

WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST

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2015 Early Years and Prevention



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Itinerary

- September 16th / 23rd Colorado
- Ace Colorado
- Families of Character
- Colorado Uplift
- Seeds of Hope

September 24th Chicago

- Dr Susan Breitenstein at Rush University
- 1 site visit

September 28th / 4th October Boston

- Parenting University
- Children's Trust Conference
- 2 site visits

October – 5th New York

- New York Child Welfare Organisation
- Deputy Mayor – Richard Buery
- Deborah Beasley – Academy of Coaching Parents
- 2 site visits
- Parents for Parents. New York

October 12th leave for Buffalo

- Parent Network New York
- October 15- leave for New York
- October 17th Home

Abbreviations

WCMT – Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

WCTF – Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship

PNS – Parent Network Scotland

FOC – Families of Character

PLV – Parent Link Volunteer

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

BPS – Boston Public School

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, Wave Trust and the Dulverton Trust for this fabulous opportunity and also for all the support I received before, during and after my trip. From start to finish the experience was enjoyable, engaging, challenging and extremely exciting. From the first stage of travelling to coming home, it was a wonderful learning adventure. So many, many thanks.

I would also like to thank Parent Network Scotland Board who were completely encouraging and supportive from the start, both emotionally and financially. PNS is an organisation that prides itself on supporting people to develop their own capacity and to be given this opportunity and to be fully supported was greatly appreciated.

I experienced the whole journey from the parents' point of view and I have brought back lots of ideas to explore and implement.

I would also like to thank the staff team at PNS who very diligently held the reigns while I was gone. They are an inspirational bunch.

In addition my sincere thanks to the following people who helped make my experience all that it was.

- Steve Markel and Stephanie Corder - Families of Character
- Jonathan Tee -Ace Colorado
- Gabe Trujillo- Colorado Uplift
- Natalie Mesko Seeds of Hope
- Dr Susan Breitenstein, Shannon Ellison, Diana Rosenbrock
- Monica Roberts /Cyntoria Grant and team – Parents University
- Children's Trust
- Sue Parker – Family Nurturing Project
- Sandra Killett, Tiffany McFadden, Wanda Rodriguez, Selestina Martinez, Tracey Carter. Child Welfare Organizing Project
- Mary Beth Fadelici, Ellen McHugh – Parent to Parent
- Deputy Mayor –Richard Buery
- Theresa Drum and the staff team - Parent Network New York
- Deborah Beasley – Academy for Coaching Parents

Summary

The aim of this report is to describe the journey I embarked on, not only geographically but emotionally and as a learning experience, as I visited my chosen projects. My original application expressed my intention to look at the values work being carried out by Families of Character in Colorado. However, this soon expanded when I delved deeper and researched alternative family support.

Although I visited twelve projects in total I will feedback on those that I believe will have the greatest impact on our work here at home. I will however post a link to all projects.

The report will be placed on our website, my contacts throughout Scottish Government strategic partners, Minister for Children and Families and sent to the projects that I visited and also our own database of partners at PNS.

The report will highlight the compassion, energy and enthusiasm that I witnessed within these projects and also the care, attention and complete respect I felt when I spent time with the workers and the families they engage with.

Project Outline

I was very interested in my own sense, shared by others, as to why some of our parenting has gone way off course. Stories in the media, examples at meetings appeared to indicate that many parents were struggling. Large scale programmes were being rolled out and appearing to be quite ineffective to some of our most challenged families. It seemed that some of the work being delivered was only serving as a sticking plaster and that the root causes were not being dealt with. This of course is often due to time and finances within services which is very understandable. Also the root causes are not something that can change overnight and poverty in itself can impact on a parent's ability to manage what at times can feel like a burden (I speak from personal experience).

Parenting is the most complex and important role in the world. As parents we are a child's first role model, yet we receive little or no training for this role. No book or advice can prepare us for this journey into parenthood. It's a journey of trials and tribulations, and, as we know, no two families are the same, in fact no two children are the same.

Many families struggle with the normal every day issues that we take for granted such as setting boundaries, listening and looking after themselves because of the stresses and strains of everyday living. By offering short fixes sold as the answer, much superficial work does not anchor them. The idea for this report is to find something that helps us go back to basics and offers a new way forward for parents and their children.

