

Within this portfolio there will be a discussion on catalytic leadership. There will be coverage on what catalytic leadership is and what a catalytic leader does for early years and the community. It will also be going over the sociological issues children face, along with the skills and challenges of being a catalytic leader within early years settings. Finally, this portfolio will discuss how to become a positive catalytic leader within the early years and how practitioners use these skills to provide a better quality of service and care for children, families and communities who use their services.

Families, children, and communities face sociological issues that impact their lives however, there are leaders who can help them improve and change for the better, (Grantham-Caston and DiCarlo, 2021). Catalytic leaders are the ones who face these issues as Popli and Rizvi (2017) explain catalytic leadership is seen as someone or a group of people who can inspire and provide better ways of working to improve the quality of communities and families. Furthermore, Horowitz (2013) agrees explaining, catalytic leaders are seen as confident and supportive leaders who inspire action in the communities around them. Moreover, Van Eeden (2015) agrees stating, they tackle sociological issues communities face by identifying the barriers and challenges of the issues, and overcome them with support and services thus, improve the quality of life within the communities. In addition, Matthews and Brueggemann (2015) state however, catalytic leadership is not seen as leadership, moreover a skill that any person can learn by understanding sociological issues. Matthews and Brueggemann (2015) continue, they show a care, compassion and willingness to change and improve the issues thus changing communities thinking for an improvement on quality of life.

Catalytic leadership plays an important part of improving quality of communities as Hackman and Johnson (2013) discuss, catalyst people offer support and services to those who need it for which is more likely to have people to change things for the better and to provide a better chance for people who are more willing to change. Furthermore, Parker (2020) agrees explaining, catalyst leaders see potential in all people around them, as they encourage people to try new things out of their comfort zone and change their way of thinking and learning. Moreover, Parker (2020a) states, with positive encouragement on skills and abilities which they do not see in themselves, thus giving them the confidence to change and improve their quality of life. In addition, DeHaas *et al.* (2019) agrees explaining, they seek out and solve

sociological issues that they deem to be a problem that needs to be proved with support and services, resulting in a better quality for the community and workplaces. Equally, Silcox and MacNeill (2017) concur stating, catalytic leadership aims to not only prove a better way of thinking but also gives learning opportunities for everyone. Silcox and MacNeill (2017) continue, however it also allows for other leaders to understand what it means to be a catalytic leader thus, providing future leaders with the right skills and mindset on how to be a good catalyst leader.

Being a catalyst leader plays an important part of change as they are someone who leads for change in issues within the community (Toendepi, 2021). Catalyst leaders work step by step on issues that can be changed for the better as Sims *et al.* (2015) explain, their leadership is more about forward looking, meaning they see issues that can help and progress forward for the community to have a better quality of life. In addition, Lalonde (2017) states however, they may encounter resistance who do not want change or there may be an obstacle, so they must find another way to tackle it and push through their resistances for a better chance of change.

Catalyst leadership skills are being used from practitioners within early years settings and leadership is seen differently in early years as Clark (2012) explains, practitioners will be using these types of skills to provide a sense of direction for others, giving them inspiration to change things for a better quality of service and care. In addition, Nicholson and Maniates (2016) concur stating, all practitioners will have the skill of problem solving by approaching issues within the setting and to work together to come up with a solution to solve any issues. Furthermore, Cameron and Miller (2016) agree stating, all practitioners in early years settings will have a positive partnership with both parents and children, as families use their services and must understand the needs of both child and parent thus, implementing their needs within the setting.

Being a catalytic leader is not based around leadership, it is based around a certain set of skills an individual or group may have which will help support and change things for a better quality of life (Manley and Titchen, 2017). Catalyst leaders are seen differently from other leaders as Kristensen *et al.* (2016) state, they are seen energetic and supportive towards the people and community as they are helping to change things for the better. Moreover, Bøe and Hognestad (2019) concur explaining, they are sustaining shared thinking leaders who ignite inspiration to the people around them

with their thoughts and ideas on improving their quality within the community. Furthermore, New (2019) agrees explaining, most catalyst leaders already can be inspirational to people within the community, as they understand how to motivate others into changing their way of thinking for the better.

