

Section One

Whilst in physical science a catalyst speeds up a chemical reaction, in social science a human catalyst accelerates progress towards an end goal. Toomer *et al* (2018)

Costly and Armsby (2007) explain that effective leadership not only comes from the top or front of the organisation, but from throughout the organisation where effective leaders are leaders that are reflective, change makers in their profession. Reed and Canning (2012) support this and suggest that the catalytic leadership model shows that effective leadership can come from anywhere in the organisation, explaining that whilst a leader with an authoritative job title can impose changes a catalytic leader provides change through progressive action. McDowall Clark and Murray (2012) view catalytic leadership as where practitioners regardless of their job title implement change through reflection, improving and evolving their practice on along their journey rather than focusing on an end goal. Toomer (2018) describes the catalytic leader as a leader who can accelerate progress to ensure that the end goal is met.

McDowell Clark (2012) stated that an effective early year leader's role was not to control, organise and direct people but to be non-directive and influential because the non-directive influential approach steers change in small steps rather than through dramatic interventions. However, Tichy (1983) argues that there are three different leadership styles of change, force, being authoritative and stating that changes must happen which ensures change is made quickly, the mind, arguing logically and rationally why the change must happen and the heart which focuses on influencing people's values and beliefs so that they support and work towards the change. All have their benefits and downfalls whilst force ensures the change happens quickly it also can result in people feeling devalued and could result in losing staff. Whereas whilst influencing people's way of thinking ensures that practitioners work well together and there are shared beliefs of common goals, it is not always an effective method if the change is required to happen quickly. This is because influencing people's values and beliefs takes time. However, Moyles (2006), explains that a successful leader includes their team in implementing change, allowing them to be part of the change process and implementing change over longer periods of time. This supports the view of Baker as cited by Parker (2020) and the heart section of Tichy (1983). Moyles (2006) also explains that if change in the early years setting is made to quickly it has a detrimental effect on children's learning and wellbeing as children need time to adapt to the changes. This shows that the delayed time taken to implement change through catalytic leadership is not always negative and when making internal changes in early years settings it can be a positive. Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet (2016) also support long term improvement plans as suggest that long term quality improvement in early years settings requires

commitment from leaders, practitioners and teachers rather than short term changes resulting from compliance.

Baker (1972) as cited by Parker (2202) stated that strong people did not need strong leaders and that leadership development should not be provided to people who wish to lead alone but to people who wish to develop leadership among other people. Early Years Matters (no date) explain that leadership should inspire others, influencing others to share philosophy and beliefs to ensure staff understand the nursery's values and goals.

McMahon and Dyers (2017) explain that research into the early years sector suggest that children's outcomes are greatly improved in settings that promote strong leadership. Welsh Government (2022), support this and explain that children need enabling adults in their settings to ensure they feel safe and supported, enabling adults that can provide effective learning and engaging supportive learning environments. The entire workforce need to share the same values and beliefs regarding early years practice and work towards the common goal. For the New Non-Maintained Curriculum to be successful, all practitioners should focus on child led planning, encouraging independence, risk taking and challenge and vast opportunities for meaningful uninterrupted play. Moyles, (2006) explains that children should feel empowered and supported to become independent leaders of their own learning again showing that early years practitioners need to be catalytic leaders as described by Murray and McDowall Clark (2012) influencing and empowering not only the adults in their settings but the children too. Culp and Cox (2014) state that as a result of catalytic leaderships groups and individuals may change their thought belief or stance. They should feel energised as they all work together for a common goal. The catalytic leader would be influential, planting ideas and supporting the team members to reach the goals of the setting.

St Pierre (2004) explained that catalytic early years leaders will be prepared to take risks, encourage others to take risks and to engage with organisations to challenge social justice issues relating to early years and aim to improve lives of children. Parker (2020) states that in practice catalytic social justice leadership develops through struggle and that catalytic social justice leadership should include problem solving, collaboration and persuasion. Kilegi and Ewest (2012) suggest that education requires leaders that have intrinsic pro social values and have concern for social issues. Larson and Murtadha (2002), state that education has correctly championed the idea of social justice to create a civil and humane society.

