

Inclusive leadership: working together to support families.**Section 1**

Booyesen (2014, p. 306) defines inclusive leadership as both a respectful and relational practice, that allows individuals and groups to be fully part of the holistic, aligned, directed, and committed towards the end goal and the outcome of good for all, whilst being authentic, unique and a true version of yourself. To critique this in Booyesen states that individuality is important and excepted however, fails to mention how vital the realization of others is, in order gain knowledge on everyone's uniqueness whether that's a cultural aspect or not. However, Ferdman (2021, p.3) defines inclusive leadership as more than cultural capability or leading diversity but to include creating and fostering an environment that allows all individuals to embrace their differences and without having to hide their true identities. In order to do their best and work at the highest capacity whilst being valued in doing so, and to fit in and engage in numerous ways that are safe, fair, and overall appreciated. To critique this in early years it is suggested that children's identities are valued and supported, in order to retrieve the best outcome for the child's holistic development and well-being. Booyesen (2014, p. 306) agrees with Ferdman with the statement that everyone should be authentic and not hide their true identities this is a considered a vital aspect of inclusive leadership as all children are different and this should be applauded. Throughout this assignment Ferdman's definition will be referred to (2021, p.3).

Inclusive leadership is considered important as Ferdman (2018, para. 6 cited in Ferdman, 2021, p.10) states that without inclusion children with different backgrounds from the traditionally represented groups may feel less safe, valued, and expected. Sadly, resulting in the child not engaging, participating, or contributing to activities. If the child's sense of identity is threatened, then they may feel like they cannot be portrayed as their true self (DiMaria,2023). This is one of the many reasons why inclusive leadership is considered vital especially in early years practice as children should not have to come to the school environment feeling like this (Roberson and Perry, 2022). However, in order for all staff members to be fully inclusive and understanding training may have to be implemented, as Vygotsky

states it is important to learn from a more knowledgeable other (Abtahi ,2014). There are, however, some barriers to training such as funding and time which will be mentioned throughout this assignment.

Scenario

Leo is 4 years old and has found his parents separation extremely difficult. You have noticed this as he has been coming into school upset and is more frequently having accidents when he is fully potty trained. The divorce is quite acrimonious. The parents both have shared custody of Leo. However, the school setting is aware that dad has recently overcome addictions and has newly been assessed as being able to care for Leo independently on his two nights a week with him. Leo's mum is very engaged with school and talks openly to staff on a daily basis. You notice when dad is doing the school run, he stands alone on the playground and the other (female) parents look at him, however, are reluctant to start up a conversation. Unlike mum, dad is nervous around staff members and never stays around for long but will talk for a short while if needed. Mum is very aware and portrays dad as difficult and does not communicate with each other about Leo due to the nasty breakup. You would like to hold a meeting with other professionals and Leos parents as you have noticed Leo regressing holistic development over the last few weeks. Leo has started to struggle interacting with other children in the class. On days when Leo stays with dad you have also noticed him wearing dirty clothes and complaining that he is hungry and stating that he has not had breakfast.

Children

Belonging is a key aspect when working with young children, it has been seen to affect young children's both cognitive and socioemotional development in huge ways, impacting transitions, attachment and young children's opinions, beliefs, and views on their own potential (Souto-Manning *et al.*, 2021). Leo's sense of belonging and self-esteem has been knocked due to the hard time he is going through at home. This has been portrayed through him being more upset, having frequent accidents and distancing himself from other children which is all un-usual for Leo. However, to counteract this Riley (2019) states that practitioners are the issue and

that the senesce of belonging in school has been largely ignored in recent years, by practitioners as they are driven by targets and not the needs of young people. The impact on not belonging needs to be recognised (Johansson and Puroila, 2021).

In order to support Leo, the inclusive leader can help ensure he is stepping foot into a safe and secure environment ready for learning. To fulfil this holistically the setting can minimize risks and ensure Leo's needs are met (Vain, 2023). When meeting Leos needs, the physiological and safety needs require to be met first to progress onto belonging and self-actualization according to Maslow (Pichère and Cadiat ,2015). When Leo stays with his dad, he is coming into school hungry and in dirty clothes. Research shows Leo must have a full stomach in order to concentrate in school, take part in group activities and to be happier (Brimble, 2023).

