

Section 1

Clark (2012) explains that a common conception of the term 'leadership' relates to the idea that those in authoritative positions are the ones responsible for paving the way in early years education and care. However, Clark (2012) further adds that this idea is being challenged by the notion of a catalytic leader. The idea is that anyone working with children has the opportunity to be a catalytic leader and be a driver for change, regardless of if they are in a role of authority or not. Additionally, Reed and Canning (2012) would agree with Clark (2012) as they state that the purpose of the catalytic leader is to promote the idea that anyone in a setting has the ability to lead and encourage change, which confronts more common beliefs that leaders are the ones in positions of power. Furthermore, Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet (2012) would also agree with the above statements and in addition state that the key motivation for encouraging the early years workforce to be catalytic leaders is to continually upgrade the quality of provision children are being provided in the early years. However, Wenner and Campbell (2017) say that the idea of practitioner leaders being a catalyst for change is an area that lacks thorough research as to what extent it improves outcomes. Moreover, Siraj and Hallet (2014) explain that facilitating these improvements to practice requires commitments from all those working with children and that the workforce must understand and have belief in the improvements and changes that are being made, as opposed to simply agreeing with changes in the short-term because they have been instructed to by someone in a position of power. Whilst Siraj and Hallet (2014) acknowledge that anyone can be a catalytic leader and inspire change, they suggest that it is the early years graduates that are being relied on to be advocates for change and be innovators that inform best practice.

Tsuchiya *et al.* (2018) are of the position that catalytic leaders are collaborators who work in partnership with communities and other agencies, as they understand that this is the best way to facilitate changes that best meet the needs of the children and wider community. However, whilst Ankrum (2016) acknowledges the effectiveness of catalytic leadership and the outcomes it can achieve, he explains that because anyone can be a catalytic leader, irrespective of role, it can lead to people's ideas being overlooked by others if they are not in a position of power. Then again, Cooper (2014) may argue that the issue does not stem from the ideas of practitioners in non-authoritative roles being disregarded, but instead the issue lies with the practitioners themselves. Cooper (2016) elaborates on this point and states that many early years

practitioners do not understand catalytic leadership concepts and do not feel it is their role or responsibility to lead and suggest changes that could improve practice. Cooper (2016) puts blame on a lack of training in the early year's workforce, as he states practitioners are not aware of current and emerging leadership concepts. Moreover, Dalli and Thornton (2013, quoted in Pendergast and Garvis, 2013, p.305) may suggest that practitioners are not aware of their capability and potentiality to drive change because of previous concepts that change to provision was something decided by those in higher managerial positions. However, Cooper (2016) also has similar views to Tsuchiya *et al.* (2018) in relation to catalytic leaders having awareness of the needs of all stakeholders, children, parents, colleagues etc and the best way to meet these needs.

McLeod (2020) discusses Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. This is the idea that social elements and a child's interaction with others will impact the child's development and progress. Vygotsky believed that community influence has direct effect on a child's cognitive development and the outcomes they achieve. However, McLeod (2020) explains that this approach differs to Piaget's theory, as Piaget believed that children's development was guided by individual, hands on experiences, with less emphasis on how social factors can impact child development. Nevertheless, Kapur (2018) is in support of the notion of social constructivism and suggests that social constructivist approaches are effective because they look at a child holistically. Kapur (2018) emphasises and states that the social constructivist approach looks at the child as an individual and all the external factors that have influence on their development and learning, considering issues that affect the body and mind.

