

Section 1

This section consists of a critical evaluation on the role of an inclusive leader within a chosen scenario. Leading Effectively Staff (2022) explain that an inclusive leader is aware of their personal thoughts and biases, but they are able to detach themselves from these and take other people's viewpoints into consideration to advise them when making decisions. This approach makes them able to cooperate efficiently with other individuals. Additionally, Bourke and Espedido (2020) would agree and say not only do inclusive leaders show consciousness of bias, they prioritize inclusion and challenge existing conditions to ensure diversity is celebrated and supported. They also state that an inclusive leader should be genuinely interested in the perspective of others and ensure they listen and understand these perspectives.

Bourke and Espedido (2020) report that a leader's attitude and actions can make a 70% difference as to whether people feel they are in an inclusive environment. Furthermore, Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2021) are of a similar position and express that inclusive leaders must inspire and provide an environment where others feel able to be their authentic selves, whilst the inclusive leader also maintains their authentic self.

An inclusive leader does not ignore situations that endorse bias or inequality, they recognize them and develop ways to remove them and implement actions that promote equality and inclusive working. However, Riera (2021) discusses that there are some barriers when it comes to being an inclusive leader. She says that one of the main obstacles an inclusive leader will face is not having enough time to establish bonds with people.

Inclusive leadership involves personal understanding on a deep level with others and there is not always enough time to facilitate this. Additionally, Riera (2021) says that another barrier that inclusive leaders may face is the inability to trust others to carry out a task and make decisions. An inclusive leader must value others and allow them to make decisions on their own, but for some inclusive leaders, letting go of that control can be difficult. However, Robertson (2021) explains that when leaders do not let go of control and make decisions alone it can have a negative impact. He explains that when inclusive leaders make decisions collaboratively, more informed and beneficial decisions are made.

Hallet and Siraj (2016) discuss inclusive leadership in early years educations and say that leaders in the early years should allow their practice to be informed by children, their families and the wider community to ensure that these stakeholders needs are being met. They also say that inclusive leaders will adopt an inclusive mindset, which enables them to work in an open and cooperative way. Furthermore, Hallet and Siraj (2016) explain that inclusive leadership facilitates a successful work environment. In a case study they conducted, they reported that there was a headmaster of a primary school who adopted an inclusive leadership approach, the headmaster championed staff and supported their goals. As a result, staff were happy in their jobs and many were encouraged to continue professional development and progressed to higher roles, which highlights the impact of an inclusive leader.

As well as inclusive leadership amongst staff, Pacey (No date) explains that leaders in early education must promote inclusive practice with the children. Pacey (No date) states that inclusive leaders in the early years must welcome and recognize each child's unique traits and make sure every child is included and attended to regardless of their ethnicity, cultural beliefs, language, disability or their socio-economic background. However, Riera (2021) suggests that sometimes inclusive leaders do not have enough understanding of how to promote inclusion that incorporates a person's culture, which can affect relationships.

Scenario

This scenario has been identified by a practitioner who will utilize their role to ensure the people involved feel included. Ashikali, Groeneveld and Kuipers (2020) describe inclusion as meeting two needs a person seeks to fulfil. The first being a sense of belonging, where a person feels they have things in common and validated by others. The second being uniqueness where a person embraces their unique characteristics and feels accepted. However, if people are in minority groups, and are noticeably different from those in the dominant groups, they may feel undervalued, unappreciated and unsafe in their environment, which can lead them to isolate themselves and recluse (Ferdman, 2018, para.6 cited in Ferdman, Prime and Riggio 2021, p.10). This is similar to the following scenario where a single father, who for the purpose of this scenario will be called Dave has beaten addiction and survived domestic abuse. He has now been given full custody of his daughter, who for the purpose of this scenario will be called Holly. Dave drops Holly off in the mornings and collects her at home time, but waits alone and tries to avoid other parents. Dave appears to be on edge

around school staff and is reluctant to speak to Holly's practitioner unless absolutely necessary and on occasions where he has spoken, he talks about not having many people to talk to. Holly's development is behind the majority of her peers and she plays alone during playtime. As a result of this scenario, the practitioner involved utilized their ability to be an inclusive leader to ensure actions were put in place to help Holly and Dave to feel more included. Aguilar (2013) explains that when a child feels included they are able to make friends, improve skills, have higher self-esteem and be respectful to others. Aguilar (2013) discusses that these benefits can also be said for the child's family and that working in partnership with a child's family and ensuring inclusion for all can facilitate the child to fulfil their potential.