Furthermore, to promote Leo's sense of belonging providing him with a consistent routine when in school may help as Aston (2021) states that routines show children what is important to them and can provide unity by completing daily activities as a team in the classroom environment. Mindell and Williamson (2018) agree with Aston by suggesting that routines are important to create a calming and predictable environment for the children. A routine would benefit Leo in school as he does not have a stable home life, living between both parents' houses. As a result of both Leos needs being met and routine Leo should gain emotional ability, security, and fulfilment in belonging. As an inclusive leader practitioners can allow Leo to bring in a comforter from home to help further his sense of belonging, by having an object of his own and something from the home environment can provide that warmth and security in school (Lewis, 2023). The other children may seem intrigued in Leo's comforter promoting them to ask questions and engage with him. Being accepted, included, or welcomed by the other children will release a number of positive emotions for Leo for example happiness, contentment, and purpose (Chouinard ,2007). Whereas being ignored and excluded leads to strong negative emotions such as loneliness and sadness which practitioners have observed more recently (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Uniform can also a make child feel like they belong and are a part of a community according to Shanks (2023). However, poverty may mean that the family cannot

afford uniform or to wash it like in Leo's case when he stays with dad. Uniform banks in schools can help resolve this issue some schools also provide essential toiletries and washing powder (Connect ,2023). Possible barriers for Leo in school include other children being mean and maybe lead to bullying as he comes to school in dirty clothes, this refers to positionality the other children may not have experienced poverty first-hand before, so he seems different and stands out from them (Takacs, 2002).

Families

As an inclusive leader working with the family, you observe the difficult relationships with dad and the school and aware of the communication barrier between mum and dad as mum talks openly with the setting. As an inclusive leader you recognise the family requires extra support, according to Joseph Roundtree Foundation (2020) childcare can play a key role in unlocking work opportunities for parents, communication skills and development in Wales. To expand the inclusive practitioner can use their role in setting to promote communication skills (Evangelou *et al.*,2013). Opportunities for inclusive leadership in this area include Farther groups or possible one to one meeting with dad every so often as this will help dad to feel like a part of Leos school life and benefit their attachment (Parenta ,2020). Farther groups have seen to be beneficial as Heppleston (2019) states that fathers are able to come together with a similar understanding and shared experiences resulting in them being more open and more likely to communicate with each other. However, as inclusive practitioner barriers have to be considered dad may not feel comfortable enough to attended and have a fixed mindset that school and communication is not important in Leo's life (Yeh, Ting, and Chiang, 2023). To overcome this the inclusive leader can make dad feel more comfortable by the farther groups being held in a public place and not in the school grounds. Dad should interact with this as Whalley (2015) states that compromise and co-construction with parents is important as parents want more for their children than they have themselves.

Furthermore, due to dad's previous addition this may be the cycle for Leo as he as observed a lot as a young child for example his dad having no GCSE's and no job (Nikolova and Nikolaev, 2018). Dad may have started this addition to fill a void. In

addition, school may not be a priority for dad as an inclusive leader to teach dad the importance of school the inclusive leader can explain why education and play is vital for a child's holistic development (Whitebread *et al.*, 2012; Scanlan and Johnson, 2015). The setting could also invite dad to come in and observe Leo in class as the setting has an open-door policy. Estyn (2020) also states that it is important to immerse parents in what their children learn and experience at the setting. However, it is important that intersectionality is considered according to Crenshaw (2017) meaning that dad's own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression are acknowledged by the inclusive practitioner (Centre for intersectional justice, No Date) this may show reasoning behind dad's poor communication skills with the setting.

