

Section 1

The aim of this section is to critically evaluate inclusive leadership in the scenario of an early years setting. The meaning of inclusive leadership is bringing inclusion into life. Inclusion to personal and professional relationships, organisational systems, or communities (Ferdman et al, 2020). Inclusive leadership allows leaders to involve all people from different backgrounds to share their opinions and thoughts fairly and have their ideas heard (Edmonson, Kramer and Cook, 2004; Nembhard and Edmondson, 2006). Rodd (2013) agrees with the statement as he states that leaders in early years settings aim to work alongside others instead of using authority over others. Inclusive leadership uses interpersonal skills as the approach is supportive. Inclusive leadership in the early years creates diversity, allowing individuals to feel encouraged and supported.

The following scenario is about a single father and his six-year-old son, Dylan. Two years ago, Dylan's mother passed away, this resulted in Dylan's father grieving terribly and finding his comfort in drugs and alcohol, leading to an addiction which resulted in Dylan being taken out of his father's care. Social services placed Dylan in his grandmother's care. Since this, Dylan's father has been in a rehabilitation centre, seeing Dylan on weekends while working with social services and members of staff at school. Six months ago, Dylan's father completed his rehabilitation programme and passed his final parenting assessment with social services which has allowed Dylan to return into his care full time. Dylan is doing very well at school and is reaching all his targets however he tends to play alone and does not engage with other pupils and does not speak to his teachers. Dylan has a very good relationship with his social worker. Dylan's father is relatively shy and tends not to communicate with other parents at the school. He often hangs back from the crowd of parents at the school and does not engage in conversation when he asked to join them. He exchanges simple pleasantries at drop off and collection but does not attend parents evenings/school functions.

Article 9 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, no date) states that Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests. Since Dylan's father has completed his rehabilitation programme and parenting assessments Dylan is back in his full-time care. Since the passing of his mother and the decline of mental health in his father practitioners have noticed that Dylan can be quiet, shy and does not like to engage with other children. Practitioners are concerned about Dylan and have raised concerns about Dylan and his isolation from other pupils and members of staff will begin to affect his

mental health. It has been reported that children who are lonely and excluded from their peers often have a low self-esteem which could prevent them from gaining lifelong skills (Ramsey, 1991). It is important to consider that children often mirror their parents' behaviour. Dylan has observed his father isolate himself from parents and practitioners at the school and shy away when welcomed into conversations which in result could mean that Dylan might feel nervous or unsure how to feel around these practitioners and children due to his father and his behaviours around the parents and practitioners at the school. Lopez (no date) supports this statement by saying that modelling and copying behaviours are popular in early childhood. When inclusive leadership between the home and school is used correctly strong relations are formed. Gov uk (no date) states that strong relationships with practitioners can be vital for a child's learning. Children spend most of their early life at school when they are away from home which means it is essential for children to feel a sense of belonging in the school community. Good relationships with staff and pupils can have a great impact on children and their growth, welfare, mental state and achievements in future. It is important for children to have a 'key person' inside of the educational settings who work with the child and their parent/s for the child to feel secure in the setting. Having a 'key person' allows children to have a sense of security in knowing that they can go to this person with how they are feeling or what they are thinking without the fear of being judged. Failing to support the child may result in them feeling unloved, or unwanted. Johnson (2010) supports this statement by saying that a positive relationship is central to development in the early years.

Inclusive leadership helps to overturn prejudices' which can sometimes happen in school communities (Ryan 2006). Dylan's practitioners have invited Dylan and his father to an informal meeting in order to discuss how Dylan can feel more at ease in the classroom. This will also provide an opportunity for Dylan's father to feel welcomed by the staff and reassure them both that the school is a safe place for both Dylan and his father and that they are supported by the school. It also shows that the school supports Dylan's individual needs. It is important that Dylan has regular conversations with his 'key person' at school to discuss how he is feeling and what can be done to help him if he is struggling. It is with hope that this allows Dylan to feel more comfortable with talking to practitioners and express himself for the staff to understand a little more about him and what he likes or dislikes. Dylan will also be encouraged to participate in group activities this will be achieved slowly by taking groups of children to play. Dylan has also been invited to after school activities in hopes that he will

make some friends while taking part in fun activities. The school aims to achieve positive interactions with other students for Dylan in hopes that relations can be formed with them. Ryan (2006) states that inclusive leadership is concerned with inclusion of others. Ryan continues by stating that as an inclusive leader the aim should be to address peoples concerns of social injustice.

