

CONTINUITY PLANNING



The Key

Unlocking Early Years Leadership



MARCH / APRIL 2020

**THE KEY -
UNLOCKING EARLY YEARS LEADERSHIP**

WWW.THEKEYLEADERSHIP.CO.UK

LEADING IN A CRISIS

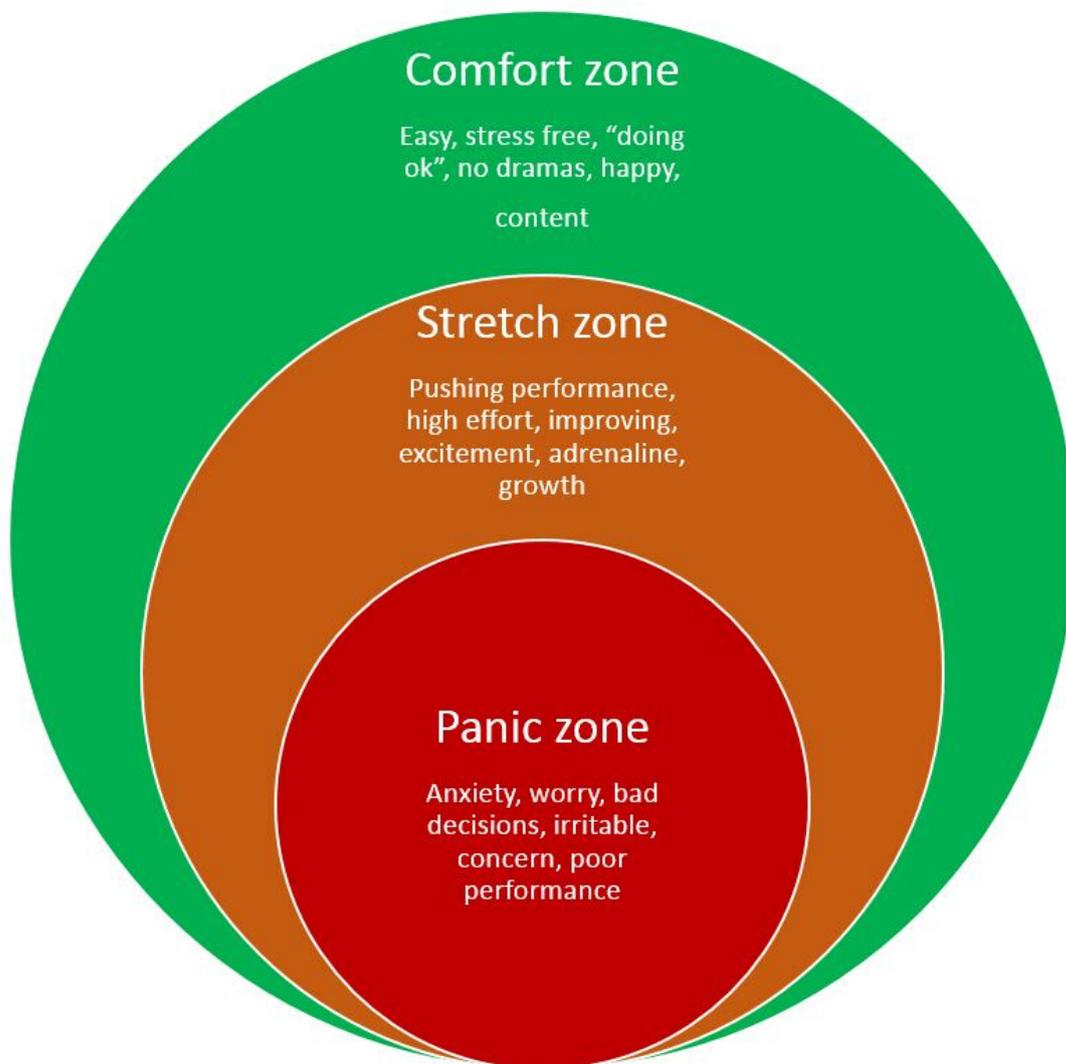


Early years leaders, in our experience, are caring, pragmatic ‘doers’. We want to be doing, helping, involved and busy as we manage our setting and staff teams. We aren't ones for sitting around, waiting to be told, we want to be getting on with things. Right?

