

Assignment B - Leadership for Systems of Quality

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) (2018) state that there has been various research to prove that children develop to their full potential within childcare, as long as, this childcare is of high quality. PACEY (2018) continues to state that the quality of a childcare or play provision can be found within their inspection reports from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), the qualifications of staff and how the children form an attachment with any of the staff at the setting. Additionally, as stated by PACEY (2018);

Other signs of high quality care include:

- a safe, hygienic environment
- plenty of good quality toys, equipment and resources and lots of opportunities for play and learning, inside and out
- structured days and an organised, well managed setting
- nutritious food and enjoyable, sociable mealtimes
- positive interactions - plenty of praise, encouragement and laughter
- parents fully involved and consulted in their children's care.

(Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, 2018)

In early years and childcare settings, there has been greater emphasis on high quality service and also ways to improve quality within the setting through ensuring a more child-focus service, as stated by Reed and Canning (2012: 1). However, Pirard and Barbier (2012: 171) states that improving the quality of these early years and childcare providers, especially for children under the age of three is continuously a challenge. Pirard and Barbier (2012: 171) explain that the structure of the service and the quality they aim for is different within each setting. Additionally, the qualification and any continuous professional development (CPD) are constantly changing and currently staff within early years and childcare settings 'often fail to reach' the professional standard that is required. An example of this is Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) (2018) have announced that by September 2021, any childcare and play providers caring for children aged between eight and twelve must have the playwork level three qualification alongside their childcare. This is also reflected within Standard 13.6 (DC) of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) (2016: 35), where emphasis is placed on following the qualifications guidelines set by Social Care Wales (2017) for children under eight years old and Skills Active (2017) for children over eight years old. Whilst this provides settings with guidance on what qualifications are required, there has been no mention on how settings should fund this CPD. Nutbrown cited in Anonymous (2012: 8) emphasis that all

education and childcare providers should be at a level three by 2022, which is similar to CIW's recommendation by 2021. Nutbrown also cited in Anonymous (2012: 8) that the present qualifications system does not support practitioners with the 'knowledge and experience' that they require to offer children with high quality care and education and additionally to support the practitioner's professional development. However, through ensuring all practitioners are benchmarked at level three in either education, childcare or playwork, this will promote consistency within this field of work. Consistency is one of the key elements for a high quality and successful settings, alongside shared knowledge, reflective learning and sharing best practice giving a holistic approach. This methodology is highlighted within the Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan (2013) that there is need for consistent approach when caring for children in the early years.

Cwlwm (2016) states that early years, childcare and play provisions will continually review the quality of the service they provide through reflection. Reflection allows providers to learn from previous experiences and share any lessons learnt. Cwlwm (2016) states that they do not provide a quality assurance scheme, however, each umbrella organisation associated with Cwlwm does offer their own which all reflect the NMS (2016) from CIW. This leads to other complications such as settings having to choose which quality assurance scheme to follow, for example Mudiad Meithrin have the 'Safonau Serenog' (no date), whilst Wales Pre-school Playgroup Association (WPPA) have a quality for all scheme (2011). This may lead to settings become overwhelmed with the various schemes and therefore undecided as to which one to follow. This is also reflected within the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (2015) as there are five options available, as shown on the UK ECERS Network Resource (no date). This common problem is seen in other industries and causes confusion and a lack of confidence in quality assurance and having a cross provision scheme would help this situation. It bodes the question is this why the Self-Assessment of Service Statement (2017) has been developed and will this become the main scheme for quality assurance? One common connection that can be seen throughout the majority of quality assurance scheme, stated by Cwlwm (2016) is the CPD element for all staff within the setting. Within the NMS (2016: 36) Standard 13.10 it states that the training need of staff is continuously monitored on a regular basis. NMS states the minimum requirements that settings

need to comply with, whilst if a setting is funded by Flying Start (2014: 6) they are required to complete an additional five days of CPD rather than only adhere to the mandatory training requirements given in the NMS (2016).