Aim(s) of the Project

- Learn new skills and disseminate firstly within a staff team and then roll out into local communities
- Introduce families to the idea of values as a way of being and how this can impact their family
- Develop local networks for support so that when parents are struggling they have local support

- Train up to ten parents per year in the Families of Character work
- Enable Parent Network Scotland to become a leader in the field of parenting support.

At present our model at Parent Network Scotland is 'parents for parents'. We support parents to build on their own capacity to deliver our materials in their own community. The findings from this project will underpin all of our core programmes and existing materials. Looking at developing some values based engagement will be a way of understanding what makes families tick and will also enable parents to unpick the family history and find a new set of tools to move forward.

Training can be delivered before or after our core programme and will therefore be a catalyst for change and growth. It will be delivered in local communities to parents who will then be nurtured into becoming group facilitators. It will raise the profile of our work and we will become known for doing the real work.

Unfortunately some parents do not have the experience of having received positive roles models and therefore ask for support to change and be more engaged with their kids. This new way forward will support them to undo the negative experiences and keep the good. It can have a serious positive impact on their children's future while helping them to feel empowered.

Objectives

- Develop a more unified vision for parenting support.
- Balance prevention and crisis intervention into a community approach
- Increased family affection
- Improved family – community relations
- Empowerment of the family to solve future difficulties

About me, the start!

Driving home from work knowing the letter was behind my door was one of the most nervous drives I've ever had. The WCMT was letting me know if I was good enough, good enough to be one of their Fellows. This is a biggie! A little girl who was always told she was defiant, cheeky and too much to say for herself. I was about to find out if this was still true. Luckily it was. I was picked, so those wonderful traits that I learned to survive my childhood had brought me here.

Not only just here to this Fellowship but on my journey of life. These traits also set me in good stead for my parenting path. Alas with great joy I announce I also raised two defiant, sparky young people who also have too much to say for themselves at times. I always spoke about and encouraged their spark, their courage, believing I was not about to repeat the negative stuff but focused on such great strengths. Alongside these traits they are also the most compassionate, resilient and joyful people I know. I am at home in their company and they are my greatest joy.

The reason I am telling you this is to explore the issue of labels. The labels that were laid on my young skin were the labels that also helped me make it through very tough situations. They served me well. Many are not so lucky. The weight of the labels drives them down and they turn to other methods to ease the pain. I believe I was chosen for this journey because I had something to say, not perhaps in the most academic of ways (although that has its place.) There is also a place for some very ordinary stories, from ordinary people, living very ordinary lives.

About Parent Network Scotland

Parenting. The best thing in life or the most challenging? When given our little bundles of joy at the hospital we leave with a feeling of pure joy, fear and terror. What if I get it wrong? I love this baby, what if I don't do it right? We are all learning. No one gets it right all of the time. Most of us do a great job. We need to start hearing these stories. It's a tough job, but one that reaps benefits if you can survive. I have to say I thought I was doing an ok job until I met PNS.

The change was coming. The change being I didn't need to feel guilty for getting it wrong. I can fix it. I can get the chance to explain and say sorry and that mummy was tired. I remember sitting on the sofa with my own two children telling stories of princesses and dragons while reading the Woman's Own magazine. They didn't care what I was doing, they were just sitting on the sofa being close to me and hearing my voice. A trick I learnt from PNS, don't beat yourself up, you're doing a good enough job.

Shame and blame have a lot to answer for. We carry the shame of failure with us when we get this stuff wrong. When our older kids get stroppy we think was it something I've done? Or didn't do? It's never ending.

Learning new techniques as well as self-confidence is crucial for our own health and wellbeing. If we can't get it right for parents, how can we get it right for the kids? We need to start talking about the good stuff. At Parent Network Scotland we talk about the joy of parenting, we encourage creativity with children and above all we use the L word, love. Love for ourselves and love for our children.

Through our work we speak to many parents who talk about feeling uninvolved as a child, not knowing how to do this stuff, unable to understand their behaviour has a direct impact on their children. Using tools and techniques as well as being nurtured by the facilitator helps embed the skills. Some come empty having given everything to everyone and never been nurtured, some come to us eager to learn, knowing there must be another way. The joy and relief when they hear other stories is great. They share and they learn. Most importantly they take home the feelings.

We hear a lot about learning but first needs to come the feeling. If someone doesn't feel nurtured, cared for, accepted then it becomes harder to articulate and replicate. This is what brought me to the WCMT. Here was an opportunity for me to learn and share something I thought will be useful, supportive and doable. This is also when I came across Families of Character.

