Centre for Research in Early Childhood

CREC Student Research Papers Archive

Paper No: 2016/021

*This piece of academic practitioner research was submitted in part fulfilment of the award of MA Integrated System Leadership at Birmingham City University. It is made freely available with the express permission of the author as part of CREC's commitment to support, promote and develop practitioner research in the field of early years.

How can I use my position as a local system leader to encourage more effective multi-agency working to "turn the curve" thus ensuring that outcomes are improved for vulnerable children?

Judith Parr

To cite this article: Parr, J. (2016) *"How can I use my position as a local system leader to encourage more effective multi-agency working to 'turn the curve' thus ensuring that outcomes are improved for vulnerable children?".* MA Integrated System Leadership. Birmingham City University. Available at: http://www.crec.co.uk/research-paper-archive/ [Accessed date]

To link to this article: http://www.crec.co.uk/research-paper-archive/2016-021.pdf

Abstract

This paper considers the self reflective journey of a multi agency leader as they promote greater collaborative interactions and develop initiatives for improving outcomes for vulnerable children. It is widely recognised that investment in early help (both in terms of children's ages as well as early intervention when needs are identified for families) has significant affirmative economic, social and emotional outcomes (Munro 2011, Friedman 2005, Department for Education 2015). The author explores how this service can be better delivered in her own context by first reflecting on her own performance and then secondly undertaking research into her own leadership in order to better lead her team in future. The research lead to findings which influenced her leadership style but the process of engaging with her team in research also led to a transformative process which empowered individuals and supported organisational aims.

Keywords: outcome based accountability, turning the curve, children's centres, multi-agency working, leadership.

Integrated System Leadership 2015-2016

Developing as a Reflective Leader
…
How can I use my position as a local system leader to encourage more effective multi-agency working to "turn the curve" thus ensuring that outcomes are improved for vulnerable children?

Module Code: EDU 7026

Judith Parr (S15140943)
1-1-2016
Word Count: 5440

CONTENTS

Part 1

Learning Contract 2

Self-evaluation of learning 5

Part 2

Context 8

Participants 10

Research design and background 10

Ethical considerations 12

Research Questions 12

Data Collection Methods 13

Presenting Evidence 15

Reflections 15

Conclusions 18

Next Steps 20

References 21

Appendices

Appendix A: What is a Thinking Environment? 23

Appendix B: Team Meeting Email 24

Appendix C: Team Meeting Feedback Questionnaire 26

Appendix D: Team Meeting Sign-in Sheet 30

Appendix E: Feedback Questionnaire (Collated) 31

Appendix F: Responses to Question 2 38

Part 1

Learning Contract

In committing to undertake this period of intensive study I needed to explore the elements that motivated me to achieve my goals. At times I considered that academic study would simply enhance my CV and add knowledge and a few skills to my "toolkit" of being a leader in a rapidly changing Local Authority. Once it become more tangible and the commitment necessary became evident, I realised that I would have to invest a great deal more into the process than I had initially considered. Over time, this prospect interested me more and I began to feel excited, if a little apprehensive about returning to academic work after a long period away. I became curious as to what I would learn about myself and looked forward to the time and space to reflect on my skills, style and learning needs.

> *I don't think I fully thought through the logistics of how this course and the workload would happen. I'm looking forward to the challenge and looking forward to the sense of achievement when I've completed it…….I wonder what I will learn about myself, how I learn and how I lead?* (Journal 14th October 2015)

I feel that as a leader I am able to create an effective working environment. I believe I am approachable, honest and I work with integrity. I believe very much that building relationships with a team is crucial to developing a stable structure on which tasks and projects can then be built. I am certain that investing time and energy in developing a team pays for itself in terms of productivity, outcomes and staff morale. However, I also recognise that I sometimes struggle with individuals within a team. I am questioning whether that makes me intolerant, whether I only want "yes people" in my team or whether I struggle to manage those who don't agree with me. Recent training enabled me to gain insight, through

psychometric testing, into my own preferred behavioural modes, confirming that I am motivated by well-being and harmony, and that I am liable to become anxious when faced with uncertainty and conflict (MiRo Report, 2015). I don't resist challenge and I believe that everyone has a valid view and opinions; however I am aware that conflict causes me to feel uncomfortable and it is not something I actively seek. If I think of specific people with whom I have struggled professionally, I think of their reluctance to support colleagues, I think of those who perhaps are a little maverick in their ways of working, or those who struggle to understand why a project is not being done the way they would do it. I now feel I need to explore how I can lead more effectively to understand some of these issues and characters. Is this about them, or is it about me? I would like to lead with greater emotional intelligence, to be able to deal with conflict in a way which respects all those involved and leads to acceptable and productive outcomes for all.

> *'People with well-developed emotional skills are also more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity; people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought.'*
> (Goleman, 1995 p36)

I am a solution-focussed leader. Confront me with a problem and I will instantly look for an answer. I have a "can-do", "half-full", "nothing is too much trouble" attitude. I recognise that this can be an optimistic and potentially empowering way of working. Contrary to this is the fact that I am aware that I don't always allow people to find their own solutions, I don't always see the logistical issues which others may see and I don't always give myself or others time to reflect on a situation. I would benefit from becoming a more reflective leader, both in terms of allowing myself time, space and the development of skills to be able to reflect better, and also to equip my team with the same (Johns 2013) (Hayes *et al* 2014).

> *Could I have handled that situation better? I was so set on "this is the way we have to do this", that maybe I didn't allow enough for individual circumstances. Maybe I should have spent more time considering how to keep the children at the centre of what we do, rather than simply following protocol.* (Journal 24th November 2015)

Another area where I feel I need to develop is that of being able to confidently and assertively develop and build my team for the future. The work environment and the pace of change is so frenetic that it is often impossible to plan for the medium and long term – everything is concentrated in the here and now. I would like to develop my leadership in terms of coaching others, helping them to enhance their own self-awareness, develop their skills and ultimately enhance performance throughout the workforce.