An important skill for leaders is to be honest with people as Sibthorp and Richmond (2015) explain, leaders need to be truthful on their progress and barriers on issues, as people will be more appreciative and gain a better insight on things, even if it is critical feedback. Moreover, Lomenick (2013) explains, this will give leaders more people leaning towards their ideas of change for the community as they are being honest with them and listening to their positive feedback on what support and services they are being provided with. Leaders can also provide a safe space for learning opportunities as Booth (2019) explains, these safe areas can be used for families for both parties to come together and learn about the changes and to reflect on their own issues to see how they can change through learning and support. Additionally, Snepvangers and Rourke (2020) agree explaining, leaders will also provide a safe space with equality and diversity and will not tolerate discrimination as everyone is welcome, thus being liberating and inspirational for the community.

Catalyst leaders need to understand what motivates people within the community as Bolden and Kirk (2012) explain, to understand what changes are required, leaders must understand the mindset and personality of families, and to understand the community they come from as everyone is different. Furthermore, Davenport and Mattson (2018) concur stating, a leader who can understand the community by listening and understanding their struggles and issues are helping by promoting inspiration and spark action with everyone.

However, there may be some challenges of being a catalytic leader in an early year's sector. One of these barriers could be potential resistance of people who do not agree with the leader as Jacob *et al.* (2020) states, other staff members may not have the same mind set of a catalyst leader so they may need to have more time convincing. Moreover, Lashlee (2020) agrees with this explaining, the leaders may be challenged with resistance. By getting people to listen and to take action with their ideas may be more difficulty as they may not understand or agree with their ideas. Another challenge could be the leader may suffer with burn out as Van Eeden (2015) discusses, catalyst

leaders may not get much of a break when they are working on time consuming issues that needs a lot of support, funding and research, so there is no time to quiet down and recharge. Moreover, Neck *et al.* (2013) agree stating, they could be working on these issues with little support, and they tend to work too hard thus, leaders suffer with physical and emotional burn out resulting in staff struggling with overcoming the challenges without their guidance of the leader. There is also this issue with leaders of not being able to choose one matter to focus on as Meijerink and Stiller (2013) explain, a catalyst leader tends to struggle on what to focus on first, as they may have multiple ideas. In addition, Catalyst Constellations (2020) explain, catalyst leaders end up struggling to pick on an idea to invest in as other ideas seem to have better outcomes, so they struggling to fixate on one idea.

All practitioners in the early years sector need support and guidance from a leader and a team to face the demands and challenges of working in the setting (McDowall, Clark and Murray, 2012). To help prepare practitioners for challenges and barriers, could be to have team meetings as Murray and Clark (2013) state, this could bring staff together to discuss any issues that are occurring within the setting to see how they can resolve them. Furthermore, Hanno, Jones and Lesaux (2021) concur stating, this gives each staff member a chance to speak with the leader about issues and ideas on the setting whereby, the leader can suggest solutions to help change things for the better, thus building on teamwork and bonding with their staff.

Leaders and staff must always have a good partnership with parents as Meyer, Migala and Plichta (2016) explain, leaders, staff and parents will be working together to help their children develop and learn so they must understand what support and needs the child may need. In addition, Weber (2021) agrees explaining, for staff and leaders to understand the needs for the child, they will implement support and services required to meet the child's needs, thus building a better bond with the parents whereby, they will feel happier returning to the setting knowing their child is in a safe and secure area. Staff and leaders can also reflect on their leadership and practice as Vandenbroeck, Urban and Peeters (2016) discuss, reflecting on past experiences of both practice and leadership is important to see if there are any improvements needed. Moreover, New (2019a) agrees with this explaining, this will help both parties to have an insight on what they need to improve on and to adapt or learn new skills to improve the quality of the setting and services and to also see new opportunities for improving leadership.

Within this section there will be a discussion on children's rights and children commissioners based on laws and policies based around the rights of the child. There will also be an in depth look at child's laws in Wales and how they came about, including how children were treated years ago before the introduction of children's rights and why were they changed and implemented into law. Finally, there will be a discussion on children commission and how they have had a positive impact on children rights and how children are now being treated today.

Looking at the brief history of childhood, there was a significant difference on how children were perceived back then vs now (Lascarides and Hinitz, 2013). Early childhood plays an important part in children's rights as Bruce (2012) explains, early childhood is seen as a state of time of infancy to eight years old, during this time children develop skills. Furthermore, Heywood (2017) agrees with this explaining, children will also be learning from experiences from their environments and community to help them develop their brain growth and development. However, Zeanah and Humphreys (2018) have a different opinion explaining, if the child experiences any negative effects such as, abuse or neglect this will have a negative impact on their brain growth and development. In addition, Archard (2014) agrees explaining, this is the reason why children's rights were introduced to protect children and to give them the rights to learning, expressing opinions and quality of life.