Introduction

For me the idea of travelling to learn new ways of working has always felt intriguing. We can sometime get caught up in the everyday and forget there may be another way. Therefore when this opportunity presented itself I could only see good coming from it.

Within Local authorities in Scotland we are often told that the more evidence we can gather the better the work will be. Having now witnessed people's personal journeys I believe the softer methods of evaluating change can be much more powerful. My impression and some research states that the role of the facilitator is more crucial than the content. That's why at PNS all of our facilitators and parents who have been through our programmes and intensively trained to deliver the work.

Working in local communities and growing the skills and confidence of those we come into contact with is a very humbling experience. We build relationships with local people and in turn they build closer relationships with others in their locality. This helps alleviate isolation and also helps to build trust so that parents feel they can ask each other for help. Imagine being at the end of your tether and knowing you can pop in somewhere and get a cuppa and support.

This community approach to caring and being responsible for each other is something we are hoping will come back. In addition the Christie Report <http://www.gov.scot/About/Review/publicservicescommission> talks about the benefits of building capacity and community based assets. If we can leave behind a legacy of positive, nurturing relationships with confident, resilient families, then we are going in the right direction.

Background information

Letter sent pre visit to Hosts.

Dear Host

Enabling Parent Network Scotland to become a leader in the field of parenting support.

The focus of my Fellowship application is to research how we as an organisation could develop the focus around Values into our work. Although we have our own set of values to which we work to it was apparent that this was not getting translated within communities. As we delivered our courses we noticed that some parents were struggling with how to actually make changes within their family structure. These structures are often embedded in old ways of behaving and family scripts. They know they want things to change but struggle with the skills or techniques to do so. After some discussion and workshops it was highlighted that some have difficulties in sticking to values in life such as patience, compassion, self-respect and so on. It was from here that I started to look at what other organisations were doing and looking further afield. My first contact was Families of Character in Colorado who make this work their focus. Hence the application grew into a five week programme.

So with this in mind and at a time of tight budgets we start to look at:-

1. How are you engaging with parents? Using our own values of respect, inclusion, resilience and trust.
2. Is there a clear understanding of the parent's journey? Looking at what values were important for them.
3. If there is high need, low engagement, poor experience of education, low confidence how is this done? Whose values are uppermost

What methods do you use in these circumstances?

Other areas for questioning.

- Parents who are ready to engage in the process of learning.
- What is it that makes this different?
- Resilience? Self-belief? Efficacy?
- As an organisation that works at a grass route level what is it that you are doing that makes the difference and what do you term as "difference"?
- How is our work impacting on parental self-efficacy?
- Are we really empowering and supporting the family unit?
- Are we reducing the incidences of child maltreatment through the reduction of stress?
- Are we making an impact on children's learning?
- Is this carried out in isolation or is it a joint effort? Do we start with the parent?
- Do you think that building parental capacity is enough?
- What are the next steps? Who decides this? Parents? Organisations? Circumstances?
- I am also open to new ways, new thinking and enjoying meeting new practitioners with a passion to support parents.

Colorado

Families of Character (FOC)

Families of Character is an organisation based in Denver, Colorado USA. They believe that strong family virtues is what holds a family together and sets them on a path of joy as a family. They believe this transfers into the community and has a huge benefit for society. We all have values that we live by, that sets us for life and helps us teach our children. But what happens when there are no clear, positive values?

This project was developed when Steve Markel who is the founder realised that something was missing. Having brought up his own children he realised he worked too hard and could have spent more time with his kids, a very familiar feeling amongst many. Steve started to look about and found that although there are many projects supporting families and children, not many were going underneath the issues. This is when he carried out some reflection and alongside research and went about trying to find the answers.

He began an organisation that supports parents to unpack the underlying issues within their family, looking at the virtues within the family and how embedding these can make the biggest difference in small steps. By working through some chosen virtues and recording what is working well, families can then have a more enjoyable experience. Parents come together to chat about what this means, how can it impact life, what would it look like if this was the norm within the family? They are then given a take home toolkit to experience and role model. Coming back four weeks later they then discuss the highs and lows.

