

Inspiring leaders to
improve children's lives



National College
for Leadership of Schools
and Children's Services

Child poverty: we can make a difference

Summary report of the children's centre leaders' event
December 2009

Angela Spencer

Report

Introduction and welcome (10 minutes)

The Child poverty: we can make a difference event brought together 114 leaders of children's centres and directors of local authorities to:

- promote an exchange of ideas and understanding of what they could do to make a difference
- share one another's understanding of the various risks and factors that impact on child poverty
- exchange knowledge and examples of effective local practice with colleagues
- present a marketplace of resources, tools and approaches that could support local outcomes and improve the work across children's centres
- explore the potential of integrated delivery to better meet the needs of children and families

Jane Creasy, education consultant and event facilitator, welcomed delegates and outlined the key objectives of the day.

Child poverty remained a significant issue affecting society. The event would give delegates a chance to hear from people who were making a difference and come up with breakthrough ideas that they believed should be included in any local child poverty strategy.

Jane led an ice-breaker exercise in which delegates were invited to stand up or sit down to show their preferences for a series of choices, eg Ford or VW, Costa or Starbucks. The day's event was similarly about being ready to stand up and be counted.

Delegates had been shown to one of 17 tables, each furnished with a tablet laptop on which to record key points and questions. Their inputs would be centrally collated throughout the day and shared with the whole room on the main conference screen. A record of all the electronic inputs for the event can be viewed in the full report accompanying this summary.

In a test run, delegates were asked to use the laptops to record the names of inspiring leaders and what made them special. The results included:

- Barack Obama: personable, shared leadership, appears to listen
- Geoffrey Canada: made such a difference to so many people's lives
- Nelson Mandela: values not for sale, no time to be bitter
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu: because he makes me have hope
- Winston Churchill: motivated people at such a difficult time
- My mum: matriarch

The full list of responses is contained in the accompanying report.

Context setting: Sue Egersdorff (15 minutes)

Sue Egersdorff, the National College's Operational Director, Extended and Integrated Leadership, set the context for the day.

All 3,125 designated children's centres would be formally placed on a statutory footing in January 2010. This required local authorities to support them, and other services (such as health services and Jobcentre Plus), to be delivered through them. It was a huge endorsement of children's centres, and leaders should feel proud of their achievements to date.

Shrinking resources would however make it increasingly difficult to sustain and develop the quality of children's centre services over coming years. Planning for challenges ahead was therefore crucial. This was difficult for a leader by influence, rather than a leader in a chain of control. It meant leading by values and working to develop these values in themselves and others.

The child poverty agenda was hugely complex, but was essentially about giving all children a richness in their lives that enabled them to overcome barriers and make the most of opportunities presented to them. It wasn't about simply delivering services to children and families, but about working with them in partnership to help them find their own solutions.

The child poverty issue was nothing new. Benjamin Rowntree's 1901 report on child poverty talked for the first time about the poverty line, primary and secondary poverty and the poverty cycle. The Beveridge Report of 1942 talked about five giant evils in society: want, idleness, ignorance, squalor and disease. Between the late 1970s and mid-1990s, child poverty doubled in the UK, making it the nation with the highest rate of child poverty in the industrialised world.

Today, 10 years into the government's pledge to end child poverty by 2020, there was plenty of good guiding policy, but words on a page wouldn't change things for children and families. The answers lay in hard work, unwavering dedication, committed professionals with high expectations for children and families and, above all, everyone who came into contact with children and families making a strong personal connection that gave hope, aspiration and inspiration.

Gifted leaders of children's centre had to be:

- ambassadors relentless in doing the right things for the children they were working with
- focused on doing the tough work where it counted, not just skirting round the edges
- curious enough to step into territories where they had never been before, and to think and do things in different ways
- courageous for children – brokering strong relationships, having unconditional love for the children and communities in which they worked, and challenging to the point of irritation those who said they could not make a difference

Sue concluded by reciting the poem *Some People* by Irish poet and dramatist Rita Ann Higgins. The essence of the poem was that some people knew what it was like to be poor and unsupported, and some people didn't. "We need to understand what it's like and not be the people that don't," said Sue.

Keynote: Lord Mawson OBE (35 minutes)

In the second address of the day, social entrepreneur Andrew Mawson, founder and president of the renowned Bromley-by-Bow Centre in East London and co-founder and president of the Community Action Network (CAN), talked about his work. A copy of his book, *The Social Entrepreneur*, had been included in delegate's information packs.