This guide is designed to help you as a leader cope with the uncertainty we are currently facing, plan some ideas for the future and try to remain in control of your setting outcomes as much as possible. Of course, the coming months are extremely changeable and so we wanted this guide to be about you as a leader, rather than the guidance, announcements, compliance or instructions that will no doubt have been updated before we've finished writing this guide!

We know that in some areas of the UK settings are still fully open, whilst others are closed and some partially open. Therefore, this guidance attempts to cover all types of settings and some parts may not be applicable to you directly.

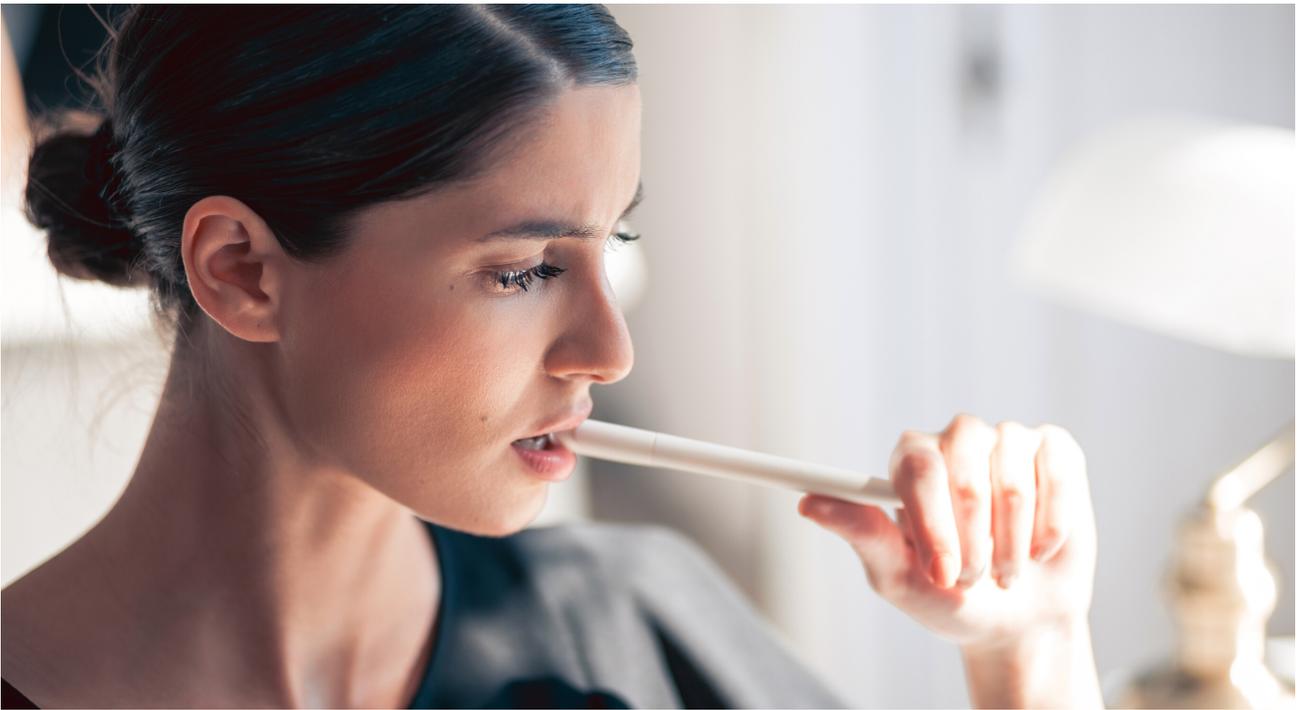
This guide doesn't not replace any statutory guidance, it is to be used as a tool for self reflection, a place to get your thoughts on paper and hopefully provoke some 'out of the box' thinking for difficult times.