In summary: my key learning goals are:

- To learn to lead with greater Emotional Intelligence
- To create an environment, individually and collectively, where my team feel enabled to develop their own skills and contribute to the future planning for our service
- To develop my skills in reacting to and managing conflict within my team.

Self-evaluation of Learning

The study days at CREC, along with self-directed study and gap tasks, have laid foundations and enabled me to start exploring my further development as a leader. I recognise that I have much to learn, but also that I have, in a number of respects, already "arrived".

I had until recently believed that certain people were born to be leaders – surely the ability to be a leader must be defined by certain pre-existing qualities rather than something that could be learnt and developed over time? (Solly, 2003) This never sat comfortably with me, as I never felt that I fitted this mould. In my mind I had "drifted" into my current role purely by chance - I believed that I happened to deliver a set of convincing answers in a job interview. However, I am starting to realise that this is not the case. Rowley (1997), in her article discussing whether academic leaders are born or made, suggests that there are certain traits which are recognisable in many leaders – such as intelligence, initiative and self-assurance. However, she goes on to develop the point that leaders are generally able to be flexible in their styles depending on the situation and the team around them, and that their styles are influenced by their own values and beliefs, confidence and, interestingly, their stress levels.

Related to this is what I learnt through my reading about "imposter phenomenon" (Clance & Imes, 1978). It wouldn't be an understatement to identify this theory as being an epiphany for me in terms of understanding my own feelings of anxiety and inadequacy at many stages of my life, when I thought I would be "found out" as not being capable of roles I was undertaking. Understanding a little about this has enabled me, to some extent, to move past it and recognise that I am worthy of my career progression to date.

The exercise exploring my journey into my current locality leadership role really helped me to identify the value base, experiences, people and circumstances which have supported me on my journey. Not all of these were entirely positive, yet the impact they had led me to where I am today. My journal entry immediately after this exercise also reflects this understanding:

> *It is as a result of my attitude, life experiences, beliefs and a massive amount of hard work that I have got to the position I'm in today. Nothing has happened by chance, despite what I tell myself.* (Journal 15th October 2015)

I need to recognise that perhaps leadership is a tangible process, rather than only recognition of personal attributes and qualities. (Hooper & Potter, 2000)

The exercise we undertook looking at leadership styles was also an activity which demonstrated where I am on my leadership journey. This helped me to recognise one of the paths I need to explore over the next few months. Giltinane (2013) describes three styles of leader – Transactional, Transformational and Situational. Reading through the descriptions initially led me to suppose that I primarily use a transformational style – I am able to create vision, work democratically and recognise individuals within the team (Bass, 2008). However, on further reading I came to realise that I am, in fact, a situational leader (Lynch *et al* 2011) – I am able to adapt my style to suit the situation I am faced with.

> *I'd never given much thought to what "style" of leader I am, or what elements of leadership I am using at any given point…..I hadn't considered that I can change style depending on the circumstance, but I can see now that I do.* (Journal 22nd October 2015)

Goleman's (2000) identification of leadership styles, also clarified for me where my strengths and areas for growth lie. I am aware that I work well when I am able to use his Democratic and Affiliative styles. I am also able to be visionary at times, although long periods of this would not be conducive to my own wellbeing. The theme running through all the leadership styles I have considered is that I will always avert conflict, if possible. This potentially could have the effect of not addressing issues as they arise and allowing the team or individuals to continue with unhelpful actions or behaviours. However, personal reflection on many of the activities at CREC has led me to really grasp that conflict does not have to be destructive or lead to high levels of discontent. I think previous experiences in this and other workplaces had led to this fear, which I now need to address and move on from.

Part 2

Context

For the last six months I have undertaken the role of Children's Centre Co-ordinator, with responsibility for access to services, at a busy Children's Centre in a town bordered by two cities. I also have responsibility for a satellite centre ten miles away in a rural, generally affluent location. I lead alongside another co-ordinator, who has responsibility for measuring the impact of our services. Our team is made up of Outreach Workers, Early Years Practitioners and Administrators, and we share the time of a Qualified Teacher and Safeguarding Lead who work across all the Local Authority Children's Centres as well as a Service Manager who strategically leads two Children's Centre areas. Following re-structure of services in our Authority this year, I re-located to this area and took on the leadership of a group of staff, the majority of whom were also new to this particular Children's Centre. As a result, the last few months have been a time of great change. As far back as 1965, Bruce Tuckman, whilst working with the US Navy, identified a distinct set of four behaviours inherent within groups of people, both in social contexts and those related to work tasks or other goals. These behaviours – forming, storming, norming and performing- are clearly evident within my team, with perhaps, the "storming" element currently at the forefront.

However, despite the affirmation of Tuckman's theory throughout the past fifty years, I don't wholeheartedly agree with it. I feel that his approach is linear and does not fully allow for cross-over between the different stages. My team, for example, although currently experiencing low-level conflict and some disagreement, appear concurrently to be developing cohesiveness and are performing at levels expected of them. Perhaps then, there can be an overlap between the behaviours, and they do not stand alone. Equally, I feel

that teams often move back and forth between storming, norming and performing. I would also question Tuckman's theories in light of the fact that he is a male researcher and his initial studies were primarily conducted with predominantly male teams, so may not fully transpose to all- female teams, as mine is.

We are half way through our first year as a Local Authority commissioned service. It is a perfect time to pause in the busyness of the work to reflect, individually and collectively, on where we have come from, how we have got to where we are now, and where we want to go from here. I felt that it would be beneficial to help my team reflect on the work they have done, the issues they have faced and their opinions on how best we can move forward. Rodd (2006) emphasises that in this stage, when conflict often occurs, staff need recognition of their contribution to the team, in an environment of mutual support and encouragement. Without this, she feels there can be an increase in stress, power struggles and destructive criticism. Personally I am finding that my team seem to be responding well to my leadership, but I am aware of some background discontent around new expectations and methods of working, which they perceive I am "inflicting" on them. I need to help them understand and "own" these concepts and create an environment where opinions are valued and heard, even when they may go against the grain of what my team think I want to hear. As a result, my aims in my learning contract of coaching, managing conflict and leading with greater emotional intelligence are brought sharply into focus.

