

Section 1

This section aims to look at inclusive leadership and its importance in the early years setting. As stated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) all children have the right to an education no matter the child's race, gender, culture, or disability (UNICEF, 2019). Inclusion is interpreted differently by everyone (Nutbrown, 1998-2022). However, according to Nutbrown (1998-2022) in the early years sector, inclusion is understood as 'everyone belongs' beginning with the children, parents and anyone involved with the setting. Hallet (2016) refers to inclusion as a 'philosophical stance' of moral principles and values relating to fairness and shared justice for all.

Leadership is a process in which the practitioner can personally develop their learning and growth in making improvements within the setting to make it inclusive for everyone (Hallet, 2014, pg. 17), applying to the practices, attitudes and values that are presented (Nutbrown, 1998-2022) by the settings leadership management and staff members. Ferdman (2021) makes a clear point that having the ability to be inclusive towards everyone is critical in this generation's leadership skills. As it is important for leaders to be diverse and understand different ways in which they can enhance opportunities for all to feel included, valued (Ferdman, 2021, pg. 38, Booysen, 2021, cited in Ferdman 2021, and Childhood Education International, 2021) and a sense of belongingness while maintaining their uniqueness during activities and challenges (Randell *et al.*, 2018). Dr Fawzia Reza (2021) suggests that, ensuring a nurturing environment can embrace diversity and inclusion while involving consideration in all features of the settings policies and set curriculum, that will create an inclusive environment for all children, families, staff, and communities (Childhood Education International, 2021).

Rodd (2013) states that, leaders who work in the early years can influence and encourage the behaviours of others while accomplishing set goals and outcomes (Hallet, 2014, pg. 16). There are three features in which can affect a leadership situation, and these are the leader itself, the people involved and the task (Billie and Ritchie, 1999, pg. 27). Billie and Ritchie (1999) suggest that each one of these can provide different opportunities on how the situation can be developed. On the other

hand, Newstead and Isles-Buck (2019) point out that, setting leaders may find it difficult to identify and understand everything about all the different backgrounds and cultures of children and staff they work with within the setting. Asking is important as it will encourage other practitioners and even the children to become involved allowing them to learn from one another rather than assuming and developing prejudgment towards someone who may seem different to them (Nutbrown and Isles-Buck, 2019, pg. 65).

Scenario

This scenario relates to a 5-year-old girl named Lila whose mum is from Poland and dad from Wales. Lila lives with her mum who has parental responsibility of herself and her younger brother. Her parents have just recently gone through a separation which has been difficult on Lila. Mum has little English and has shown nervousness around staff members and other parents and leaves as soon as Lila has been picked up from school. Mum does not engage in speaking to practitioners and will normally try to avoid speaking to them at the end of the day. Practitioners have noticed a slight regression to Lila's development and are worried as she has also become withdrawn and isolated from other children and will now normally play on her own avoiding any contact with others.

Child

As presented in the scenario it is evident that inclusive leadership is not being effectively applied to benefit the child. Presence (2020) and Mental health Foundation (2022) suggest that, when children like Lila become withdrawn and isolated, they can begin to develop feelings of loneliness which can not only lead to stress for the child in their early life but also future wise. Children who feel isolated from others can become more withdrawn with time especially during group and class activities (Rubin *et al.*, 2009). For effective inclusive leadership to happen, social interactions will need to occur as they are beneficial to every child's learning development (Presence, 2020). The way in which the brain develops can also be impacted as her emotional and cognitive development will be affected (Almeida *et al.*, 2021 and Gotlib, 2018) due to the stress levels and lack of social interactions and relationships (Presence, 2020). However, it is important for leaders to ensure an inclusive environment, as it creates

a harmless, non-judgemental atmosphere for children to feel safe and secure (Centre for child counselling, no date) minimising the risk of social withdrawal happening again.

