

This essay will be looking at a person-centred service that has been designed for a specific group of vulnerable children who are living in poverty. It will look at different person-centred planning (PCP) approaches and will be looking at the background principles of PCP, observing how they work in practice and how effective they can be with improving social inclusion and knocking down any barriers that children may have to learning. The service will be fully explained and will highlight areas that need improvement in order for it to work fully. The service is called “The Busy Bus” and has been specifically designed to target children living in poverty, aiming to reduce social exclusion, ensuring that no child is left behind and that everyone can have “a flying start in life”. (Play Wales, 2019) The Welsh Government and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) created the seven core aims. The idea of these aims is to ensure that children’s needs were being met and that their rights are being understood and listened to. The Busy Bus has tried to meet all of the seven core aims and believes that this service is going to be beneficial to many children across the city. The bus is not only for social purposes, but for educational, which is what the second core aim looks at. It also recognises that play, and social interactions are “essential to children and young people’s learning”. (Play Wales, 2019) The UNCRC is an organisation that aims to protect children’s rights within their 54 points articles. The Busy Bus service links in well with this as it too focusses on the same principles. Those principles being; “non-discrimination, best interest of the child, right to life survival and development and right to be heard” (Unicef, 2019) just to name a few. The Busy Bus service follows PCP principles in order to achieve the best outcomes for the children who the service is targeting.

The main PCP principles are put in place to ensure that children are able to have a say in decisions that are going to impact their lives. It is a way in which practitioners teach, approach and involve children in different aspects of their learning and places the child as the centre focus. The PCP approach believes in children’s rights, children’s independence, their choices and equality for all. However, PCP does rely on the views and support of professionals whilst also allowing the child to be heard. According to Learning Disabilities Morality Review, the second key feature of PCP is “Partnership Planning” (2017) which includes the individual at the centre of the focus, the family around them for additional views and support and then finally the professionals, who are able to then steer the

planning process in effective directions that will work for the individual. PCP approaches rely on positive communication and working together in order to understand the best routes to take. There are also many ways in which PCP can be put into practice and different styles that it can be presented in. The Busy Bus focusses on two approaches within the service, one for when the children first come into contact with the service and the other once the professionals have met and started to get to know the children personally. The first style of planning is the one-page profile. This profile will be the foundation of their support system and will be focused on the main issues that the children face, including the areas which they need the most help with overcoming. On the one-page profile, the children will be asked to fill in questions that allow the practitioners to get to know their personality, along with their preferred learning styles and support tactics. The idea behind this approach is to build on approaches that are already being used with the child and are seen to be working, along with addressing the issues that are being used and are not effective at all. This approach is a stepping stone method, that is used as a tool guide for when you move on to your next PCP tactic. For the Busy Bus, the next method that will be used is MAPs (Map Action Planning System), which is more detailed than the one-page profile and is designed to be used long term. Following on from the information given within the one-page profile, the MAPs approach will be used as tool to guide the children's path how they feel best suits them. MAPs are a very family orientated approach, that deals with past and present issues children face and allows the child to express their struggles to their family members and to the professionals, so that everyone can understand from first-hand experience, rather than trying to imagine how someone is feeling. Oldham.gov (2015) have written a PCP toolkit, in which explains why MAPs is used and their seven-step description of how it works in practice. The first couple of steps that they talk about are the introductions. Everyone within the meeting, professionals and family members, will be asked to explain their relationship to the child in question and then the child themselves will explain why they think they are in this meeting. The things that the child will be prompted to talk about are issues, past and present, that they feel are barriers to their learning or issues that they need help in order to overcome. (Oldham.org, 2015) The meeting then moves on the talk about dreams, which is where the child is able to express their visions of what they believe they want from life, what path they want to go down and their greatest desires. 'The dream' is the most relaxed part of the process, but along with the dream comes 'the nightmare'

(Oldham.or, 2015) which is where any doubts and uncertainties are raised, discovering any hidden barriers that are in the way of the child reaching their dreams. At this stage of the meeting, the child can become very self-conscious and negative about themselves, which is why they are then picked up shortly after by the group talking about their talents and gifts, aiming to raise their confidence and ensure that they know that along with having weaknesses in certain areas, they are also appreciated in many other ways. The final stages of the MAPs process are where the professionals take charge of the situation, addressing what the child's dreams are but also being realistic with how achievable those goals are. The professionals will compile an action plan, which may consist of stages such as work experience in an airport if the child's desires are to become a pilot. By taking these little steps, within the area that the child is longing to belong to, it shows the child that their wishes and needs have been listened to and things are moving in the right direction. There are of course many flaws with these approaches, which are going to be explored. With the one-page profile, although it is a very good starting point, it is very limited with how much information you can gather through it. The reason that the Busy Bus starts with the one-page profile is to get a rough idea of the child's needs, but their main focus is on the MAPs meetings. This approach is a lot more detailed and thought out than the one-page profile, but still has its weaknesses. With the one-page profile, anyone is able to glance over it and have a simple understanding of a child's needs, likes and dislikes and it is easy to work from when seeing it for the first time, before even meeting the child. This is not the case for MAPs. MAPs focus in depth about a person's past, looking into reasons as to why they have certain barriers and it is all about their story. It is not something that is easily caught up on without knowing the child previously, or without being in the first MAPs meeting with the child, their family and the professionals working alongside them. In order for the sessions to work, everyone must work together as a team in order to build on a child's dreams and explore the reasons behind their nightmares. This would make it very difficult for the child to be assigned to a new lead professional half way through the process, which could happen for a number of reasons. This is why the Busy Bus created the one-page profile to go alongside it, in hope that it equals out these barriers if they were to arise.