As an inclusive leader to help improve mum and dad's communication for Leos benefit the setting could hold parent coffee mornings where both parents are able to attend. Both parents being in the same room and in a safe, secure, open space allows them to connect with one another (Barrington *et al.*, 2022). Harpenden Academy (No Date) agrees with this by stating that parents are given support and advice during these sessions on a wide range of topics for example communication. The parents will be taught how to communicate effectively and in a calm manner (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2020).

Staff

A non-inclusive practitioner may have pre-judged Leo and his family due to dad's past addiction and living in poverty. A practitioner may think that Leo's dad is lazy or shows lack of intelligence or willingness to make bad decisions (Heberle and Carter, 2020). These stereotypes need to be demolished according to Wang and Yang (2020). Similarly, Phoenix (2019) agrees with this by stating that stereotypes of poverty have a negative impact on children's well-being and some children may feel a sense of shame however, staff members who do not live in poverty or do not have an understanding on the subject may support this stigma or show lack of support and empathy towards Leo. Additionally, as the staff member has not been in this position themselves this refers to positionality showing that staff need to gain knowledge on

this subject and how to be inclusive (Lyndon, 2018). As a result of being un-educated on poverty a non-inclusive practitioner may choose the wrong strategies for Leo when trying to support him and further his development.

Furthermore, judgement may also be cast on Leo due to coming from a split parent home according to Clark (2013). However, to critique these statistics from section 2 in the 2021 census highlights that 18.7% of children came from a split parent home. This is an increase by 7.3% since 2011 (Office for National Statistics ,2021). To go more in depth shows that in the modern-day society lone parent homes are on the rise and are becoming more common. Practitioners need to keep up with this by being inclusive and able to support each child's unique needs. Norms set standards what a family 'should' look like however an inclusive practitioner understands that this is not always the case and communication is important in order to form positive relationships with the child's family and not to cast judgement that will have a negative impact on the relationship (Daniels and Rittenour, 2020).

An inclusive leader can help ensuring that the setting has well-trained staff that know how to be inclusive and can meet the children's individual unique needs though training is vital according to Welsh Government (No Date). The Effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project shows evidence of this and states that the higher qualified the practitioner the more positive impact on children's intellectual and social behavioural development (Slyva *et al.*, 2004). This shows inclusive practitioners that training and further education is beneficial for those around them. This is important in this case as an inclusive leader should encourage all staff to work collectively to make a difference according to Dallimore (2019, p.4).

However, as an inclusive leader the possible barriers of professional development have to be taken into consideration. Barriers include ensuring that the staff have the time to complete the training as the main priority is to be in the classroom environment (Eroglu and Donmus Kaya, 2021). An inclusive leader can help resolve this by having the training during twilight hours this ensures that the staff are being paid for their time and are receiving the hours back elsewhere. As referring back to

the definition Ferdman (2021, p.3) states that an inclusive leader should be someone who creates a fostering environment.

Communities

Dad stands alone in the yard other female parents do not interact this maybe because of gender discrimination or because of judgement on Leo's dad additions in the past. In order to help prevent this gender discrimination and judgement an inclusive leader could help organise a family fun day drawing focus on the dads in the school setting as sometimes fathers are overlooked as valued members of the community according to Jacobs (No Date) As a result of this Leos dad may feel more included and like he is an important person within the community. The fun day will welcome and promote their father and son relationship though activities, play and quality time (McDonough, 1995). Leo's mum can also attend as she is member of the community, this may have a positive impact on mum and dad's communication skills even though they are separated by placing them in a public and safe setting where they are free talk openly. As Scott *et al.* (2022) states that the outdoor environment is fresh air are beneficial for a clear mindset and to talk. Duncan (2013) States that it is important that the relationships practitioners form with children and families is sustained beyond the setting and into the community. To ensure that the child observes parents and practitioners as a unit to support their well-being. Barriers to the fun day may include enough volunteers to set up, an inclusive practitioner could resolve this by advertising well in advance and asking fellow practitioners to help out. Another barrier that needs to be considered is cost, the fun day could be free of charge with people from the community volunteering to do face paint and bouncy castles, the setting equipment could also be used (Local Government Association ,2012).