Families (Dad- Dave)

As seen in the scenario, Dave isolates himself from other parents and waits in the yard alone. As well as this, he has admitted to Holly's practitioner that he does not have many people he can go to for support. Novotney (2019) would say that this is a concern as social isolation can have a negative impact on a person's health, affecting them physically, mentally and cognitively. Furthermore, Luo *et al* (2021) would agree that social isolation has a negative impact on mental health and says that adults who experience social isolation are more likely to be diagnosed with depression, so Dave could be at risk of developing depression if he continues to be socially isolated. However, if we can help Dave to engage more with other adults, Cohut (2018) says that this will trigger the nervous system to release hormones that can prevent depression and anxiety.

Dave also avoids talking to the practitioner unless necessary and seems uncomfortable during the conversations meaning discussions are limited. Stade (2019) explains that a poor relationship between parent and practitioner is concerning, as she believes that a healthy relationship between parents and practitioners is key to a child being successful in education. She says that a parent will know their child on a deeper level, and be aware of what makes them happy or sad. Whereas the child's teacher has the knowledge on education and developing a child academically. When the parent and child work together, the needs of the child are best met and the parent will feel involved and included in their child's education.

Vertava Health (2016) discuss that Dave overcoming addiction may be the reason he isolates himself from other parents and practitioners. They say that those overcoming addiction are usually affected by shame and guilt and this causes them to isolate

themselves as they feel they are unable to connect with other people. People struggling from addiction often feel left out and alone, which Vertava Health (2016) say can lead to relapse. However, Gepp and Dibdin (2021) say that if a recovering addict connects with others who are open and empathetic about what they have been through, it can have a positive impact on their lives and reduce risk of relapse. Therefore, they would suggest it is important for Dave to engage with others to support him on his recovery journey. However, similarly to Vertava Health (2016), they note that addicts beating addiction are usually affected by shame and are aware of social perceptions on addicts, so may feel unable to ask for help.

Brown (2019) says that an inclusive leader is aware that some people face tougher challenges in life than others and should be supported as a result. In this scenario, the practitioner was aware that Dave has been through a lot and wanted to enable Dave to feel that he belonged there and was determined to put steps in place to ensure this, as suggested by Brown (2019).

In this scenario, the practitioners first step was to ask Dave to attend the setting for a meeting, as up to this point, Dave had only spoken to the practitioner in parents' evenings. Cusumano (2020) says that communication between practitioners and parents must go beyond this and in order to build a successful relationship between Dave and the practitioner, there must be regular communication, so during the first meeting Dave and the practitioner decided days that they would meet for a conversation each week. However, according to Cusumano (2020) the practitioner could have done better here and offered Dave a communication method he would have preferred, as this would have made him feel more included and that his thoughts were considered. As stated by GOV.UK (No date), during the meeting, the practitioner encouraged Dave to talk about himself and talk about his family and the community he is surrounded by. The practitioner also asked Dave what he expects from the setting, as GOV.UK (No date) says that these questions will make Dave feel valued and that the setting want him to be included.

Furthermore, Hornby and Blackwell (2018) say that it has now become the role of practitioners to support parents in other ways than before, as parents lack external support services and now rely on schools more for help. However, Ozmen *et al* (2016) explains that there may be barriers to building this positive relationship with Dave and being more inclusive, as they say that some parents do not trust practitioners and are

unwilling to communicate openly. However, they say this relationship can be built over time by regular communication in agreeance with Cusumano (2020).

The practitioner also invited Dave to attend a weekly coffee morning in the school, as suggested by Gateway Academy Westminster Primary School (2022). They say that parent coffee mornings are a positive way of building trust between parents and practitioners and also a good opportunity for parents to meet, get to know and support each other, which could benefit Dave by feeling included and that he has people to speak to, which could also prevent a relapse according to Gepp and Dibdin (2021).