Participants

My team is made up of a mix of personalities – some quiet, some assertive and some who, given the chance, would dominate discussion in team meetings and other forums. I wanted this exercise to give voice to all involved and to be transparent in doing so. As well as my own direct team, I also invited others to take part in the session, who work across all Children's Centre teams in our Local Authority. I feel that this may have skewed the ability of participants to discuss feelings and opinions openly. The three people invited are all senior members of staff, and possibly perceived by front line staff as in a position of transactional leadership. If asked, they probably would have identified themselves as visionary or transformational leaders (McDowall-Clark & Murray 2012), thus redefining the nature of perceived hierarchy. This altered perception however was hard to embed in practice in such a short space of time.

Research Design & Background

As a result of my experiences, which included, at times, not feeling like I had a "voice", I am keen to develop as a leader who is able to ensure that my entire team feel heard and are able to influence all that we do. Freire (1970) emphasises that leaders who try and impose decisions on others are, at the very least manipulative and could also be viewed as oppressive. He emphasises that leaders need to be prepared to enter into dialogue, listen to the views of others and enable decision-making in order to shape the future, be that personal or organisational.

I wanted to ensure that the work undertaken would be valuable to those taking part. We often find that busyness overtakes productivity and team meetings can create anxiety and fear of being overloaded with information and instruction (Wilson, 2001). With this in mind I reflected on training I undertook some time ago, entitled "Time to Think", led by Nancy Kline, who developed the concept of "The Thinking Environment" – a simple model of interaction to improve the way people think, relate to one another and solve problems (Kline, 1999) (Appendix A). I believe it is a model that can only be really effective if all those in the room agree to adhere to the principles, thus I have found it highly frustrating when this hasn't been the case.

> *I love the Time to Think model. The Local Authority must have spent a fortune on the training a few years ago but we hardly ever use it. What's that about? I wonder whether it's because so many managers are actually too fond of, I don't know – being in charge. Wanting to have the last word? Being in competition? I know I'm far from perfect. I don't listen enough. I cut across people. I try and give all the answers. I wonder what it would be like if I did step back, just think, and wait to be given an opportunity to share my thoughts. I fear that I would be perceived as not having an opinion, or being possibly ineffectual.* (Journal 8th December 2015).

I felt strongly that to resurrect the principles and briefly impart them to my team could be beneficial, not only to this piece of work, but in a wider context.

Ethical Considerations

I emailed all staff explaining my intentions, providing them with a link (Havers, 2008) to read to gain a little insight into the model and asking them to email back with their informed agreement to take part (Appendix B). I wanted to ensure that participants had the opportunity to be as honest within and after the session as they wanted to be. I felt that there would be no value in people feeling that they could only raise things they perceived I would want to hear. In order to try and create this structure I requested that the questionnaires were returned by email to a trusted colleague, who, without reading the comments, anonymised each one before emailing it on to me. I hope that this gave freedom of expression, although I have no guarantee of this. I still found that I was apprehensive about reading responses - was I worried about too much honesty, or too little?

> *Why am I so nervous about reading the feedback I've been given? Is it that Imposter Syndrome flaring up again? Even if the opinions expressed are critical, then that will give me lots of food for thought as well as things to develop.* (Journal 16th December 2015)

Research Questions

Using the Time to Think model of facilitating meetings, I posed two questions – *"What has gone well for you at work within the last six months?"* and *"What needs to happen from now to make sure the next six months (and beyond) are positive and productive for this team?"* These questions, I felt, would enable to team to feel that the session was of use to them, and subsequently from the feedback I received, I hoped I would be able to consider not only

how I used my leadership skills to lead the session, but also how valuable the Time to Think model was as a tool to use to greater effect in the future.

Data Collection Methods

Developing an effective feedback tool was fundamental to ascertaining the value of the session as well as evaluating its facilitation and delivery. I was highly conscious that the meeting could contain elements of conflict, wide-ranging emotions and outcomes for which perhaps I hadn't prepared.

> *I need to let go of my own assumptions and expectations about how this session will go. I can plan and plan but in the end, I can only guide it, I can't force it. I hope the team feel able to be real and honest with me and each other. I don't want anyone to be just saying what they think I want to hear* (Journal 9th December 2015)

I don't consider display of wide-ranging emotions to be negative – all are necessary, can be productive and can support the development of leadership skills. However, as far as possible I wanted to be able to "capture" all of these elements as well as the feelings of at least a sample of my team afterwards. Many studies have been undertaken to ascertain the "perfect" methodology with regards to surveys and questionnaires. Detailed analysis of this kind was not possible for my work, although elements of methods reviewed by Leitz (2010), including question length, order and use of scales were taken into account in developing the tool I used.

I settled on using observation and immediate journaling to enable my reflection on the session. These enabled me to gather the "here and now" thoughts of all participants as well

as my instinctive reactions to the content and facilitation of the session. I also asked for brief feedback on flipchart paper following one part of the meeting, which identified ideas for what needs to happen to develop the team over the next six months. I then compiled a questionnaire to send to what I hoped would be a representative sample across the team. (Appendix C). I used a 10-point Likert Scale to enable participants to hone their responses. Studies suggest that using longer scales can give more precise answers as they allow for a definitive answer, compared to 5-point scales where the middle-point often allows for a "don't know" response (Cummins and Gullone, 2000).

In terms of deciding from whom to request feedback, I felt that it may be too challenging to correlate responses from all participants. Everyone provided signed agreement (Appendix D) that they were happy to contribute, so I requested that a cross-section of the team including my line-manager, some of my line-managed staff and staff managed by others were asked to complete the questionnaire. Reflecting on this, I wonder whether it would have been beneficial to ask for feedback from all those who took part – the numbers would not have been significantly greater and I may have gained greater written depth of opinion.