As inclusive leaders this setting offers an open-door policy meaning that all members of the community are welcome at any time to voice their ideas and concerns (Gibson and Blandford, 2005). However, at times this can be overwhelming as practitioners are already overworked as over 69% of teachers in a recent survey stated that they were suffering from burnout according to Bell (2023). Stevens (2003) agrees with this by stating that simply teachers do not have the time however counteracts this

stating that this does not outweigh that an open-door policy as it provides effective communication between the community and the setting.

According to Welsh Government (2016) it is also important that parent forums are easily accessible so that parents are receiving information linked to current events in the community and so that the inclusive practitioner is contactable at any time. The liaison between parents and school is also vital according to Welsh Government (2015) as working together has been found to provide the best outcome for the child. The sharing of information regularly provides the inclusive practitioner with an understanding of circumstances and allows them to offer support through the wider community. As a result of the inclusive practitioner, parents and the wider community working together and using the best available resources to promote Leo's relationships and gain local knowledge and insight Leo's development and communication skills will improve (Munro, 2015).

To summarise, it is evident throughout this paper that there's many opportunities for inclusive leadership to be carried out. Furthermore, all the strategies chosen benefit Leo in the scenario. In addition, going forward the next steps would be to ensure that the practitioners in the setting continue to provide Leo with a safe and secure environment to promote his sense of belonging and unique needs (Vain, 2023; Souto-Manning *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, the practitioners can continue to promote and strengthen the relationship with both parents in order to benefit the child, using the wider community for support (Duncan, 2013).

Section 2

Booyesen (2014, p.306) defines policies as a respectful practice, that allows individuals and groups to be fully a part of the holistic, directed, aligned, and committed towards shared outcomes, for the goal at hand for all, whilst retaining a sense of individuality. However, this does not consider that everyone has different personalities that may cause conflict when working in a group setting (De Dreu, van Dierendonck and Dijkstra, 2004). To counteract this, Baldock, Fitzgerald, and Kay (2013) defines a policy as an indication on a status or course of action taken by those with authority in an administrative practice, to work towards a common goal. This agrees with Booyesen when stating that policies are important as they are created for a group of people to work collaboratively towards a shared target. However, Baldock, Fitzgerald, and Kay (2013) state that policies are only for people with authority despite everyone having access to policies. A common element of policy is specificity as a policy will entail very specific detail ways of dealing with specified issues (Levin, 1999 cited in Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay, 2013 p.2). This works well for some people as they thrive with step-by-step instructions however every issue is different, and the policy may not be as relevant from one circumstance to another. The focus of this section will be analysing the flying start childcare: guidance the word policy throughout refers to this particular guidance (Welsh government ,2023a).

This is a macro policy as it is written by the Welsh government (The Economic Times ,2023). In the UK we have a labour government taken and the aims in Wales into account when writing a policy. However, macro policies are less personal than micro policies as micro policies are written by the setting and allow the workers to be included and give feedback according to Ferdman (2021, p.9).

Throughout the document the importance of children's rights and the child's voice is highlighted. However, the children did not write the policy, nor were they involved in the process (Welsh government ,2023a). Commissioner for children Tasmania (No date) states the importance of involving children by saying that it provides them with an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that involve them. Similarly, Children's commissioner for Wales (2023) states that embedding children's rights

allows the child to voice their needs and that they are considered when writing a policy. Collaboration is required to be inclusive, however if the document is written by one person or people with the same outlook no different views or opinions are considered could be presented as bias and narrow minded (Louis and Betteridge, 2020).

Wording is an ongoing issue throughout this policy on the first page it states that childcare providers must provide 'quality' childcare (Welsh government ,2023a). However, the word 'quality' can be interpreted in many different ways as a result the children may receive a varying standard of care according to Shulman (1928). Furthermore, throughout the document the word 'should' is also used when implying that flying starts 'should' have an accessible quality outdoor space. The word 'should' could be misleading for the practitioners following the document as it is not autoreactive and could lead to some settings proving an effective environment and others not (Welsh Government ,2023b). In order to improve this and make it inclusive to ensure that children receive the same standard of care and opportunities words such as 'must' and 'are required to' can be used to ensure inclusive practice for all children (Boise State University ,2023). Practitioners could also use initiative when reading the policy.