However, getting Dave to attend and engage with other parents and practitioners may be a challenge as Ozmen *et al* (2016) highlights that Dave may not be willing to communicate openly and honestly. However, Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2021) explain that is the role of the practitioner as the inclusive leader to provide the conditions in which Dave feels comfortable to be his authentic self. Furthermore, Weiss *et al* (2018) suggest that the practitioner can facilitate inclusion by utilizing inclusive language. For example, they suggest that by using 'we' when referring to points, it can make people feel part of the plan and that they are included, respected and valued, which Dave could benefit from.

Children (Holly)

As seen in the scenario, Holly plays alone during playtime and does not have many friends outside school. Yurcaba (2020) highlights that this is concerning, as studies show that children who experience loneliness are at higher risk of developing mental health disorders. She says that childhood loneliness could attribute towards mental health conditions like anxiety and depression that present up to nine years later. Furthermore, Nauert (2018) suggests that a reason for Holly isolating herself on play time is because she is modelling dad Dave's behaviour. Holly sees Dave avoiding other parents and keeping to himself in the yard, and she may be imitating him thinking that is normal behaviour and isolating herself from peers. However, Hobbs (2021) explains that if practitioners facilitate inclusion and peer interactions, it can have a positive impact on the child. She says that peer to peer interaction in the early years has long lasting effects on the child's life and enables the growth of social and emotional skills.

As seen in the scenario, Holly is also developing at a slower rate to that of her peers. Welsh Government (2021) say that research shows that children with ALN are disadvantaged compared to their peers without ALN. Children with ALN have lower

academic achievement compared to those without and subsequently this limits their future prospects. However, Central South Consortium (2021) released guidance to schools in South Wales, in which they state that Early identification and intervention of ALN is key to minimising impact on the child. They also state that practitioners must promote inclusive practice and ensure the child feels supported and that their needs are being met.

Practitioners must be inclusive leaders and non- discriminatory. This is in line with UNICEF (2019) that state in the UNCRC that no child experiences discrimination, no matter their ethnicity, social status, gender, skills or whatever background they come from. In the scenario, Holly is not mixing with peers. PlanBee (2017) explain that it is the practitioner's duty to use their inclusive leadership skills and ensure Holly feels included with her peers.

As a result, the practitioner facilitated a 'Getting to know you' session where each child in the class spoke about their favourite things to do. This was useful as the practitioner was able to identify children that Holly shared interests with and was able to encourage conversation between Holly and them which has now turned into regular conversation as suggested by PlanBee (2017) and Holly now includes herself more with peers. However, although the session was successful, it was challenging at first getting Holly to participate. Raising Children (2022) say that this could be because Holly is shy which makes her less likely to want to participate in activities.

As per the scenario, Holly's development is behind her peers, Al Hout (2017) explains that the practitioner must facilitate inclusion by ensuring Holly plays an active role in school in whatever way possible. He says that the practitioner must engage with other professionals to know best how to meet Holly's needs. Al Hout (2017) also suggests that the practitioner should have a one to one conversation with Holly to find out more about her and her needs that will inform the most effective way to adapt lesson plans and differentiate work so that she feels more included in class.

Professionals

In this scenario, there will be multi-agency work. Kelly (2015) explains that in the early years, multi-agency working refers to various professionals being involved in the child's life, as well as their families to ensure they are receiving the correct support. For example, in this scenario, Dave is a recovering addict and social services are involved regarding the custody of Holly. Neal (2021) says that the practitioner will work in collaboration with social services so they fully understand Holly and Dave's needs

and improve relationships between all stakeholders which can inform the practitioner on how to be more inclusive and involve Holly and Dave more in all aspects of the setting. However, Ferguson *et al* (2020) explains that social workers do not always have a positive impact, as some families do not want social services involved in the first place which can cause hostile relationships which can affect communication between Dave and the practitioner and subsequently impact inclusivity.

