

Inspiring leaders to
improve children's lives



National College
for School Leadership

Early Years

Leadership development resources for children's centre staff

Children's centre leaders questionnaire

Professional development

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Introducing the questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to be completed by the centre leader. There are two types of questionnaire: one designed for completion by the centre leader (this one), and the other for completion by two or three other members of the senior leadership team (SLT). This centre leader questionnaire asks the leader to respond to statements reflecting his or her leadership responsibilities within the centre. The second questionnaire asks other leadership staff to respond based on their views of their own leadership ability, as well as that of the collective SLT (which includes the centre leader). The questionnaires will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and should initially be filled out individually. It is important to ensure that the appropriate questionnaires are filled out by the correct staff (ie, that centre leaders fill out their version of the questionnaire).

To answer each question, staff are asked to circle a rating from 1-6 (from disagree to agree) in response to a series of statements about the children's centre.

Discussion session

After all members of the SLT have completed their questionnaires, they might compare their answers to as a group, discussing any discrepancies between ratings. This allows the centre leader to compare his or her own assessments with those of other leadership staff and pinpoint any gaps in views or understanding. Interesting differences in beliefs may arise between different parties, and self-reflection might support improvement in this area.

During the discussion, differences may arise between how leadership staff feel that the SLT as a whole is leading, compared with how the centre leader evaluates his or her own practice. This eye-opening exercise is designed to broaden the understanding of the centre leader and the SLT on leadership issues, and help each person to become aware of his or her own perceived practices as an aid to improvement. It is recommended that discussions are conducted in an open, respectful way to aid self-evaluation and review of current practice and to help develop priorities for improvement.

Learning from the discussions

A set of action plans are available to allow the SLT to sit together and note any areas of leadership which they subsequently feel it would be helpful to work on.

Questionnaire for the centre leader

This questionnaire is for individual completion by the centre leader. Please rate all statements as honestly as you can. You will be asked to reflect on your answers during a development discussion with members of your senior leadership team.

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section A: Vision and purpose towards facilitating change within the Sure Start children's centre, and challenging weak practice

1. Indicate the extent to which you agree that each statement characterises your Sure Start children's centre.	strongly disagree 1	moderately disagree 2	slightly disagree 3	slightly agree 4	moderately agree 5	strongly agree 6
a) I regularly discuss the vision for this centre with staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I place a strong emphasis on giving staff a sense of overall purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) There is a strong focus on children's learning and development.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) There is a strong focus on parents'/carers' engagement and learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) We have clear strategic priorities in place that are closely linked to the highest quality of learning and development outcomes for all children and integrated across service collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) The multi-agency focus and partnership work in this centre work well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Children and parents/carers feel safe in this children's centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I make sure all children and families linked with the centre are treated equally and fairly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) Staff and families are regularly involved in developing the vision of the centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Indicate the extent to which you agree that each statement characterises standards and expectations within your Sure Start children's centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) I have a clear view of the challenges facing the families in most need.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I set and model high standards for achieving positive, high-quality learning and development outcomes for all children.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) The national standards for centre leaders are followed closely and adhered to (eg, DfE standards for leaders of Sure Start children's centres).	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I have high expectations of staff working with children and families.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Staff understand and implement safeguarding/child protection procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Safeguarding/child protection policies that ensure the welfare of children are in place and up to date.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Staff are well trained to provide support to at-risk children and families.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) We are successful in improving outcomes for the children and families in most need in the community served by this centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section B: Leadership of the Sure Start children's centre

3. Indicate the extent to which you agree that each statement characterises your own practice as a leader.	1 strongly disagree	2 moderately disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 moderately agree	6 strongly agree
a) I keep up to date with developments in early education, care and integrated services in relation to children's centres.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I feel confident that staff understand the reasons for, and are actively involved in, improvement initiatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I find it easy to balance my administrative duties with my leadership of the development and delivery of services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I regularly review my own practice and take part in continuing professional development (CPD).	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I find it easy to manage the finances of this centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) I am knowledgeable about and actively pursue opportunities to generate income and funding for the centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) An important part of this centre's development plan is provision for managing change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I carry out regular collaborative reviews of current policy and practice to help staff understand and manage changes that take place.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) My knowledge of the local context and community that the centre serves influences how I plan for change in services, particularly for the families in most need.	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) I find it easy to manage the challenges I face in my role as a Sure Start children's centre leader.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section B: Leadership of the Sure Start children's centre

4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your own children's centre leadership style.	strongly disagree 1	moderately disagree 2	slightly disagree 3	slightly agree 4	moderately agree 5	strongly agree 6
a) My leadership style is adaptive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I model good practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I regularly ask staff for feedback.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I am ready to learn from and alongside others.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I place a high value on building trust-based relationships with staff and families.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) I am consistent in my high expectations for service delivery.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) I am innovative, entrepreneurial and reflective.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I am generally optimistic about my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) I am willing to develop and grow in my approach to leadership.	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) I feel confident in my ability to foster centre improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) I feel confident in making difficult or unpopular decisions for the future development of the centre's work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) I am able to successfully manage conflict when it arises.	1	2	3	4	5	6
m) I find it easy to motivate some of my staff in their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
n) I often alter my style of leadership.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

How can you develop or improve staff sense of overall purpose?