The Busy Bus is aimed for children living in poverty. It is a service that will provide free educational lessons and social activities for children living within certain catchment areas

within Swansea. The areas have been specifically targeted due to figures of children within the areas that are eligible for free school meals. According to gov.uk (2019), a child is eligible for free school meals when their family income is lower than £16,190 and so the lead professional felt that this was the best way to measure which areas needed the bus the most. The service's lead professional is a qualified teacher who is accompanied by a group of volunteers who are students studying in many different areas such as teaching, social work and the police. The lead professional decided to set up The Busy Bus after realising that there was a lack of free activities within the area that all children had access to. The effect that poverty can have on a child's life is major, and there must be services like The Busy Bus put in place in order to combat their barriers. CPAG (2019) looked at the impact that poverty can have on a child's early life chances and social barriers it causes. Poverty impacts a person's health and wellbeing as there is a higher chance that a child growing up in poverty will develop chronic illnesses, and general poorer health than those born into a wealthier family. (CPAG, 2019) It also effects their wellbeing as children are at greater risk of bullying, mental health issues and insecurities (CPAG, 2019) alongside the damaging effects it can have on a person's education. A child growing up in poverty is already at a greater disadvantage to those around them, but the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007) explains that "out of school activities can help build self-confidence" (JRF, 2007) and that it is children who are from wealthier families who are able to enjoy these kinds of extra-curricular activities. There are many reasons as to why children living in poverty are unable to attend extra-curricular activities, money and transport being two of the main issues that The Busy Bus aim to eliminate. The Children's Society (2019) claim that there are 3.5 million children living in poverty in the UK and that these figures have risen a lot over the last 30 years. (TCS, 2019) Within the Child Poverty Act (2010) they aimed for "less than 10% of children to be living in poverty by 2020" (CPAG, 2019) but the number of children now living in poverty is greater than when the act was made in 2010. Within Wales, it is said that one in three children will experience poverty, and that as a country, they have the highest rates of child poverty out of the UK. (PSE, 2019) Links between poverty and poor education are complex, but The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2007) explain throughout their study called Education and Poverty, that a child's socio-economic background can have multiple influences on a child's education and learning process. (JRF, 2007) The Sutton Trust (2018) also found that some learners whose backgrounds are from the most deprived areas, are up

to one year behind their peers by the time they start school. Not only did they find this out, but also found that those at the top level of advantage within the class were ahead by 5.2 months. (Sutton Trust, 2018) For Children in Wales, it is so important that these issues are tackled head on, so that they do not rise even more. Flying start, which was founded in 2006, is a beneficial support system for families living in poverty, as it provides free childcare for children aged 0-3 and also vital support given to the parents. This service is provided by the Welsh Government in order to close the gap between poverty and attainment. Ensuring that children have a positive start in life is crucial, but The Busy Bus wants to focus on a wider age range between four and sixteen. The reason that the lead professional chose this age range was due to the flying start age capacity, so she felt that the age should start at four, when the children would no longer have access to Flying Start and would be in full time education. The idea of The Busy Bus is that it incorporates educational learning and social engagement in one and picks up children from their homes so that they don't have to worry about transport or money. The service focuses on reading and writing, dance, singing, art and mixed sport. It is a weekly Saturday service, that lasts for three and a half hours. Enrolment is completed online and each child that signs up is asked to fill out their one-page profile before their first trip on the bus. This is an essential criteria that must be met in order to gauge an idea of what needs each child has, in order to overcome any barriers straight away. The team of volunteers and the lead professional are then able to meet up assess each profile page, working out the best way to combat each issue before the sessions take place. Volunteers will be placed with specific children, while the lead professional will work alongside each child, for shorter periods, in order to give each child, the best chance at achieving their best potential. Once the first session has taken place, each child will be invited to a meeting to complete their MAPs, and their family members will be asked along as well, alongside the volunteer working with that child on The Busy Bus service.