As mentioned in the scenario, Holly's development is behind that of her peers and the practitioner has noticed her finding tasks difficult. Child & Family Blog (2021) may suggest that a possible reason for this development delay is that Holly has experienced ACEs, seeing her father be an addict and be a victim of domestic abuse are example of ACEs. Child & Family Blog (2021) say that ACEs can hinder a child's development which can cause issues with how well they learn in school and can deter them from attachments leaving them isolated, which could possibly be what is happening with Holly. However, The European Commission (2022) may suggest that the practitioner could enable Holly to overcome this and feel more included by referring her to a child councillor, as they say a child councillor can encourage children to communicate more with their peers and also assist developmental delay. The practitioner will then work in partnership with the councillor to be informed on the best ways to include Holly and meet her needs academically and socially. However, as suggested by Child Counselling (2021), Holly may be reluctant to speak to the counsellor as she may be confused as to what is going on.

Communities

As seen in the scenario, Dave nor Holly engage with their community. Jones, Gallus and Cothorn (2016) suggest that this is a concern as when there is limited purposeful communication between people and their community, it contributes to social stigma and extends the barriers to inclusion in the community. As suggested by Bourke and Espedido (2020) an inclusive leader will prioritize inclusion in all aspects of a person's life. As a result, the practitioner located a local single fathers' group in the community and suggested to Dave that he attends. Dave attended his first session and informed the practitioner that it was beneficial to meet people with the same experiences and felt that he found somewhere that he related to other and could share support which made him feel more included and confident as suggested by Mental Health Foundation (2022). However, they do note that it may take a while for Dave to fully open up to the support group, but that it will get easier over time.

Section 2

Howlett and Cashore (2014, quoted in Engeli and Allison, 2014,p.17) explains that a policy consists of goals and how these can be achieved. Furthermore, Lane (2018) would agree and adds that a policy contains guidance for the organization to follow. Liddicoat (2014) explains that when it comes to policies in education, there are macro and micro-level policies. Macro level policy is published nationally by Governments, whereas micro-level policies are on a local basis where councils and schools inform their own micro policies based off the macro policy. Additionally, Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay (2013) discuss that whether people agree with policies or not, they have been created with intent and purpose. People must comprehend why policies have been created to be able to best implement them in practice.

This section will look at a macro policy that has been created by the Welsh Government (2020), namely the New Curriculum for Wales. The Welsh Government (2020) has created guidance for schools to follow and establish their own curriculum. Hallet and Siraj (2016) may agree with this and say that this policy enables inclusive leadership as early years settings can involve children, parent and the communities when implementing policy to ensure that it caters for the individual needs of the setting and all stakeholders involved.

Furthermore, Ferdman, Prime and Riggio (2021) may also agree with the Welsh Government (2020) and say that inclusive leaders do not ignore those that face struggles and could build the new curriculum with these people in mind to ensure inclusion. Furthermore, Harris, Jones and Crick (2020) also agree with the Welsh Government's (2020) New Curriculum for Wales and explain that by putting practitioners in a central role of change and enabling them to be part of designing their own curriculum will have a positive impact on practice as they know the children best and how to promote inclusion to improve outcomes. However, Harris, Jones and Crick (2020) also note that many people see letting practitioners create the curriculum as too much of a risk. However, the Welsh Government (2020) may argue with these hesitations and say that schools and practitioners are the most informed people to make these important decisions, as they know children on an individual basis and know the best ways to encourage and assist their inclusion in education.

Pacey (No date) would suggest that this enables inclusive leadership as practitioners know each child and their individual needs and can use this information to inform the development of the curriculum to ensure everyone is considered and included.

However, the Welsh Government (2019) explain that one of the main concerns of the new curriculum is that it is up to individual settings to interpret. This can affect inclusion on a national scale, as some settings may pay more attention to facilitating inclusion than others. The Welsh Government (2019) say that because the New Curriculum is being led by practitioners, each will have different perspectives and values. Therefore, if a practitioner does not have knowledge and understanding on implementing an inclusive curriculum, some children may be disadvantaged. However, the Welsh Government (2022) explain that this barrier can be overcome by training practitioners and by schools working together to share views and opinions that can inform best practice.

