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Children's Centre Leader



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COUNTDOWN TO 2017

30 Hours Are On The Way

by James Hemsall, OBE

The children's centre offer has moved a long way from some of the early aspirations that centres be childcare providers in their own right. Instead, we have become a vital hub of information, a sign-poster of childcare services, and a local enabler of childcare links and partnerships. In this role, we have also been key players in supporting the local authority statutory duties for childcare sufficiency, information provision, and childcare market management.

I've been impressed and extremely grateful to children's centres in reaching around 190,000 least advantaged two-year-olds each week and supporting their access to the 15-hours early years entitlement since 2013. And with new changes

to the world of childcare, our role will change further. Here, I make some suggestions around the potential role for centres and linked services to ensure families and children, and providers too, get the most out of this new programme. The role includes: information and awareness raising; engaging with the local childcare market; working as a resource hub and facilitator; contributing to the assessment of sufficiency; supporting parents to access their entitlement appropriately and with confidence.

The Government has announced that a 30-hours extended childcare entitlement will be made available to three- and four-year-olds of working

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Welcome

Welcome to the June 2016 issue of Children's Centre Leader.

This issue explores the concept of professional love in early years and childcare on p7, considers the 30 hours free entitlement opposite and gets us to think about body language on p12. Our focus on practice takes us to Hertfordshire (p4) where services come first and buildings second and Tower Hamlets (p14) where they share expertise between early years settings.

Let us know what you think by emailing:

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James Hemsall,
Editor, Children's
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parents from September 2017. Plans are still being finalised as to how this will be delivered by local authorities and childcare providers. However, we already know that eligible children will have the benefit of an additional 15-hours to their existing and well-established early years entitlement. The new entitlement aims to support working families to manage the cost of childcare, and support parents into work, to work successfully, or even to increase their hours, should they wish to. The government currently estimates around 390,000 children will meet the criteria.

ROLE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES

With 30-hours of free childcare on the horizon, it is time to consider what children's centres should or could be doing now and in the future. This is particularly important as it will include some of our priority and target families, some of the two-year-olds we have supported in early years, and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and has a direct offer of support to enable families to improve their employability and economic situations. Contributing in very concrete terms to one of our key objectives.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW ENTITLEMENT

The first task, and the most important one I guess, is to fully understand what the new entitlement is, and what it is not. Collecting and sharing this information is a really effective way of ensuring everyone is aware, and accurately on-message. Start with myths and misunderstandings now and

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“motivate everyone to promote the entitlement and answer their questions and concerns”

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you will spend years righting those wrongs. Hold briefing sessions for staff and partners agencies (JobCentre Plus, health, training providers), or attend other meetings as an extra agenda item or guest speaker. Motivate everyone to promote the entitlement and answer their questions and concerns. We found in the two-year-old entitlement how effective this was, so learn from this experience and start now. That way we can start to tell families in outreach, at sessions, and in one-to-one interventions. And then repeat, repeat, and repeat so the message gets through. And don't be too scared about starting this early, employment and childcare

plans can take months or years for families especially when confidence needs to be built up, training completed, and work-skills developed.

CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Build relationships with your local childcare providers, and find out about how they operate and link-up. Are current models of childcare working, or not, in your local area? What could or should change – and how can you drive this change? Is everyone ready and able to consider offering 30-hours? How are schools delivering? How flexible is the local market? Families can stretch their 30-hours across more weeks of the year – beyond traditional term-times, but can they in your local provision? With flexibility needs come new thoughts about longer opening hours and weekends – all are key issues for the modern childcare market. Think about how much inter-sector respect, partnerships and friendships are happening, and to what depth or value? What can you do to make this better? Can you act as a hub and bring together your local private sector, sessional groups, childminders and schools? In doing so, you could facilitate some amazing joining-up of models and services. With new flexibility to deliver part of their offer on non-domestic premises, childminders could be hosted in your space. Children's

centres can facilitate and model the very best of practice from the front, or indeed by highlighting the excellent practice you will find in your local provision, so quality models and transitions can become the norm not the exception. And of equal importance is that provision is financially successful and sustainable, and is something that a childcare hub working from a children's centre could tangibly offer or broker.

SUFFICIENCY DUTY

Many of these considerations are part of the local authority's childcare sufficiency duty, so find out about your latest, current or planned childcare sufficiency assessment.