I felt it was helpful to use more than one method of gathering information and feedback, although this was difficult to do given the time constraints and other limitations to this piece of work. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of participants' thoughts, ideas and feelings, which I knew could be gathered through triangulation, in its simplest terms, bringing together qualitative and quantitative evidence to draw conclusions with relevance to this piece of work (Gorard, 2004).

Presenting Evidence

Immediately prior to the meeting, I ensured that the room was set up comfortably and that I put up on the wall posters outlining the ten components of a Thinking Environment. To start the session, I ensured all attendees were welcomed by name, and felt comfortable within the room. I outlined briefly the concept of Time to Think and ascertained who was aware of it, or had taken part in the training in 2010. This was valuable in gaining an understanding of different experiences and perspectives within the room.

The session took place over 90 minutes, within a monthly team meeting. Everyone, in turn, was given equal opportunity to speak, without interruption, on the questions posed. This is an integral principle of the Time to Think model. In addition, participants were invited at one point to split into pairs and give each other a defined amount of time to share their thoughts around the second question. Brief feedback from this section was invited from all participants, again with no interruptions. Finally, each person was invited to share one thing they respected about the person sitting to the left of them. This enabled the meeting to end positively, with each person hopefully feeling valued and appreciated.

Reflections

My immediate reflections at the end of the session included a great sense of relief that, on the surface, it had been a "successful" session. Success at this point was that people took part, appeared fully engaged, contributed to the discussion and were respectful of others in the room as well as me as the leader of the session:

> *That was quite an intense session. I planned really well, but I had no idea how it would go. It was great to feel a real buzz in the room when people were talking and*

> *listening to each other, and I think it may have been beneficial. To start with I thought I was talking too much but, as M said later, it was really key to helping people to understand what Time to Think is all about.* (Journal 9th December 2015)

I emailed questionnaires immediately after the meeting had finished, wanting to ensure, as far as possible, that those completing it could do so with the session at the forefront of their minds. Doing so would hopefully give me the advantage of receiving their "freshest thinking" around the questions I asked, although I am aware that possibly I did not gain the benefits of any longer term reflection on their thoughts.

I received written feedback from six members of my team (Appendix E). This was helpful in terms of giving me different perspectives on the environment, content and outcome of the meeting. Initially I wasn't sure how well this feedback enabled me to reflect on the development of my identified skills. Each respondent highlighted the strengths and opportunities that they recognised concerning the Time to Think model, but perhaps my questions weren't specific enough in really drawing out the perceptions held regarding me as a leader. Reflecting on this, I asked myself whether, sub-consciously, I was worried about asking others directly about their opinions of me as a leader and manager?

> *I feel like I'm floundering somewhat….I don't think the responses from the questionnaires are giving me enough to reflect on. That's not about the participants, it's about me hiding behind the Time to Think tool rather than asking questions about my leadership skills.* (Journal 20th December 2015)

However, further reflection on my own observations of the session, personal time to think as well as analysis of questionnaires completed, enhanced my perception of the benefits of the piece of work undertaken.

Analysing the mean scores from the Likert scales identified, on the whole, that participants engaged well, felt the session was helpful to them within their work and was well led. Particular themes which scored highly included “information”, “encouragement” and “feelings of being listened to”. One participant expressed the feeling that:

> *“The whole session was well-planned and executed in a professional, calm and clear manor(sp). JP seemed to grow in confidence as she facilitated the group, when she relaxed, it was clear that she was kind and supportive which was helpful.”*
>
> (Questionnaire respondent “B”)

Respondents also expressed appreciation of feeling that they were being listened to, both by myself as the leader of the session, and by other participants. This felt significant in a team where often, low level criticism is heard around individuals feeling that others are self-centred, not team players and unable to listen to the perspectives of others. As a result, moving forward with my leadership skills, coaching my team to enable them to provide quality listening environments, has started and now needs to remain high on my list of priorities. Kline (1999) states:

> *‘Attention, the act of listening with palatable respect and fascination, is key to a Thinking Environment... When you are listening to someone, much of the quality of what you are hearing is your effect on them. Giving good attention to people makes them more intelligent.’(p37)*

One of my own observations of the session, also reiterated by another participant, was that it didn’t seem to allow for negativity of any kind. That was not my intention, and I verbally expressed at the start that a whole range of emotions was permissible. However, I recognise that individuals need to feel “safe” enough to express feelings and thoughts which may be

considered controversial, and obviously that feeling of safety was not there. As one participant told me:

> "*I found this quite an emotional experience. I did not feel able to fully express this, as it may have been perceived as inappropriate by other team members".*
> (Questionnaire respondent C).

My observations concluded that those in managerial roles found it hard to be open and honest, perhaps due to the need to present an image of neutrality and positivity. Those in "front line" roles equally found it difficult- perhaps perceiving that they may be judged as being disrespectful if they expressed their true thoughts.

Conclusions

In terms of my initial goals, as set out in my learning contract, how well do I feel I achieved these, through this activity? My thoughts are mixed on this. "To lead with greater emotional intelligence" was the first of my aims. I feel that generally, through research into this work, and developing greater self-awareness, as well as undertaking the Time to Think exercise, my emotional intelligence is increasing and the way in which I interact with my team is changing. I feel that I am demonstrating to greater affect the five competencies outlined by Goleman (1998), of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. I am excited and re-invigorated by the fresh understanding of how my own skills development can only promote a more effective, efficient working environment, and give leadership to those in every role.

Intertwined with this outcome is that of developing my coaching skills, to support individuals in their own development as well as that of the wider team. At the end of the Time to Think session, the enthusiasm in the room was palpable. Through really listening to each other and enabling everyone to share their thoughts, my team were able to come up with a comprehensive list of ideas which they felt would make the next six months and beyond productive (Appendix F) These included "promoting the power of play to create lifelong learning and change outcomes", based on the sudden realisation that the work we do with vulnerable families, really does make a difference to children's outcomes. This is something that I feel I have reiterated for a long period of time. However, it took this meeting for these individuals to recognise the true value of their work. Coaching in this way was relatively simple and I have come to realise that it doesn't have to be complicated. Often individuals need freedom to "unblock" their own thinking, in order to release their own potential (Hooper & Potter, 2000). I recognise that I still have work to do in relation to this, and all areas identified, but I feel that I can move forward with confidence that through this work I am pursuing this area of personal growth. I have, since this session, been approached by a colleague with a view to offering training to other staff teams around the Time to Think model, and I am excited to imagine the potential that using this format effectively throughout Children's Centre Services could bring.

