

Section 1

Leadership can be defined as someone who undertakes the opportunity in leading a group within an activity or role (Emeritus, 2022). According to (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022) a leader is someone who is “tasked with the responsibility of leading, managing, and supervising others. They’re forward-thinkers who influence and inspire their team members toward achieving their desired goal.” Catalytic Leadership within the early years is any practitioner who wants to make a change and inspires change for the children and young people within their care, a catalytic leader within the early years is someone who seeks opportunities which can change children’s and parents’ lives, a catalytic leader within the early years is someone who doesn’t ask can they do something they just do it as they know it will benefit the children, young people and / or parents they work with. A catalytic leader within the early years is someone who actively looks for opportunities that can benefit a child’s development and learning to ensure that the child is reaching the best possible outcomes. According to (Zachery, 2011, page 29) “the five components of a leadership catalyst are ingrained states of being for a leader that promote, encourage, or elicit leadership behaviours in others”. The 5 components are mindful, connected, intentional, genitive, and heretical. Although there are 5 components found, there are often times where catalytic leaders will find that they overlap.

There are often troubles within the early years that practitioners feel that leadership comes from power or roles within the setting, it comes from the presumption that “leadership stems from authority” (McDowall, 2012, page 397). Teaching assistants and other practitioners lead more than they know it, but they do not recognise that they are being a leader due to the fact that they are not in a position of management or leadership within the school, often attitudes are that if they are not in the senior leadership team (SLT) then they are not a leader. Reggio Emilia have a great catalytic leadership example due to the fact that they took it upon themselves to change and build a new educational system after the war to ensure children could get the best learning possible given the demanding times, after the war they found empty buildings that could be used as classrooms due to the high demand and need for schools at that time.

There are many sociological factors that can affect children and young people’s learning and development, and it often takes a catalytic leader to get to the root cause of any issues that are refraining the child or young person from being able to perform to the best of their ability. Sociological issues can be defined as “Social issues are topics or subjects that impact many people. They often reflect current events but also represent longstanding problems or disagreements that are difficult to solve. Beliefs, opinions, and viewpoints can be strong, and debate on these topics is a natural outcome of public discourse” (Gale, 2023). Sociological issues can play a major impact on a child’s learning and development, they are issues such as poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, domestic abuse, and neglect. These can then cause a child to have adverse childhood experiences and children who suffer from Adverse Childhood Experiences can have lifelong issues such as poor health in their adult hood and they can suffer from mental health their whole life, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are intense and often scary events that happen during childhood.

When it comes to domestic abuse it can cause long- and short-term effects on a child, every child is different so the way they recover from something as traumatic as witnessing or being physically hurt themselves. Domestic abuse can cause a range of impacts and effects on a child such as emotional and behavioural issues. When children witness or become the victim within domestic abuse, they will feel a range of emotions such as anger, powerless and scared. Early Years Practitioners need to be aware of all signs and symptoms when it comes to domestic abuse, children who suffer from domestic abuse will seem withdrawn, there will be reoccurring marks and bruises on the child's body. Therefore, it is extremely important practitioners have safeguarding training whilst working in schools in settings and that they are very vigilant when working with children and young people (Women's aid, 2022). Practitioners need to be calm and patient when suspecting child abuse, if a child is comfortable enough, they may speak to a teacher or practitioner about what they have witness or about what has happened to them. Practitioners need to ensure they follow the safeguarding policy of their settings. Record and report it as soon as possible and as a catalytic leader they may feel it is not their responsibility to record and report it, but a child's safety is everyone's responsibility.

