Introduction

By being grounded in practice, this book aims to meet the needs of those facing the challenges currently presented by *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004a) *The Children's Workforce Strategy* (DfES, 2005a) and *The Children's Plan* (DCSF, 2007), to work together in a new way for the benefit of young children and families. The content of this book applies as much to those working as childminders as to leaders of Children's Centres, and it is a useful resource for those studying to achieve Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL). It also serves students and tutors of Early Years degrees (Level 5 and 6) and practitioners, governors or parents with an interest in early years leadership and management, whatever type of setting is within their experience.

Throughout the text, links are made with current standards and policy, for example, standards for EYPS and NPQICL and the themes within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and their application within an early years leadership and management context. In a practical sense, the book focuses on theoretical perspectives linked directly to the views of practitioners who enact change. These are set out as 'pictures of practice' alongside academic arguments and evidence from published research provided by the contributors. In essence, the text moves away from purely theoretical perspectives towards developing practice. An underlying premise is that children and families are at the heart of early years services and therefore the current government's ambition to bring about a transformation of the sector involves all who are associated and affected by it. As a consequence, when referring to 'teams', children and their families are considered to be part of this team. Although this book is designed to support those involved in and affected by current government policy and initiatives, the intention is that the ideas and arguments can be applicable in changing circumstances, whatever their nature.

The enormity of changes experienced within the early years sector across the four nations of the United Kingdom in recent years is highlighted by Moyles (2006), in the introduction to her publication

Effective Leadership and Management in the Early Years. She provides a thought-provoking scenario which asks us to think about the people who, without any formal training or qualifications, have found themselves undertaking leadership and management roles in private or voluntary settings which are becoming increasingly complex businesses. She gives an example which will be familiar to many of our readers, of 'the playgroup leader, a mother of young children, who suddenly found herself responsible for, amongst other things … ensuring staff within the setting received opportunities for professional development' (Introduction). This is not an uncommon experience and even where formal training has been undertaken, leadership and management have not generally been central elements of early years qualifications at any level. This situation is changing with the growing recognition that there is a significant relationship between the quality of a setting and its leadership. The drive to raise quality of service and workforce across the sector needs to attend to the development of leadership and management, and more opportunities are occurring to study leadership and management in initial training and professional development courses. This book intends to support such courses by reflecting the particular nature of the sector and the context of the learner, providing reflective activities which are transferable and relevant to the workplace.

This book aims to contribute to the developing knowledge concerning leadership and management practice across the early years sector with the primary focus on leading people and managing the development of practice in order for individuals to become agents of change. A unique feature of the book is that each chapter considers the impact of leadership and management of settings on the children and their families. With this in mind, the contributors hope to inspire practitioners to take ownership of the lead role and regard such management as fundamental to the well-being of the community.

The sentiment expressed by Roger Gill that 'seeking the answer to the question "what is leadership?" is like searching for the Holy Grail …' (Gill, 2006: 8) indicates the complexity and variety of perspectives on the subject. The relationship between leadership and management is open to debate and this book does not seek to provide a definitive answer or suggest that we could arrive at such a position. There are a wide range of theories and models which contribute to our overall understanding of leadership and management and the contributors to this book will draw upon competing perspectives within their chapters. We do believe, however, that the real value of

considering the theories surrounding leadership and management is in the potential to move forward our understanding of experiences in practice. This does not simply mean using the models which fit comfortably within our personal contexts but those which challenge our assumptions and which we can use critically to evaluate our working knowledge in practice. This book assumes a readiness of the reader to engage in reflection in order to apply, evaluate, contest and review theory and principles of practice within their own context to come to a greater understanding and informed ways of working. In this spirit, it is worthwhile the reader spending a few moments identifying their own perspective on leadership and management and reflecting upon the possible origins of and influences on their own thinking.

In considering conventional ways in which the terms leadership and management are used, there is a danger of confusing attributes with roles and functions or just considering one of these aspects. Attempts at drawing distinctions between leadership and management include a straightforward division between operational (micro) and strategic (macro) skills and functions, with the former seen as the province of management and the latter as leadership. Sometimes it is the tasks undertaken which are seen as differentiated, with management tasks being pragmatic or technical and associated with running an efficient organization, whereas leadership provides the human dimension, the world of workplace relationships and interaction (Morgan, 1986). Leadership may also be seen as providing the wherewithal to motivate and mobilize human resources to work towards goals (Rodd, 2006). Some attempts to differentiate between the terms evoke more emotive distinctions, for example, managing as coping and leadership as inspiring or initiating (Smith & Langston, 1999). This could affect attitudes and perceptions and have implications for the way we see ourselves and those with whom we work. Would you prefer to be seen as someone who copes or who inspires? It is therefore important that the two terms are not given prejudicial or negative connotations which suggest one is more valued than the other. In seeking clarification of terminology, we do not want to draw too much separateness. Stark distinctions might not be the most helpful as leading and managing need to interrelate. 'Managers may be good at *managing* and nominally regarded as leaders, but the most effective managers exercise *effective leadership*.' (Gill, 2006: 10).