Don't Panic

02

We all like to be in our comfort zone and on a normal average day we spend most of our time in the green comfort zone, flitting occasionally into the stretch zone as we learn new things and encounter new experiences. As early years leaders we move between the green and amber zones frequently and often encourage our staff to do the same. However, over recent days so many of us have slipped into the red panic zone as we've watched our livelihoods, our settings, our plans crumble before our very eyes. The uncertainty is often what pushes the panic button. What shall I do? What shall I tell parents? What about the children? How do I keep my staff safe? How do I protect my business? With so many questions going unanswered, it's no wonder we move into the panic zone. However, we know this won't help us. Most leaders in the sector will no doubt put on their game face in front of children, families and staff, but then hide under their desk or in the craft cupboard and allow themselves a minor breakdown before the game face is reapplied. I can imagine how many of you are reading this and nodding right now! Staying out of the panic zone is essential and we will look into this in more detail in our April bundle 'Leadership - when the going gets tough'.



Reflecting

03

Take time to reflect on your emotions and actions so far. What issues have pushed you from the amber to the red zone? Why have these issues caused you panic? Could you have done anything differently to prevent the panic? How much has social media helped or hindered your move into the panic zone? Where have you gathered your support / knowledge understanding from? Were these sources reliable? How have your staff team made you feel? Have you been able to share your concerns with them or are you leading with a stiff upper lip? Have parents been pushing you for answers you just don't have? How have you handled this? Write down your thoughts and reflections so far. We will then look at practical steps you can take to improve this situation and drive business continuity during these difficult times.



Starting With Why?

04

Think back to the day you decided that the early years sector was for you, the day you completed your training or got promoted into a leadership position.

"Why did you start on this journey?"

I can make an educated guess that somewhere near the top of that list is to make a difference to children's lives and I can presume that the salary didn't make the cut? Am I right?

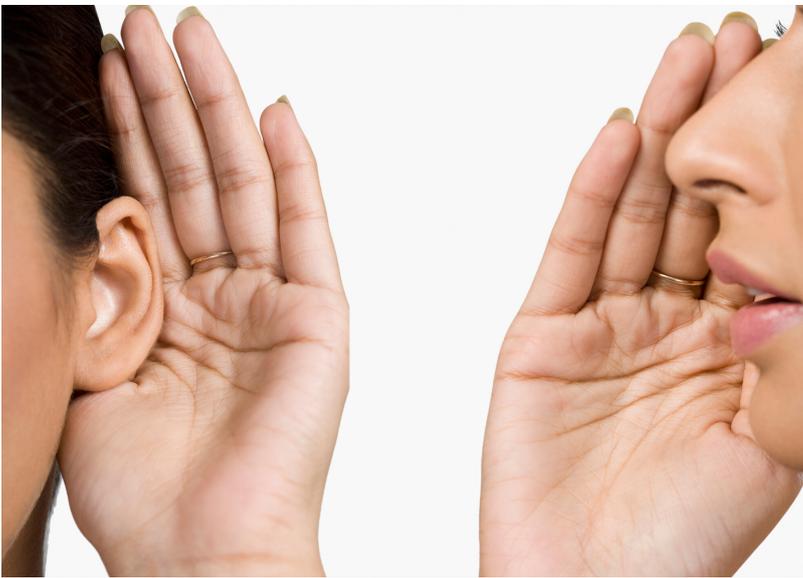
In times of panic and confusion, come back to this. Come back to your WHY. Your WHY will never change, no matter what's going on in the sector, no matter how much funding we do or don't get, no matter how many salaries we can and can't pay, your WHY remains consistent and this can be grounding.

Write your WHY down somewhere you can see it, where you can come back to and remember that as long as you stay true to that, everything else will work out just fine.

Staff Team Activity

Ask them to reflect on their 'WHY?', regroup, share and remember why we do the job we do. In the midst of uncertainty, a collective sense of vision, that we are all in this together for the right reasons is comforting and reassuring. It will bring back focus and clarity in this time of confusion.





Ignore Rumours

05

Many early years leaders use social media to share ideas, activities and gather support. FB groups for example are a brilliant way to share our experiences and get help on the day to day issues we all face. However, they are also a black hole of rumours, fake news and negativity, which can leave you confused and drained. We certainly don't think you should remove yourself from all these groups, they definitely have a place, however, look for the most useful groups in which to be a part.