He said making a difference to child poverty was a big matter to contemplate. The best way into the big things was to start small and get the detail right, like American entrepreneur Paul Preston, who brought the burger chain McDonald's to Britain. Preston concentrated first on the detail of a single shop in south London before going on to open thousands of outlets across the country.

Andrew went on to tell the story of the Bromley-by-Bow Centre through a series of inspirational vignettes about people from the community whom he had worked with in partnership over 25 years. Together they had gradually effected the regeneration of a substantially disadvantaged area through entrepreneurial commitment.

Having arrived at Bromley-by-Bow as the clergyman responsible for a rundown church with a congregation of 12 and £400 in the bank, he came across civil servants whose inflexibility hindered improvement and charitable organisations whose ideologies stood in the way of entrepreneurship and actually perpetuated local poverty and dysfunction. He decided to find out the truth for himself by, as he put it, "loitering with intent" on local estates and getting to know local people.

He allowed a dance teacher to use the church for dance classes that built connections and raised funds. By year 6, her dance school had 150 students and a staff of 8. There were protestations from the voluntary sector about poor children being charged for classes, but the project's success illustrated the difference between what some people wanted for families and what families actually wanted for themselves.

Andrew formed a partnership with a group of families running a nursery in a local house and together they brought in an architect to redesign the church's interior so that it included a smaller church, an integrated nursery for children, a community and events centre, and a gallery where local artists displayed their work on condition that they shared their skills in workshops.

By starting small and becoming known for what they did rather than what they talked about, Andrew and his congregation gained the trust of local people who had previously heard countless promises that never came to fruition. "Integrity and delivery matter," he said. "We realised that money isn't the most important thing in getting things started: it's the idea. Money follows the entrepreneurial commitment."

He told the story of Billy, an out-of-work builder who took control of planting a meadow on wasteland behind the church. Nine years later the project had developed into a landscaping business with a £1.5 million turnover that created new jobs. Andrew said: "The entrepreneur's eye doesn't see problems, it sees fascinating opportunities."

Andrew told the story of a mother of two who died in poverty of cancer, and with only the support of friends to look after her two children, disabled mother and mentally ill father. Statutory services had failed her because different departments didn't communicate with each other. Following her death, Andrew delivered a vision for the first integrated health centre in the country, with medical and public health services, art gallery, education centre and community centre with 125 different activities all under one roof. After an 18-month battle, a government minister instructed the local health authority to provide staff and a budget for the project. Today the Bromley-by-Bow Centre has 166 staff and is recognised internationally for its pioneering approach to community regeneration.

Finally Andrew told the story of St Paul's Way in Tower Hamlets, where three years ago, local services didn't speak to one another and where the local school had been judged at inspection as being in serious difficulty. After taking local services leaders to a conference centre in the Cotswolds so that they could get to know each other, they came up with an idea for a new village for St Paul's Way. Now health, social and education services were working together and with local people to build a new £40 million school, a health centre and a science complex. The local children's centre leader was part of a larger leaders' group that put together all the connections.

Question and answer session (20 minutes)

Following the keynote address, delegates were given 10 minutes to think about what they had heard so far and to record any comments or questions on their laptops.

One theme that emerged was how to break through local authority and government barriers. This was illustrated by several of the inputs:

- If you have an idea that could bring change on the ground, who do you take that to who would listen and not put barriers up?
- As an influential leader within local government, how much can we champion this level of independence and autonomy? How can we be mavericks and challenge people enough to bring about change whilst keeping our jobs?
- There is a compromise between entrepreneurial vision and the structures, policies and bureaucracy that we have to work with in local authority services: how do you get the balance but still manage to play positive politics?


Andrew said the answer was to start small, believe in yourself and look for other individuals in the organisations around you who feel the same way. If people thought entrepreneurially, did things carefully and clearly and looked for allies, the system would take them seriously. Those people who rose in their careers were often the ones who challenged in this way.

Another emerging theme was about the can-do mindset and getting everyone to the point where they all wanted to work together to create the same thing:

- How to change mindsets and get everyone on the same page?

Andrew said this was simple. Rather than talking about needs and poverty, leaders should look for the opportunities that came with individual people. They should spend time with parents trying to discover what made them tick. Underneath the professional-parent relationship was another level – the ‘human being’ – where there were all sorts of different connections and opportunities.