Link to colleagues at the local authority that hold the task of meeting the duty to assess childcare supply and demand. You could not only benefit from the findings, you could contribute to the process in consultation or ensuring your families have a voice in surveys and focus groups. This will ensure their needs are included and responded to.

Before we know it we will all be wanting to identify who is eligible for 30-hours, finding them and supporting them to access their provision. But we should not underestimate the support many children's centre families need to make this aim a reality. Supporting the building of confidence in understanding and accessing childcare – motivating families to use



it, is a key role we have. In our Lambeth children's centre programme, we are holding sessions entitled 'Thinking about childcare'. These accessible and friendly sessions look at hopes and fears, they show the free-entitlement, and explain what is free and how costs and fees work. We also demonstrate how flexibility works, and the different types of childcare – especially childminding, and what to look for when choosing provision to meet families' needs.

That way, families can access this new entitlement, make positive choices for their employability and economic situations, and children can play, learn and be cared for in safe, high quality provision that is responding to the needs of the modern family.

HAVE YOU GOT A VIEW?

We're looking for writers for future issues of Children's Centre Leader.

So, if there's something bothering you about policy or practice in children's centres or early help and you'd like to share your views, let us know.

Or perhaps you have a success story that deserves wider recognition.

Whatever it is, please email us to discuss your ideas: cclr@hempalls.com

Services First, Buildings Second

With 98 per cent of people who use the Hertfordshire children's centre services satisfied or very satisfied and happy to recommend to other parents or carers, Children's Centre Leader takes a closer look at the secret of their success.

As well as strong customer satisfaction, Hertfordshire has retained all of its 82 children's centres despite budget cuts. The programme is fully commissioned with 17 organisations or lead agencies running 29 groups of centres.

Sally Orr, Head of Early Childhood and Early Help Commissioning, puts their success down to professionals and families valuing the role of their local children's centre. They work in partnership with health visitors, midwives,

GPs, schools, early education providers, the voluntary sector and adult learning providers.

Children's centres are represented on a recently established early childhood board, which explores innovative solutions to the shared objectives for early years providers across public services, including budgetary concerns. "This puts them at the very heart of the early childhood strategy across Hertfordshire," she says.

CONTINUING TO EVOLVE

"Our centres have evolved over the years," Sally continues, "meeting the changing needs of Ofsted, government, local authority and most importantly, the local community to become a much-loved and essential

part of the early childhood offer in Hertfordshire."

They offer fewer universal services now and those that are provided tend to be held in more disadvantaged areas so they are accessed by more targeted families. Children's centres are embedded and valued by 91 per cent of all families in Hertfordshire and professionals know they can safely signpost and refer to them.

The children's centre team has always commissioned the services and delivered them with a minimal budget. Their vision was always to deliver local services for local families. This means that services are delivered from over 250 community venues that are local to where the families live rather than from expensive-to-run premises. Also, the programme did not directly deliver childcare but developed good relationships with existing childcare providers.

"These factors made the programme more affordable and so more sustainable," explains Sally.

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT...

The children's centre staff have worked with the team at Hertfordshire County Council and the families they support to ensure that services are high quality,





appropriate, local and flexible. "They respond to need and go the extra mile so families can give their children the best possible start."

EVERYONE HAS A VIEW

The challenges have been addressing the many and varied misconceptions about children's centres. "Everyone seems to have a view about children's centres," says Sally. "And a lot of them are outdated or inaccurate." Her antidote is to continually repeat the facts - their aims and what they do.

"To support people's understanding", she says "it's much better to focus on the work and the services and the way they are delivered, rather than the buildings, bricks and mortar or structures of working." Some of the children's centres in Hertfordshire aren't buildings at all.

It is important to share information about how the services are actually delivered and how people benefiting from them. Centres take this information proactively into their communities, spread the word and grow the support strategically and operationally, which builds real partnerships.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND

There is a great opportunity for children's centres to pick up elements of work from other services. "Perhaps the areas that other funding cannot cover at the moment, or the tasks that don't fall within the statutory duties, or indeed ones that are essential but lower level; universal or non-specialised work. However, there are cost implications that need to be carefully

considered," says Sally.

DEMONSTRATING SUCCESS

To demonstrate success, share data on reach and registrations, the identified needs and how these are being addressed and improved. "Case studies are absolutely key in getting this message across," says Sally. "But then you have to show how it is scaleable".