The Welsh Government (2022) say that this collaborative approach amongst schools in Wales to ensure equality and inclusivity for children by ensuring that core principles like inclusive practice are being implemented by leaders. However, The Welsh Government (2022) discuss that within the New Curriculum, practitioners are expected to utilize their inclusive leadership skills to ensure the requirements of children are met on an individual basis. Furthermore, Pacey (No date) would agree that this statement enables practitioners to be inclusive leaders and ensure the best for all children by listening and understanding their needs to implement inclusive practice. However, the Welsh Government (2022) say that practitioners, 'should' consider the children's input and 'should' provide opportunities. Law Insider (No date) says that the word 'should' means that something is important to action, but not mandatory. The Welsh Government (2019) may argue that this language leaves the guidance up for interpretation and can lead some practitioners to not considering child input which can have a negative impact on individual needs inclusion.

A micro policy is a policy created at a local level as suggested by Liddicoat (2014). An example of this is the Inclusion Strategy Policy created by Blaenau Gwent Council (2015) This Inclusion Policy states specific steps that schools in the local borough are to follow to ensure inclusivity. This differs to the Welsh Government (2020) in the New Curriculum, where although they say discuss that the curriculum should be inclusive, they don't give specific steps as to how. For example, the Blaenau Gwent Council (2015) Inclusion Policy gives instruction to practitioners and states that they are required to celebrate diversity and that practitioners 'will' implement inclusive leadership ensuring lessons cater to individual needs based on child input, that they ensure holistic wellbeing of children by promoting non-discriminatory and inclusive

leadership within the setting. They also instruct practitioners to adopt a whole school approach and work with external professionals to ensure early intervention and inclusion. The policy also informs practitioners that they 'will' provide education opportunities that are inclusive to all, while regularly reviewing and adapting practice to best meet children and family's needs. Cambridge Dictionary (No date) explain that the word 'will' means that something is certain, meaning that steps laid out in the Blaenau Gwent Council (2015) document will be actioned to ensure inclusion. However, this is not the case with the Welsh Government (2022) New Curriculum guidance where it says that the children's input 'should' be considered meaning it may not be actioned by all practitioners and there's a risk of inclusiveness in the curriculum not taking place.

Section 3

How You Can Use Inclusive Leadership to Support Single Parents in a Setting...

Wightwick (2016) discusses that in Wales alone, one in four families consist of a single parent, which is around 97,000 single parents. She explains that there is social stigma around single parents and many suffer feelings of marginalisation. Furthermore, Carroll (2019) highlights that in a poll, it was reported that 75% of single parents felt stereotyped and judged for being a single parent. Wightwick (2016) adds to this and says as well as facing stigma, single parents struggle with finances and time management as they have to revolve everything around looking after their child. In addition to this Desmond (2019) explains that single parents often feel isolated and a burden to others, with 96% of single parents in a survey saying that they felt isolated.

However, Cleaver (2018) explains that schools and practitioners should support single parents and assist them in the challenges they face. She explains that a practitioner can promote inclusive leadership in an Early Years setting by engaging in conversation with the parents and finding out what they can do to help. This supports Brown (2019) views that an inclusive leader understands that some people face more challenges than others and step up to support them. However, Ozmen *et al* (2016) may suggest a barrier to this could be a lack of trust from the single parent to the practitioner due to stigma, but this can be overcome by building the relationship overtime.

Cleaver (2018) explains that single parents are busy and sometimes will not be able to make events or meetings due to working or looking after other children. Cusumano

(2020) explains that inclusive leadership could be promoted here by offering the parent different methods of communication like a phone call or video call if they cannot be there in person. This will enable the parent to feel included and that they are still part of the setting even if they could not physically be there. However, Dominguez (2021) may disagree with virtual meetings and say in-person meetings allow physical interaction and create more trusting relationships which is good for inclusion, so it may be beneficial for the practitioner to facilitate both in personal and virtual meetings to maximise inclusion. Cleaver (2018) also adds that practitioners can promote inclusive leadership by arranging meetings and events a good while before they happen. Single parents are often juggling work, childcare and other commitments so giving them plenty of time to plan can ensure their attendance and promote inclusion.

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