Catalytic leaders throughout early years education are important to drive change and improve outcomes for children particularly where there are many sociological factors that impact on children

in the early years as discussed by Blank et al (no date). These are:

- **Socio-Economic Status:** Research showed that children's cognitive and social development was positively affected by higher parents' social class and greater family resources. It was positively affected with higher family income and higher earners in the household.
- **Housing Measures:** Children's cognitive and social development was positively affected in children whose parents owned their own house and negatively affected with social housing or being a resident in a deprived area and experiencing housing difficulties.
- **Early Years Education:** Childrens cognitive and social development was positively affected when the child attends any type of childcare setting.
- **Parental Relationship Status:** Childrens cognitive and social development was positively affected by having married parents or having birth parents living together. However it was stated it was negatively affected by living with a lone parent or step parent and further negatively affected if parents had disagreements over parenting the child.
- **Parenting Measures:** Childrens cognitive and social development was positively affected by positive parenting skills and there was also proven child wellbeing.

As Toomer et al (2018) explains catalysts lead change through building trust integrity and credibility, creating cohesion and developing relationships. Welsh Government (2018) explain that families have a powerful influence on children's school achievements, and that schools that wish to raise standards and improve pupil wellbeing need to engage successfully with carers, parents and the community. Involving parents in their child's education improves attitudes and behaviour in school and removes barriers to learning. Practitioners can develop successful relationships with caregivers to support them in times of need, by supporting them with parenting skills, directing them for housing or financial third parties.

Toomer et al (2018) states a catalyst generates momentum, mentors and coaches' others, deepens and expands knowledge through continuous professional development and inspires others. Care Council for Wales (2016) states that it aims to raise childcare standards in Wales by improving the skills of the childcare workforce as when skills and standards are raised, outcomes for children in early years education are greatly improved. Ryder (2016) argues that whilst qualifications have

been introduced there is lack of status and capital for a workforce who have the important role of supporting children and their families. Ryder (2016) also states that whilst research shows practitioners are confident in their practice and understand the values and ethics that underpin it many are frustrated by factors such as policy, inspection requirements and regulation and do not feel that they can challenge it and influence reform.

Lindon and Lindon (2011) explain that practitioners with Early Years Practitioner Status are required to be change agents, leading change regardless of job title. Talan, Bloom and Kelton (2014) support this and state that many early years practitioners did not set out to be leaders but were identified because they were good practitioners. Nutbrown (2012) also state that all practitioners should lead in their own way regardless of job title or qualification. Whilst Grantham-Caston and DiCarlo (2022) disagree and state that leadership in childcare can be described differently than in other professions, research has proven that for leadership to be effective then leaders must possess the characteristics and skills of an effective leader. However, Lindon and Lindon (2012) also state that practitioners often lack confidence to promote and lead change as they feel it is not their role if not in a job role with a leadership job title this again supporting Ryder (2016) views that many practitioners lack the confidence to be catalytic leaders and influence change to improve outcomes for children.

Section Two

According to Childrens Commissioner (no date) The role of Childrens Commissioner was created following a recommendation in the report by Lord Laming regarding the inquiry into the case of Victoria Climbié. Lord Laming (2001) suggested that under the Childrens Act (2004) a Childrens Commissioner was established to represent views of children and advocate their rights. However, despite the recommendations in Laming's report children are still being failed by multi agency working practices such as the case of Peter Connelly who was killed by his mother's boyfriend and his brother as stated by Community Care (2017).

As stated by The Childrens Commissioner for Wales (no date) The current children's commissioner for Wales is Rocio Cifuentes. Rocio Cifuentes has been in post since April 2022 and will remain Childrens Commissioner for Wales for seven years. Prior to her appointment as Childrens Commissioner, Rocio was a Chief Executive Officer of a charity supporting ethnic minority children, served on the Wales Committee for Equality and Human Rights Commission, supported homelessness, taught in a college and was chair of the Welsh Refugee Coalition. Rocio came to the UK as a refugee as a baby.