Furthermore, Kirk (2005) also agrees with social constructivism and created the 'System Leadership Development' model to explain the ways in which leaders in settings could integrate social constructivist theories within their practice to be a catalyst for change in the setting and wider community. Kirk's (2005) model shows how leaders can be catalysts for change by following three key components. The components are 'Seeing together', 'Walking together' and 'talking together'. This essentially refers to catalytic leaders identifying issues that are affecting the community, then talking about solutions with those impacted and then implementing solutions together. However, Schott, van Roekel and Tummers (2020) may argue that practitioners leading and being catalysts for change may be counterintuitive, they suggest that practitioners already have unmanageable workloads, and expecting them

to take initiative and lead change may cause more stress and cause an imbalance between their work and home lives, which in turn may affect the quality of provision they provide the children. Pierce and Aguinis (2011) may refer to this as the 'Too Much of a Good Thing effect' which they suggest is a common problem with leadership and management. It relates to when there is such acute focus on achieving a positive outcome, that other factors can be overlooked, which then has a negative effect. In this case, there may be so much focus on making a positive change, that potential workforce burnout and a subsequent impact on quality of provision is somewhat disregarded.

Masten (2013) explains that resilience is when a child continues to develop normally and be successful, despite the fact they have experienced hardship. Masten (2013) continues to discuss that when a resilient child faces a difficulty, they are able push past it and continue their normal and expected path of development. However, when a child who is not resilient faces a difficulty, they will find it considerably more difficult to carry on developing normally which can result in them not reaching milestones and lead to poor outcomes. Furthermore, Nolan, Taket and Stagnitti (2014) would agree with Masten and in addition state that their research has found a confirmed link between how resilient a child is and the rate in which they grow and develop. They also highlight that during the early years of a child's life is when resilience must be instilled, so they are equipped to deal with stressors they may face.

Public Health England (2014) state that resilience is often seen as person's characteristic and that children either are resilient or not. However, Public Health England (2014) conducted a report where they evaluated child resilience in schools, in which they explain that resilience is built by children being exposed to experiences and opportunities and add that there are three social sectors in which children's resilience can be improved. The first area being individual. This is when the individual child is supported to improve their progress, ensure they have smooth transitions and inspire and encourage healthy behaviours. The second area is interpersonal, where parents, carers and teachers of a child are also supported so they know the best way to meet the child's needs and further develop their resilience. The last area is school and community, this focusses on a whole school approach which expresses that everyone in a school is responsible for a child's wellbeing. Furthermore, Nolan, Taket and Stagnitti (2014) emphasise that in the early years, practitioners are responsible for encouraging and safeguarding children's resilience. Practitioners should also be

aware of the importance of building resilience and utilise pedagogy that will enable this. In addition, Barber (2020) expresses the view that research has shown that a child's family, school setting and the community they are a part of all contribute to their ability to be resilient. This can be done by encouraging and enabling children to construct positive relationships with others, aiding them in being independent and self-regulating, confidence building through facing difficulties, as well as supporting them to acknowledge their emotions and express how they feel. Barber (2020) places emphasis on early years practitioners being aware of the challenge's children and their communities face and integrate protective factors into their practice to change the way children deal with adversity, which Tsuchiya *et al.* (2018) may argue are the qualities of a catalytic leader. Someone who is aware of the needs of the child and community and drives change to ensure better outcomes.

As mentioned by Masten (2013) resilient children overcome adversities they face and continue their normal path, whereas children who lack resilience will may be hindered in their progress and achieve poor outcomes. Gartland *et al.* (2019) explains that children who experience sociological issues are in danger of poor achievement with little prospect of success in life. However, Li-Grining and Durlak (2014) may argue with this, as whilst they agree that children who are affected by social issues are more likely to achieve poorly, their research has found that early interventions carried out predominantly by the child's school setting are showing promising results in terms of enabling children who experience difficulty to reach their potential.

Kelly and Chapel (2021) explain that a sociological issue is any issue that affects a large population of society. The Welsh Government (2021) explain that the term used to refer to problem's children experience as ACEs. This is an abbreviation of 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' which covers any traumatizing incidents or situations that a child experiences that can limit their likelihood of success in life. ACEs refers to any form of mistreatment towards a child, including physical and/or mental harm. The term also covers household disruptions like domestic abuse, parents who separate, any form of substance misuse, as well as mental health issues and parents in prison.