The work carried out with FOC is with groups mainly in churches and communities. They work through a list of virtues and take home work to try it out. My thinking was to try this with some of our parents who were not quite ready for group work but needed some stability in their family life. What is it you're doing? What do you hold dear? How would you like it to be? How can we support you? Then another radical thought. Why not train up some parents to deliver this work within their own community? That will have a real impact. What is the saying "You teach most what you need to learn" For example, I know that orderliness is my struggle. Patience is also challenge for me. This list could go on.

What can be developed UK wide?

I know this work is already being piloted in Birmingham UK with 3 schools. The idea of having virtues in the school curriculum would be a good indicator that we are looking beyond just academic and meeting the needs of all students and preparing them for life's journey.

http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/projects/Summaries/Schools_of_Virtue_Project_Summary.pdf

What we will do.

At PNS through our PLV project we are looking at delivering this within the communities we work in. Training up parents to be the champions within their own communities with the

biggest impact being within their own family as this becomes a way of being. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MivFRsWInig>



Families of Character Staff. Ellen Moran, Steve Markel and Stephanie Corder

Colorado Uplift

This is a project that supports over 5200 children through 24 hours support. Gabe Trujillo is a real inspiration and his passion in the work is being driven by his personal experience of growing up. The support comes in the form of around the clock support, academically and emotionally.

Through this support they are engaging with families to keep the positive steps they are delivering moving forward. Young people are learning how to deal with stress and conflict and they then become the ones sharing this in the family. They are being the positive roll model.

Funders are very involved and keen to be hands on with the staff and kids. I had the fantastic opportunity of attending the baseball game of the Colorado Rocks which was through the kindness of one of the funders who rented a box for the staff and kids to enjoy the experience.

I think the difference this project is making is that they are giving young kids hope and meaning, they value them as people and for their input. This gives them a sense of belonging and value which they then take back into the home.

The model

The Colorado UpLift model is so powerful and has such impact on children and families and it is now showing real signs of changing schools culture and improvement within the lowest performing schools.

“In fact, the program was so successful that it resulted in substantial increases in student achievement, improved student daily attendance rates and a decrease in negative student behaviour. Results achieved are verifiable as part of the Denver Public Schools and State of Colorado School Performance Framework and a testament to the power of UpLift.”

— Gabe Trujillo, President, Colorado UpLift

Character Qualities

The curriculum is designed to teach character qualities and life skills that enables children to work through situations and handle the daily stresses of life by giving them tools to focus, work through and manage their lives.

Here is a list of the Character Qualities:

- ❖ Vision
- ❖ Courage
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Caring
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Positive Work Ethic
- ❖ Integrity

Life Skills

The UpLift curriculum is also designed to teach character qualities and life skills. This becomes a new filter that alters their perception of the world along with their decisions and actions in everyday life. As a catalyst for change, this foundation drives positive transformation to a better future.

Life Skills:

- ❖ Career Mindedness
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Problem Solving
- ❖ Decision Making
- ❖ Goal Setting

In School

UpLift teaches straight through from school to afterschool so children are building long lasting relationships with positive role model. They provide structures and unstructured activities for children to feel good enough about themselves that they are then able to reach their full potential.

Adventure

The Uplift model also engages outdoor activities which again builds on the trust and relationship but helps develop character and resilience. The learning from the classroom is also reinforced making it a seamless experience for the children they support.

“We want our youth to believe they can go anywhere and do anything”

Little Lift Student Mentors and Advanced Leadership

Having gone through the Uplift journey students are then given the opportunity to mentor younger children who are going through the programme. This gives a sense of giving something back to an organisation that has had such an impact on their own lives. Many say it's their favourite part of their journey is having the opportunity to flex their leadership skills and also have a positive influence over the newer students.

Having that ongoing support makes massive impact on children loves. Meeting some of the kids involved was truly inspiring and they spoke about the fun, learning, experiences that they are very much engaged with.

Case study – showing the impact

Inacia who was originally an immigrant from Africa but now lives in Colorado, being raised by a single mom in desperate poverty. Her dad, an abusive alcoholic, had abandoned her mother and seven siblings. Inacia's mom suffered from schizophrenia and depression, leaving much of the household duties and parenting to Inacia and her sister. When UpLift invited Harrington Elementary fourth graders to attend a summer camp, it seemed like an opportunity for Inacia to lay down burdens no child should have to shoulder, if only for a few

days. She loved the camp experience and began to spend time with an UpLift teacher/mentor.