Poverty is something that happens all around Wales and due to current times more children are suffering and living in poverty than ever before. According to (Children in Wales, 2021) "latest figures show that 34% of children in Wales are living in poverty". Poverty can leave an impact on children lasting a lifetime, it leaves an overall negative impact on their health and wellbeing. However, there are many things catalytic leaders may do within the early years to help parents and young children, many schools offer a free breakfast club in the mornings, schools are able to provide children with breakfast every morning for parents who need to work earlier but also for children who do not get breakfast in the mornings at home. Some schools in Wales offer food boxes to those who need it most, to the families they are aware of that are struggling in current times. Furthermore, a local primary school in Swansea places an emphasis on recycling old school uniform so those who need it most can have uniform to wear to school every day. This local primary offers second hand uniform that is still in perfect wearable condition to those families who are unable to afford new uniform. Within this circumstance a catalytic leader may go out of their way to get uniform for a child who they see in dirty clothes or a child they see in the wrong clothing for the time of year, for example just a t-shirt in winter a catalytic leader would take it upon themselves to get the child suitable clothing without worrying about the scrutiny from other members of staff.

To conclude, catalytic leaders can be anyone who wants to make a change for the good of other people especially within the early years, it is a practitioner taking time out of their day to speak to those parents who struggle with poverty and letting them know about different services available to help them when their suffering such as food banks.., Within the early years catalytic leaders inspire change and change for the better of the children within their care. Often practitioners are worried about the backlash they may receive when a catalytic leader being when they should not have to worry as long as all intentions are to benefit the children, young people, and their family.

Section 2

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is Rocio Cifuentes, part of Rocio Cifuentes' roles and responsibilities is to educate others on the importance of children's rights and how decisions made by the Government can affect children and young people living in Wales. The Children's Commissioner for Wales is a new role within the government, it was first set up in 2001. It was set up under the Care Standards Act 2000, Rocio's roles and responsibilities are set out in the Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001 (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2023). In order for Wales to have their own Children's Commissioner separate from the UK Government, the Health and Social Services Committee (HSSC) placed a huge emphasis to the government on the need for the promotion of children's rights and welfare, the paper the HSSC produced mentioned the significance for the need of the promotion and education of children's rights. However, the UK Government were very resistant at first to allow the Welsh Assembly to have its own Children's Commissioner although it was then passed by the UK Government after altering the Care Standards Act 2002 (Clarke, 2002). There have only been 4 Children's Commissioners in Wales since the post began in 2001, Peter Clarke was the first commissioner from 2001 until he died in 2007, he focused on "planning, transport, the environment, economic development and rural affairs" (Philpot, 2007) that affect children's learning and development as well as the promotion of children's rights. The second Children's Commissioner for Wales was Keith Towler, from 2008 to 2015 Keith placed a huge emphasis on protecting and safeguarding children from trafficking, he also placed an emphasis on play, and this was outlined in the reports he created (Welsh Government, no date). The third Children's Commissioner for Wales was Sally Holland, she was Children's Commissioner from 2015 to 2022. Sally Holland was dedicated to implementing the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC), Sally's implementation can be seen "through her development and delivery of *The Right Way* which is a resource drawing together a strategic approach to embedding children's rights" (Welsh Government, 2022). The current Children's commissioner is Rocio Cifuentes she took over from Sally Holland in 2022, according to (Wightwick, 2022) Rocio has "promised to ensure children's voices, views and future would be top of her agenda". The Children's Commissioner for Wales must ensure that children within Wales are safeguarded and have access to necessary resources in order to further develop children and young people's knowledge on their rights.

Sally Holland produced a report called Sam's Story in 2017, it looks at bullying within Wales. Sally continues the work of earlier Children's Commissioner Peter Clarke. Within the report it is said that children who suffer from bullying are often different to the other children, they are bullied due to their characteristics such as ethnicity and gender. Bullying can be defined as "repeated behaviour which is intended to hurt someone either emotionally or physically and is often aimed at certain people because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation or any other aspect such as appearance or disability" (Family Lives, 2022). Bullying is a devastating situation that happens all around the world. Bullying can affect children for their whole lives, it can leave them with life lasting mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. Bullying is wrong and goes against the rights set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), furthermore the rights set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child include children having the right to be safe and have the right to an education (Unicef, no date). Bullying goes against these rights as children will feel unsafe and will not want to go to school therefore there will be gaps in

learning and development due to missing vital education. According to the (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2023) children who become victims of bullying will suffer from many long terms and short-term impacts, short-term including issues with learning and have a poor mental health, long term impacts include poor health in adulthood and struggle to gain and sustain relationships. When a child is being bullied there is many signs to look out for, they may seem withdrawn, unwilling to go to school, struggle eating and sleeping and unexplained injuries (NSPCC, 2023)

