

## **Social inclusion of children**

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### **I. Introduction**

Good Morning,

My name is Peter Lee an active member of DECET but Director of Children and Families: Research and Development Centre.

This presentation will focus on activities in Scotland but concerns a wider research and development programme which is operating throughout Europe. The reason for focussing on Scotland is because of the wealth of material that we have gathered in our home country, its innovative nature but mainly because there is not enough time to mention everything today.

This workshop will look at the research findings into one of the main programmes on social inclusion for young children in Scotland. The provision of services for children and families in Scotland has received the utmost priority from central and local governments over the past six years. Funding, particularly through policies entitled Childcare Strategy, Changing Children's Services funds and Sure Start, have been made available to local authorities and municipalities to improve and develop services for children and families. The results have been a drive towards social inclusion through the integration of all health, education and social service provision for children and families. This has increased the number of multi-agency management and operational systems for children's services supported by local authorities.

One major example in Glasgow in Scotland has been the development of multiagency integrated services entitled Family Learning Centres. These Family Learning Centres aim to provide childcare and pre-school education for children aged from birth to five and support services for families within an integrated setting. The original operation for these centres included a multi-disciplinary team drawn from Education, Social Work and Health.

This workshop will report on social inclusion policies nationally in Scotland and use the Family Centre programme in Glasgow to identify 'real' issues in the neighbourhoods and communities.

### **2 Connections to other countries**

The main research question that we were trying to answer was : What is the impact of central government policies on support for families living in disadvantage by promoting the integration of services?

We did this by looking at countries through an inverted telescope approach, looking at dimensions: at a national level, at a regional level; at a municipality level and a community level and then at a single programme level ; for example a social inclusion and assessment; or social inclusion and the provision of services for children in centres.

The research methodology we will not look at in greater depth because it becomes full of jargon but it is sufficient to say we looked at qualitative data through for example focus groups and interviews with parents and professionals and quantitative data through analysis of statistical material at governmental and local authority level.



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### 3. Data Collation Matrix

Our approach was to create a matrix from the data:

1. Looked for similar instances of words / definitions / understandings: examples  
Inclusion  
Social inclusion  
Social Justice  
Integration  
Diversity
2. Government & policies  
e.g. welfare; progress in implementing the articles of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
3. Demographics, Culture / languages, Government & policies, e.g. integrated approach, definitions of needs, programmes and activities
4. Types of services, health, education and social services, costs to families, operational hours, internal policies, centre ethos (using principles of DECET)
5. Staffing: who are they? professional and qualifications, conditions of service, training and development
6. Parental involvement and roles, management and policy, level of partnership
7. Children: access to service, what criteria if any age range.

### 3. What we hoped to elicit

Whether national and local governments demonstrate a commitment to social inclusion, as we understand it, for example through a strategic approach to integration. We would hope to see an interface between policy and practice. we were looking for 'Best practice' is likely to be responsive to community and family needs and have elements from the following:

*mixed economy of provision; balance between universal and targeted service; demonstrate partnership-between parents and professionals, professional groupings, sectors; have flexibility in programme content and availability; include children in decision making processes – be working to a children's rights agenda; offer a menu of support services; have an accountable management structure – including to families and communities; have an ethos which welcomes all families regardless of age, gender, race or ability; have staff representative of both genders and that reflects the demography of the local community e.g. asylum seekers; staff are valued and supported*

### 4. Some indicative results

There has been a major shift in language across Scotland and across comparative countries on the use of the integration in vision documentation, policies, strategy and operations: this has included greater focus on holistic approaches with a greater focus on needs of parents and children and children at the centre. Comments on all aspects of social inclusion: increased communication vertically and horizontally, breaking down all barriers, sharing a vision of a better way to service children and communities, building nets which would ensure children at risk did not suffer, sharing practice arrangements between health, education social services and these others that you can see.

In terms of social inclusion managers of services felt that the following were important



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1. Support for individual children
2. Support for individual families in crisis
3. Local service delivery
4. Support for individual parents
5. Links between departments
6. Senior management liaison
7. Links between local authorities and external agencies
8. Understanding different roles
9. Creation of new community groups
10. Links between community members and services
11. Sustaining existing community support

#### 5. **Community Dimension**

- In one example of the community dimension when we looked at the integrated services in one local authority in Scotland which had implemented a 'real' programme on inclusion and had:
  - Multi-agency early years planning group
  - Aim to provide childcare and pre-school education and family support services within an integrated setting
  - Main target group – vulnerable families and children aged birth – 3 years

The research methodology is here but it is only for those really interested in that scientific approach. Some methods

- Qualitative methods
  - literature review
  - orientation and semi-structured interviews
  - focus groups
  - observation of local meetings
- Quantitative methods
  - review of national, local and departmental and agency documentation
  - survey of parents
  - profiles of centres
  - analysis of databases

(Speaking directly to these slides:)

#### Vision

- Strong commitment from all departments and agencies
- Key staff need clearer understanding of visionary concepts

#### Policy

- Broad agreement on principles and practices on social justice and inclusion
- Knowledge and understanding of policy reflected departmental or agency background
- The monitoring procedures of the administering department did not include family support services



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### Strategy

- Programme roll out achieved
- Lack of clarity in strategic implementation
- Confusion as to decision making processes

### Operation

- All centres provided childcare and pre-school education and some support services for parents
- Interagency staff teams were not created in most centres
- Centre management and staff were unsure of the role and remit of re-deployed staff
- Objective of providing innovative approaches to reaching vulnerable families was not realised
- Little evidence of regular constructive meetings between all stakeholders

### Common threads

- Voluntary sector input viewed as secondary to that of statutory agencies
- Parental involvement in inconsistent and dependant on geography
- Communication breakdown and haphazard approach to dissemination

## **6. Conclusion**

From this work it is clear that certain action points emerged: the need for people who would advocate and push for change, Regional Change Advisers or Champions. That real collaborative leadership and support was needed and the inclusion did not happen without resources of people and time.

Certain steps were needed which were seen as essential; cognisance had to be given of what existed and what good practice could be built on, so there had to be mapping out existing provision followed by training course promoting social inclusion by offering the chance to gain a sense of ownership through the Establishment of a shared philosophy. It was also essential to not undermine people and value one another's contribution as an important step while acknowledging the need for different approaches in diverse contexts

Other aspects included: acknowledging the range of skills, accepting differing perspectives, developing collaboration, identifying roles and responsibilities

## **7. Final Slide**

I will finish with the five laws that Leutz suggests

Five laws

You can integrate some of the services all of the time, all of the services some of the time, but you can't integrate all of the services all of the time.

Integration costs before it pays.

Your integration is my fragmentation

You can't integrate a square peg and a round hole.

S/he who integrates calls the tune.

Leutz, W (1999) *Five laws for integrating: lessons from the US and UK*. *Milbank Quarterly*. 77(1): 77-110



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