That mentor-student bond became a lifeline through middle school, high school, and college. Inacia graduated from South High and continued through college at Colorado Christian University on a full ride Daniels Scholarship. Her UpLift mentor provided essential support as she faced the challenges of higher education as a first generation college student, the tragic death of her mom and two siblings, and the custody battle for her brother. Today, Inacia is a teacher/mentor for Colorado UpLift. Fully one third of UpLift's employees are former students; that is how much they believe in the program. Research shows that high quality mentoring can have a strong positive influence on teen behaviour. UpLift students have higher class attendance rates than their nonparticipating peers.

Taken from Colorado Christian University Case Study Colorado UpLift February 2014
Author: Krista Kafer.



Gabe Trujillo, end right, Jackie Tolland middle and young people for Colorado Uplift.

Chicago - Prof Susan Breitenstein

Project: - Digital delivery of a parent-training program for low-income urban parents. Susan M. Breitenstein, PhD, RN

Background -Developing innovative delivery methods is needed to overcome time and logistic barriers to in-person participation in evidence-based parent training (PT) programs.

Purpose -Describe the systematic process for adapting an evidence-based group PT program (the Chicago Parent Program) to a tablet-based delivery format, (b) present the adapted program, and (c) discuss opportunities and challenges of adapting evidence-based programs for alternative delivery methods.

As you can imagine this was a very exciting project for me to visit. Knowing the landscape of Scotland and the fact that so many people can live in remote places, especially Highland and Islands, this was a look at an interesting way to engage parents who may not engage for a variety of reasons. It can be isolation, culture, confidence. This could be a good way to keep in touch. At PNS we have been looking for new and innovative ways to engage families that will mean we can be more accessible and also far reaching. Our initial thoughts were that with so many young adults being hooked into technology this would be a great way to engage younger mothers and dads.



Dr Susan Breitenstein, Diana Rosenbrock, Jackie Tolland and Shannon Ellison

In speaking to the team I found that there were a lot of similarities in Chicago as with some of the UK's communities. The biggest difference being the gun crime which has to make family life even more stressful. Stories of young children mapping out their route to school the long way so not to bump into any situations and avoiding whole streets. This has to have a huge impact on their mental health, attainments and sense of self. I felt really sad when speaking to some people that I met that some of the families they have been in contact with had such an experience. The weekend I was visiting there was 12 shootings, this made me feel uneasy but I had the opportunity to leave. I can't imagine if this was my neighbourhood the worry it would cause with young children.

The team at Oakpark are an inspiration. They were so positive about their work in the face of many cuts and challenges. I received a great resource book which was developed by the Collaboration for Early childhood, which is a combination of public and private partnerships. The idea is to promote a community wide system to work together and share this information with parents so that they have access to the best information when they need it in a way that fits for them. The resource, watch and help me grow, which covers the developmental milestones from birth to 5 years could be a great addition to the internet based programme for us. It's easy to read and clear and has lots of helpful tips and links for different parents in the community who may be needing support. The Early Childhood Resource Directory is also packed with information about nurseries, health and safety in the home, links to support groups. These are often the little handouts that may help a parent at a time of struggle. Just knowing there are options and people out there that you can reach out to can make a difference.

The work that Dr Susan Breitenstein is doing is great. Not only reaching out to those who may be living in challenging circumstances, be affected by poverty but also to those who have very young children and struggling to make it to groups and networks. This is a way of some contact and learning new skills and techniques.

The learning from UK

Engaging the most hard to reach and those who are furthers away geographically is always a barrier to involve parents. This tool could be used in conjunction with the normal techniques but introduced to those hardest to engage as a way of sharing information, sharing tools and techniques for parenting and also giving them some control over how they want to engage and at their own pace. A good way of building relationships.

The learning for us.

This is most definitely something I will be following up to see how we can develop this tool and also look at how cost effective this would be for us to engage families in very rural areas. The internet based programme plus the additional booklet that I mentioned would be ideal for our Parenting Matters Early Years.

Parenting University Boston

Parent University is an opportunity for parents to sharpen their skills as they work in one of life's most important and demanding roles. Sessions focus on child development, what children are learning in schools, advocacy, parent leadership and effective parenting skills.

Launched in 2009, Parent University was established by the Boston Public Schools Office of Family and Student Engagement as the primary strategy to build the capacity of parents to be actively engaged in their children's education.

The goal of BPS Parent University is to "educate and empower parents as partners, advocates and lifelong teachers in their child's education through educational courses and leadership opportunities."