Childrens Commissioner for Wales (no dateb) state that the commissioner's role is to protect and promote children's rights in Wales. Along with the management team, the Childrens Commissioner for Wales aims to ensure that every sector public service prioritises children's rights when designing and delivering services for young people, to ensure that children are protected from physical harm, to ensure that every child is made aware of their rights through teaching and can experience their rights at home and in educational settings. The Childrens Commissioner Wales is also promoting multi agency working to ensure children have adequate mental health services and can access support where and when they need it and to ensure that the government take clear steps to reduce child poverty and its impact.

The Childrens Commissioner for Wales has power to review functions of government public bodies in relation to children. It has power to monitor and review complaint and whistleblowing policies of public bodies to ensure children are safeguarded and their rights are met. The Childrens Commissioner Wales does not have power to act in matters that have not been devolved to the Welsh Government, for example issues such as welfare benefits , immigration and asylum and justice and policing. They cannot override decisions where the children and court advisory service (CAFCASS) is able to act and are unable to enquire or report on any matter that has been the subject of legal proceedings.

They can however assistance and examine cases in respect to individual children in certain circumstances or where an organisation is not meeting its exercise of function. For example the Childrens Commission Wales (no datec) explains that they can review an exercise of functions if the public body is not doing what it is supposed to do. This was shown in the "Clywch" report that was published where the Children's Commissioner used powers of examination to investigate allegations of child sexual abuse in a school setting, where a Drama teacher called John Owen was accused of the historical sexual abuse of pupils in a school in Pontypridd. Owen killed himself before the court case, so the case did not go to trial. A range of recommendations were made by the commissioner to avoid such abuse being repeated, including training in safeguarding for all employee of schools and a range of new safeguarding procedures for educational establishments to follow. However, there were many criticisms of the Clywch report with Waters (2005), suggesting that twelve months after the report the assembly had still not implemented further safeguarding procedures. At the time of the report a Cwylch Response Group was set up and the Cwylch Response Group as cited by Wales online (2004) accused the Childrens Commissioner of Wales of making a finding of guilt of John Owen outside the Commissioners terms of reference and power, suggesting that the findings were unproven, that conclusions were made based on limited statements and reliability of evidence was not considered. The group stated that the report was seriously flawed, and the procedure was unfair. However, the response group as reported by Wales Online (2004), consisted of people

who knew John Owen and colleagues who worked with him, many of which were implicated in the report as were employed by the school at the same time, showing that they had potentially bias views.

As stated by Children's Commissioner Wales (2020) one of the reports by the Childrens Commissioner for Wales is the Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase report. It is stated that this was written as a six-year-old had been excluded for challenging behaviour from mainstream education and there was no other placement available for them. The child had no statement of additional learning need and no assessment process had been initiated. During 2018-2019 this did not seem to be an isolated case and the Childrens Commissioner office was taking calls from concerned parents of children under eight whose educational rights were not being up held. UNICEF (no date) states that in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child document article states that every child has the right to an education. The reports' purpose was to find out if this was a widespread issue in Wales and to find out the challenges the children were experiencing. Results of the report were that children were being allocated reduced timetables, taught in isolation or being excluded due to having challenging behaviour that was not explained through an official diagnosis.

According to the Childrens Commissioner for Wales (2020) one of the issues was exclusion or unlawful exclusion. Unlawful exclusion is described by as being where child is sent home for a period of time, for example a cooling off period maybe for half a day due to their behaviour. This is not recorded by the school, it is unofficial, but the children's commissioner argue that it should still be classed as exclusion. Rhondda Cynon Taf (no date) support this at explain that even if the parent agrees to the child being sent home such exclusion is still unlawful.

According to the Childrens Commissioner for Wales (2020) children are displaying challenges due to unmet needs, communication issues, poor routine and structure, poverty and inappropriate use of technology. This is supported by Bates (2019) who discusses Maslow's hierarchy of Needs, where a child needs basic needs such as shelter, food and housing, and then love and support before they can reach self-actualisation and thrive. If a child is not having one of these needs met, then the child may display challenges in behaviour. Watzlawick *et al* (1967) states that all behaviour is a form of communication.