The full set of responses recorded for this session is contained in the accompanying report. Following the question and answer session, there was a break.



“They are building the vision as they walk it, by building partnership along the way. That’s how you build a place, through people and relationships.”

Andrew Mawson

Workshops (60 minutes)

In the hour before lunch, delegates were allocated to one of four workshops:

- Integrating delivery to better meet the needs of children and families living in poverty
- Improving parental employment rates: working with Jobcentre Plus
- Supporting the development of local child poverty strategies
- Working alongside parents to raise aspiration

Workshop 1: Integrating delivery to better meet the needs of children and families living in poverty

Peter Gerrard, Head of East Staffordshire Children's Centre and Sally Ward, Children's Centre Co-ordinator

This workshop looked at how the East Staffordshire Children's Centre was engaging key partners across a range of sectors to provide successful interventions to tackle child poverty in the urban area of Burton-on-Trent, which has the highest Black and minority ethnic population in Staffordshire.

Peter and Sally showed a DVD illustrating the centre's holistic approach and gave an overview of its 30 services. Key to its integrated working was an open-plan office shared by professionals from a range of sectors. For example, seven service partners were involved in running a parenting group for teenage mums and the professionals met every month to assess their own performance against mutually agreed targets.

Centre staff made home visits to gradually break down barriers with harder-to-reach families, offering one-to-one sessions if needed. The provision of minibus transport for users had also made an impact on engagement. Keeping a high profile through publicity was considered vital: "We can't address child poverty if no one knows who we are."

Delegates were asked to work in groups to answer three questions:

- What is child poverty?
- How do we identify child poverty in our communities?
- What do we, as integrated children's centres, do about it when we encounter child poverty?

The workshop agreed there were different facets to child poverty, ranging from more obvious physical and material deficits to less visible emotional poverty. Not meeting one or more of the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes could constitute child poverty. Parents' experiences and aspirations had direct influence and often perpetuated the poverty cycle.

Identifying child poverty involved taking time to walk round estates, seeing, hearing and talking to families and building relationships and trust. It involved using key professionals and community members as ears and eyes in identifying vulnerable families, as well as outreach work for harder-to-reach families. It also involved having an awareness of data and statistics and not allowing the centre's core offer to detract from what needed to be done.

For integrated children's centres, working to end child poverty involved being focused on solutions, sharing information and working in partnership with families and other services/organisations, and using the common assessment framework (CAF). It involved building trust and relationships within the community (not making assumptions) and providing a welcoming, supportive environment in which families were exposed to a richness of experiences and opportunities. The focus should be can-do, but the work should be done with rather than to families.

Workshop 2: Improving parental employment rates: working with Jobcentre Plus

Caroline Jones, Child Poverty Unit and Doreen Smith, Jobcentre Plus

This workshop looked at how children's centres and Jobcentre Plus were working together to tackle poverty and unemployment by developing programmes that support parents to enter the job market and building real working relationships with employment providers.

The Child Poverty Unit's focused services pilot programme had placed advisers from HM Revenue and Customs and Jobcentre Plus advisers in 30 children's centres across 10 local authority areas to provide advice on tax credits and personalised employment support.

The backdrop to the programme was the new Child Poverty Bill, which proposed to place a duty on local authorities and a range of local partners to co-operate to reduce child poverty in their area. This involved carrying out a child poverty needs assessment and preparing a local child poverty strategy.

Children's centres were already tackling the root causes of deprivation and mitigating the effects of poverty by bringing services together within the community around the needs of the family, but research had shown more could be done by working with Jobcentre Plus services to help families raise their income through access to personalised employment support and financial advice.

Before becoming involved in the pilot at the North West Nottingham Sure Start Children's Centre, Doreen had felt isolated in a Jobcentre Plus office detached from the children's centre team. Getting started had involved a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check and a two-week induction to the children's centre shadowing various team members, touring the local area and talking to members of the community, employers and partner organisations.

There had been a number of operative challenges, including IT obstacles and having to wait for risk assessments to be carried out so that she could work at non-departmental locations. All these things were resolvable however and it was important to think positive and not be put off.

Doreen felt the pilot had proved a big success. She now felt part of the team and was able to get involved in some of the other activities at the centre as well as offering Jobcentre Plus services on tap. Of the 285 parents engaged in the pilot, 16 had now found work and 29 were in training. The pilots as a whole were showing that children's centres and Jobcentre Plus were achieving more by working together than operating separately.