Currently Dylan's father is not communicating with the school, which stops him being involved in any type of inclusive leadership. Dylan's father avoids almost all types of interaction with other parents and staff when at the school for drop off or collection although does exchange a 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' with Dylan's practitioners. It is important to remember that Dylan's father has overcome an addiction and it is possible he may not engage due to his own personal stigmatisation and is anxious that people at the school will judge him. Volkow (2020) states that people with addictions or those who have overcome addiction feel it is themselves to blame and are ashamed of the choices they have made. Williamson (2022) states that roughly 50% of recovering addicts suffer from mental health problems such as depression or anxiety. This could be the reason why Dylan's father does not interact with people at the school as he is afraid that they have the same negative view that he has of himself. It is important to remember that Dylan's father has overcome his addiction and that is something the school celebrates not judges him for. Members of staff at the school sympathise with the family after the tragic loss of their wife and mother. The fathers own views on himself creates a challenge for inclusive leadership to be used.

Inclusive leadership is about allowing a person to speak without judgment therefore it is important that Dylan's father should not be made to feel judged in any way and should come away from the conversation feeling heard. Newstead and Isles-Buck (2019) supports this by stating that inclusive leadership allows everyone to feel welcomed, valued and respected. In support of this, Dylan's father should be given the opportunity to share his thoughts and ideas about what would work best for Dylan in school moving forward. Allowing Dylan's father to participate in these discussions can form a good relationship between himself and the practitioners. Wilson (2016) agrees by stating that home and school maintaining good relations has a positive affect on the child's mental health. In this scenario one positive conversation could make Dylan's father feel more included and begin to break down the worries he may have about the school environment. It is important that Dylan's father does not feel judged by the members of staff at the school. Johnson and Scanlan (no date)

emphasise that schools must take an holistic approach when welcoming families and understand that not all children come from the same backgrounds. Dylan's father is also struggling to make connections with parents at the school.

The first step that the practitioners took to get in touch with the family was sending letters inviting Dylan's father to the school to discuss why Dylan may not engage with other children. Ferdman (2020) emphasises the inclusion of all persons in discussions as an inclusive leader welcomes new ideas and opinions, thus, it is important that Dylan's father is welcomed by the school, and he is made to feel equal in discussions of how to help Dylan develop relationships with other children in the classroom. Including Dylan's father in these discussions assures him that he is equal to them and his opinions are valued by the professionals who work with Dylan. Including him in these discussions also reinforces that Dylan's father is an important part of Dylan's education and that his ideas are welcomed. It has been decided that a conversation with dad daily after school will allow him to form a good relationship with the teachers and express any concerns he may have. This allows him to feel listened to and reassured that the practitioners are there to support him and Dylan. Dad also agreed to writing in a 'keeping in touch' booklet where he can write to the practitioners about any concerns or praises, he has for Dylan. There is a plan in place to host a parent-children mixer which will allow children to play and parents to talk to each other. This has been set up in hopes for Dylan's father and other parents in a similar situation a chance to communicate with one another. The school have encouraged Dylan's father to go to meetings in the local area for single parents. They have contacted one group in the local area and the group are looking forward to welcoming Dylan's father. HelpGuide (2022) states that support groups can offer support and encouragement to a person. In this case Dylan's father may find someone in a similar situation and not feel alone.

The scenario in play here allows the practitioner to critically analyse their own position in the situation and notice that Dylan and his father have not been receiving the benefits of inclusive leadership. Inclusion in schools can be achieved by practitioners who are aware of the role they have and can critically evaluate it (Ryan 2006). Booysen (2014) states that inclusive leadership is a respectful relational practice which enables individuals and collectives to be fully involved in the outcomes with intention of good for all while having a sense of realism and individuality. Brown (2014) states that inclusive leadership enables a supportive, reflective environment where both staff and pupils can contribute and develop. In this