Within the report it says that children who witness the bullying do not know what to do, within the report it is stated that more work is to be done to educate the children who they can turn to when they witness bullying, “ this highlights a potential need for further work relating to bystanders, equipping children with the confidence to act when they become aware of bullying” (Holland, 2017, page 5). This was a key finding within the report that children who are by standers are in conflict with helping the child who is being bullied, telling the teacher, and just ignoring the situation. Often people who are bystanders to bullying can suffer from anxiety, guilt, and depression, by standers often may not help as they feel someone else will help the victim and they also may feel that they will get bullied as well for helping or reporting the issue (Gordon, 2021). However, if the bystander reports the issue of bullying or cyberbullying to a teacher or member of staff the appropriate consequence will be put in place following both Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bulling Policy, despite this “in 2005, the majority of respondents said their school did not have an anti-bullying policy” (Holland, 2017, page 4) furthermore from more recent findings, it was said that " bullying is still a widespread concern for children in 2017” (Holland, 2017, page 4). In addition to this, following a survey found in 2020 19% of young people in Wales and England ages 10-15 years said they experienced bullying online, that corresponds to 764,000 children (Office of National Statistics, 2020). Even more shockingly “nearly three out of four children (72%) who had experienced an online bullying behaviour experienced at least some of it at school or during school time” (Office of National Statistics, 2020). Referring to schools lacking an anti-bullying policy it is now law under the Education and Inspectors Act 2006, section 89 that all schools must display good and bad behaviour and their outcomes, and they must have measures in place to meet the outcomes, schools do this through an Anti-Bullying Policy or a Behaviour Policy (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2023 A).

Looking at the recommendations of this report it suggest that schools begin to adapt an approach where the wholistic view of the school is through children’s rights and using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to promote anti-bullying and child safety, “schools in Wales should adopt a Child Rights Based Approach to Education and promote a culture that supports children to learn about rights and respect the rights of others” (Holland, 2017, page 27). A local primary school in Swansea whole approach is through using children’s rights in order to promote positivity through the school, the local primary school had the children redesign the school logo to fit the new ethos of the school, the school now has a Rights Respecting Rhino as their logo and even on the school clothing it remind staff, children and visitors that the school is a rights respecting school, this has been the ethos for the school for many years.

From looking at another recommendation from Sam's Story, it states that “Children benefit from opportunities like circle time and other fora in which they can reflect and discuss peer

relationships and behaviour” (Holland, 2017, page 29) many schools in Wales use check in’s every morning as a way for children’s to let staff know how they are feeling, not only that it allows the children to understand their feelings “children benefit because they learn how to identify their own feelings and articulate them through words” (Shackleton, 2017). Children checking in and addressing their feelings is important due to the fact that it makes staff aware of any issues and concerns such as bullying.

To conclude the Children’s Commissioner's role has had a major impact on the schools across Wales due to the fact that many schools have changed the whole dynamic of the school from looking at a released report. The Children’s Commissioner plays a vital role ensuring that children’s rights and needs are being met across the country in all aspects of learning and development, the Children’s Commissioner works hard to ensure that the government does not affect children’s rights and that all children are able to grow up being educated on their rights so that they can work in positive and respected environments, ensuring every child is safe from danger and abuse such as bullying. The Children’s commissioner works hard to ensure all children are safe and protected through her role and no damage comes to them and their learning and development. Rocio Cifuentes promotes the inclusion of rights within schools and the importance of them.