Delegates were asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of having Jobcentre Plus in children's centres. Issues raised included:

- lack of funding
- strained relations between children's centre leaders and Jobcentre Plus
- Jobcentre Plus being target driven
- not enough Jobcentre Plus advisers to go round
- a need to evaluate pilot projects before the scheduled date of 2011

Workshop 3: Supporting the development of local child poverty strategies

Layla Richards, Service Manager, Strategy and Paula Holt, Children's Centre Strategic Manager

The Tower Hamlets Partnership brought key stakeholders, including elected members, health and economic partners, Jobcentre Plus, housing services, children and young people, together with the Children and Families Trust to tackle child poverty in Tower Hamlets through four key themes:

Removing barriers to work

Successes: a job brokerage service being rolled out in children's centres and getting 669 more people into work through the city strategy pilot between January 2008 and March 2009

Work in 2010: a programme in children's centres and a financial incentives scheme for families in temporary accommodation

Developing pathways to success

Successes: more than 600 parents receiving passport to learning certificates in 2008/09 and having 873 English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners in the 2008/09 academic year

Work in 2010: extension of ESOL provision and development of a comprehensive apprenticeship scheme and additional diploma lines

Mitigating the effects of poverty

Successes: reducing the gap between those eligible for free school meals and their peers to the lowest in the country and giving 2,000 disadvantaged young people £40 a month to spend on cultural and leisure activities

Work in 2010: targeted learning programmes for each significant group of 14-18 learners at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) and roll-out of a family intervention programme (FIP) in relation to babies.

Breaking the cycle of poverty

Successes: doubling the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, since 2000 and reducing the number of young people NEET from 13.5 per cent to 6.7 per cent in three years. Work in 2010: establishment of a new benefits service take-up team, provision of a child development grant in children's centres and provision of in-depth financial literacy training for parents

Giving a children's centre perspective, Paula Holt said an employment project had helped 42 parents access training or education in the past year, 9 begin volunteering, 14 enter paid employment and 10 attend a small business workshop. A child development grant pilot project had also enabled the centre to offer financial incentives to hard-to-reach families, giving £50 to parents who completed a four-week programme of activities and a further £150 to those who went on to complete a 12-week programme.

The children's centre was currently working with the FIP team and an educational psychologist on a mellow parenting course aimed at early intervention with vulnerable families. In addition, HM Revenue and Customs advisers were visiting the centre for a half day each month to give advice and information about tax credits, helping 45 families in the first year.

Delegates were asked to consider:

- What good practice can be highlighted in your local areas?
- What are the things we need to focus on?
- What are the challenges looking ahead?
- How do we make this sustainable, particularly in a landscape of tighter public spending?
- What are the radical things we could be doing?

Flipchart notes on the issues raised were:

- expectations versus the core offer
- relevance of the core offer
- personalisation
- too many masters
- community development/engagement
- harnessing opportunities
- outreach workers - mandatory visits
- NHS birth data
- email account for each children's centre
- early intervention
- inspire/involvement/active
- empowerment and ownership
- radical – carrot/stick
- advice – credit unions

Workshop 4: Working alongside parents to raise aspiration

Alison Priestly, Sure Start Area Lead, Newcastle; Heather Docherty, Integrated Services Manager, Sure Start, West Riverside; Natasha Nicholson, Sure Start Information Outreach Worker and Lila Barnett, Sure Start Parent Participation Worker.

This workshop looked at how children's centres in the disadvantaged West Riverside area of Newcastle were providing intensive support to families experiencing multiple problems.

The area's two centres, Westgate and Armstrong, didn't operate as single centres, but were made up of numerous settings and projects led by a partnership board and an integrated delivery team. They offered all the usual adult and family learning courses and links with Jobcentre Plus and worked to employ parents directly wherever possible.

Research showed parents knew of at least 2 of the 31 services provided and 60 per cent said they felt the services were very effective. Partners felt the wide and varied services offered reflected the individual identity of the areas they served. In the last financial year, £800,000 had been invested in each of the children's centres, over £355,000 of which was invested in commissioning local projects from other partner agencies. This gave good value for money and enabled the children's centre to tap into the trust and credibility built up by partners who had been in the area for a long time.

Raising parental aspirations was approached in a holistic way via a welcoming and supportive ethos and a range of confidence-building services. Parents were used as positive role models who could influence change in their communities. They were often referred to as VIPs – very influential people.