There are barriers within the way The Busy Bus plans to work which need to be addressed. The first issue is money. For a scheme like this, funding is needed, as the whole point of the service is to provide free extra-curricular activities for children living in poverty. The Busy Bus team have fundraised a lot of money to start up their business, and the staff working are all volunteers, but the bus, activities and rented hall all cost money and the fundraising is not guaranteed. The next issue is time. During the three-and-a-half-hour activity sessions,

there is limited time to work with each child effectively to create their MAPs. The principles of PCP need to be met and in order to do that, the child needs the focus and attention of the lead professional. As the rest of the group are volunteers, the lead professional needs to share her attention with all of the children on the bus and cannot solely focus on any one child. It may work best if there are a couple of qualified teachers working alongside the lead professional, so that each child can have more 1:1 time. The final barrier that this service faces is the cooperation of family members. In order to sign up, the one-page profile needs to be filled in online. It is encouraged by The Busy Bus that the children fill this in themselves, but of course depends on the age and abilities of the children. Some of the children will rely on the parents help in order to fill this in. It is then required that the family members of each child attend the MAPs meeting, which may be an issue for some parents. These meetings are lengthy, with some lasting over an hour (IS, 2019) and parents have to be willing to cooperate and be involved. If the child's parents are not available for the meeting, or not willing to participate, this can have a damaging effect on the way the meeting will go. There is not much that The Busy Bus can do to prevent this, other than strongly advise the parents to partake in the meetings with their child.

The bus aims to encourage social inclusion in the same way that Flying Start does with their service. Flying Start and The Busy Bus' main aim is to involve children from poorer areas in social activities that they would not have easy access to unless they were free. The idea of Flying Start is what it says on the tin, giving children a head start in life. It has been said by the National Assembly for Wales, that some people fear that the way in which it targets its audience is creating a "post-code lottery" (Senedd Research, 2018) and may in fact, create even more inequality by doing so. It is a worry that not all children who should be entitled to this service will be able to have access to it, due to their post-code. It has been found by the committee's report in 2018 that the support from Flying Start is beneficial for the families and children who are able to benefit from it.

In Conclusion, The Busy Bus service has two main aims. The first is to close the gap between poverty and attainment by giving free extra-curricular support to those who need it most. The service is able to focus on children's individual needs by using different PCP approaches that both have different methods but aim for the same outcomes. The use of the one-page profile and MAPs together helps to combat some of the barriers that would be there if only

using one of the approaches. These PCP methods aim to reduce the gap of poverty and attainment by gathering in depth information about the children's preferred learning styles, their struggles and their abilities. It looks at what they want from life and by working together with the team, how they can achieve it. The aim of this is to reduce insecurities and allow their strengths to shine. The next aim that the Busy Bus service has is to encourage social inclusion. The way in which this is done is simply by including these children in activities and reminding them that they are not alone on this journey. The Busy Bus does have many flaws that must be corrected before being able to properly thrive. One of the main flaws that this service has is that it is only led by one qualified professional who is accompanied by volunteers. For this service to thrive, it may be best to employ more qualified teachers who are able to work alongside, giving the children the best possible education whilst on board The Busy Bus.

References:

Unicef, (2019) *What is the UNCRC?* <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/> (1st May 2019)

Play Wales, (2019) *Seven Core Aims* <http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/sevencoreaims> (1st May 2019)

LeDeR Programme, (2017) *Person Centred Planning* <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sps/leder/leder---fact-sheets/10.%20Person%20centred%20planning.pdf> (1st May 2019)

JRF, (2007) *Experiences of poverty and educational disadvantage* <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/2123.pdf> (2nd May 2019)

The Children's Society, (2019) *A good childhood for every child?* https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/2013_child_poverty_briefing_1.pdf (2nd May 2019)

CPAG, (2019) *Child poverty promise and child poverty act* <http://cpag.org.uk/content/welfare-reform-and-work-bill-briefings> (2nd May 2019)

PSE, (2019) *Wales has worst child poverty in UK* <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/report-wales-child-poverty/wales-has-worst-child-poverty-uk> (3rd May 2019)

The Sutton Trust, (2018) Poorer children a year behind at start of school <https://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/poorer-children-year-behind-start-school/> (5th May 2019)

Independent Support, (2019) Person Centred Planning meetings https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/independent_support/AR.Personcentredplanningmeetings.fINAL.pdf (5th May 2019)

Gov.co.uk, (2019) *Apply for free school meals* <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> (5th May 2019)

Sennedd Research, (2018) Is the Welsh Government giving a 'Flying Start' to all children who will need it? <https://seneddresearch.blog/2018/05/21/is-the-welsh-government-giving-a-flying-start-to-all-children-who-need-it/> (4th May 2019)