The nature of leadership and management within the field of early years is undoubtedly that of a human dimension. Human resources and human development are the essence of the business, not the

technical efficiency and outputs associated with industry, so it is not helpful to see management as technical, nor just as the utilization of human resources. 'Effective leadership in the early childhood profession is about working towards creating a community and providing a high quality service' (Rodd, 2006: 24). Early years leaders and managers work in the world of relationships and need to lead people. This is not to say that leadership is confined to recognized positions of authority such as the manager. Leadership can be diffused within the organization, among staff, governors, parents and children, any of whom can initiate change and improvement, motivate and enthuse others, contribute to developing the direction and mission of the setting, and model and communicate its values and ethos (Jones & Pound, 2008). Gill (2006) sees leadership as both extrinsic (provided by another) and intrinsic (from within ourselves), where individuals have vision, are self-aware and self-driven. Whether extrinsic or intrinsic, leadership 'creates a sense of direction, empowerment and the motivation we feel when we are doing or achieving something worthwhile' (Gill, 2006: 11). This concept of leadership fits well with early years as a community service, whether public or privately owned, as the organization has a moral purpose in improving outcomes for children and families.

This view of leadership in the early years sector means that the contents of this book could be relevant and useful across the myriad types of settings and stakeholders, including childminders, parents and governors, students and team leaders, all of whom can exert leadership influence and who have a vested interest in the quality of early years provision.

The aim of the book

The aim of this book is to support the reader in exploring contemporary views on how interprofessional leadership and managements skills can be part of the process of meeting the needs of families, as well as managing resources and enhancing teamwork within a wide range of early years settings. The contributors acknowledge that there are similarities and differences between the four nations in terms of their approaches to early years but this text is written within the context of policy and legislation in England. The general principles, however, and experiences within practice which are discussed, are applicable across all settings within the UK.

Overall, the chapters provide the reader with a mixture of relevant theory, practical suggestions, pictures of practice, questions for reflection and discussion (pauses for thought), activities for personal and professional development and suggestions for further reading. Each chapter finishes with questions or thoughts that may be used individually, as part of a team, or by a tutor or mentor in order to reflect upon personal and professional development planning. We do not wish to impose any particular structure or approach to this activity but hope that by considering and reflecting upon these questions or thoughts that understanding, values and beliefs underpinning practice will continue to develop. The contributors hope that this book provides the reader with the means to a greater understanding of practice, future aims, prompts for further action and exploration of thinking. Above all, we hope this book supports strong relationship building among a community of learners in whatever team and context.

Content

This book leads the reader towards a view of leadership and management that encompasses a value-based, principled approach. Chapter 1 identifies the need to take into account the nature and characteristics of early years, the influence this might have, and the demands it might make, on the leadership and management of settings in following a principled approach. The text also emphasises, in Chapter 2, the importance of recognizing the value of individual contributions within an early years setting, and explores how leaders empower others to support the development and sustainability of the setting in its approach to working with children, families and communities. Chapter 3 moves the reader forward and explores the nature of change in early years settings. It considers how leaders in those settings can draw upon their understanding of pedagogical practices to inform their change management skills and develop a 'change embracing' organization.

Chapter 4 considers the way that management and leadership needs to be concerned with various professional groups working together to support children and families and explores what we mean by 'professionals working in partnership'. In Chapter 5, group dynamics and the facilitation of team-building to encourage the development of positive motivation and attitudes is considered, alongside potential difficulties and the importance of emotional literacy for the effective

operation of teams. Chapter 6 explores the notion of supporting teams using a variety of mentoring techniques and considers why and how the skills used by a mentor are an important part of leadership, the management of change, and an essential element of working effectively with children and their families. Finally, Chapter 7 focuses on the context, literature and professional principles underpinning work with parents and encourages a reflective approach to work in settings. As a result, this chapter is a working case study with which to plan for professional development needs and improvement action in teams.

Clarification and explanation of some of the terms used throughout this book can be found in the Glossary. Where practitioners have drawn on experiences, care has been taken to respect and preserve confidentiality and deal ethically with privileged information.