What was groundbreaking was the way the centres brought people together in an integrated approach and tailored their offer to the needs and wants of the local community. For example, many local parents didn't speak enough English to qualify for ESOL courses, so the Westgate centre had set up English conversation classes to help people access community services including transport, supermarkets, doctors and dentists. There was so much demand that advertising wasn't necessary.

It had also set up play fun-and-learn sessions in response to parents' requests. The initial session were so successful (with over 100 participants) that more sessions had to be quickly introduced. Similarly, parents asked for more exercise-based activities, so the centre organised walk-and-talk sessions in the local park, which not only proved cost-effective but had encouraged wider use of the park at other times.

Health visitors, midwives and GPs used the centres to do baby checks and centre staff did home visits for all new births, which had proved a good way to find out what parents wanted.

Lila was born in the West Riverside area and had been a community volunteer for more than 20 years. She was unemployed with no qualifications when she became a carer for her grandson 10 years ago, so she set out to gain qualifications in order to be a better role model for him. She became involved with Sure Start six years ago and now used herself as an example for other parents looking to gain qualifications and employment: "If I can do it, anyone can," she said. Living in the community made her passionate and determined to break the cycle of poverty that saw generations of the same family without employment.

Local parent Natasha was 21 and working in a call centre when she gave birth to her first daughter in 2006. She knew nothing about Sure Start children's centres until a home visit following the birth. She started with little confidence but, after training, had helped set up a local breastfeeding awareness peer support group, BAPS. She went on to become breastfeeding peer support co-ordinator across the city, undertaking various training courses over two years before taking up her current role as information outreach worker at Westgate.

Delegates were shown an inspirational DVD in which other parents talked about the opportunities the children's centre had given them and the transformational impact on their lives.

Delegates were asked to spend 15 minutes thinking of ways to raise the aspirations of parents with:

- no money
- some money
- all the money in the world

Among the ideas put forward were:

- Offer a new experience such as a holiday, theatre visit or trip to the seaside, help parents budget and plan for it and accompany them to build confidence.
- Hold a parents' success event for parents who have achieved.
- Do a skills audit of the local community with a view to setting up volunteer skills workshops.
- Take parents from the parent advisory group out for a meal ensuring that childcare arrangements are in place for single/lone parents.
- Offer incentives to attend services, such as vouchers for food and/or certificates.
- Provide childcare in the same venues as training is provided.
- Invest in staff to give them skills to work with families to raise aspirations.

The full set of responses recorded on the laptops is contained in the accompanying report. Following the workshops there was a break for lunch.

Keynote: Sir John Jones (30 minutes)

In an inspirational and entertaining address, Sir John Jones talked about courageous leadership. John had been headteacher at three schools, including the Liverpool comprehensive he had attended as a student, and now taught at the Centre for Educational Leadership at Manchester University and on the Master's course at Liverpool University.

He said that if people came together in commitment and passion, the battle was already three-quarters won, but those involved would also need a lot of courage over the next five years because everything was changing. Children's centre leaders would have to be "threshold adventurers". Theirs was a calling based on passion, wisdom (emotional intelligence) and righteous indignation (anger about how life was so unfair for some families). Not everyone had the calling. At one of his schools, twice as many children preferred the school cleaner as a mentor to any of the teaching staff because she knew how to make them feel good about themselves.

Four factors that still determined whether or not a child would succeed in life were: poverty, family, neighbourhood and quality of schooling. Sir John noted that 15 per cent of children still lived in poverty, 10 per cent of young people aged under 15 had some sort of mental disorder, there were 30,000 unwanted pregnancies to mothers aged under 18 and 2 children died every week as a result of neglect. He cited the tragic case of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié, who died a slow and painful death despite being known to three housing authorities, four social services departments, two police child protection teams, a specialist centre managed by the NSPCC, and two different hospitals where she had been admitted because of suspected deliberate harm.

Of the 4 factors, effective schooling was 20 times more significant in making a difference to children's lives than all the other 3, but the challenge was huge.

The gaps had nothing to do with the child's ability, nor were they the fault of parents who'd had the same deal. It was just a place to start "the magic weaving business" of tackling social injustice through learning.

Sir John's comprehensive school pupils had little interest in university until he took them on a visit to New College, Oxford and they saw what was possible. Exposing children to experiences and possibilities rather than talking about them was the way to build aspiration.