Being the child, whose parents have recently divorced can need some adjustment within the settings environment (Landis, 1960) as the family separation can add distress to the already adverse experience for the child (Gotlib, 2018). Children depend on their parents to effectively develop their emotional well-being with a supportive and nurturing relationship (Gotlib, 2018) which can be difficult for Lila due to her recent parent separation. As the practitioner or setting leader it is important to ensure that consideration is measured when speaking to children ensuring that they understand that they can talk about these feelings without being judged, as it is okay for them to feel a certain way (NSPCC, 2022) regarding the situation as all children have the right to be heard (Murray, 2019). Inclusive leadership involves practitioners being approachable with open body language and facial gestures (Brouet, no date), creating a sense of ease for children to talk too. Adejokun (2020) explains that children feel valued and important when they are listened to developing and building their self-esteem. As stated by Article 12 of the UNCRC all children have the right to express themselves and their views while being listened too and taken seriously (UNICEF, 2019).

Maryville university (2022) explains that children's cultural background defines who they are, with unique influences of beliefs, food, language, and religion. Evely and Ganim (2011) explain that children who have English as an additional language can develop anxiety and worries when communicating with practitioners and other children as they may be worried about their language ability. Dunn (2019) suggests that for inclusive leadership to be effective the settings environment needs to be diverse ensuring that children from all backgrounds have the support they require. Pacey (2009-2022) points out that due to differences in culture some children like Lila may grow up with more than one language making it harder to build interacting relationships with practitioners and form friendships with other children (Evely and Ganim, 2011). Ferdman (2021) indicates that, for efficient inclusive leadership to occur correctly, leaders need to ensure that relationships are being created. Bortini *et al.* (2018) states that creating this relationship with children like Lila will build a foundation where

inclusive leadership can create a safe working environment where all children can speak freely.

Parent

It is evident that Lila's mother is not receiving the advantages of inclusive leadership. As explained by Barclay (2018) by the mother appearing to be nervous, showing signs of alienation around other parents, can be a sign of feeling left out from conversations while at the same time having difficulty in approaching and speaking to them. It is essential to take into consideration what the mother has gone through and how the separation may have affected her, as stated by Danieri *et al.* (2020) certain behaviours may indicate guilt and embarrassment when feeling like something has been done wrong making it difficult for the mum to build social relationships. Danieri *et al.* (2020) indicates that if others can realise signs of remorse and shame in other people it can ease cooperation and public interactions within a social environment. However, this did not happen to Lila's mother within the setting, this can be due to mum's cultural values and how she may view that talking about her feelings can lead to further pain on the situation (Gopalkrishnan, 2018). Lekh (2022) states that, for an inclusive environment to take place showing respect to others background and culture is essential in creating an understanding atmosphere within the society.

Due to the mother having English as a second language it can cause barriers to arise preventing effective communication from happening (Akuzum *et al.*, 2016, pg. 30). However, a barrier to efficient communication not happening may arise for Lila's child development as presented by Kummer (2020) communication struggles between the mother and practitioners can impact the outcomes of the child and addressing this will benefit both the child and the family (Freud, no date). On some occasions parents will not share their own difficulties with practitioners as they may fear it will impact the way in which their child will be viewed by others (Freud, no date). For effective inclusive leadership to transpire practitioners will need to ensure that they are approachable to parents, ensuring they are respectful (Lekh, 2022 and Freud, no date) and showing concern for both the family and child. As presented by Roche *et al.* (2005) many parents will look for reassurance in their child's development as well as a form of reassurance for them indicating that they are doing a good job. Therefore, this can also be the case for Lila's mother to ensure she is dealing with the situation correctly.