My last area for development was that of managing conflict. This is my weakest area of growth, due to my own subconscious reluctance to raise current issues, and the fact that the opportunity was not appropriate to force discussion of uncomfortable matters. Perhaps I could have overtly highlighted the issue of team conflict within the work I did? On reflection my team is not yet in a place where they can focus on and address the "storming" issues effectively. This, I feel, shows my increased levels of emotional intelligence – a while

ago I may have just leapt in to try and “solve” what I perceived to be the “problem”. I now appreciate that this is not always conducive, often there may be steps to be taken beforehand which can address the issue without antagonism, defensiveness or feelings of there being “winners” and “losers” (Kline, 1999).

Next Steps

My development as a leader still has some way to go – in fact, I would argue that the journey is endless, and there will always be room for growth. However, this exercise has clarified for me where I need to go next with my development. I still have work to do on acknowledging that I have effective leadership skills and that I am adept at putting them into practice. I need to work on accepting the meaningful critique of others, and learning from it. I also need to recognise that conflict is a natural and inevitable part of working life – in itself it is not a problem, unless it is not approached and managed effectively. (Rodd, 2006). I will, over the next months, be taking steps to undertake personal study and further training around the areas of managing conflict and coaching others. I don’t yet feel confident in these areas, and I feel it would have a great impact on the development of my team if I could address these further.

At this point I feel revitalised by my growing self-awareness and am anticipating the future with the knowledge and growing understanding that my ongoing self-reflection and personal development could have long-lasting positive effects for my team and ultimately for the ever-changing environment in which we work.

References

Bass, B.M (2008) The *Bass Handbook of leadership*; *Theory research and managerial applications*. 4th edition. New York: Free Press

Clance, P & Imes, S (1978) *The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women; Dynamics & Therapeutic Intervention.* Psychotherapy Theory, Research & Practice, Volume 15, No3

Cummins, R.A & Gullone, E (2000) *Proceedings, second international conference on quality of life in cities,* 2000/3/8 pp74-93

Freire, P (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. England: Penguin books

Giltinane, CL (2013) *Leadership Styles and Theories.* Nursing Standard, Volume 27, No.41 pp35-39

Goleman, D (2000) *Leadership that gets results.* Harvard Business Review March-April 2000 p82-83

Goleman, D (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing

Goleman, D (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing

Gorard, S & Taylor, C (2004) *Combining Methods in Educational & Social Research.* Maidenhead: Open University Press

Havers, E (2008) *A study of whether, and how meetings held in a Thinking Environment® impact organisational life.* Précis of a Masters Research thesis

Hayes C *et al* (2014) *Developing as a reflective early years professional: A thematic approach.* Northwich: Critical Publishing Ltd

Hooper, A & Potter, J. (2001) *Intelligent Leadership: Creating a Passion for Change*, London: Random House Business Books

Johns, C (2013) *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*. 4th Edition, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons ltd

Kline, N (1999) *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind.* London: Cassell Illustrated

Lietz, P (2010) *Research into Questionnaire design: A summary of the literature.* International Journal of Market Research, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2010, pp. 249-272

Loken, B *et al*. (1987) *The use of 0–10 scales in telephone surveys*. Journal of the Market Research Society, 29, 3, July, pp. 353–362.

McDowall-Clark R, Murray J (2012*) Reconceptualizing Leadership in the Early Years*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Lynch B.M *et al* (2011) *Development of a model of situational leadership in residential care for older people*. Journal of Nursing Management. 19, 8, 1058-1069

Rodd, J.(2006) *Leadership in Early Childhood*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Rowley, J. (1997) *Academic leaders: made or born?* Industrial and Commercial Training, Vol. 29 Iss: 3, pp.78 – 84

Solly, K (2003) *What do early years' leaders do to maintain and enhance the significance of the early years?* Presentation on 22 May at the Institute of Education, University of London, London

Tuckman, B.W (1965) Developmental sequence in small groups, *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384-399. Reprinted in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal* Number 3, Spring 2001

White, J *et al* (2001) *Challenging traditional models: Toward an inclusive model of group development*. Journal of Management Inquiry; Vol 10, No.1

Wilson, T. D.(2001). *Information overload: implications for healthcare services*. Health Informatics Journal, 7, 112-117

Appendix A

What is a Thinking Environment?

A Thinking Environment is the set of ten conditions under which human beings can think for themselves –With rigour, imagination, courage and grace.

1. **Attention**
   Listening with respect, interest and fascination
2. **Incisive Questions**
   Removing assumptions that limit ideas
3. **Equality**
   Treating each other as thinking peers
   - Giving equal turns and attention
   - Keeping agreements and boundaries
4. **Appreciation**
   Practicing a five-to-one ratio of appreciation to criticism
5. **Ease**
   Offering freedom from rush or urgency
6. **Encouragement**
   Moving beyond competition
7. **Feelings**
   Allowing sufficient emotional release to restore thinking
8. **Information**
   Providing a full and accurate picture of reality
9. **Place**
   Creating a physical environment that says to people, “you matter.”
10. **Diversity**

    Adding quality because of the differences between us

Kline, N (1999) *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind* p35

Appendix B

Team Meeting email:

Dear All,

As many of you are aware I am currently undertaking a course in Integrated Systems Leadership at the Centre for Research into Early Childhood. I am currently tasked with undertaking a piece of work within our staff team, that bears relevance to the work we are doing on a day to day basis, and that will give team members the opportunity to reflect. There will also be the opportunity to comment on the exercise in order to give me valuable feedback for the assignment I am currently writing.