scenario the practitioners clearly show the practise of inclusive leadership, by inviting Dylan and his dad to the school there is clear evidence of inclusion. The practitioner has reached out to a local support group for single parents, in hopes that Dylan's father can communicate with other people dealing with similar situations. Multi-agency working is a huge part of inclusive leadership. It is important to note that great developments of multi-agency working has been achieved in Wales and it often works well (Welsh Government 2016). The Children Act (2004), encouraged all local authorities to have multiagency Children's Trusts in place by 2008. The Department for Education and skills (2003) has discovered that early support for parents or carers are essential to improving children's outcomes. Dylan's teachers have worked closely with social services during the time Dylan was in his grandmother's care. It is possible that Dylan's father is worried to converse with the teachers when social services are involved due to his previous experiences with them. Inclusive leadership in practise allows all persons to express views and desires without judgment. The practitioners have arranged for Dylan, his father and social services to work together in the school setting to prevent any anxiety which Dylan or his father may face. Bifulco et al (2006) states that social workers believed that working away from the offices increased a mutual respect towards them and other families and reduced the feelings of stigmatisation from those involved. It was noted that families found the social workers more approachable being away from the office and felt they were an equal in decision makings. The Welsh Government (2016) states that inclusion is a process which schools and local authorities practises to include all children and young persons. The report continues to state that successful inclusion offers exceptional response to parents, carers, children and young people. The teacher in this scenario followed the Welsh Government Families First scheme. This programme emphasises early intervention/prevention and allows organisations to come together to work with families prior to any problems arising (2016). It is important to note that although inclusive leadership is being achieved here it is not always successful as in some cases not all parties feel like equal participants. This can have a negative affect on the leader and caused them to give up on maintaining inclusivity. This could be due to lack of training on how to achieve inclusive leadership or people with higher authority not wanting to listen to somebody in a lower position to them. Baker (2021) states that correct training can be the first step to creating an inclusive workplace. Often, training can open people's eyes to identify common problems in the workplace which are often encountered. The correct training will allow all members of staff to understand how to handle sensitive situations and resolve conflicts which may arise.

Inclusive leadership is only successful when all staff and other members in the scenario feel that they can contribute. Leaders should always welcome feedback from members of their team as this ensures a welcoming atmosphere is being achieved (Baker, 2021). The Welsh Government (2016) states that self-evaluation shows practise of a good school, therefore it is important that staff members evaluate their own performances regularly in relation to their inclusive leadership strategies to ensure they are meeting the individual needs of the children.

It is important to note that the practitioner in this scenario noticed that Dylan and his father did not benefit from inclusive leadership and they acted upon it. The members of staff at the school aim to make school a positive environment for Dylan and his father. This shows the practitioners understanding of inclusive leadership and how to execute it correctly. To ensure that Inclusive leadership is achieved by the teacher in this scenario it is important that they follow The Welsh Government (2016) Inclusion and Support document. The document emphasises the importance of self-evaluations as previously stated above. It is the practitioner's responsibility in this scenario for Dylan and his father to feel welcomed by members of the school. The practitioner's self-evaluations will allow them to decide if they feel they need more training on inclusive leadership and how to achieve it successfully. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to ensure that not only themselves but the other members of staff are implementing inclusive leadership and are achieving it. It is important that other members of staff also reap the benefits of inclusive leadership at the school. This will create a positive environment for the staff at the school which will in result help to make Dylan and his father feel a sense of belongingness.

Section 2

This section will be focused on critically evaluating The Welsh Government Inclusion and Pupil Support Document (2016) which has been touched upon briefly in section one. This section will highlight the positive factors of implementing inclusive leadership and any barriers it may face. Inclusive leadership should be implemented in the workplace with sufficient training for all staff prior. In order to achieve inclusive leadership, the voice of the pupils should be considered. The Welsh Government (2016) states that children should be included in decision making when possible. This should be done as early in their education as possible. This allows children to begin to understand that their thoughts and opinions are

valued. Young children should be encouraged to share their feelings within their household and in school. This will create a sense of security for pupils throughout their time at school. Using the word 'should' could cause confusion for practitioners here. The meaning of the word can be described as 'what is ought to be' (Merriam-Webster, 2021) which implies that although the voice of pupils 'should' be considered the practitioner can decide not to include the child if they wish not to. Using commanding words such as 'must' would ensure that all staff are practising inclusive leadership. The Welsh Government inclusion and pupil support document (2016) states that all staff should be provided with training on inclusion in order for them to successfully perform their role. The document continues to say that training provided for staff should provide information about equality in communities and the definitions of inclusive education. These training sessions can also be given with parents or carers of children at the school. The Welsh Government (2021) states that the vision for 2030 is for all people to understand the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion and why inclusive leadership should be prioritised. The goal is for people to be encouraged to reach their potential and know there will be no discrimination against them due to the person they are. Although there are many benefits to inclusive leadership there are many barriers which can prevent an organisation from implementing it. Barriers can often dishearten those trying to implement inclusive leadership and prevent them from trying. Gully and Phillips (2012) state that one of the most common obstacles faced is a 'like me' bias. This type of bias can negatively impact and make people unwilling to discard another person's background, gender or culture. This type of attitude can undermine the implementation of inclusive leadership. Gully and Phillips continue to say that another setback of inclusive leadership in the workplace is higher levels of staff feeling a threat to their career. Leaders who are traditionally known as the 'predominant' employee may feel the need to defend their role as a leader and are unwilling to be an equal. These types of unwilling attitudes can be observed by the children which could result in them not feeling the sense of belongingness which is trying to be achieved. Secondly, this type of attitude can be seen as a barrier which prevents inclusive leadership being implemented. The UNCRC article 12 states every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes and this right always applies, including in the classroom and school environment. This article enforces the idea that the voice of the child is important. The Welsh Government inclusion and pupil support document (2016) states that it is committed to the UNCRC in its work when concerning children and young people. Inclusive leadership is promoted here as the Welsh Government states children have the right