Akuzum (2016) explain that, having cultural differences with a setting can make it difficult to interact with practitioners as different values and perspectives of own's culture may influence opinions and feeling towards the situation. Lekh (2022) implies that for inclusive leadership to occur it is essential for the setting to ensure that they understand and respect the abilities and values of all cultures and backgrounds. Dr Fawzia Reza also explains that inclusive leadership should include environments that engage, accept, and encourage different views and opinions from all. In this scenario the mother should be allowed to share views, feeling and opinions with the practitioners without feeling any judgement (Childhood education international, 2021). For inclusive leadership to take place creating a comfortable environment for parent's is key as some may struggle to ask for support or reassurance (Roche *et al.*, 2005) to make sure they are dealing with certain situations correctly.

Professionals

Following the scenario, it is clear that practitioners are not effectively implementing inclusive leadership for everyone within the settings environment as the mother does not engage in communicating with practitioners. As indicated by O'sullivan (2015) the way in which practitioners present themselves to parents, other professionals and children is significant as it will impact the way in which people will respond to them. As a cause of this not happening, the practitioners along with the settings leader may need to look at what changes can be made so that this can become effective in the setting. For inclusive leadership to take place, O'sullivan (2015) and Baker *et al.* (2016) both state that, practitioners need to reflect on the audience they are trying to communicate with, with consideration on how the message will be relayed to ensure that it is not misunderstood. This should be considered when referring to the scenario as the mother may interpret things differently due to a language barrier (Gratis, 2022b).

As stated by BETA (no date) working with parents is essential to children's learning and being able to offer opportunities for them to become involved with their child's development helps to eliminate barriers between the practitioner and parent when working together. However, this can pose as a challenge for parents who have English as an additional language (Evans, 2020). It is evident that this happens in the scenario as Lila's mother is from Poland making English her second language. Gratis (2022b) describes how settings can be enlisted with a qualified translator if needing to

communicate with parents, meeting the needs of all involved. Having an outside agency working collaboratively with the setting will have a beneficial impact on the knowledge of practitioners developing their skills in this area (Martin, 2017, pg. 157), for example, practitioners can learn basic words and phrases to communicate with the mother without having the translator present. Pen Green Centre (2022) states that working with other agencies allows professionals to share a common goal and vision to effectively support the needs of all families.

Following the scenario, all staff members and practitioners need to effectively work together to best fit Lila and her mother's needs. As stated by Early Years Matters (2022) for effective partnership to work between each practitioner, all contributions and professional opinions need to be valued equally. Having appropriate continuous development between practitioners is key when effectively working with parents and children as they can plan and support families when challenges may arise (Education Scotland Foghlam Alba, 2019). As presented by Kimberley (2017) conflicts and disagreements between practitioners may happen causing an impact on children's learning and the effectiveness of practice presented. Bortini *et al.* (2018) states that, for inclusive leadership to be successful leaders should focus on creating an inclusive environment where relationships between each practitioner is promoted minimising the risk of exclusion between staff occurring.

Communities

For a setting to be inclusive they need to locate themselves within the community (Gibson and Blandford, 2005, pg. 33). Gibson and Blandford (2005) indicate that, leaders have the duty to understand the setting is a society where different beliefs, cultures and values will be displayed. As presented by the Welsh Government (2016) developing community partnerships is important to create a support system that can reinforce the setting. Being able to work with other businesses and organizations outside the work environment will enrich the curriculum and the opportunities that can be offered for each individual child and their families (Welsh Government, 2016). Hence, this links to the scenario as it creates opportunities for the family to gain the support needed. As explained by Reina *et al.* (2013) children will show an increase in their educational development when they feel supported by the setting, families, and the community.

In the scenario it is apparent that the family is not receiving the advantages of inclusive leadership within the settings environment as the mother is not invited to join conversations. Bardsley (2013) explains that single parents can suffer direct stigmatisation and unfair stereotyping from the community leading to a decline in their self-esteem with a difficulty in seeking help and conversations. According to Kim and Kim, 2020 single mothers are socially more vulnerable, as they are aware of the stereotypes around being a single parent, as indicated by Morris (2020) this can make them feel ashamed. Agnafors *et al.* (2019) explains that parental vulnerability will not only impact the well-being of the mother but also the development and well-being of the children. This can be seen in the scenario as Lila's mother leaves the environment of the setting as quickly as possible. For inclusive leadership to take place practitioners need to create an inclusive environment where parents feel welcomed and supported by the setting to improve and support their children (Lekh, 2022, and Estyn, 2020, pg. 9).