DELIVERING EARLY HELP

The children's centre programme is delivering the early help offer for pregnant women and families with children within the early years foundation stage. "In future, I imagine the age range will extend to the

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end of the primary phase and there will be far greater alignment and integration with health," speculates Sally.

TAKE UP OF EARLY ENTITLEMENT

Children's centres have played a crucial role in increasing the take up of the free entitlement for two year olds. Supporting these families is the core work of centres and so they can ensure that families know their entitlement and are supported to access it.

PARTNERSHIPS

Children's centres and health visitors have all signed a partnership agreement which sets out how they will work together and GPs in some parts of the county are very engaged with the programme. The colleges and the Hertfordshire Adult Learning Service work well to provide development and qualification expertise and in some areas, JobCentre Plus staff meet clients in the children's centre. BookStart staff also work very well with children's centres as do other voluntary sector organisations.

DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

91 per cent of families with children under five in Hertfordshire are registered with a children's centre and the children's centre programme is reaching 75 per cent of families.

Children's centres offer a range of services and activities for families that

enable them to support their child's early development and provide support for families to navigate and access early years education and childcare. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development as measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile has continued to increase in Hertfordshire and remains above the national average at 69 per cent in the academic year 2014-15.

In a children's centre user satisfaction survey carried out across Hertfordshire in autumn 2015, almost all the

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"provide the physical space and connections that facilitate collaboration"
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users (98 per cent) said they were either very satisfied (61 per cent) or satisfied (37 per cent) with the services that the children's centre offer them. Also, 98 per cent of people said they would recommend their children's centre to other parents and carers.

SUPPORTING NEW FAMILIES

All new parents and particularly those without a supportive network of family or friends can find the first few years with children a challenge. Expectant and new parents are expected to take on a new world of meetings with midwives and health visitors, establish themselves as a family, choose the appropriate childcare and/or early education for

their child, learn how to be a parent and how to support their child's development. The main advantage of children's centres is their ability to bring together services and activities that enable families with young children to access information and support they need to navigate the complex network of public services available for children and their families in the period before birth and onto statutory school age, which was one of the original aims of the programme.

"Effective children's centres provide the physical space and connections that facilitate collaboration between providers' services for young children and families and ensure that parents can focus on their children rather than having to become "navigators" of services," says Sally.

She shares this motivating advice for other local authorities:

"The evidence for investing in early intervention in the early years is overwhelming. Children's centres provide local authorities with an established and effective model of delivering early help services to families with young children. Timely and effective provision of early help services can result in a reduction in the numbers of children and families entering high cost specialist services. Success in the early years will support the ambitions of the local authority to reduce dependency and maintain a sustainable level of public services for parents and children".

Is Love Important in Early Years?

Love is not a word that is commonly used in early years education and care contexts in England. And yet, studies have shown that love is important. In my own research (Cousins, 2015) with practitioners from a range of settings, including a children's centre, love was constructed as important and related to wide aspects of practice. A broad definition is needed for love in settings in order to facilitate professional discussions.

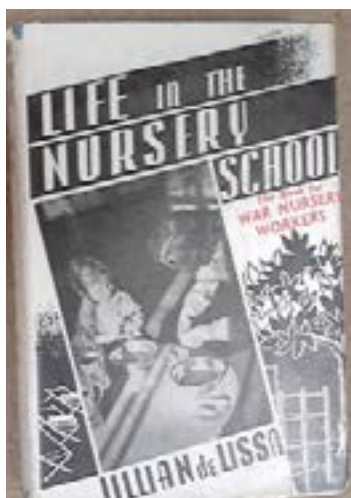
HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO LOVE

The word 'love' was in wider currency until around the 1960s. De Lissa (1949), for example, wrote about children's generosity in showing love to their teachers:

The child gives his love very generously to the adults in the nursery schools and expects love from them. (de Lissa, 1949, p.143)



Gardner (1956) wrote that a child often shows very marked improvement, in many and often unexpected ways, once he is convinced that he is really loved. (Gardner, 1956, p.19)



Fletcher (1958) wrote about the importance of love between adults and children and stated that "it is a love of children which is real, unchanging and very, very understanding" (p.19).

By the 1960s, however, love was less widely encouraged. Winnicott (1964) wrote about the importance of love between a mother and a child but suggested that a teacher should adopt a very different role:

"She has, in contrast to the mother, technical knowledge derived from her training, and an attitude of objectivity towards the children under her care." (Winnicott, 1964, p.195)

Langford (1968) wrote that teachers' attitudes to children "should reflect the necessarily temporary nature of their relationship" (p.144).