Children all around the world are all safeguarded and protected by the children's rights as Freeman and Veerman (2021) explain, children rights are a list of different rights that are based around what children have rights too. Moreover, Liebel (2012) states, children's rights also include the needs for protection and take action towards abuse and neglect from parents or carers; to have the rights to nutritional food and drink and health care; rights to have access to learning and play areas. Furthermore, Jones and Welch (2018) agree stating, it also protects children's identity from discrimination based around the child's culture and how they may perceive their personality and identity within the world. Children's rights play an important part within a child's childhood and development as Ferguson, (2013) explains, children are only just starting to learn about the world around them and they need protecting from potential dangers and harm they may experience in their life, so these rights are here to protect children from these negative experiences. Additionally, Archard (2012) agrees with this explaining, children should not be experiencing abuse and neglect

from their parents or carer or experiencing discrimination for who they are as a person, so these rights have been made to protect children from dangers and harm that can have a last impact on their lives.

Looking back at the brief history of children, children in the past were not treated with respect or seen as children, not as we see and treat children now, (Kirby, 2013). Children in the past were not seen as human as Tuttle (2021) explains, back in the 1830s, children had no human rights and were seen more as workers rather than children, as they were used for cleaning chimneys and factories working very long and hard, working hours with little or no breaks, resulting in server health issues and child deaths. Moreover, Franco (2018) agrees stating, there was also an overflow of homeless children that impacted orphanages in the UK, so most children had no choice but to be living on the streets, where they were left to starve and die with no one to protect them from harm. Furthermore, Moss, Wildman and Lamont (2021) Concur stating, children who were also living in poverty were unable to go to school due to families needing to pay for their children to attend therefore, children spent little to no time in school. In addition, Levitas (2012) agrees stating, children would have no choice but to work to provide for their families, children had no education and no support services for families in poverty.

Even in this time period, children were only seen as workers with no human rights however, there was one person who started a campaign to children's rights. There was one person who believed that children were seen more than just workers and human rights for children as Kerber-Ganse (2015) explains, Eglantine Jebb was the first woman who founded the foundation charity of Save The Children in 1919 and this was the start of childrens human rights. Furthermore, Mayall (2018) agrees explaining, in 1918 at the end of the first world war, Jebb noticed there were a lot more homeless children who were suffering from the aftereffects of the war and there were no laws protecting them. Jebb started to fight for children's rights by rallying others to join her cause thus the creation of her organisations a year later. Moreover, Freemantle (2012) states, after a few years, in 1924 she presented the very first Declaration of the Rights of the Child to the leaders from all around the world. This document stated what she believed was human rights and what rights that relate to children all around the world. Jebb's catalytic leadership resulted in the creation of United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (Bengtsson, 2017). It took a while for the full documentation of

children's right to be released as ICO (no date) states, in 1989, the very first child's human rights were enacted, with a wide variety of different types of rights relating to children. This drafted document pushed the laws of the importance and acknowledgment of the children's human rights around the world. In Addition, Save The Children (no date) agrees with this explaining, this drafted document was an inspiration and empowerment for children's rights which resulted in being ratified around the world, resulting in 196 countries making it official for children rights including the UK in 1991.

Looking at the 21st century there is a significant difference in the way children are perceived. Things began to change for children rights in the 19th century as Flegel (2016) states, the attitude towards children started to change in the 19th century, children were seen more as children rather than labour workers. Furthermore, Griffin (2020) agrees explaining, people understood that the health and wellbeing of children must be protected from potential abuse and harm and children needed to be provided to provide with healthcare and support. In addition, Jones and Welch (2018) state, children were also given the rights to learning, rest and play and were provided with nutritional food and drink. Moreover, Pearson (2018) explains, children with Additional Learning Needs were also being provided with the right support and services to support their needs.