To create an inclusive environment for everyone within the community an open-door policy can be considered. This can benefit situations in comparison to the scenario as families can openly communicate with the setting building a sense of security and safety (Kelton and Corral, 2021). Stevens (2003) suggests that an open-door policy can promote effective partnerships between the parents and the setting and can work together to resolve any problems that may arise within the school environment or at home. Creating an open-door policy within the setting allows managers to become more approachable and involved (Morris, 2021) with the parents and community showing inclusive leadership. Therefore, this can also be the case for Lila, her family, or the other parents to openly approach the setting about any concerns or worries.

Moving forward

Additionally, an important factor to consider going forward is providing children and families with effective interactions where they can effectively communicate and converse with each other, where practitioners can listen and verbally communicate with children and families effectively to support their development. Regular open conversations with the mother where reassurance is provided should also be put into place by the staff, to allow the mother to share any worries or concerns either about the child or her situation at home building an effective relationship.

Section 2

As defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2022) a policy is a variation of plans and ideas of what needs to be done in 'situations that have been agreed officially by a group of people or organisation'. Fitzgerald and kay (2013) and Executive compass (2013) note that, policies are a legislative, clear, and coherent way of aiming to achieve a final objective that is understood by all staff members. Similarly, Viennet and Pont (2017) explains that policy implementations in education are a complex growing process that involve a variation of stakeholders to create. An effective policy is crucial to understand and clarify if any changes need to occur to avoid any failure if not well directed (Viennet and Pont, 2017, pg. 8). However, as stated by Viennet and Pont (2017) policymakers who are at the macro level of implementing policies can struggle to understand the required process when adapting a policy in an educational environment, due to not effectively engaging with those in the micro level. This section is going to critically evaluate a professional guidance, focusing on certain aspects of the Inclusion and Pupil Support document (Welsh Government, 2016).

Welsh Government (2016) argues the significance of an inclusive educational environment for children. In section 1.1.1 of the Inclusion and Pupil Support document it focuses on the way in which settings are adapted to benefit the individual needs of all children while valuing their development (Welsh Government, 2016). Lee (2021) explains that an inclusive environment is important as it aims to remove any obstacles to education to support the achievement of children while guaranteeing practitioners values are not compromised. The Inclusion and Pupil Support document also requires that settings have an inclusive curriculum that develops the teaching and other staff members attentiveness's of and inclusive and equal learning environment (Welsh Government, 2016, pg. 2). Having an equal learning setting creates a fostering atmosphere where all children can be provided with the opportunities to learn about acceptance and understanding of others they may view as different (Star bright books, no date).

However, referring to the section above of the Inclusion and Pupil support document. There needs to be a variation of language and phrases that promote equality and diversity as directed by the Equality Act 2010 (Government Legal Department, no

date). Section 1.1.1 (pg. 2) onwards uses words like 'all' which is referred as in every person, without exception (Merriam-Webster, 2022), signifying to all within the setting environment. In dissimilarity this is not always the case, as presented by Rohwerder (2015) environments may not always be adapted to best fit a child who has additional learning needs which can create a barrier for children to participate and feel included in certain activities. As explained by Murray (2019) this can happen as some practitioners may struggle to understand what some children may be trying to explain due to communication barriers as some children may not use oral language to express their voice. This can also occur due to a concern over cost and inadequate funding when effectively implementing guidance's in practise (Rohwerder, 2015) allowing inclusion to become a barrier for all children.