Love began to re-emerge in the USA from the 1990s. Goldstein (1997) wrote about the intensity of love in settings. Although practitioners only have children on a temporary basis, the quality of their love for children may be just as intense as the quality of love in families. Noddings (2007) argued that people need love, and recommended that loving encounters become an integral part of the professional role.

In England, Gerhardt (2004) stressed the importance of love from a biological perspective, arguing that people's psychological make-up is, to a significant extent, shaped in relation to their formative experience of being loved, or not. Gerhardt demonstrated that there is a direct correlation between feeling loved by particular others as young children and becoming emotionally balanced for life. Manning-Morton (2006) argued that "children do not thrive if they do not also receive loving attention" (p.45) in the form of touch.

Page (2011) found that mothers wanted practitioners to love

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SOME DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED THROUGH LOVE EXPRESSED THROUGH TOUCH

Although love is finding its way back into educational discourse, there are confusions and complexities associated with it. The subject of touching young children has become associated with paedophilia, and sometimes seen as sexual. Physical contact between adults and children is constructed as dangerous (Sikes and Piper, 2010). And yet experts (e.g. Gerhardt, 2004, Manning-Morton, 2006) argue that it is important to touch children.

In a study by Powell and Goouch (2012), baby room practitioners acknowledged the importance of loving children in their care, whilst at the same time reporting that child protection concerns influenced their day-to-day approach with the children. Thus there were unwritten restrictions on the extent to which they felt they could be demonstrative in their love or act fully in accordance with their beliefs about the importance of love. Powell and Goouch found that restrictions on what practitioners felt they could do, arising out of cultural concerns with child protection matters, had an impact on the quality of love offered in settings.

On the one hand, teams must draw up robust safeguarding policies, and on the other, they must make sure that these policies are not over-restrictive. Over-restrictive policies in relation to touch may inhibit the intuitive side of people's professionalism

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their children. She developed the concept of "professional love" to denote a style of love that was like the love parents offer their children, while at the same time posing no threat to the parent-child relationship. "Professional love" was conceived to "support dialogue between carers and parents" (Page, 2011, p.11). Page (2013) found that the mothers regarded love as more important than education or cleanliness when choosing providers for their children, and suggested that "for too long the subject of love has been neglected" (p.8).

Manning-Morton and Thorp (2015) wrote that children benefit from knowing that they are loved by practitioners. In my own small-scale, qualitative research (Cousins, 2015), I found that practitioners constructed love as important in their work. The topic stimulated discussions about varied aspects of their

practice, including teaching children lessons for the future, showing love through touch, relationships with parents, the extent to which they drew on their training or life experiences in relation to love, and allocation of work within teams according to people's natural propensity for love. Page (2015) later carried out research with a wider sample and developed a toolkit to support practitioners with this aspect of their work.

In Australia, White (2016) wrote about teaching with love. Children learn by the way they are touched and the loving sounds of those who communicate with them. From White's perspective, practitioners need to tune into children's diverse understandings of love, and love children in ways that children recognise as love.

and create a tension between what they consider privately, as ethical people, and what practitioners are prescribed to do as public professionals.

SUPPORT FOR COMPLEX WORK INVOLVING LOVE

There is a need for a new awareness about the complexity of work that involves love. Manning-Morton (2006) emphasised the importance of practitioners developing as mature, emotionally intelligent, self-aware adults, and "becom[ing] experts in themselves" (p.48). She recommended that practitioners receive high levels of support in order to meet day-to-day challenges, including instances when they may be rejected by children, and emphasised that

work with very young children involves practitioners' hearts as much as their minds.

Osgood (2010) argued that practitioners need "improved support" (p.131) for this work. She proposed that early years practitioners be allowed to draw on their "life experience and wisdom" (p.130), as indicated within her concept of "professionalism from within". Harwood, Klopper, Osanyin and Vanderlee (2013) found that love was very important to practitioners and proposed that more opportunities be established for them to talk about the emotional aspects of their roles.

Elfer (2012) and Page and Elfer (2013) recommended that managers facilitate

opportunities for staff to talk about complex aspects of their work. Leaders should establish a climate in which it is acceptable for there to be no clear answers to questions, problems and issues may be raised, uncertainty can prevail, and practitioners are able to talk about their feelings and concerns.