Section 3

Sociological issues impact children’s learning and development, poverty plays a huge impact on children when it comes to their education, according to (Public Health Scotland,2021) “poverty has negative impacts on children's health, social, emotional and cognitive development, behaviour and educational outcomes”, a child having all these impacts on their health and wellbeing can lead to children and young people having Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) , these happen to children everywhere but especially to children born into poverty and in deprived areas, in more deprived areas where there is an extreme amount of poverty it has been found that the number of children who do have Adverse Childhood Experiences is relatively larger than the number of children in less deprived areas (NHS Scotland, 2021). Adverse Childhood Experiences are intense events that happen during childhood that are distressing to children and young people, Adverse Childhood Experiences can leave life lasting problems and determine a child’s outcomes in life, as stated by (Public Health Network Cymru, 2017) Adverse Childhood Experiences can be defined as “traumatic events that affect children while growing up, such as suffering child maltreatment or living in a household affected by domestic violence, substance misuse or mental illness”. Children who suffer with Adverse Childhood Experiences can have health struggled in their adulthood, Adverse Childhood Experiences can leave children with lifelong mental health struggles such as anxiety and depression.

Poverty can play a vital role in a child’s Adverse Childhood Experiences; a child will miss opportunities within early learning and development due to the fact that a child is to being born into poverty. Being born into poverty does not give them the best start in life as parents may struggle to be able to afford resources such as reading books to help encourage a child’s learning from an early age. Children who struggle with poverty and trauma can have problems extending their whole life, this is according to (The Robertson Trust, 2023) they state that “when children experience poverty and trauma at the same time, the impacts can be

even more profound and damaging and can extend well beyond childhood” therefore proving that poverty is also a vital factor as to why children may have Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Schools and services offer early interventions in order to reduce the risk of poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences happening to children and young people. Early interventions are agencies, schemes and groups that a child and its parents may take part in, this is for the child in order for them to gain a better life and also allows all children to have “a flying start in life” (Welsh Government, 2015, page 2), which is a priority set by the Welsh Government within the Foundation Phase Framework as it's an aim they want to ensure will happen for all children in Wales. As stated by (Graham Allen MP, 2011, page 3) “Early Intervention enables every baby, child and young person to acquire the social and emotional foundations upon which our success as human beings depends” children who need early interventions and do not receive them can struggle later into adulthood as they have not gained the necessary tools to thrive within their lives.

Early interventions can include multi-agencies working in schools and settings, and schools that work with many outside agencies to ensure children are reaching their maximum potential for their learning and development, often children who have difficulty at home due to suffering with Adverse Childhood Experiences often work with an agency called Brighter Futures, this agency works with parents and their children in order for them to get a better life for themselves by trying to stop the generational cycle of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Many children Brighter Futures work with have difficulty at home and these children also struggle emotionally and behaviourally. Brighter Futures often come into the schools and settings that the children are based in and have 1-2-1 sessions with them. The sessions are often based on understanding their emotions and why they use certain behaviours (Faith in Families, no date). Although agencies such as Brighter Futures work closely with children and their families in order to gain the best possible outcome for them, Early Intervention Foundation released a report in 2017, within this report it was discussed that multiagency working groups were taking place, however there was little evidence to show which multi-agencies were most effective (Early Intervention Foundation, 2017). Despite this, Brighter Futures has had a positive effect on the children they work with due to the fact that “97% of parents noticed that their child interacted better with others after being involved with the project” (Faith in Families, no date). Similarly, “98% of parents noticed an increase in their child’s confidence” (Faith in Families, no date), granting all Early Intervention Foundation’s report Brighter Future has had a larger impact on the families it has worked with over the last 21 years.

In conclusion, sociological issues such as poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences play a significant role in a child’s learning and development, these issues can determine a child’s future and how well they do in life. Providing children with early interventions can help reduce the risk of the generational cycle carrying on and provides them with a better understanding of their feelings, behaviours, and relationships they encounter. Early interventions allow children to gain better outcomes for their lives and helps prevents adulthood illnesses.

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