Childrens Commissioner for Wales (2020) stated that parents called them to discuss cases where they felt children's needs were not being met in school. Out of the twenty one reports made to the commissioner sixteen were eventually diagnosed with either

with foetal alcohol syndrome , autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Teachers also described instances where children were suffering from additional learning needs or adverse childhood experiences and were not supported or given enough attention by external agencies. There were issues with specialist Social Emotional and Behaviour Disorder provision only being available in Wales for children in Year three and above. Welsh Government (2018b) devised The Additional Learning Needs Act Wales (2018) which was implemented from the school year 2021, Its aims are to create a unified legislative framework to all children school age and below with additional learning needs. It also includes all children in years ten and below who identify as requiring support but do not have an official diagnosis. The legislation states children must receive an integrated collaborative process of assessment and that interventions should be early, timely and effective.

Childrens Commissioner for Wales (2020) stated that there were concerns that children's speech and language needs were not being met in school. They state that behaviour is a response to a need again supporting Watzlawick et al (1967) view and state that if a child has a speech and language need and cannot communicate, therefore gets frustrated and displays negative behaviour then that is a speech and language need that needs addressing not a behavioural need.

Childrens Commissioner Wales (2020b) explain that an approach to deal with the challenges in behaviour that children were displaying were to deal with the challenged the right way, ensuring children's rights were met, being non-discriminatory, empowering, supporting participation and being accountable. The toolkit suggests that practitioners focus on building professional meaningful positive relationships with pupils and move away from thinking about managing the behaviour but developing the relationship Bomber (2020) suggest that' children need to regulate, reason and repair and we as practitioners should provide opportunity in settings to allow a child to do this in their time of need Childrens Commissioner Wales (2021b) states that practitioners should always be supportive and provide safe spaces for children to regulate again supporting Bowlby; s theory of attachment by providing a safe trusting relationship to the child who may be missing out on this at home. Childrens Commissioner Wales (2021) also suggest also providing a warm , nurturing environment where children feel safe , as described by Maslow's hierarchy of Needs as discussed by Aubrey and Riley (2016) , if children are having their needs met then they can reach self-actualisation.

Childrens Commission Wales (2021) had an impact on the Wellbeing of the children, supporting settings to put principle into action and bring strategies to classrooms in Wales to support the inclusion of all pupils. This included providing training on the right

way for practitioners to respect children's rights, advising settings on updating their policies to respect pupils rights.

Section Three

As described by UNICEF (no date) Article Twenty Seven in the United Nations Convention of the rights of a child state that all children are entitled to a standard of living that will support their physical and social needs and support their development. The government must help families who cannot provide and adequate standard of living. Townsend (2010) defined poverty as where individuals lack resources to participate in activities, having living conditions, amenities and eat a diet which is customary in the society in which they belong. Child Poverty Action Group state that in 2020 to 2021 there were three point nine million children living in poverty in the United Kingdom. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) explain that three out of every ten children living in Wales are living in poverty, which amounts to one hundred and eighty thousand children.

Hysen and Tomlinson (2016) state that children who are living in poverty are more likely to suffer from an adverse childhood experience due to families with low incomes suffering with higher levels of stress and lower levels of wellbeing. Hysen and Tomlinson (2016) suggest that when people are under stress they are not at their best and may turn to substances to numb feelings of inadequacy or become angered or short tempered. Clark and Wenham (2016) state that research showed that there is positive correlation between antidepressant prescriptions and local economic poverty areas. The poorest reported areas in the Index of Multiple deprivation in the north of the United Kingdom have the highest prescription rates.

As Bates (2019) suggests when discussing Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Systems, children's development is affected the ecological systems around them. With parents being the closest in the child's microsystem, the immediate environment, a parent's anxiety or depression would have an effect on the child. Shultz (2013) states that maternal depression disproportionately affects children in Low Income Families, thus creating a serious risk to healthy child development affecting the healthy parent-child relationship. This is supported by Bowlby's attachment theory as discussed by Aubrey and Riley (2016) where a child does not develop a secure attachment with their primary caregiver and may struggle with communication or attachment disorders affecting relationships with others later in life. The effect of poverty on older children is described by Ridge (2002). When describing interviews of families and children living in poverty it was noted that some children admitted to theft to enable them to have the same items as their friends or peers whilst other children felt they were singled out and treated as though they would not succeed at school due to being poor.