Goouch and Powell (2013) found that "critical spaces" (p.83) for talking and thinking helped practitioners "to develop a sense of their own worth in their work and to develop a 'voice'" (p.87). "Time for talk" (p.84), they found, helped practitioners to think about their practice and gain a better understanding about their work.

(References on p10)

Professional conversations needed to define love in early years settings

My own research (Cousins, 2015) found that a wider definition was needed for this complex topic. I suggest that this definition be generated by practitioners in the field. Accordingly, leaders should facilitate discussions about affective aspects of work with children in out-of-home contexts. The following questions could be used to stimulate such discussions:

- » Is love desirable in settings?
- » How does love in settings differ, if at all, from love in familial contexts?
- » What support is needed for key persons when children they have grown to love leave their care?
- » Is love connected to learning, and, if so, how?
- » Can education and care be offered without love?
- » How is love the same as/different to compassion?
- » Can everyone love as children need to be loved?
- » Should applicants to training programmes be selected on the basis of how they love?
- » How should trainees be prepared for affective aspects of their work?
- » How should practitioners be supported with affective aspects of their work?
- » What can leaders do to better support this love work?

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Listening Leaders

If you are a leader, you probably recognise you got into your position by doing quite a bit of talking. Now you are there, do you realise your main task and role is to listen?

You know, we talk a lot about listening to children in this sector. And I have always thought the best children's centre workers are those that have excellent observation skills. Whenever I am in a centre I see good visual and audible listening skills anticipating the individual needs of children and families.

It is these skills that typify great leaders too. If you notice what is being said and done, or what isn't being said or done, and consider how people are saying things and doing things, and how they are feeling, you have all the tools you need

to connect with children, families, and the people you lead. These tools help you to help them flourish.

Maya Angelou said "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel". This is good advice for any leader. It reminds me of the big difference between leadership and management. Leaders inspire people to have confidence and take action themselves. Managers too often tell people what to do, how and when. And this can damage confidence, motivation, and individual responsibility. Don't get me wrong, we need both in every organisation. Often it is the same person. It could be you, and if it is, this is your juggling challenge that makes

every work day different.

The vast majority of learners who come to my leadership and management training courses are surprised to find themselves in their positions. Most have never undertaken any such training before. And have often learned their leadership skills through a painful process of trial and error. Like most leaders, their route to the top is often because they are great talkers. But once there, the best advice is to shut up! If you are too busy talking at people, or constantly seeking to demonstrate and assert your position, you will not connect with them. They will quickly learn not to talk themselves, which results in you becoming uninformed and out of touch with what is happening and how people feel. And then there's nothing to listen to!

Here are a few thoughts on how to listen really well – my shortlist of personal tried and tested favourites by James Hemsall, OBE.

- » Don't wait to listen when you've finished all your planning and are simply presenting your final ideas
- » Involve people early, and listen at the early stages of thinking or developing ideas
- » Be open-minded by not assuming what people are going to say before they say it
- » Listen to everyone, not just those that you know will agree, and be prepared for different views
- » Be patient, give people time to think first and talk later, not everyone likes being the first to speak or thinks on their feet
- » Allow people the time to finish their talking – don't interrupt
- » Repeat what you think people have said so you get your listening right first time
- » Listen without power – support people to be honest and answer and not just in ways they think you want
- » Ask open questions, e.g. what do you think?

Should We Fake it to Make It?

As you enter a room, sit in a meeting or face a challenging situation, how are you feeling - powerful or weak? As you gaze around your team meeting, what do you observe about your colleagues' confidence and potential? Psychologist, Amy Cuddy has built on her own life experiences, to make some connections that will benefit us all. These ideas blend beautifully with what we as professionals in early years begin to understand about brain development and future life chances for the children we work with.

Ideas about leadership and our own potential presented during the NPQICL programme have been informed by self theories (Dwerk, 2016), feeling a fake, (Ket DeVries 2005) and depleted potential (Galway, 2000). Often these papers have helped leaders to understand how a feeling of powerlessness and low self-esteem emerge from our life experiences. The articles suggest that the socialising

and negative experiences have a powerful impact on our self-image and in turn, our performance. The writers agree that we internalise the perceptions and feedback from others and our level of self-confidence determines our performance. These papers have been influential in informing contemporary leadership development

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 "our level of self-confidence determines our performance"

programmes. Findings drawn from the NPQICL programme offer some evidence that talking and sharing with mentors and fellow students enabled leaders to believe in their ability to meet the demands of the role of a Children's Centre Leader (NCSL, 2008). But now our evolving understanding about brain development emerging from neuroscience

provides an opportunity to examine ourselves from a new perspective.