to use their voice when adults make decisions on something which will affect them. Although this is the perfect opportunity for inclusive leadership to take place there is a barrier. Many practitioners do not follow inclusive leadership as they feel they do not have enough time to listen to every individual child's thought and feeling. Many practitioners often have many other responsibilities on top of their initial job of teaching young children, such as paperwork, meetings, hitting targets and planning lessons. These stressors often take priority on the list and prevent practitioners from using their inclusive leadership skills. Overall, Inclusive leadership is something that the Welsh Government is striving to achieve in all schools. However, it has not quite achieved the goal yet, there is hope that by 2030 inclusive leadership will take place in all schools across Wales as the government recognises the importance for young children to flourish in the future. Inclusive leadership is something which allows the school and home environments to work together in an equal manner. Inclusive leadership is something which requires dedication from both practitioners and students and will not work if both parties do not cooperate. As previously stated, there are still many barriers which prevent the practise of inclusion. An example of this is the ambiguous wording in the Welsh Government inclusion and pupil support document. Word's such as 'should' create an idea that the document is something to be followed if the practitioner wishes to, however it is not essential that they do. Finally, for inclusive leadership to be executed correctly it is essential that all staff have relevant and up to date training. Training needs to become mandatory for all members not an option for the goals of inclusive leadership to be achieved in an early year setting.

Section 3

The aim of this blog is to discuss inclusive leadership and how the inclusion of parents can benefit a young child and their successions in academia.

Inclusive leadership for social justice goes beyond the time a child is in school. It is important that when practising inclusive leadership, a holistic approach is taken (Johnson and Scanlan, 2020). Using a holistic approach allows families to be looked at as a whole not just certain parts of their identity (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Inclusive leadership in the early years is achieved through a mutually respectful relationship between parents or carers and practitioners where all members involved share the same level of respect towards the other and feel equal to all members involved. For inclusive leadership to be achieved the leader in the situation must be open minded, accepting and able to make all parties involved feel a sense of belonging (Rodd, 2013). According to Freud, when parents and carers are actively apart of their children's learning and extra activities in their schooling the child will be more likely to excel in their academia and will generally have good wellbeing. Inclusive leadership

involves families, teachers and support staff. When working together effectively children will feel supported and are likely to excel their capabilities and can refocus if problems in the future arise. Freud continues to state that allowing children to express their emotions can have a positive impact on the child, staff and the atmosphere in the classroom. It is critical that we remember that for inclusive leadership to be successful all people need feel equal and feel they can speak openly without fearing judgement from others. It is possible that parents may find engaging with staff members at the school difficult due to their own personal experiences of educators when they were a young child. Due to this it is important to remember for inclusive leadership to be achieved a personal approach for the parent to feel included is needed. Parents or carers and teachers are the most influential people in a child's education. Freud states that these adults play a crucial role in how well the child engages in curricula activities. It has been found that when both parties work together effectively it has a great impact on the child. Fenton (2017) supports this by stating that parental engagement in their child's education is key to the child's success.

In conclusion, there have been many examples of how inclusive leadership can benefit families and the inclusion of parents in a child's education can further a child's success. The mutual level of respect between schools, parents and children in discussions allows the child to feel respected and listened to.

Reference list

Bifulco A, Bernazzani O, Moran PM, Ball C (2006) Lifetime stressors and recurrent depression: preliminary findings of the Adult Life Phase Interview (ALPHI). 35(6):264–275.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s001270050238>

Booyesen L. (2014). *Responsible Inclusive Leadership: A Whole System Collective Process Outcome*. Available at:

[file:///C:/Users/carys/Downloads/booyesen,%20L.%20\(2020\)%20Responsible%20Inclusive%20Leadership%20a%20whole%20system%20collectibe%20process.pdf](file:///C:/Users/carys/Downloads/booyesen,%20L.%20(2020)%20Responsible%20Inclusive%20Leadership%20a%20whole%20system%20collectibe%20process.pdf)

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Pioneers together*. Community Care, 3–9 April.