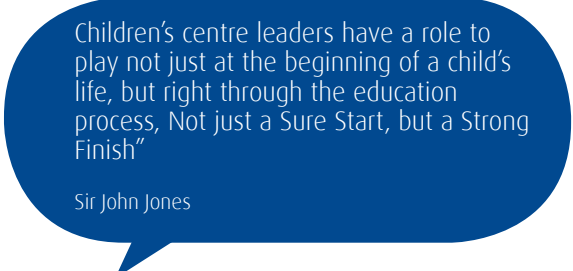
A big challenge for leaders of early years was to teach the rest of the system about personalisation. They did it automatically but higher up the education system some teachers started seeing "Level 3 children" and, if they weren't careful, started treating children as Level 3 human beings. Children were being prepared for a world that didn't yet exist, and this required leaders with creativity, ingenuity and flexibility, not compliance.

Personal challenges for leaders would involve overcoming the temptation to lock into habitual behaviour or just make improvements to same mental model, rather than fundamentally changing the way they thought, which was far more courageous. Another would involve making time for personal development rather than working so hard that they killed their own creativity.

Everyone lived their lives according to a subconscious script, sometimes written for them in their formative years by someone toxic. The challenge was to change that script for children and breathe in life.

John showed an excerpt from an inspirational speech by Nick Vujicic, a young man born without arms or legs who toured schools talking to young people about having a positive attitude and never giving up.

Finally, he said he believed children's centre leaders had a role to play not just at the beginning of a child's life, but right through the education process, encapsulated in the phrase "Not just a Sure Start, but a Strong Finish". Rather than being poverty thinkers with an inevitable future, or probability thinkers with the predictable future, they had to be possibility thinkers capable of creating the preferred future.



Children's centre leaders have a role to play not just at the beginning of a child's life, but right through the education process, Not just a Sure Start, but a Strong Finish"

Sir John Jones

Task workshop (60 minutes)

In the last workshop session of the day, delegates were asked to consider, in their table groups, five critical, non-negotiable themes that they would want to see included in any local child poverty strategy and to record their responses on the laptops.

The full set of responses is contained in the accompanying report.

Delegates were asked to pick the top priority among their five themes, say why it was so important, what difference it would make and what they would do as children's centre leaders to bring it about.

Notes of their discussions, recorded on flipcharts, were as follows:

Top priority: complete freedom to use funding resources flexibly

Case for: More efficient; individualised support; target those who really need support via outreach; commission services to meet local needs; families design services/support - tailored; bring services into centre where families feel comfortable

Difference: know individual families; presence in communities - not relying on people going to centre; make a tangible difference to community

Top priority: every child and their family given the opportunity to fulfil their potential

Want equity, access and achievement

Breakdown the cycles

Preventative rather than reactive

Let children and families see, feel, smell and taste their potential

How children's centre leaders can support/make it a reality

Top priority: access to high-quality settings that develop social and emotional skills with a focus on achievement

Why: if children are taught the building blocks - social and emotional skills - they are then able to sit still, take turns, listen, be kind etc, and formal education and learning will follow because children are prepared and have the tools to learn

Top priority: being possibility thinkers

Move away from punitive actions

Doing something different to make change

Maintain ethos for children's centres into later life – keeping feistiness

If we don't have that attitude, how can we expect children and families to?

Risk-taking, safety

Empower

Building on what already works well – celebrate success

Creating resilience

Possibilities for the unique child

Organic actions rather than forced

Top priority: people

Can't do anything without the right skills

Right amount of people to meet the needs of the community

Community-led

Leadership and shared vision that people can sign up to

Communication

Outcome: encouraged people; all children and families would have the same opportunities; maximising everybody's potential; diversity; happy, blossoming people - ideal

Top priority: know your subject

It's the foundation of everything; you then build into a strategy

To truly make a difference you have to know what people/families want and need

You need to not only talk at families but talk to and with them to understand the opportunities for growth and development

Know the depth and breadth of your subject – families do not fit into boxes and need options and flexibility

See the issues – don't believe the hype – go to the source, not the ones who just think they know

Top priority: shared commitment, responsibility, partnership, accountability

Why: all need to join together because we can't do it alone; have to identify the range of needs locally and tailor services accordingly

Difference: families will get more personalised services; more joined up and may lead to new ways of working together that haven't had a chance to explore yet

Top priority: commitment to every child's rights - its society's commitment and not driven by political agenda

Importance: every child at the centre – held in mind; continuity of commitment – long-term sustainability; more effective use of resources; leading up from communities rather than government; more established relationships and quality

Difference: long-term planning involving local communities; difference in children's lives; cohesive communities based on trust; narrowing the gap

This group shared its ideas with the whole room. Its breakthrough moment came in moving its thinking from needs to rights. If the whole agenda could be taken out of the political arena so that everyone signed up to a declaration of children's rights, services could be more effective in that they would be able to plough a continuous furrow without being subject to the vagaries of government. The first step toward this would be to develop a shared understanding as a society about children's rights, which would involve talking to children and parents to give everyone ownership.