As a result of this, I would like to use our team meeting next week (9th December) as an opportunity to stop for a while in our busy lives and reflect on the first six months as a new team and the first six months of delivering re-structured services. I would also like us to think about what's going on for us right now and what the future might look like.

In order to prepare for this, it would be helpful if you could think about how it has been for you - what have been the good bits, the challenges, the frustrations and the celebrations?

I will be using the "Time to Think" model as a tool to help this session - I'm not sure how many of you are familiar with this model - we started using it as a service a few years ago, following training that some of you may have taken part in - but it doesn't seem to be used widely at the moment. I will give an outline of how it works at the start of our meeting, but if you are able to read the following link http://www.timetothink.com/uploaded/PM%20article.pdf beforehand, you may find it helpful.

If you have any questions about this session, or have reasons why you would prefer not to be involved, please let me know. I'm happy to discuss these confidentially. If you're not able to catch me in person, please email me on my work address, or my personal email which is jp……..com.

I will be asking a few of you as participants to give me feedback on the session. This will be done anonymously, to enable you to be honest in your responses. Again, if you would prefer not to give feedback, please just let me know, and I will ensure that your wishes are respected.

It would be helpful if you could reply to this email to confirm your attendance, and that you are happy to take part in this exercise.

With regards,

Judith

Judith Parr

Children's Centre Co-ordinator (Access)

Appendix C

Team Meeting Feedback Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in providing feedback regarding the session which took place in the [redacted] Children's Centre Team Meeting on Wednesday 9th December 2015.

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you feel able. There are no right or wrong responses. In order to protect your identity, please email your completed feedback to d.....@....gov.uk. D… will ensure these are anonymised as far as possible before forwarding them to me. If, however, you would like to discuss your responses, or anything regarding the meeting further, I would be happy to do this. Please contact me to do so.

1. Prior to the meeting, having received information about the outline structure of what was planned, how did you feel about taking part in the "Time to Think" session? (Please circle all relevant)

   Interested – *"I wonder what this will be about"*
   Apprehensive – "*I'm not sure about this"*
   Overwhelmed – "*I really haven't got time for this"*
   Optimistic – *"This could be really positive"*
   Pessimistic – *"What a waste of time"*
   Other – Please give details below:

2. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being very poor and 10 being exceptionally well), did the Time to Think session provide you with the following:

   A Positive physical environment (suitable seating, lighting, refreshments, comfort, space)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

   Comments:

   Enough Information (clarity of purpose, background, clear agenda, timescales)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Feelings of being appreciated (through actions, words and body language of others)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Opportunity to be at ease (freedom from rush or urgency)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Encouragement (unthreatening environment, free from competition)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Feelings of being listened to (receiving high quality of attention from others present)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Freedom to express feelings (across the whole spectrum of emotions, if necessary)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Asking of Incisive Questions (questions which take away limiting assumptions from you)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Recognition of Diversity (Valuing of the differences between us)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Respect (Agreements adhered to, being treated as equally important as others)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

3. On a scale of 1-10, How well did the leading and delivery of the session enable you to reflect on the work you have done over the last six months? (1 is not very well, 10 is exceptionally well).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

4. On a scale of 1-10, how well did the leading and delivery of the session enable you to consider your role and development within this team over the next six months and beyond? (1 is not very well, 10 is exceptionally well).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

5. How useful a tool do you think the “Time to Think” model could be if it was used regularly in team meetings, supervision and peer support meetings?

Team meetings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Supervision

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Peer Support Meetings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to give me this feedback. Your comments and thoughts are really appreciated.

Judith Parr
December 2015.

Appendix D

Team Meeting – Wednesday 9th December 2015

Please sign below to confirm your attendance at this Team Meeting and your willingness to take part in the reflective discussions which are planned, as per the email sent last week (see attached). Please also mark the relevant box to indicate if you are prepared to offer written feedback regarding your thoughts on elements of this session (to be sent to a selection of participants). Feedback may be used to support the assignment I am writing as part of my Integrated Systems Leadership course. All feedback can be anonymous

Name	Signature	Prepared to Feedback?

Judith Parr

December 2015

Appendix E

Team Meeting Feedback Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in providing feedback regarding the session which took place in the [redacted] Children's Centre Team Meeting on Wednesday 9th December 2015.

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you feel able. There are no right or wrong responses. In order to protect your identity, please email your completed feedback to d.....@.....gov.uk. D. will ensure these are anonymised as far as possible before forwarding them to me. If, however, you would like to discuss your responses, or anything regarding the meeting further, I would be happy to do this. Please contact me to do so.

6. Prior to the meeting, having received information about the outline structure of what was planned, how did you feel about taking part in the "Time to Think" session? (Please circle all relevant)

   Interested – *"I wonder what this will be about"* x
   Apprehensive – "*I'm not sure about this" x*
   Overwhelmed – "*I really haven't got time for this"*
   Optimistic – *"This could be really positive" x x x*
   Pessimistic – *"What a waste of time"*
   Other – Please give details below:

   I felt really optimistic about this because all too often the quieter people do not get a say in group meetings.

   I see the value of the Time to Think model but I often find it difficult to express myself in a wide group

   I thought that we were also going to have a team meeting, as possibly a split session, because we were sent an agenda by our administrator. However, when I re-read JP's email, she did specify the team meeting time would be used for a Time to Think session, so this was my mistake.

   Apprehensive- I was not sure about this as I have not always been a great lover of the "Time to Think" but at the same time I have not received training on this.

7. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being very poor and 10 being exceptionally well), did the Time to Think session provide you with the following:

A Positive physical environment (suitable seating, lighting, refreshments, comfort, space)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 xxxx	8 x	9x	10

Mean – 7.5

Comments:

The refreshments were very nice. The room was just ok for the number of people attending and became a little hot when the door was closed.

Having the door open was a bit off putting as it felt less confidential

7 Room was too hot, but adjustments were made to help this, ie windows and door opened. I felt comfortable and it felt like an environment in which I could share information openly.