On January the 15th 2018 Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) changed their name to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). Whilst all the documentation is being changed, for the time being, both CSSIW and CIW are valid, as stated by CIW (2017). CIW (no date) states that childcare and play providers have a legal requirement to complete a self-assessment which should include the quality of care report for their service, this is known as SASS (2017). However, CIW (no date) states that although some childcare and play providers submitted their quality of care report annually, there were some settings who did not produce a report. For this reason, CIW (no date) issued the SASS (2017) to be completed, too which if settings did not they would have a non-compliance marked against the Leadership and Management element from the inspection framework (no date). CIW (2018) stated that 'part one' of SASS was to be completed during the summer of 2016; however, 'part two' was due before the 28th of July 2017, this shows a significant amount of time between each part and for this reason some settings may have had a turnover in staff resulting in inconsistencies within their reports. However, the ECERS written by Harms et al. (2015) is classed as a 'time stamp', where children are observed during the busiest time of the day and for no longer than three hours. All information collected within the ECERS (2015) is observed with no additional information collected from the staff at the setting. However, childcare providers have a legal requirement to complete a self-evaluation as part of the second element of the SASS, CIW (2018) states the aim of this was to support childcare providers to consider the most effective 'way to maintain and improve' their services. CIW (2018) clarifies that the information childcare and play settings provided them within this element would support them to see what systems childcare providers have in place to monitor, review and improve their service in order to provider children with the best quality of care they can, additionally CIW (2018) could also plan their inspections of the childcare and play providers with this information.

In line with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, CIW have changed the way they inspect, additionally this Act supports the aims set out by

the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2015. The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 has placed an emphasis on the quality of services and ensure that improvements are made by services to deliver the highest quality of care. Montessori (1909) cited in Ma et al. (2013: 146) the importance of quality and the extensive benefit this had on children throughout their lives. CIW (2018) supports this with the introduction to the inspection framework (no date). Under the new inspection framework (no date) CIW will be placing a focus on how the childcare providers can improve the quality of the care to the children. Additionally, CIW (no date) have also placed a greater emphasis on the wellbeing outcomes of the individuals that use the services. Within the inspection framework (no date) there are four areas CIW will be inspecting, these are;

1. Wellbeing
 2. Care and Development
 3. Environment
 4. Leadership and Management
- (Care Inspectorate Wales, no date)

However, if a childcare setting is providing the funded education for children aged three, for example in a Cylch Meithrin or Playgroup, they will have a joint inspection from CIW and Estyn (no date). During this inspection framework (no date) there are two additional areas to inspection; 'Learning' and 'Teaching and Assessment'. Currently, this inspection framework between Estyn and CIW (no date) is being piloted, as stated by CIW (2018), although amalgamation of both Estyn and CIW are not going as successful as they hoped, as stated within Llywelyn (2014). However, CIW (no date) states although this inspection framework is new CIW have provided a guidance to their inspection framework (no date). Within the inspection framework guidance (no date), CIW (no date) provide an example of 'good practice' alongside what they expect to see when they inspect and the reason behind these. Through providing childcare and play providers with examples of good practice (inspection framework guidance, no date) this gives targets or areas they need to achieve in order to reach a 'good' status within their inspection and on the SASS (2017). Additionally, ECERS (2015) also provides settings with a scoring scale in order to achieve the best possible result and therefore ensures a high quality of care for children using the service. However, the SASS form (2017) itself does not provide settings with specific targets, instead provides questions that settings must answer

in-line with each area from the inspection framework (no date); although the inspection framework guidance (no date) does provide targets and therefore can work alongside each other.

A negative element of the SASS (2017) is that it is very repetitive as the same questions are asked within each section of the SASS (2017) which all interlink together, for example wellbeing is connected to care and development. The SASS (2017) can be compared to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory as cited in the Department of Education and Training (2010), where the children are placed in the middle with each section of the SASS (2017) around the child and how each section will influence children's development. Whilst, the ECERS (2015) provides a scoring system where settings can score themselves to see how effective they are. However, the ECERS (2015) expects settings to consider the outside environment and how this is incorporated within the children's care and development. The use of the outside environment is a strong factor within the Foundation Phase (2015) and how each of the seven areas of learning can be taken outdoors to enhance children's learning and development.