Public Health Wales (2015) conducted a study and found that 47% of the population in Wales had encountered at least one ACE, with 14% of the population suffering four or more ACEs. Public Health Wales (2015) elaborate that longitudinal studies confirm that children whom experience ACEs are at increased risk of developing chronic disease as they age, like heart disease, diabetes and mental health conditions. As

well as the risk to their own health, children who experience ACE's are more likely to pose risk to their communities, by committing crime and not contributing positively towards society. They are also less likely to succeed in school and therefore struggle with employment. Additionally, Bellis *et al.* (2014) also reported that their research had found direct connections between ACEs and a higher risk of health conditions, as well as a negative impact on social outcomes. They imply that children who experience ACEs are more likely to be morbidly obese, become involved in substance misuse and are likely to be more violent. Bellis *et al.* (2014) also add that increased ACEs are linked to young accidental pregnancy, which then increases the chance of their children also being exposed to ACEs and the cycle repeats. However, Dewar (2022) may argue with these statements as she explains that the outcomes of children who experience ACEs are complex. She explains that not all ACEs will result in the same outcome for each child, as different ACEs cause different levels of harm. The impact of an ACE is also dependent on how resilient the child is and the extent of the ACE they experienced. For example, two children could experience the ACE of having a mentally ill parents, but depending on the child's resilience and severity of the mental illness will influence to what extent the child is affected.

Jenkin (2022) explains that it is responsibility of early years practitioners to reduce the impact of ACEs on a child's outcome and that the practitioner should work in partnership with external agencies and the child's family to do this. For example, in a setting, children identified as having ACEs should be assigned a consistent adult, so they can build positive attachment, the practitioner should also work with health visitors and social workers to identify the needs of the child and the best way to meet them. Furthermore, Jenkin (2022) explains that the practitioner should also work with the child's family and inform them on the impact of ACEs. This collaborative approach is what is required to be a catalytic leader and drive change to improve outcomes (Tsuchiya *et al.*, 2018).

Section 2

UNICEF (2021) explain that prior to 1924 in countries that were industrialized, children had no form of rights or protection from harm. Children often worked in jobs similar or worse than adults and were forced to work in unhygienic and dangerous environments. People started to become aware that these conditions were not acceptable for children and that it was not fair for them to be living this way, so movements began to safeguard the children.

Save the Children (2013) are in agreeance and explain that it's founder Eglantyne Jebb was a key driver behind the movements and fought hard to protect children. Jebb believed that no child should ever experience severe adversities that could harm them or put their life in danger and as a result wrote the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the child. The league of Nations endorsed the Geneva Declaration in 1924 and was the first internationally recognized document that protected children. Higgins (2017) displays the Geneva Declaration and discusses that the document had five outcomes that protected children. For example, children must be given the resources to allow them to develop in healthy way. As well as this, children had to be fed, cared for and nurtured and if there was ever an accident, the child should always be helped first. However, whilst Humanium (No Date) acknowledge that this was the first international declaration that aimed to protect children, it was not legally binding, so lots of children did not benefit from the protection it set out to achieve. Cole-Aback (2021) explains that after World War II, there was again mass concern over the rights of children. Furthermore, Humanium (No Date B) would agree and state that when the United Nations had formed in 1945, the countries endorsed the Geneva Declaration, but given the progress of rights, it was clear to see that Geneva Declaration was too brief and needed an upgrade. Humanium (No Date B) go onto explain that this resulted in an update to the 1924 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which was endorsed by every member state of the United Nations, all 78 of them. UNICEF (2021) explains that the updated document in 1959 also took into consideration a child's right to be educated, their right to play and be entitled to a healthy, enabling environment as well as access to health treatments.