Are there any statements that you struggled to rate or feel are not directly relevant to you or your centre (give reasons)?

Section C: Monitoring services within the Sure Start children's centre

5. To what extent do you carry out the following activities to improve Sure Start children's centre practice?	1 not at all	2 very little	3 little	4 partially	5 a lot	6 very significantly
a) We conduct observation of centre activities in relation to interactions between children and adults.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) We conduct observation of centre activities in relation to interactions between staff and parents/carers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) After observing activities, I provide rapid feedback and work with staff to improve their practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I ensure value for money in everyday work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I use research evidence to inform practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) I monitor the effectiveness of services in terms of cost and value for money.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Coaching/mentoring are used to improve the quality of staff service delivery.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) Staff are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) The encouragement and support of staff to use data effectively inform planning for individual child or family needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) I use comparison/benchmarking of the work of my centre against that of other, similar centres.	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) I use screening to identify at-risk children and families (eg, common assessment framework).	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) Our development plan and self-evaluation are key management tools used to monitor and evaluate current practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section C: Monitoring services within the Sure Start children's centre

6. To what extent do you use data to:	1 not at all	2 very little	3 little	4 partially	5 a lot	6 very significantly
a) monitor progress and act on and set priorities for achieving the highest quality of learning and development outcomes for all children	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) monitor progress of the families in most need, eg improving parenting skills, returning to work, drug misuse etc	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) ensure efficient, fair and effective deployment of resources to improve outcomes for children and families	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) influence the sharing of data between agencies	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) evaluate your centre's programme and its improvement	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) examine value for money in service planning and implementation	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) measure progress towards centre targets for staff, families and children	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) evaluate the needs of the local community	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section D: Working with other members of staff and stakeholders

7. Thinking about working with staff and stakeholders, to what extent do you believe your actions :	1 not at all	2 very little	3 little	4 partially	5 a lot	6 very significantly
a) encourage staff to develop and share new ideas for their work or to improve services	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) model a high level of professional practice	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) develop and share an atmosphere/ethos of transparency, care and trust	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) encourage staff to think of broad outcomes for children and families (eg, physical, educational, emotional and behavioural)	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) ensure wide staff participation in decisions about improvement of services	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) overcome professional boundaries between staff	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Other staff and stakeholders in your Sure Start children's centre:	1 strongly disagree	2 moderately disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 moderately agree	6 strongly agree
a) have absolute clarity in our values, beliefs and attitudes related to the goals of the children's centre	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) participate in ongoing, collaborative work	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) have a significant role in centre-wide decision-making	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) play an important part in the development of policies on service provision	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) are actively involved in the evaluation and review processes of the centre	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) play an important part in working with parents	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) have a positive impact on standards of service delivery	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) have a positive impact on improving outcomes for children and families	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) have a significant role and voice in shaping budget decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) work closely and pose little challenge to the running of the centre	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) understand issues of accountability and procedures to be followed	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section D: Working with other members of staff and stakeholders

9. Indicate the extent to which leadership practice in your Sure Start children's centre is provided by the following people or groups :	rarely/never 1	infrequently 2	some 3	moderate amount 4	a great deal 5	all the time 6
a) senior management team (SMT)/senior leadership team (SLT)	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) other staff, acting together or individually	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) governors/advisory board members/centre improvement partners	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) local authority	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) parents/carers/families	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) community groups/voluntary organisations	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) other (please give details)	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Thinking about the way leadership responsibilities are distributed or shared , to what extent do you agree with the following statements?	strongly disagree 1	moderately disagree 2	slightly disagree 3	slightly agree 4	moderately agree 5	strongly agree 6
a) Leadership tasks are delegated by the centre leader or SMT/SLT.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) There are clear arrangements in place for who deputises when I am away/unavailable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) We collectively plan which individual or group(s) will carry out which leadership tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Most leadership tasks in this centre are carried out by the centre leader and SMT/SLT.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) Other non-senior centre staff are encouraged to take on leadership tasks, roles or responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section E: Relationships with staff and stakeholders

11. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your relationship with staff .	strongly disagree 1	moderately disagree 2	slightly disagree 3	slightly agree 4	moderately agree 5	strongly agree 6
a) I trust most of the staff in this centre to do their jobs well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Staff are able to discuss their feelings, worries and frustrations with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I find it easy to discuss my feelings, worries and frustrations about service delivery with my staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I receive strong support from centre staff in my leadership role.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I think staff contributions, views and expertise are an important part of the centre's self evaluation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) I provide regular feedback on the ideas provided by staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) I regularly implement the ideas provided by staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I encourage staff to develop new ideas to improve services.	1	2	3	4	5	6

12. Thinking about your relationship with members of your Sure Start children's centre advisory board , indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) Other staff play an important part in working with the advisory board.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I find it easy to discuss my concerns with members of the advisory board.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I feel supported by the advisory board in my position as leader/head of centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I feel satisfied with the way the current governance arrangements work.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section F: Professional development of staff

13. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about continuing professional development (CPD) and development of the workforce .	strongly disagree 1	moderately disagree 2	slightly disagree 3	slightly agree 4	moderately agree 5	strongly agree 6
a) I find it easy to give staff individual support to help them improve their work practices.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I promote and support a range of CPD experiences among all staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I ensure that CPD is aligned with centre improvement policies.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I ensure there is a clear pathway of progression and CPD for all individuals and teams.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I often appraise staff performance to identify staff training needs, including goals and targets.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) I provide professional and educational resources to encourage professional development, eg journal subscriptions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) I find it easy to make sure staff understand relevant legal and policy frameworks and how they affect multi-agency and integrated services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I encourage reflective critical practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) I promote leadership aspiration and development among staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) I encourage the sharing of best practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section G: Collaboration and integration

14. Indicate the extent to which you believe your leadership practice facilitates working collaboratively with:	1 not at all	2 very little	3 little	4 partially	5 a lot	6 very significantly
a) managers of health care services	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) managers of social care services	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) managers of Job Centre Plus	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) staff within this centre	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) other Sure Start children's centres/local primary schools	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) voluntary/community organisations	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) local nurseries/pre-schools	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) local childminders	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements concerning your work with other people within your Sure Start children's centre to provide better services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
a) My leadership style impacts on outcomes for children and families.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I successfully manage within a model featuring integrated services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I challenge over-adherence to professional boundaries.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I make sure that job descriptions for staff at the children's centre reflect integrated ways of working.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I include feedback from all stakeholders in the centre's self evaluation (eg, regarding performance, achievement, outcomes and roles).	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) I find it easy to use research information on best practice when it comes to integrated and multi-agency working.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I encourage my staff to attend training aimed at improving how people work together to provide better services.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section G: Collaboration and integration

16. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your work with partner agencies , particularly when working with the families in most need.	1 strongly disagree	2 moderately disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 moderately agree	6 strongly agree
a) There is shared vision across the senior managers of partner agencies and centre management.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I find it easy to bring together partner agencies successfully.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) There is good communication between multiple agencies working at this centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Sharing information between service partners is easy within this centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) An integrated management information system is in place within this centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) There are regular meetings between different service providers to discuss individual child and family cases (eg, team around the child), especially with regard to thresholds.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) This centre contributes and learns from local formal/informal learning networks such as the Children's Centre Leader Network (CCLN).	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I feel comfortable influencing those who are employed by partner agencies.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

Section G: Collaboration and integration

17. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about parental and community involvement.	1 strongly disagree	2 moderately disagree	3 slightly disagree	4 slightly agree	5 moderately agree	6 strongly agree
a) Parents/carers are heavily involved in the running of services within the centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) Parents/carers are regularly consulted about their service needs and ideas, with comments being acted upon.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) Parents/carers are actively engaged in service design.	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) Parents/carers have their own committee, group or channel through which their views can be represented and acted upon.	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) There are good links between local community or voluntary groups and this centre.	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) Parents/carers have access to a comprehensive selection of parent-focused and regularly updated courses/sessions to develop their skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) Parents/carers are given lots of guidance on how to support their children's development within the home environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) Parents/carers have lots of opportunities to join the workforce through clear pathways.	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) A large number of parents/carers support the centre's activities as volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) This centre takes into account the cultural and child-rearing views of families using the services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) I ensure effective and sustained outreach into the community so that the most disadvantaged families can access services.	1	2	3	4	5	6
l) Activities and opportunities within this centre are well publicised.	1	2	3	4	5	6
m) Activities and opportunities within this centre are well attended.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please circle only **one** answer for each statement throughout.

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