Top priority: holistic locality approach

Define our locality

Build locality ownership and vision

Create a leadership coalition

Establish a locality trust with all stakeholders present

Align local authority provision with the locality vision – local authority as partners

This group also shared its thinking with the whole room. It had developed 4 themes: a non-negotiable vision for what was achievable over a 10-year journey; a holistic strategy at locality level; collective service responsibility for universal success; and a profound knowledge-base about each child. Bringing these about would involve building a sense of community ownership and voice around a shared vision, creating a leadership coalition and establishing a locality trust with all stakeholders represented so that there was a governance arrangement for the vision, and then negotiating and brokering with the local authority the alignment of its service vision with the local vision. The sticking points were where to start and deciding the role of the children's centre leader in helping to broker the capacities.

Summary and close: Catherine Fitt (15 minutes)

Catherine Fitt, the National College's Strategic Director of Children's Services, thanked everyone for attending.

She said children's centre leaders were among the most important leaders of children's services across the country and she knew they could do this important work tackling child poverty because of the most extraordinary journey they had already been on and the difference they were already making to people's lives and communities. Titles and hierarchies didn't matter because professional passion would bind people together.

Children's centre leaders had to be brave on behalf of children and families. They would be listened to and while it might not always be comfortable, there was no one better placed to lead the transformation of services for children and young people.

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Appendix A: List of delegates

Transport problems prevented a small number of delegates from attending on the day, leading to slight rationalisation of some of the table groups listed below.

Table 1

Lisa Buxton, Mansfield Woodhouse Children's Centre

Daniel Dearnley, Maypole Children's Centre

Alison Jollands, Immingham Children's Centre

Nicky Morris, Bloxwich West Children's Centre

Michael Robinson, Northamptonshire County Council

Lesley Talbot, Central Bedfordshire Council

Sue Wadhams, South Acton Children's Centre

Table 2

Sarah Buller, Ann Tayler Children's Centre

Susan Heap, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Jill Hickman, Butterflies Children's Centre

Mandie Jobling, Arnbrook Children's Centre

Dawn Knight, Buttercup Children's Centre

Julia Miller, Chapel Street Nursery School and Children's Centre

Table 3

Eurel Grey-Read, Goleston and Hopton Children's Centre

Pat Mills, Clifton Children's Centre

Anita Parker, Stockingford Early Years Centre

Margaret Sleight, Sale West Children's Centre

Amanda Tasker, The Acorns Children's Centre

Suzanne Williams, Willow Children's Centre

Table 4

Laura Bagley, Pear Tree Children's Centre

Sandra Bell, Hebden Vale Children's Centre

Glenis Charlton, The Star

Nicola Dillon, St James' Children's Centre

Jo Green, Sure Start Darlaston Children's Centre

Sarah McSweeney, Millwall and Blackwall Children's Centre

Table 5

Pip Beasant, West Bassetlaw Children's Centre

Trish Benson, Bluebell Wood Children's Centre

Odette Morgan, Windhill Children's Centres

Laura Provett, Footsteps

Christine Smallwood, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Andrea Thackray, Pomfret Children's Centre

Table 6

Sharon Bell, Broadwater Children's Centre

Annie Clouston, Together for Children/National College

Pamela Harbot, Camp Hill Primary and Early Years Centre

Barbara Kirby, Gladstone Children's Centre

Wendy Knight, Crossley Hall Primary School and Children's Centre

Himisha Patel, Grove House Children's Centre

Table 7

Angela Coleman, Boulton and Alvaston Children's Centres

Claire Hunter, Brookvale Children's Centre

Penny Olivo, Vancouver Children's Centre

Elaine Targett, Ash Tree Children's Centre

Helen Watson, Hillfields Children's Centre

Sue Webster, Together for Children

Table 8

Wendy Brookfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Jenny Cuthbert, Caister Sure Start Children's Centre