These changes with children's rights also came with new changes in policies and procedures. One of these polices related to children's rights is The Children's Act 1989 as Nursery world (2022) explains, this act is about the protection of children from abuse and neglect, giving them the right to healthcare for their health and wellbeing. The act is an important part towards children's rights as Virtual College (2021) explains, it centres around the welfare and care of all children within their families and there should be support systems for families who are struggling in supporting their child welfare by listening to the child's wishes and feelings. The Welsh Government also implemented children's rights in Wales as Welsh Government (2019) states, in 2004, the Welsh government official implemented the UNCRC within all early years settings as they were similar to their policies and procedures, relating to the protection and care of children and young people. Moreover, Williams (2013) states, following into 2011, the Welsh Government took further steps and made the UNCRC law in Wales, this law was called the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure

2011. This new law in Wales represent the UNCRC children's rights as Welsh Parliament (2020) explains, reviewing over the UNCRC of childrens rights this new law helps Welsh minsters to review and develop policies and legislation relating to children and young people's better quality of life in Wales.

There are certain leaders who promote and take action on children's rights across the UK. These leaders are known as Children Commissioners, as Children Commissioners for Wales (2022) explains, these Commissioners are a national organisation with statutory catalyst leadership and set out new policies and procedures relating to children's rights. Furthermore, Durrant, Rutter and Jones (2021) explain, the commissioners have a duty of care to promote and protect the rights of all children and young people within the UK. Commissioners play an important role in children's rights in Wales as Appelbee (2014) explains, Commissioners in Wales ensure all children and young people's rights are promoted correctly and that the Welsh Government policies and procedures are also beneficial for children and young people's rights. The role of a children's commissioners is more about making children's rights better as Crawley *et al.* (2020) explain, children commissioners review the rights, views and interests of all children and young people which will help build new policies and procedures. Moreover, Lynch (2019) agrees with this stating, their role is more than just looking into the rights of children and young people, they also look into the children who are vulnerable such as, they are unsafe or do not have a voice. Furthermore, Rees (2013) agrees explaining, they also value the child's voice as children may find it hard for people to hear them or have their views known, so the commissioners are there to guide and listen to all children and young people. What these commissioners have done is to bring more value and rights to children and young people as De Wilde and Vanobbergen (2020) explain, the primary focus for Children Commissioner's is to support children and young people who are vulnerable and in need of help, as they are facing difficult challenges. In addition, Marshall and Williams (2013) agree stating, Children Commissioners learn from the challenges children and young people face within the world and see how there needs to be change in policy or children rights for a better quality of life for both children and young people.

Looking more in-depth on a children commissioner, there will be an analysis of one named, Sally Holland. Sally Holland plays an important role in children's rights and changes as Children Commissioner for Wales (2022a) explains, when Sally Holland

started as a Children's Commissioner she began her fight for children rights by promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and Anti Bullying Strategies. There are some steps to take to help young people and children who may have mental health and wellbeing issues as Children's Commissioners of Wales (No date) explains, it discusses how children and young people are under a lot of pressure with schoolwork and their own identify and something needed to be done. What they needed was someone to listen to them and a group session was suggested to help with these issues. Sally Holland has also focused on anti-bullying strategies as Children Commissioner for Wales (2022b) explains, Holland suggests that the Welsh Government should inform all schools to record all incidents and types of bullying, this would narrow down what the bullying is and schools should inform children about the types of bullying and how to handle them.

Within this section there will be a discussion on a chosen sociological topic that has an impact on a child's life with an in-depth look at what sociological issues are and why and how they impact children's lives. The chosen topic discussed is Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). There will be an in-depth look into this topic on how it affects the child's life and how early intervention can have a positive impact for both child and families within the community.

For catalyst leaders to help the community they need to understand what issues they are facing. Problems that children and families could be facing are known as sociological issues as Williams, Sloan and Brookfield (2017) explain, there are certain types of issues that are making it difficult for children or families to overcome, due to barriers or lack of support and services they are not being provided with. In addition, Glicken (2011) agrees explaining, many of these issues can have an impact on the child or families' lives as the barriers of these issues could have an issue of them reaching and achieving their full potential in life. Moreover, Lawler (2015) concurs explaining, sometimes sociological issues could not just be one issue, it is usually a group of issues that are causing problems for both the child and their families to overcome if they are not provided with the right support and services. For example, a sociological issue is poverty as Shildrick and Rucell (2015) explain, poverty has a massive impact on children and families due to living in deprived and unsafe and the lack of support services for struggling families who are in need of help for their children. Shildrick and Rucell (2015) continue, they will also have a low income resulting in a lack of food and drink whereby they may need to rely on food banks and need to budget their money. This is when the role of a catalyst leader comes in, to take action on these issues. It is very important for catalyst leaders to understand the sociological issues as Manley and Titchen (2017) explain, leaders will need to at first research and collect data of the issue to gain a better understanding of what support and services are required to help them solve the problem and change it for the better. Moreover, Stoll *et al.* (2015) agree stating, it also helps the leaders to guide people to approach issues using different ways of thinking, thus developing critical thinking skills which would be beneficial for any future issues that may occur.