In her own academic career journey, Cuddy noticed that as she addressed students, she perceived their ability from their body language during lectures. Some students sat in a confident open body pose, broadening their body shape to look physically larger and strong. While others, sat in a closed pose making their body look small and contained and this led her to begin to investigate this further. Her research study asked the respondents to strike two poses, one group where they were projecting a powerful image of themselves and another group where they were weak and powerless. She asked each participant to maintain the pose for two minutes. Every participant then participated in a job interview and saliva samples were collected before and after the experience.

The interview data showed that the participants in the



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powerful pose group scored highly and were assessed as having high potential. Whereas the weak pose group performed less impressively in the interview and were rated less suitable. However, the remarkable findings from this study come from the analysis of the saliva samples. The powerful pose groups had significantly higher levels of testosterone and lower levels of cortisol than the normal range. Testosterone levels inform our ability to adapt to challenges, they increase when we win and reduce when we fail. Similarly the hormone cortisol supports our innate survival instincts, but a prolonged high level of cortisol can have a detrimental impact on our well being, for example it

can increase our feelings of anxiety. The ACE study (2015), found that in the long term there are potential negative mental and physical health consequences (Bellis, et al, 2015).

So what is a powerful pose and what can we do to perform better and look after our own mental health? Think super-hero; strike a pose like superman/woman for two minutes, a private space with a mirror where you can practice is advisable. Anecdotally, a leader I know tried it before attending a difficult meeting and reported that she felt more confident. Why not give it a try? Resources required are negligible and if you feel an effect, then share the idea with others.

Perhaps we could also consider the application of this idea in our wider work. An argument for further thought was outlined in a Radio 4 broadcast recently (Unhappy Child: Unhealthy Adult, BBC, 2016). Try to take 30 minutes out of your busy day to listen and learn about how an experience of neglect and domestic violence in childhood, has a long term impact on our physical and mental health. Is it possible, that power posing in the early years could support vulnerable children in our communities to improve their health and well being as adults? Perhaps learning to look like superman/woman really does have the capacity to address social injustice.

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Improving Quality in Newham

An important aspect of the Core Purpose of a children's centre is "sharing expertise with other early years settings to improve quality".

Three years ago, Newham in East London had the poorest quality early years provision (as rated by Ofsted) in England. So there was an urgent need for Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre – located in the north east corner of the borough – to work closely with the local authority to change this. Early on in our thinking, we made two key decisions. The first was that our model for improving quality would be based on peer-learning. We would set up projects which would enable us to learn alongside our local PVI settings, childminders and schools. We needed to recognize that the traditional model for quality improvement – running courses, or going out and offering advice, support and challenge – had not worked. Secondly, we judged that it was important to develop this work as part of a wider network. We needed to have a way to learn from others, share ideas, and develop practice: we needed to stop just looking inwards and staying in our small patch of north east London.

So we worked with the national charity 4Children to develop an "Early Learning and Community Childcare Hub", which brings together local early years settings, schools and childminders in a learning network. The

network has helped drive a marked improvement in quality, with all participating settings now rated "Good" or "Outstanding". This is as a result of the network's involvement in a number of programmes, including projects which support children experiencing language delay and with specific speech and language

.....

"The network co-ordinator also provides regular support and training for childminders, with a focus on improving quality"

.....

needs, initiatives to improve the quality and take-up of free entitlement places, and engagement with Area SENCOs to help identify support and training needs within settings. The Hub Improvement model is now being rolled out across Newham, in partnership with the local authority.

Sheringham also leads a childminder network with 16 childminders. Building on these successes, Sheringham

is now a National Teaching School and co-leads the East London Partnership.

SUCCESSSES

Sheringham developed the network of 10 early years settings; 2 new settings have opened in the last 12 months and, as with childminders, Sheringham advertises the settings through its website. As well as there being an increase in the number of settings, there has been a marked effect on quality, with the Sheringham figures well ahead of those for the local authority as a whole (Fig. 1). The Sheringham network now outperforms the country by having no requires improvement/satisfactory or inadequate settings.