Vicki Knowles, Oakhill Children's Centre

Catherine Parkin, Chesterfield Children's Centres

Ann Winsor, Buckingham and Steeple Claydon Children's Centre

Nicola Young, Halton Brook Children's Centre

Table 9

Joseph Cox, St Ann's North

Kristianne Gray, Rainbow Children's Centre

Angela Hancock, Ings Children's Centre

Hilary Hastings, Sure Start Birchills and North Walsall Children's Centre

Julie Lannon, London Colney Children's Centre

Rachel Lord, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Table 10

Rebecca Bates, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Eve Harris, Vancouver Sure Start Children's Centre

Alison Lancashire, Chesterfield Sure Start Children's Centre

Beverley Ledra, Heaton Children's Services

Graham Lowther, Staffordshire County Council

Ali Sykes, Bartongate Children's Centre

Table 11

Kaye Brentley, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Julie Butcher, Ramsey, Sawtry, Somersham and Farcet/Yaxley Children's Centre

Joanne Maltby, Bulkington Children's Centre

Pauline Monaghan, The RISE Children's Centre

Lesley Phair, North West Sure Start and Aspley Children's Centres

Jo-Anne Taylor, Redvales Children's Centre

Table 12

Linda Blakey, Northamptonshire County Council

Susan Davies, Spa Spiders Children's Centre

Russell Norman, Howgill Children's Centre

Georgina Shaw-Halford, Mere Footprints

Pam Swain, Children's Centre at the Mall

Brenda Whitmore, Hillfields Children's Centre

Table 13

Alex Bennett, Abacus Children's Centre

Deborah Buxton, Burnett Fields Children and Family Centre

Una Daniel, Prospect Kilton

Ruth Foster, Willow Children's Centre

Pam Ley, Spa Spiders Children's Centre

Crin Whelan, St Ives Children's Centre and St Just and Pendeen Children's Centre

Table 14

Sheila Ajimati, Spurgeons, Abbey Children's Centre

Paul Church, Willow Children's Centre

Jessica Day, Chickenley and Earlsheaton Children's Centre

Annie Fletcher, Manton Children's Centre

Diane Harrison, Clay Cross Children's Centre

Zoe Mawson, Heaton Children's Services

Table 15

Denise Akers, Throne Children's Centre

Kim Ford, Bloxwich West Children's Centre

Gail Grierson, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Janette Keller, Golborne County Council

Pam Robinson, Warsop and Meden Vale

Jill Wharton, Lambert Children's Centre

Table 16

Wendy Brown, Sneinton Children's Centre

Denise Galland, Camp Hill Early Years Centre

Fiona Godfrey, Ambler Children's Centre

Claire Henderson-Clark, Sprotbrough Children's Centre

Rachel Wallbank, Stockbrook Children's Centre

Amanda White, Pinmoor Children's Centre

Table 17

Kulbir Bura, Lidget Green Children's Centre

Ann Clay, Stockingford Early Years' Centre

Eleanor Dewar, Derbyshire County Council

Selina Galsinh, Allens Croft Children's Centre

Mari Griffiths, Rowland Hill Nursery School and Children's Centre

Lynne Robinson, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Gill Sykes, Sunbeam Children's Centre

Appendix B: Delegate's agenda

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| 9am | Registration, tea and coffee |
| 9.20am | Table welcome |
| 9.30am | Introduction and welcome: Jane Creasy, education consultant and event facilitator |
| 9.40am | Context setting: Sue Egersdorff, Operational Director, Extended and Integrated Leadership, National College |
| 9.55am | Keynote address: Lord Mawson, Founder and President of the Bromley-by-Bow Centre in East London and Co-founder and President of the Community Action Network (CAN) |
| 10.30am | Question and answer session |
| 11.30am | Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrating delivery to better meet the needs of children and families living in poverty• Improving parental employment rates: working with Jobcentre Plus• Supporting the development of local child poverty strategies• Working alongside parents to raise aspiration |
| 1.30pm | Keynote: Sir John Jones: Challenge setting: So what does this mean for children's centre leaders? How can you lead the way? |
| 2pm | Task workshop: delegates use knowledge captured from the keynote speeches and workshops to generate their own key strategies |
| 3.05pm | Feedback |
| 3.30pm | Summary and close: Catherine Fitt, Strategic Director of Children's Services, National College |
| 3.45pm | Close |