United Nations (1989) explain that just like there was a need to update the 1924 Declaration in 1959, there was again a need to update the 1959 version of the declaration. Furthermore, UNICEF (2021) state that in 1989 The Convention on the

Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was endorsed by the United Nations. This was a monumental success in acknowledging children's rights in society, as the Convention finally placed minimum standards that every child is entitled to and consisted of 54 articles that cover every right each child is entitled to. UNICEF (No Date) is of the position that the Convention has achieved significantly positive outcomes. It held governments accountable and encouraged them to alter previous laws and create new ones so that children are listened to and taken seriously, as well as being taken care of and safeguarded from harm. However, whilst UNICEF (No Date) express the positive impact the UNCRC has had around the world, they also acknowledge that not every child is experiencing the protection that the UNCRC set out to achieve and that many children are dying too soon as a subsequence of not having their needs met. This can only be changed by continuing to put pressure on governments and societies in general to understand their responsibilities to protect children at all costs.

In addition to the UNCRC, Elvin *et al.* (2019) expresses that another significant movement to occur in 1989, was The Children Act 1989. This Act further cemented the importance the importance of safeguarding children and their rights. Elvin *et al.* (2019) adds that the implementation of The Children Act 1989, made laws much clear, as it came as a result of severe cases of child abuse. The Act set out to protect children's welfare and make it clear that children should be with their own family, and that there must be systems in place to support parents to care for their child effectively. Khan (2021) discusses this journey of Children's Rights from 1929 to 1989 and states that in both the 1929 and 1959 declarations, children are simply viewed as "objects of protection". They were seen as vulnerable members of society that required protection. However, Khan (2021) explains that these attitudes change when the UNCRC was adopted in 1989, as this Declaration saw societies perception of children move from "object of protection" to seeing them as "subject of right". This is the idea that children were no longer objects that needed protection, but they were active members of society who were entitled to their own rights and to have their voices heard and respected. However, the Children & Young People's Commissioner Scotland (2018) states that this is not always the case and that vulnerable children are less likely to have their rights valued. For example, in Scotland, it was found that children with disabilities had much higher exclusion rates from school and that gypsy/traveller pupils were shown to achieve poorly to that of their peers.

The Sunday Times (2007) explain that in 2001, Wales became the first UK Nation to appoint a Children's Commissioner. Peter Clark was appointed the revolutionary position of holding a torch for children's rights in Wales and ensuring children are having their voices heard. Organisations in Wales had been advocating for over 10 years for a role like this to be deployed in Wales. However, despite the interest of the Welsh Government, Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay (2009) state that the labour and then Conservative Government both fought against the idea of a Children's Commissioner. However, the Lost in Care report that was created as a result of the Waterhouse inquiry which investigated reports of abuse within children's residential homes in North Wales was a catalyst for the appointment of a Children's Commissioner in Wales.

Philpot (2007) discusses the influential and positive impact that Clarke not only had on the children of Wales, but other UK nations. As its Clarke's determination to protect and respect young people, led to successive appointments of Childcare Commissioners in Scotland, Northern Ireland and sometime later, England. Philpot (2007) indicates that Clarke truly cared about children's views and proved this by allowing children to partake in interviews of potential candidates to the Childcare Commission. Furthermore, Philpot (2007) highlights that the appointment of Clarke was significant because he was able to act as a bridge of communication between children and the government, even establishing a helpline which children could ring to report concerns. Philpot (2007) also suggests that amongst a lot of Clarke's positive work, he was passionate about preventing sexual exploitation, which UNICEF (2019) would say is in relation to Article 34 of the UNCRC which reinforces governments responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation. One of his most significant inquiries was the 'Clywch' report which looked at reports of sexual abuse in a Welsh secondary school. Children's Commissioner for Wales (2004) published the 'Clywch' report and concluded that there was sexual abuse of children in the secondary school, and as a result, Clarke recommended a plethora measures that should be put in place to protect children's rights in schools. For example, clear whistleblowing procedures for staff and pupils, as well as clearer guidance on how to safeguard children and to better educate pupils on signs of abuse, all of which reinforced children's rights to be respected and heard. However, Wales Online (2013) say that people argued that Clarke's report was seriously flawed as he made generalised assumptions.