Hysen and Tomlinson (2016) also slightly contradict themselves by stating many people in poverty are stereotyped to show that they cannot manage their own lives, it takes organisation, perseverance and resourcefulness to successfully keep a family running on very little resources.

Welsh Government (2015) explained that one in three children in Wales were living in poverty and that by 2020 they wanted to ensure that no child in Wales was living in poverty. The child poverty strategy aimed to reduce households in which no adult in the family was working, to increase skills of adults and young people so that they could obtain paid employment on a reasonable wage and to bridge the gap of children and families in relation to health educational and economic outcomes by improving outcomes of the poorest. As discussed by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) now three in ten children are still living in poverty in Wales. The actions in the Welsh Government (2015) Child Poverty action plan has not eradicated child poverty completely but slightly reduced it from 33.33 percent to 30 percent.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) suggests that high quality early years childcare opportunities could improve child poverty outcomes in Wales. This is because as it increases parental ability to work and provides the child with greater academic and social opportunities, The two things that can help break the cycle of child poverty. However, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023) suggests that a barrier to this is that many parents are unable to receive the childcare offer due to gaps in provision. Parents who do not live in officially "deprived" areas are unable to receive any funding until their child is three, and parents who are unemployed in those areas receive very little support until their child is three. It was found that forty five percent of children in officially deprived areas were not entitled to free childcare, and by only providing the provision to those in deprived areas it disadvantages other families living in poverty that may need the provision.

Welsh Government (2014) is the service that provides the childcare opportunities for the under threes, They also provide a health visiting service, parenting programmes and early language support to those in deprived areas. Welsh Government (2018) evaluated the Flying Start service and found that families who received support from Flying Start were more likely to engage with family support services than others, engaged more with health visitors than non-flying start families, most families accessed the parenting support and speech and language support and parents had positive views of flying start interventions. One criticism was that in some areas Welsh speaking families struggled for support

to be provided in the Welsh language. Parents believed that Sure Start supported had made positive outcome differences to their children suggesting that improvements could be made for higher engagement of families.

Rhondda Cynon Taf (no dateb) explains that Families First was brought out as part of the child poverty action plan. Clear emphasis is on early intervention and prevention to avoid statutory intervention particularly to families who are in poverty.

Newport Council (no date) state that Families First promotes the development of effective, coordinated multi-agency work focussed on families, with a clear emphasis on early intervention and prevention to avoid statutory intervention. Families First support families to decide what they need for the family to thrive. Families First can provide intervention support with parenting, home management, anger management and challenging behaviour, self-esteem and school attendance, transitions, healthy relationships and anti-social behaviour and low-level crime. Families First provide support to young people up to the age of twenty-five to support them into training or employment and provide safe child led play opportunities for younger people through play programmes. Welsh Government (2017) explain that Families First is designed to improve outcomes for children and their families and to reduce chances of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Hysen and Tomlinson (2016) suggest that a child who has one adverse experience is eighty percent like to experience another one and explains the more risk a family has the less likely they are to seek help.

Rhondda Cynon Taf (no date) explains that Families First treat the needs of a family holistically, as well as responding to the needs of individuals in the family unit. Families First provide bespoke tailored intervention to meet the needs of the family.

Welsh Government (2015b) evaluated the Families First Programme, as the programme is a national programme with the responsibly of operation led by the local authorities in Wales. The evaluation in Year Three of the programme found that overall the Early Intervention Programme had been successful, however there were limitations on measurement of success as measurement was through a small number of handpicked case studies. Welsh Government (2017) explain that a barrier to providing Families First support is lack of engagement. This could be due to physical barriers such as lack of transport or cultural barriers such as mistrust in children's services or language barriers.

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