Yes there were refreshments for us all. I do feel the room could have been bigger as there were a lot of us in the meeting.

Somewhat of a cramped room for the number of people that attended;

Hospitality welcoming and environment comfortable otherwise.

Enough Information (clarity of purpose, background, clear agenda, timescales)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8x x x	9xx	10x

Comments:**Mean – 8.6**

The whole session was well planned and executed in a professional, calm and clear manor. Prior information was shared with the whole team so everyone knew what to expect. very clear. I felt a little bit “taught” at times

8 JP gave a concise agenda for the session and set a time for the end of the session. She gave a clear and understandable explanation of the Time to Think model and I felt reassured that I would be able to have my voice heard and have time to give my point of view.

We were informed how long it will be and Judith also went through the agenda.

Feelings of being appreciated (through actions, words and body language of others)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8xxxx	9xx	10

Comments: **Mean – 8.33**

I do like the time to think model when it is used correctly. I still feel some people struggle with allowing others to have their say. However most of the time people were made to feel appreciated and listened too.

glad that I was paired with my partner as she was kind and I felt safe with her.

8 I felt that I was given the time to think about my feelings and viewpoint and that I could say what I wanted to. Whilst I was talking others showed they were listening and gave me encouragement, by giving me their attention and the odd little smile.

People was listen to

Picked up on others comments later;

Opportunity to be at ease (freedom from rush or urgency)

1	2	3	4	5x	6	7	8x	9xxx	10x

Comments: **Mean 8.3**

It was a really relaxed session however it was a bit of a shame that one person had to leave before the end

I enjoyed the fact that everyone was given ample time

5 I was aware of the time limits that JP put on certain opportunities to talk, for example saying 'in about two sentences, say how you feel about…' Unfortunately I had a lot of feelings that I had not had the opportunity to express before, so I kept talking and felt I extended these limits. This made me feel flustered and worried I had taken too much time.

Everyone was given time to talk and was listened to at all times, I felt that when people did talk Judith held good eye contact and positive body language.

This was even despite asking people for ;''one word' at the end and many attempting going into descriptive statements – handled well

Encouragement (unthreatening environment, free from competition)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7x	8xx	9x	10xx

Comments: **Mean – 8.66**

I did feel listened to when it was my time to speak and encouraged by the comments at the end however I do still feel that not everyone bought in to the model.

JP seemed to grow in confidence as she facilitated the group, when she relaxed, it was clear that she was very kind and supportive which was helpful. I preferred this style to the initial style.

7 I feel the Time to Think environment encouraged my openness and honesty about my experiences, which in turn allowed me to release some of the tension I carried from my previous situation.

Everyone was giving time to take part but was also supported and not put under pressure if not wanting to.

Made very clear ; all voices welcomed; attempted to facilitate for quieter staff members but circumstances meant that was not as possible.

Feelings of being listened to (receiving high quality of attention from others present)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7x	8x	9xx	10xx

Comments:**Mean – 8.8**

I did feel listened to when it was my time to speak.

was managed well, and I left the experience with strong feelings of having been heard

7 I did feel that other people in the group gave me appropriate attention and I felt listened to. It did worry me that I may have taken up too much time personally, but I did not actually see any signs of anyone expressing this.

Yes everyone had time to have there say.

Freedom to express feelings (across the whole spectrum of emotions, if necessary)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7x	8xxx	9xx	10

Comments: **Mean – 8.1**

I think there was the freedom to express emotions however I probably would not have felt at ease to do so in front of the whole team.

I found this quite an emotional experience. I did not feel able to fully express this, as it may have been perceived as inappropriate by other team members.

8 I felt able to express my appreciation of the team that I am working with and how much of a difference they have made to my working life. It felt good to have the opportunity to say this, as in normal circumstances I would have been embarrassed to express this openly.

Yes

Reiterated throughout the session

Asking of Incisive Questions (questions which take away limiting assumptions from you)

1	2	3	4	5x	6	7x	8xx	9x	10

Comments: **Mean – 6.2**

The question asked were concise and to the point

I'm unsure about this……..

5 I did not feel that I was asked questions that were incisive, but then I don't think I needed that type of encouragement. I did however see that JP asked questions to others to help encourage them to give their point of view and express their feelings.

Judith use the words like un pack that throughout the session

Invited others to do the same ; limited timescale to exercise but examples given

Recognition of Diversity (Valuing of the differences between us)

1	2	3	4	5	6x	7	8xxx	9	10x

Comments: **Mean – 6.6**

I think everyone was valued as an individual.

6 I noticed recognition was given to staff that had been off work for some time, and the teams different strengths were recognised and staff who needed it, were given encouragement to have their voice.

Yes

Respect (Agreements adhered to, being treated as equally important as others)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7x	8xx	9xx	10x

Comments: **Mean – 8.5**

Yes, there was a feeling of respect throughout the session

7 I feel the whole team was given respect and treated like everyone was equally important

Yes at all times

Good timekeeping; encouraged the less vocal

8. On a scale of 1-10, How well did the leading and delivery of the session enable you to reflect on the work you have done over the last six months? (1 is not very well, 10 is exceptionally well).

1	2	3x	4	5	6	7x	8x	9xxx	10

Comments: **Mean – 7.5**

The session was delivered in a clear and concise way allowing everyone the opportunity to reflect on their work over the last six months.

I'm not sure there was opportunity for me to reflect because I have already reflected but it gave me an opportunity to share how I have felt in the last six months.

8 I feel that the leading and delivery was done well, it was enabling and encouraging.

Difficult for me as I am not part of specific team where discussion taking place so I tended to make it more generic – possibly causing a confusion;

9. On a scale of 1-10, how well did the leading and delivery of the session enable you to consider your role and development within this team over the next six months and beyond? (1 is not very well, 10 is exceptionally well).

1	2	3x	4	5	6	7x	8x	9x	10x

Comments: **Mean – 6.1**

I am not sure the session gave me an opportunity to consider my own personal development; however there were quite a lot of suggestions on how the team can develop.