This significant improvement in quality is due to a range of projects:

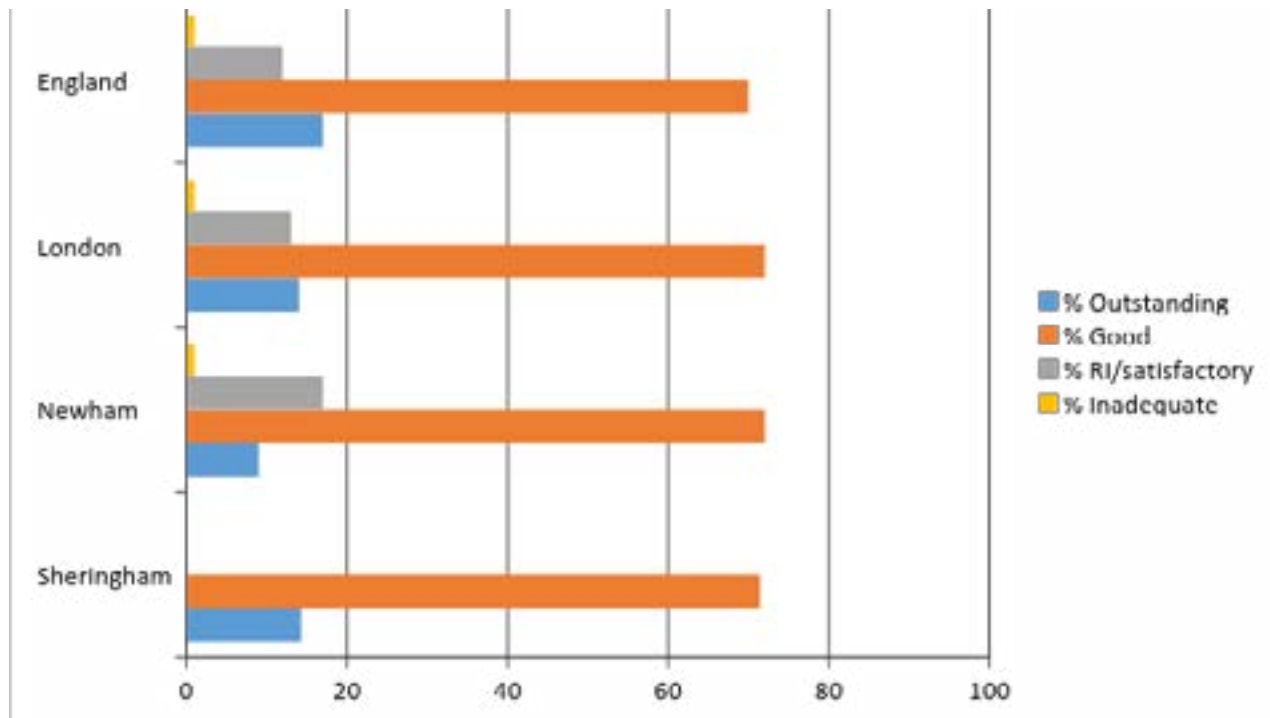
- » **Every Child a Talker (ECAT)**: local settings are involved in ongoing ECAT training, which has been effective in narrowing the gap between children who start nursery at risk of language delay and the rest.



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Comparative Ofsted Outcomes - Childcare on non-domestic premises, March 2015

» **Improving the quality of two-year old provision using the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale:**

all the local settings have been involved in this project, which has been delivered in partnership with A Plus Education.

» **Area SENCOs** have visited all the settings and met their managers/SENCOs. This has highlighted the significant difficulties experienced by a number of small settings when admitting children with additional needs. As a result of this, further support and training is being planned through the Teaching School Alliance, based around the research-based Early Years Inclusive Classroom Profile.

» **Early Intervention Speech Therapy Project:** all settings have received at least one visit from an independent Speech Therapist engaged for the project. She gave extensive feedback on how staff were supporting

language development, and how practice could be improved.

Sheringham also leads a childminder network with 16 childminders. Over the last 12 months the number of children engaged with the childminder network has increased by 25%. We have helped improve occupancy by advertising the childminders on our network and holding information days for families looking for childcare. We have also specifically put parents of

children eligible for a free place at 2 years old in touch with childminders with vacancies. Working with 4Children enabled us to pick up on best practice in other areas around advertising childminder services and raising parental awareness. The network co-ordinator provides regular support and training, with a focus on improving quality; the quality of childminders in the Sheringham hub is now significantly better than in Newham as a whole.



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