Topic covered by BPS

Helping Your Child Learn

- Family Learning Guides
- Parent University
- Parent Portal
- Watch Get Engaged! Making the Home-School Connection

- Parent University- Boston Public Schools.

This was very exciting for me as you know it's an idea that has been going around for a while so was great to meet the team. The main focus of their work is in a school setting in turnaround schools to support the engagement of parents and also build attachment between parent and child. Boston has a history of poor parent engagement and this has been worked into Government programmes to ensure it happens (our LA's)

They have recently developed a programme to use with parents and children to close the attainment gap. This is something I am in conversation with them about and as such have asked Cyntoria Grant Director of Parent University of Boston to add a few days onto her UK trip to come see us.

Learning for the UK

This could be a unique way to engage parents and give them some say over how they want to be engaged with schools. Often parents feel they are invited into the school when things go wrong. This way a hub could be set up in local school and parent could have ownership over the space and come learn at their own pace and also feel more confident when it does come to discussing the difficult stuff.

Learning for us.

This is an area that I think PNS could really develop and would ask my Board to support to start this development. As there has already been a proposal put to the Scottish Government (just a draft and as a conversation piece at this time) then I would like to put this into our business plan for year 2016/19. With the development taking over the next 3 years. My thoughts would be to develop Hubs within 2 local areas to pilot the Parent University. This would work alongside the school but not be housed within the school.

This work will complement the work being done by the Scottish Parent Teacher Council and also the National Parent Forum. Both have a responsibility for engaging parents but as such this has been shown to be challenging to engage those who need it most. (Feedback from various network meeting where both organisations are involved and attend) I am involved in the Parental Stakeholder Group driven by Education Scotland and Scottish Government and various organisations involved and interested in home school links. I will be taking this idea to that group to see how they can support PNS. This will enable us to deliver a fuller service and also be more visual with these communities. Our PLV programme has a varied CPD programme that will support this development. <http://www.bpsfamilies.org/>



Cyntoria Grant – Director Boston Parent Academy and Jackie Tolland.

Parents and children of Countdown to Kindergarten



This was a lovely morning session spent with the parents and children in East Boston. This was a session offered in Spanish and English. It was intriguing to see the young children switching from Spanish to English and vice versa with such ease.

Just shows how flexible young minds are and how they soak up new information. Some of the parent's had been very isolated and this was a life saver for them.

There was a clear level of trust and open communication with workers sitting alongside parents and supporting them with play. It was great fun and a chance for me to play!

Conference. Children's Trust Boston

I had the great pleasure of being invited to a large conference run by the Children's Trust in Boston MA. The day was focused around supporting children and families and I was very pleased to be given this opportunity. Going around the delegate stands I was impressed but also reassured that Globally there is a sense of doing the best we can and supporting families. Many of the speakers were focused on the family and the direct link of community support to families came through very strong. Building relationships with families is key. Once again as with PNS we know this is good practise but it's also good to know it's being reinforced across the pond.

There was a celebration session which was great. Practitioners receiving awards for all of their hard work and also recognition of the amount of energy and drive that people give to their jobs. I was sitting next to a woman who now works for Children Trust as a foster carers. She had gone for support initially after fostering children. She had gone through a long process with all of lives ups and downs and some very challenging situations. She felt fully supported and also keen to get other parents involved. She still has contact to some of the children with one older boy coming back to her later in his life (16). This shows the model we have can be transferred and is in fact working elsewhere. Building parents self-efficacy can go so far not only for the parent but for those around them.



Bill board of all the Conference workshops and organisations involved.

New York/Depute Mayor

I had the pleasure of being introduced to the Deputy Mayor of New York Richard Buery through another Churchill Fellow. Going to City Hall was a great experience and being able to tell him all about the Churchill Memorial Trust and my trip and the work we are doing in Scotland with parents and the additional childcare hours was interesting for him. He is the architect of Pre-K for All, the Community Schools Initiative and School's Out NYC, New York City's afterschool program for middle school students. He chairs the NYC Children's Cabinet, oversees the Mayor's Young Men's Initiative and has been charged with spearheading the implementation of Thrive New York City to overhaul of the city's mental health system.

Speaking of the Children's Cabinet there was a mix up with times and I actually ended up sitting in on a Cabinet meeting. It was a great experience. So I was doubly honoured at City Hall.