I think what was powerful was that everyone could think together – this was where the skill of the leader was very good. Personally, I already have spent time thinking about my role etc but to spend time together to consider the service as a whole was excellent.

8 In this environment, I felt able to reflect well over the last 6 months and found I had more emotions and feelings attached to that than I had previously realised.

Lots to think about how we can make this better for the next 6 months.

Difficult to answer – see above

10. How useful a tool do you think the "Time to Think" model could be if it was used regularly in team meetings, supervision and peer support meetings?

Team meetings

1	2	3	4	5	6xx	7	8xxx	9x	10

Mean – 7.5

I do think the Time to Think model is a good tool to use, however I also feel that the team meetings would be quite drawn out if it was used in every meeting and time is precious.

Supervision

1	2	3	4x	5	6	7x	8xx	9x	10

Mean - 6

Peer Support Meetings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8xxxx	9xx	10

Mean – 8.3

Comments:

I felt the session was very good and it gave everyone the opportunity to reflect on the past 6 months and how the team could improve and develop in the future.

I think this is a very useful tool which supports a more democratic way of working. It also gives a voice to those of the team who struggle to find an arena to vocalise their thoughts.

I think that the Time to Think model would work well in meetings where there are many people attending, for example in Team meetings or Peer Support. However, when there are only two people, as in supervision, I think this model would be heavy handed. Supervision is for me an opportunity to have your say anyway, and I don't think this model would bring anything more to it.

I'm still not 100% about this model I would like more information and time to try it out and reflect on how it is working.

I feel it plays a part – but due to the time required the full meeting could not be run in this way.

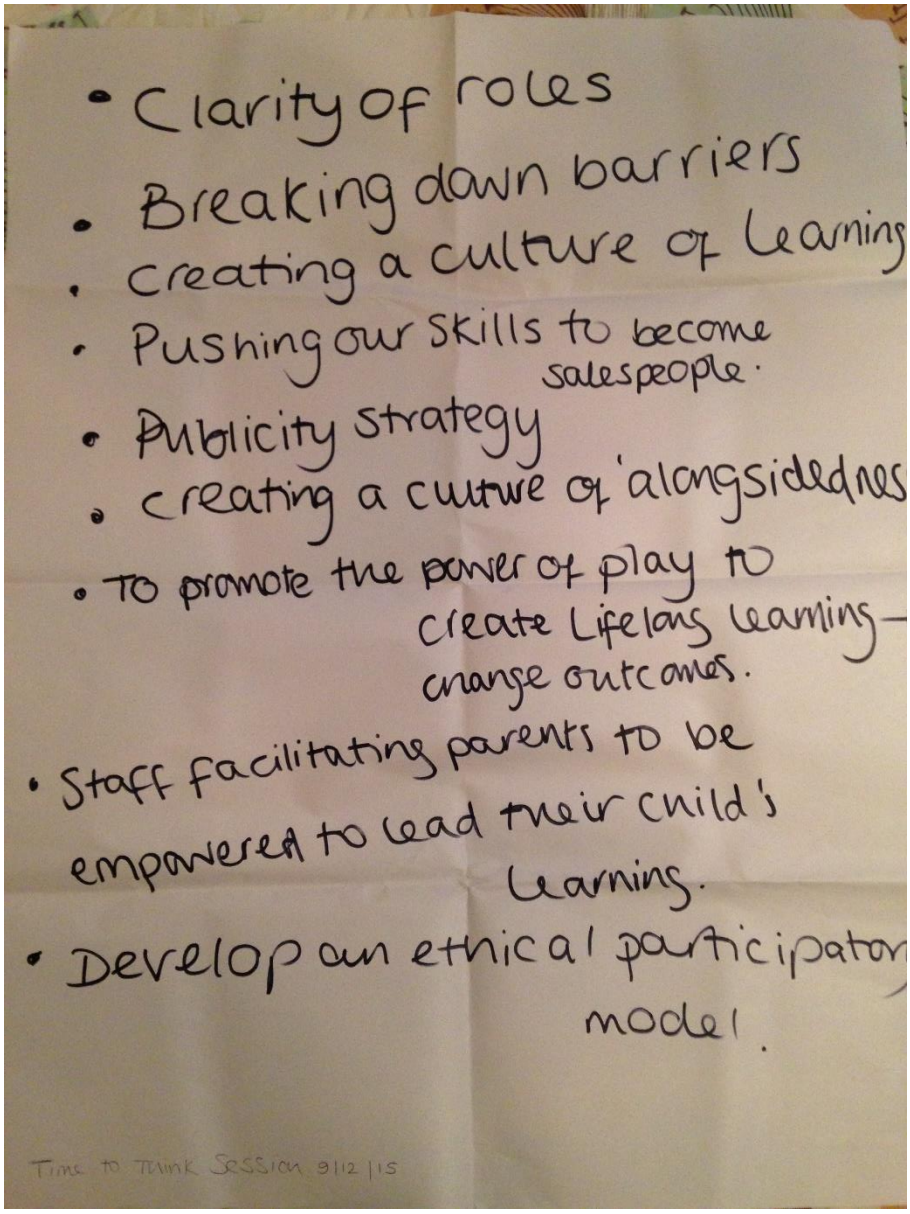
There is a need for information sharing within meetings which does not lend itself to this model ;

Thank you for taking the time to give me this feedback. Your comments and thoughts are really appreciated.

Judith Parr
December 2015.

Appendix F

Responses to question, "*What needs to happen from now to make sure the next six months (and beyond) are positive and productive for this team?*"



- Clarity of roles
- Breaking down barriers
- creating a culture of Learning
- Pushing our skills to become salespeople.
- Publicity strategy
- creating a culture of 'alongsidedness
- To promote the power of play to create Lifelong learning – change outcomes.
- Staff facilitating parents to be empowered to lead their child's Learning.
- Develop an ethical participator model.

Time to Think Session 9/12/15