London. Revans, L. Available at:

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2003/04/03/40264/Pioneers+together.html?key=PI>
[O](#)

Duncan, G., & Murnane, R. (2011). *Introduction: The American dream*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological safety: The history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 23–43.

Edmondson, A. C., Kramer, R. M., & Cook, K. S. (2004). Psychological safety, trust, and learning in organizations: A group-level lens. *Trust and Distrust in Organizations: Dilemmas and Approaches*, 12, 239–272.

Ferdman, B., Prime, J., Riggio, R. (2020). *Inclusive Leadership: Transforming Diverse Lives, Workplaces, and Societies*. New York: Routledge

Freud, A., (no date) *Engaging with all parents and carers*. Pp 1-3. London: University of Manchester.

Gov.uk (no date) Relationships. Available at: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/personal-social-and-emotional-development/relationships>

(Accessed 24th January 2023)

Helpguide (2022). *Support Groups: Types, Benefits, and what to expect*. Available at: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/therapy-medication/support-groups.htm> (Accessed on 25th January 2023)

Hallet, S., (2014) *Leadership in the early childhood: The early years context*. Pp 5-8

Jessica Johnson. (2010). *Positive and Trusting Relationships with Children in Early Years Settings. Learning Matters*.

Johnson and Scanlan (2020). *Inclusive Leadership on the Social Frontiers: Family and Community Engagement*. New York: Routledge

Lopez., C (no date) *Why Do Children Copy their Parent's Habits and Prejudices?* Available at: <https://www.mysavetime.com/why-do-children-copy-their-parents-habits-and-prejudices/> (Accessed 24th January 2023)

Merriam Webster (2021) *Should auxiliary verb*. Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/should> (Accessed 29th January 2023)

Newstead and Isles-Buck (2019) *Inclusive Practise*. Available at:

[file:///C:/Users/carys/Downloads/Newstead,%20S.%20and%20Isles-Buck,%20E%20\(2019\)%20Essential%20Skills%20for%20Managers%20of%20Child-Centred%20Settings%20Routledge%20London.pdf](file:///C:/Users/carys/Downloads/Newstead,%20S.%20and%20Isles-Buck,%20E%20(2019)%20Essential%20Skills%20for%20Managers%20of%20Child-Centred%20Settings%20Routledge%20London.pdf) (Accessed 25th January 2023)

Phillips, J. and Gully, S. (2012). *Organizational Behaviour*. 1st ed. Mason: South-Western Cengage Learning.

Ramsey, P. G. (1991). *Making friends in school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
Rodd, J. (2013) *Leadership in early childhood: A pathway to professionalism*. Maidenhead. OU Press. Pp 35-36

Ryan, J (2006). 'Inclusive Leadership and Social Justice for Schools'. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*. 5 (1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500483995> . (Accessed 24th January 2023).

The Welsh Government (2016) *Inclusion and pupil support*. Available:

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support_0.pdf (Accessed January 29th 2023).

UNICEF (no date) A summary of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Available at: [https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf?_adal_sd=www.unicef.org.uk.1636894905449&_adal_ca=so%3DLive%26me%3Dorganic%26ca%3D\(not%2520set\)%26co%3D\(not%2520set\)%26ke%3D\(not%2520set\).1636894905449&_adal_cw=1636894900203.1636894905449&_adal_id=941af5fc-f1ea-40ca-b363-8a955b747b8f.1602085649.8.1636894900.1634639623.229581f4-d1ad-4935-8eda-efb888baa9d9.1636894905449&_ga=2.123362766.455716028.1636894900-1400654250.1584200325](https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf?_adal_sd=www.unicef.org.uk.1636894905449&_adal_ca=so%3DLive%26me%3Dorganic%26ca%3D(not%2520set)%26co%3D(not%2520set)%26ke%3D(not%2520set).1636894905449&_adal_cw=1636894900203.1636894905449&_adal_id=941af5fc-f1ea-40ca-b363-8a955b747b8f.1602085649.8.1636894900.1634639623.229581f4-d1ad-4935-8eda-efb888baa9d9.1636894905449&_ga=2.123362766.455716028.1636894900-1400654250.1584200325)

(Accessed: 23rd January 2023).

Volkow, N., (2020). *Addressing the stigma that surrounds addiction*. Available at:

<https://nida.nih.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/04/addressing-stigma-surrounds-addiction> (Accessed 24th January 2023)