The NHS (2007) announced that after Peter Clarke, the new Children's Commissioner for Wales was Keith Towler and he would occupy this role from 2008. It is stated that

Towler's main focus on becoming Commissioner was to ensure the children were heard and that their views provoked action to be taken. Whereas, Clarke had more focus on preventing child sexual exploitation according to Philpot (2007), Towler's focus differed as he was particularly passionate about ensuring the vulnerable and disadvantaged children were given assistance to ensure they had the best possible chance of success. Furthermore, Gaskell (2013) explains that an example of a way Towler supported vulnerable and disadvantaged children was by assisting a campaign that demanded the Welsh and UK Governments to provide better support to the families of people in jail so that there is less impact on the children of inmates. Gaskell (2013) expresses that Towler felt strongly about giving these children a voice and implied that if the Welsh Government was not to offer this support, they would be failing to adhere to the UNCRC, which says that a child shouldn't be disadvantaged because of the situation their parent is in. UNICEF (2019) would agree and say this relates to Article 2 of the UNCRC which states that no child should be discriminated against because of the family they belong to.

The 2011 Measure (Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011) was passed by Welsh Parliament on the 18th January 2011. The purpose of passing this Measure was to ensure that Children's Rights were respected and adhered to in Wales, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and to guarantee that any future policies passed by Welsh Government considered and followed the UNCRC. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2022) explain that this 2011 Measure also reinforces that Ministers in Wales are responsible for educating the Welsh population about children and young peoples rights. UNICEF (2019) would agree that by Welsh Ministers informing the Welsh people on children's rights, they are working in line with the UNCRC article 42 which reads that it is governments responsibility to make children and adults aware of the rights in the UNCRC. Additionally, Children's Commissioner for Wales (No Date) highlights that when the 2011 Measure (Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011) was passed, Wales became a pioneering country in the UK, as they were the first to officially integrate the UNCRC into Welsh domestic law. However, Osborne (2015) conducted an interview with former Children's Commissioner Keith Towler, in which Towler expressed concerns over children's rights in Wales. Osborne (2015) discusses how Wales made inspiring progress when they made the UNCRC part of domestic law, but that Towler has expressed that he feels Welsh Government have since paid

less attention to children's rights in Wales. For example, Funky Dragon was the Welsh National Youth Assembly, in which elected children and young people in Wales could speak on behalf of their generation and express concerns and demand action. However, with cuts being made in Wales, Funky Dragon has been thrown out, which takes the voice away from young people, which UNICEF (2019) may argue is not following Article 12, which says that every child has the right to discuss their views and have them taken seriously.

Holland (No Date) wrote an article for the Education Workforce Council and explained that she had been appointed as Wales third Childcare Commissioner in 2015. Holland's aims are similar to that of Clarke and Townsend, but what differs is her approach. Holland (No Date) explained that she believed to promote children's right through a 'Rights Based Education'. She suggests that people in the education workforce are in the ideal position to influence and ensure children's rights are being met. Holland (No Date), similar to Townsend wants to ensure that children are not disadvantaged and emphasises that she wanted to ensure the needs of Gypsy/Traveller children are met. This is a similar aim to that of the Children's Commissioner for Scotland (2018) who also wanted to support Gypsy/Traveller children to achieve higher outcomes.

Section 3

This section will investigate the effect of childhood poverty and critically analyse the services and early interventions that are in place to support these children. The Welsh Government (2019) released their Child Poverty Progress Report. In which they state that in Wales, 29% of children are living in 'relative income poverty'. Furthermore, Holland (2019) discusses that Wales have the UNCRC integrated as part of their domestic law, yet she has found that those children living in poverty are not having their rights respected and followed and that the percentage of children living in poverty in Wales is expected to rise to 40% by the end of 2022.