Throughout the policy the word 'gender' is mentioned however this is not inclusive as there are as Allarakha (2022) states that there are 72 genders. In addition, by just stating the word gender and is not making it personal and inclusive by identifying everyone at once. As a result, this can be interpreted as any gender however, every gender has unique needs and experiences that should be identified. This may present as discrimination according to McDonald, Terry, and Tehranifar (2014).

As an inclusive leader to make the document inclusive we can identify everyone's gender individually or just not state gender at all as no one's gender affects how they care for young children in the fly and start setting, this helps to promote gender equality according to Browne (2004). Gender is important as according to Bradbury and Coffey (2021) society shows a representative of what children are experiencing. Furthermore, there goal is to raise awareness and to discuss difference genders with children, creating Representation of all types of families.

This policy is only available in Welsh and English (Welsh Government, 2023a). This is not inclusive practice as if there was a practitioner whose first language was Romanian it is not available for them. In order to understand the policy fully, it is important that it is accessible in the practitioner's preferred language as this is vital for success according to Department for Education (2023). As an inclusive practitioner translation of policy should be done in a wide range of languages to help resolve this issue. This allows all practitioners to gain the same knowledge and understanding from the policy (Knight and Crick, 2021).

Despite the negative aspects of inclusivity throughout this policy. Flying starts are extremely beneficial according to Welsh Government (2017) as it provides families with support and allows children to engage in experiences that they many not normally due to coming from disadvantages areas. If flying starts did not exist, then a number of children would miss out valuable developmental opportunities before starting school (Welsh government ,2023a). Carneiro, Loken and Salvanes (2015) agrees with this by stating that flying starts provide young children with routine and social interactions.

To conclude, the theory behind flying start does work however, the policy needs to be updated to unsure quality and inclusivity for all.

Section 3

How to make children from different cultures feel a sense of belonging and proud of their heritage in an early year's setting?

A child has joined the setting with an African background however as an inclusive leader you notice nothing to promote their culture in the classroom environment as a result the child is feeling excluded, because she does not have that sense of belonging and comfort (Deer, 2020).

It is the inclusive leader's role to step in as Bortini *et al.* (2018) states that inclusive leaders appreciate diversity, invites, and welcomes everyone's individual contribution, and encourages full engagement with the processes of decision making and shaping reality. Rande *et al.* (2018) agrees with this statement by saying that inclusive leaders should foster a climate where everyone is free to feel welcome and facilitate belongingness.

In this case to promote inclusive leadership the practitioner could provide toys that resemble the child and the family. Furthermore, toys that make sounds in the child's first language can also be used. Lupean (2022) states that by playing with toys that reflect the world around them, children learn to respect people of different backgrounds and promotes questioning. As a result of being asked questions the child will feel a sense of belonging and proud of their heritage according to Pope and Miles (2022).

In addition, books can also be provided in the child's first language as according to the Equality Act 2010 this is beneficial to gain better understanding and having equal opportunities for development. This links to Eric Lenneberg's critical age hypothesis as children are more likely to learn a second language between, the age of two and puberty (Vanhove ,2013). In this case it is important that the child's first language is promoted by an inclusive practitioner so that it is not lost due to no exposure in the school setting, research shows that children's first language is likely to disappear if removed from their home country expect in extreme cases according to Hardach (2018). Do you want the children in your care to lose a part of them?

Policies can also be created for the setting relating to the unique needs of black children for example silk scarves for their hair when playing in sand and moisturizing hand cream after washing hands. As a result of this the child will feel more cared for and looked after establishing a sense of belonging according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Lester, 2013).

To support both the child and the family the child's parent could come in as the school supports an open-door policy to share knowledge with teachers and other children regarding their culture (Page, Whitting and Mclean, 2007). Pemberton (2020) supports this by stating that recognition of race is important in early years practice and that practitioners should be well educated.

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