'in need' of extra support; those who were 'struggling'. Stigma associated with support seeking was still a prominent issue despite the focus being on providing a range of universal, open access, services for all families.

Contributing to anxieties of stigma were anxieties about feeling watched and judged. Centres not only offered a space for parents to access support, they also created a space for parenting to be observed. For those working in centres, observing the usually private activity of parenting in these fairly new spaces meant that staff could identify those who needed support – the basis for which is the concept of proportionate universalism. Here universal services offered the scope for identifying those who are most in need without the fear of stigma usually associated with more directly targeted interventions. Yet parents in my study were aware of this and although those working with families distanced themselves from the notion of judgement, they did see

'keeping an eye on families' as part of the work of caring and knowing the families who attended. Even in universal/open access services, I found there is always the danger that families feel stigmatised, universalism alone does not achieve this.

Now in 2018, ten years since I started my fieldwork, I am returning to re-examine how centres have managed to survive ten years of austerity measures. Changes in government ideology around the role of the state and cuts to funding of public services, have seen children's centres close and for the survivors, the emphasis has been increasingly on targeted work with families who most need support (Smith et al 2018). Families and children have taken the brunt of austerity measures and there is no doubt that centres are having to 'do more with less'. As a result, the concept of universalism, albeit proportionate, on which centres were originally based has been reversed in favour of a more targeted approach. Once again services, which have worked hard to engage with families in ways which do not isolate, marginalise or blame, could become

stigmatised. Indeed, some have argued stigma is being mobilised through policy as a tool to reduce engagement with welfare and support services (Jupp, 2015).

Despite the failure of government to support the growth and development of centres I am curious to find out how centres have survived and whether they have managed to maintain the integrity of their original heritage especially with regard to creating a normality to support seeking for families.

If you would like to be involved in the study, to share your thoughts and experiences, please email for further information.

Marie.lavelle@plymouth.ac.uk

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Dr Marie Lavelle is Joint Programme Lead and Lecturer on the BA Early Childhood Studies degree at the University of Plymouth. Her research interests reflect her professional heritage (midwife) and academic background (sociologist).

Children's Centre Leader

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