Born and raised in East New York, Brooklyn to immigrant parents, Deputy Mayor Buery has dedicated his life to improving outcomes for young people in America's most disadvantaged communities.

Since I have returned I have passed on information to the Scottish Government officer who is leading on the additional hours. Maybe we can learn from each other.



Deputy Mayor Richard Buery and Jackie Tolland

Child Welfare Organizing Project

Founded in 1994 with a grant from the Child Welfare Fund to the Hunter College School of Social Work, CWOP's early research concluded that parents, particularly biological parents, had practically no voice in NYC's child welfare system. Twenty years later, parents who have had direct, personal experience with the system now serve as advisors to public officials, lecture at area school of law and social work, develop training curricula for both parents and professionals, write for publications and work as peer advocates for the public child welfare system as well as foster care, preventive, and legal services providers. CWOP, with a staff and Board consisting largely of affected parents, has contributed significantly to this transformation through a wide range of evolving, constituent-driven activities and strategies including:

- Parent education and community organizing
- Facilitating parent dialogue with child welfare policy-makers, and parent participation in professional education
- Helping parents write for publications and work with the media
- Ongoing development of a peer-led parent leadership curriculum orienting ACS involved parents to their rights and responsibilities within the child welfare system, and preparing them to serve both as peer advocates and as uniquely qualified policy analysts

This visit was the most emotional and inspiring meeting throughout my whole journey. I was honoured to spend time with parents who had been affected by the system and had their children removed for various reasons. Hearing the stories and feeling the courage of telling them was very humbling to me. I think the fact that all of the parents in the room were now at a stage in their journey where they were progressing with contact, building relationship and also reaching out to help others being affected in the same way. To be able to hold your "stuff" whilst supporting others is a true calling and as such I was amazed by the energy and determination to make things better.

Tiffany who is the Policy officer at CWOP shared her journey and I can see why she is in that position. Her open heart and understanding of the affect it has on families is clear and tangible. I wasn't able to meet the CEO Sandra Killet as she was called away on business but again her story shows that people who have walked the walk and normally in a very good position to talk the talk, with passion and honesty.



Parents and staff from the Child Welfare organisation

Parent Network New York

This was a visit I had to make. Visiting an organisation with such strong links was exciting. Not realising the distance before I suggested the trip was a lesson for me in looking at the details. It ended up being a flight into Canada and having to cross the Border back into Buffalo. It was an adventure for those who have gone through the border control from Canada to America and back.

Their aim of the organisation is to enable parents to support other parents. Also to support professionals to enable individuals with disabilities to reach their own potential. They deliver workshops covering topics such as:

- Behaviour challenges
- Disability Specific topics
- Transitions to Adulthood
- Special Education

They offer 1 on 1 support to parents to enable them to cope with life's challenges and supporting a way forward. The workshops are also delivered in Spanish to help support parents whose English is not their first language. Their website is a hub for support, education and workshops on disabilities. Their resource centre is very accessible but most information is easily reached on their website.

I met with Theresa Drum who is the Quality Development Manager and was very kind to show me around and also introduce me to the team. The team were busy working away but stopped to give me an overview of their work.

Much like our organisation they are parent led and parent focussed. The interesting thing for me is the connection to our disability work which is in development. Our group WAMIOS (walk a mile in our shoes) is a group of parents who all have children with an additional support need. They have come through a very intensive journey with PNS and this is where I see this link coming alive. The idea of a group visit seems very aspirational but I know what it would mean to the parents and to their journey and feeling of self-worth. Watch this space!



Staff at Parent Network New York and Jackie Tolland

Conclusions and recommendations

I feel the trip was a great success. I definitely came back with more ideas than I had before. New fresh ways of looking at situations and also having the time to think was a great bonus. I may have overstretched myself in terms of traveling and I didn't realise how much energy it takes to be with new people, new surrounding and on your own. I was lucky to have skype and also my brother was visiting friends in New York so I was able to touch base with someone familiar. It was a wonderful experience and I am truly grateful for the opportunity.

Values Work

My initial application was to visit Families of Character in Denver Colorado with the view to look at their course materials, they mode of delivery and their ethos, to see if it was suitable for the PLV project. Having looked at the program and met with the CEO, workers and families it is in my view a good resource. Although some of the materials would need to be changed because of some language and of course cultures would still like to consider developing a value based programme to develop the offer from the PLV. I have asked staff to register for the course online and try it out for feedback. The idea was to use the value work as a pre cursor for group work for those parents who were in crisis or not ready for a group. This is also a way of preparing them for Parenting Matters. The other idea was that once parents had finished a PM course they could then do the value work and meet in the PLV support groups to discuss how changes within their families were going. So it's a very flexible approach.