Welsh Government (2016) also discusses the importance of the voice of every child and how effective inclusion can be essential for children's involvement in planning and decision-making when it comes to their own learning in section 2.1.5 of the Inclusion and Pupil Support document. Kimberley (2015) explains the importance of giving children a voice as they will feel valued and respected positively impacting the way in which they learn, while critically thinking and actively learning with the environment around them, developing their confidence and knowledge. Likewise, as stated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2019) all children have the right to be heard especially in decisions that impact them. Section 1.3.9 of the Inclusion and Pupil Support document discusses the importance of all children having access to these rights, specified by the UNCRC (Welsh Government, 2016) as it is their basic human right.

However, in the Inclusion and Pupil Support document, each section is worded contrastingly to one another and may be interpreted differently by all practitioners as communication barriers exist due to ways in which everyone perceives the world around them (Impact factory, no date). For example, section 2.1.5 (pg. 9) of the Inclusion and Pupil Support document the phrase 'all children should be involved in making decisions, right from the start of their education', can be interpreted differently by all practitioners (Imperial College London, 2022). Impact factory (no date) and Gratis (2022a) explains that each individuals' cognitive biases can influence the way in which certain words and phrases can be interpreted affecting the practice of

professionals and the way in which they can influence others. In an inclusive work environment other's opinions can also be influenced due to a higher authorities biased opinion and interpretation of certain situations due to own experiences (Gratis, 2022a) resulting in an environment that does not effectively support children's individual needs.

Furthermore, it is evident that an inclusive environment is important for all children with the right to be heard as it will effectively impact their learning. However, considering the evidence provided professional guidance's need to take into consideration how certain language and words may be interpreted in practise by everyone, to ensure that an effective learning environment is offered to all children.

Section 3

What is the importance of an inclusive environment for men in the early years setting and what barriers may arise?

As presented by Davies (2009-2019) settings need to care about being inclusive and open towards hiring both men and women in the early year's environment. When working with children it is normally viewed as a female profession due to woman's caring and maternal nature (Kelly, 2016), however, men have just as much to offer, as they can act as a positive role model to children, especially boys who have little to no contact with male relatives (Baker, 2012, Parenta, 2018, Kelly, 2016 and Moorhouse 2022). Both male and female practitioners care for children in different ways and by both roles working alongside each other can benefit children's development differently (Moloney, 2022). Having gender-balanced work environment will also benefit in providing the children with a variety of experience, skills and teaching styles that will be effective for the learning and development (Croner-I, 2020).

However, due to early years settings being mainly female dominated can discourage male practitioners from wanting to work in that environment, as they may worry about feeling isolated in being the only male practitioner within the setting or even during lunch hours (Moorhouse, 2022). Men can also worry about working within the childcare environment as they are perceived to be more likely to abuse children either physically or sexually (Sczesny *et al.*, 2021 and Bhardwa, 2013) even though this is not always the case. This can lead to an influenced social perception of men who are interested working with children of all ages. As stated by Discover society (2020) some male practitioners also see themselves as the 'bread winner' of the family and the pay in early years can be a concern when supporting their family.

Davies (2009-2019) states, it is essential for children to grow up viewing both men and women equally in an environment where they are looked after and taught creating a nurturing environment (Discover Society, 2020). Male practitioners can help challenge stereotypes concerning certain occupations, activities and even household responsibilities (Parenta, 2018). If children are offered the opportunity to be aware of different genders within childcare settings it can influence the acceptance of certain

roles within the society as it creates a diverse workforce that provides children with an open mind of the world around them (Kelly, 2016 and Moloney, 2012). Male practitioners also bring a more active environment to play and learning, effectively interacting with children in the early years (Kelly, 2018 and Moorhouse, 2022). A study was conducted to see the percentage of parental attitudes towards males working in the early years sector (Baker, 2012) it was found that 97.9 percent of parents both mothers and fathers were happy for a male to work with their child.

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