Some children and young people may have experienced ACEs at some point as Boullier and Blair (2018) explain, Adverse Childhood experiences are more seen in the mental wellbeing of children and young people who have witnessed or have

experienced a minor or severe trauma. In addition, Sacks, Murphey and Moore (2014) agree explaining, children and young people can experience these from between the ages of birth to 17 years old. These types of traumas can happen once or multiply times thus, straining their mental wellbeing. The main causes of ACEs are the experiences of trauma as Kalmakis and Chandler (2015) state, trauma is caused by children growing up with violence such as, abuse from family members. Moreover, Bellis *et al.* (2014) concur explaining, the toxic behaviour from ACEs can cause a change in the child or young person's brain development and how the body responds to stress. In addition, Straatmann *et al.* (2020) agrees with this stating, with no interventions for Aces, this will have a lasting impact on children and young people which will cause chronic illness and mental behavioural issues into adulthood.

There are some warning signs of Aces as Albaek *et al.* (2018) explain, children and young people can both show different warning signs and one of these signs could be they are suffering from depression and anxiety disorder, which will show in mood swings which could also be signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, Haynes *et al.* (2020) concur explaining, other signs of ACEs are showing signs of destructive behaviour, or masking their trauma such as with eating disorders, as they feel something is in their control, their own weight image. Furthermore, Hessels *et al.* (2018) agree with this explaining, some people may misuse drugs and alcohol to mask the trauma they have endured, and they may also be sexually active early, resulting in early pregnancy. Unfortunately, if there are no early interventions or support for ACEs it is most likely to lead to a suicide attempt or achieving suicide (Kiani, Ramezani and Atadokht 2019).

Early interventions are the first step in help children and young people who have ACEs. Early intervention for ACEs is required as Melville (2017) explains, they will need to build a support system for the child or young person thus, helping them reduce their aggressive behaviour towards themselves or other members of their families. Another type of intervention could be a support system for families as Marie-Mitchell, Studer and O'Connor (2016) explain, interventions can guide families to support services that teach communities about the different types of supports and services for families who are having financial or mental wellbeing issues thus, at risk of developing ACEs. Moreover, Franke (2014) agrees stating, intervention can help children and young

people access programmes to help them develop skills on how to handle stress situations and resolve conflicts, thus reducing violence.

Early intervention is an important part of providing the best support and services for children and young people as Melville (2017) continues, it can help them develop and learn life skills they need to live a happy and healthy life. Moreover, Crouch *et al.* (2019) concur stating, it can provide a better quality of life for a child or young person's home life, and it can also build a bond with families. Furthermore, Su *et al.* (2015) are also in agreement stating, it can also give them a chance to have an education as they are provided with the right support thus, boosting their confidence, wellbeing and resilience.

There are some strategies that can help children and young people to overcome ACEs. One of these strategies is Cognitive Behavioural therapy (CBT) as Lester, Khatwa and Sutcliffe (2020) explain, CBT is known to help treat people who are suffering with trauma and PTSD with effective strategies. Moreover, Navalta, McGee and Underwood (2018) agree explaining, they help children and young people with trauma to come to terms of what has happened with them, taking it step by step through their traumatic memories in order to overcome their trauma and build a better life for themselves. In addition, Nelson Cunningham and Kashikar-Zuck (2017) concurs stating, CBT is also known to help improve the challenging behaviour in children and young people who do not understand how to better their behaviour and need guidance and strategies on how they can improve their behaviour for the better.

Overall, I have learned a great deal from this module and the importance of catalyst leaders, and how their action has provided us with children rights and the laws today. I have learned the importance of being a catalyst leader as they use their skills to bring changes on issues and guide others to do the same. Also looking back at the history of children, I could see the difference of how children were treated then as labour workers compared to how we treat them today with their children's rights and to live, learn and play. Learning about Adverse Childhood Experiences was a very interesting topic for me, understanding how different types of traumas can have a lasting impact on a child and young person. I also discovered how Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is one of the strategies that supports in helping children and young people to cope with

their trauma of ACEs and I would like to learn even more about ACEs and CBT for the future.

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