<http://familiesofcharacter.com/gala2015/>

Fundraising Recommendation

The purpose of philanthropy is to improve the wellbeing of humankind by preventing and solving social problems. Philanthropy is not the same as charity. Charity focuses on eliminating the suffering caused by social problems, while philanthropy focuses on eliminating social problems. For example, giving food to a person who is suffering from a famine is charity.

The food helps the person for a short period of time, but the person will become hungry again in the future. Teaching the person how to grow food is philanthropy because it eliminates the social problem causing the person's hunger. Catherine Zimmer, Pace University.

What was of most interesting to me was the way that fundraising was carried out in USA. The UK has a different landscape to the USA however many of the challenges for parents are the same. Poverty, bad social housing, poor experiences of education and mental health problems all exists in both countries. What I witnessed was large scale Philanthropy and was very impressed and in awe of some of the work carried out. Philanthropy was driving some educational changes as well as the Families of Character programme to look at underlying values of those they were supporting. Children were being supported through education and families supported in the process by being offered parenting programmes and some educational input. Making big changes. A joint approach like this was making sure that not only was the parents being skilled up but the children were being supported and educated.

I believe we at PNS are working toward the elimination of social problems by giving parents the tools and techniques to make life changes and grow and learn as people therefore having maximum impact on their children.

I think opening our minds to more philanthropy is good for organisations but also good to help bring those who are able to give a sense of we are in this together. It could very well be the catalyst for bring the haves and the have nots a bit closer and tackle the problems together.

For us at PNS I am recommending that I connect with a sponsor (or 2) who would not only sing the praises of PNS as a friend of PNS but also gives us financial support

Another ideas was different structures of Boards and memberships involving local people and philanthropist in the UK would bring about better understanding and community cohesion.

Going Forward- some ideas for local communities though out the UK.

- Set up more Family Hubs in local communities to deliver capacity building work which will tie into the school - Boston Model.
- Awards to highlight the input of practitioners in the field and also raise the confidence of the workforce.
- Develop more philanthropy contacts and ways of working.

Other possible work throughout the UK and needs further research

Chicago - Professor Susan Breitenstein. She has developed an app to use with parents and I think this could do with more investigation. Research attached.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/wvn.12074/full>

This could help with the hard to reach communities and those who may find it hard to attend due to transport links, disabilities and lack of finances.

New York – Parent for Parents Focus of ASN and both projects that I visited were Government funded to support parents and give some respite in form of peer friendships. <http://parenttoparentnys.org/offices/New-York-City/>

One parent coach Deborah Beasley, Instructor Trainer at Academy for Coaching Parents International has written books and has developed materials for parents of children with ASN. <http://www.amazon.com/Sweet-Pickles-Girl-Would-Speak/dp/1939288673>

<http://www.amazon.com/Successful-Foster-Adoption-Deborah-Beasley/dp/1936214792>

Helpful links and websites

Ace Colorado- Families of character <http://familiesofcharacter.com/>

Colorado Uplift <http://www.coloradouplift.org/>

Seeds of Hope <http://www.seedsofhopedenver.org/>

Dr Susan Breitenstein at Rush University

https://www.rushu.rush.edu/servlet/Satellite?ProfileType=Detail&c=RushUnivFaculty&cid=1240236780899&pagename=Rush%2FRushUnivFaculty%2FFaculty_Staff_Profile_Detail_Page

Parenting University <http://www.bpsfamilies.org/parentuniversity>

Children's Trust Conference

<http://childrenstrustma.cvent.com/events/23rd-annual-a-view-from-all-sides-conference/event-summary-http://childrenstrustma.org/>

New York Child Welfare Organisation

<http://www.nycwf.org/>

<http://www.childrensrights.org/our-mission/our-partners/child-welfare-organizations/>

<http://www.cwop.org/>

Deputy Mayor – Richard Buery

<http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/richard-buery.page>

<https://www.facebook.com/dmrichardbuery/>

Deborah Beasley <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborah-beasley-acpi-ccpf-a0a16016>

<https://howdoesyourchildgrow.wordpress.com/?s=deborah+beasley&search=Go>

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