Some groups are open for all to have a free reign which for the most part is welcome, but this can lead to people posting anything they please and in these difficult times may not be so useful. Perhaps identify one or two groups where you know the information being posted is true, legislative and factual and make a deal with yourself to only trust the information from these sources.

The Key community group for example, has a policy of only posting information which is reliably sourced and verified, meaning you know its information you can trust. Not only that, group member posts have to be moderated before they are posted in the group, ensuring the integrity of the information provided. Another group we would highly recommend is Early Years Fundamentals. This group information is always valid and reliable.

Once you have the verified information and facts, it's time to get real. You may not have all the finer detail, but use what you have and don't bury your head in the sand. Now is not the time to be an ostrich

Make a Plan

A SWOT analysis looks at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of your business and helps to identify both positive and negative factors that will be influential in how your business develops. We will have more support and guidance on how to complete a more detailed and in depth impact assessment in our Leadership in tough times bundle coming up for paid subscribers. Think about each of these SWOT factors and identify the negatives and positives of each area.



Your Team

07

Early years teams are some of the most loyal and family based teams we know, they truly care about each other and this time of crisis will be no exception.

For teams that are still working together, ensure their wellbeing is top of your list; our wellbeing bundle will give you lots of ideas on how to do this.

Staff who may be working from home or perhaps in isolation will still need to feel part of the team. Perhaps online zoom calls or face times could be used during staff meetings to ensure everyone feels included and engaged.

Get their ideas on your actions going forward and really involve them in the future plans. When things get back to normal we will need staff on board!

Don't forget the treats and gratitude. As a leader it is so easy to get wrapped up in the here and now that we can forget how much impact a simple 'thank you' or 'i'm proud of you' can have!

And to all the leaders reading this, a message
from us

**Thank you, we are super proud of each and
every one of you.**



Lead and Communicate with Integrity and Kindness

08

Early years leaders are often the most genuine and caring leaders. Keeping our moral compass safely in high regard, early years leaders want the best for their teams and their children. This is a time for you to shine, to lead from the front and show your teams what you are made of. The saying 'in a world where you can be anything, be kind' rings very true in a crisis, but being kind isn't always agreeing or saying nothing. Sometimes, we have to have the difficult conversation, we have to be honest and explain when someone needs to improve. This is kind. Imagine no one telling you that something you are doing is wrong, or not helping you improve when they could? That is unkind. Leading from the heart with your team at the forefront of everything you do is the best way of driving a happy workforce. Being kind does not mean ignoring poor performance or persistent lateness. Being kind means addressing these issues with compassion, understanding and a plan to support.

Clear communication is essential during tough times, even if the message is 'I don't know'. As you are waiting for guidance and information, parents and staff will be wanting answers. Clear communication can help keep the crowds off your back. It's ok to send an email or letter that states exactly what you do and don't know and always state a time when you will update the information further. This should keep parents and staff from constantly asking the same questions and allow you to get on with things whilst you wait for your next set of information. Short meetings with staff at the beginning and end of each day will help them to feel involved and prevent the plethora of questions throughout the day. The key with communication is to be clear on what you know and to set a time when you will next communicate any further updates. Give everyone the same information at the same time to prevent rumours or anyone feeling left out.



'The Key - 'Unlocking Early Years Leadership' began after the founders recognised a significant gap in the leadership support available for leaders and managers in the early years sector. With over 30 years combined experience in HR, Leadership and Management within the sector, The Key team are proud to be supporting early years leaders every day.

Monthly Key Leader Members invest £9.95 per month in their future, giving them access to...

- "In the Staff Room With..." Podcasts
- Video training session
- Monthly tick lists
- Reflective Workbooks
- Team training toolkits
- Topic staff room posters
- Editable policies and/or procedures
- 50% off all courses and subscriptions at Avail Learning Academy

Bespoke leadership packages are available for settings who require a more personalised approach. Please email for further information