Holland (2019) goes onto explain that children affected by poverty in Wales are often left hungry. UNICEF (2019) would say that is a failure by the Welsh Government to meet Article 24 of the UNCRC, which states that governments are responsible for providing nutritious food. World Vision (2020) explain that hunger has a negative impact on children and can lead to malnutrition. This is when the body is either not having enough food, or too much of the wrong type of foods and this can lead to health conditions and even stunt a child's growth. World Vision (2020) go on to say that children who often go hungry are at higher risk of poor development, both cognitive and physical. Also, children affected by hunger will usually have a weaker immune system and become ill more often. As well as affecting children physically, going hungry may stop a child being able to focus in school which can impact their academic achievement and employment outcomes.

Children's Legal Centre Wales (2021) explain that one type of early intervention implemented by the Welsh Government to tackle this issue is the Free School Meals Scheme. The purpose of this scheme is to provide any child in full time school or sixth form whose family are entitled to welfare support with free food at school. The parent/guardian can fill in a form to request free school meals and once approved, the school or local council will provide the parent either with vouchers for local food stores, direct money for the parent to buy the food themselves or receive food parcels. Furthermore, Vik, Lippevelde and Øverby (2019) add that their study found that when a child affected by poverty receives free school meals for a year, they are not only being fed, but eating healthier foods which is a positive in regards to tackling inequalities children living in poverty experience at school. However, Westwater (2021) states that there are concerns regarding accessibility to free school meals, with people believing the entry criteria to be approved for free school meals is too strict.

Then again, Miles (2021), the Minister for Education and Welsh Language may argue with Westwater (2021) as he states that he is aware that there was a change in demand for Free School Meals as a result of the pandemic, and has since evaluated the criteria and updated it according to the needs of the children in Wales. In addition to this, Miles (2021) confirms that Free School Meals will also be offered to every primary school child in Wales. He suggests that this intervention will truly tackle child poverty head on and ensure that all children are fed. Miles (2021) also holds the view that Free School Meals have a plethora of positive impacts on children. Besides ensuring children are not hungry, it is also a good opportunity for children to develop socially by interacting with peers at lunch times. As well as this, evidence has shown that when children are fed, they are more likely to behave well and subsequently achieve higher in school.

Children Legal Centre Wales (2021) explain that another intervention implemented by the Welsh Government to ensure children do not go hungry is School Holiday Provision. The Centre suggests that during school holidays, children do not have access to Free School Meals and as a result, their families may find it difficult to provide them with enough food to stop them going hungry. Also, families may have to choose feeding their children over providing activities for them in school holidays, which may leave the child feeling isolated from their wealthier peers. Therefore, the 'Food and Fun' School Holiday Enrichment Program (SHEP) was created to intervene. Furthermore, The Welsh Government (2021b) elaborate on the program and say that it is school's duty to support children even through the summer holidays. The majority of schools who provide SHEP have a large percentage of student's accessing Free School Meals. The program is beneficial because not only are children prevented from going hungry, but the pressure is also taken off their parents, as they are reassured that their children are going to partake in activities and enjoy their summer, but they also know food is being provided for their children.

McConnon *et al.* (2017) conducted an evaluation of the 'Food and Fun School Holiday Enrichment Programme' in Wales and found an overwhelmingly positive response from parents, practitioners and children, which shows the program is making a difference. Parents reported that it was a relief that they knew their children were being well fed and were also put at ease knowing the programme was in their child's usual school, so they had reassurance that their child would be safe and happy. Additionally, McConnon *et al.* (2017) states that staff at the SHEP's reported numerous benefits of

the program, one being that were able to work with children and improve their skills, which they could then improve on further in term time. However, McConnon *et al.* (2017) also highlighted some drawbacks of the SHEP. One drawback being that, families could be involved more in the SHEP so they can experience the benefits of learning about nutrition and food choice too. A further drawback is that SHEP programs are adult led, an improvement would be to allow the children more control over the activities and food they eat.

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