In 2004 the 'Quality Interventions for Early Care and Education (QUINCE)' study was undertaken, as stated by Forry et al. (2013). QUINCE (2004) cited in Forry et.al (2013), was trialled as an 'intervention model for quality enhancement' among childcare settings. The ECERS (2015: 2) is an instrument designed to support childcare settings to assess the overall quality within their settings. ECERS (2015) can be used alongside the SASS (2017) as both are to support high quality delivery or are a tool so support improvement the quality of care provided by childcare and play provision, as stated within the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Both the SASS (2017) and ECERS (2015) consider the children within their evaluation and how the quality of the care effects their development. Within the inspection framework guidance (no date) CIW have placed significant emphasis on how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Unicef, no date) are embedded into the childcare and play provision. Additionally, within the NMS (2016);

...The views of the children and their parents are sought as part of this process to measure the success of the service in meeting the assessed needs of the children;

(Childcare Development Division, 2016)

This consistent with the methods of collecting views within the SASS (2017), however, this section of the SASS (2017) does not provide examples of individuals to ask. Although, within The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010 lists four key parties that are required to provide feedback on the childcare and play provision. However, the ECERS (2015) is completed either by two independent assessors from a third-party organisation or the setting's staff. Using a third-party organisation can be a more beneficial way to review the quality of a setting because these individuals have no connections to the childcare setting and therefore will provide an honest opinion, additionally the ECERS (2015) provide clear guidelines for the assessors undertaking the review to ensure fairness. However, SASS (2017) is completed by the registered person within the childcare setting as stated by The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010. The registered person is not always the one who runs the childcare or play provision and therefore may not have a realistic view of what the quality of care the service provides. Additionally, the SASS (2017) is very broad and does not provide clear guidelines to follow, therefore the setting can choose what to include within their SASS (2017). The ECERS (2015) however, is very specific and asks the assessors to note down the time stamps within their three hour observation. Also the ECERS (2015) provides clear instructions that the opinions of staff are not to be considered within the observations.

However, within The Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010 places an emphasis on the views of staff that work within the childcare or play provision. Collating staff views will provide the manager of a setting with an idea of the staff morale and motivation. Forry et al. (2013: 895) states that the National Study of Child Care for Low-Income Families stated that through their research they have seen individuals becoming stressed through their roles because either their requirements change, for example, undertaking a new qualification or there is increase to their responsibilities. However, Forry et al. (2013: 895) states that there

is not much evidence to link between the stress related to the role of staff and the quality of care within childcare and play provisions. To support this the SASS (2017) requires settings to collect the views of service users and staff, additionally there is emphasis on staff opinions within the Leadership and Management element of the inspection framework (no date).

High-quality childcare is important for parents and families in order for them to feel confident that the learning and play opportunities offered to their children is of a high standard, as stated by Cwlwm (2016). Flying Start (2014) states that the research has been conducted to show the quality of childcare settings does effect the development of children. The EPPE (2004) report states that children who attend quality settings become more independent; are able to concentrate for longer and, when they do begin school they are more co-operative and are ready to try any new challenges. Additionally, one finding the EPPE (2004) report did clarify is that high quality early years, childcare and play settings have been connected to children having 'better intellectual attainment and improved social relationships.' This is also stated within the Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan (2013: 33) because high quality childcare provides children with positive outcome through their development.

Quality Assurance can be seen as a way of ensuring that all settings adhere to a set minimum standard of service. This in itself, following a specific framework can aid users to make informed decisions about the settings they choose to take care of their children. From the perspective of service users, these measures can be seen as positive. However, from a settings' point of view, these base line requirements, which are not always consistent across differing quality assurance providers, can often be seen as confusing and lacking in a cross industry agreed standard. This lack of consistency or differing standpoints, adds to the pressure and stress of delivering a high quality of service that cannot always be equally compared across services.

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