



Good
Provider

THIS MONTH...

Parenta Trust expands
its footprint to Rwanda!

Is your room too
sensory?

How motivated are
your children to learn?

+ lots more

**EYFS activities
inside!**

This month...

**Physical
Development**

Exploring different pedagogical approaches

Choosing methods and practices that best suit the children's needs.



10



LEARNING IS FUN

18



20



Hello

Welcome to our family

Welcome to the September issue of Parenta magazine!

The start of a fresh academic year frequently prompts a revitalised emphasis on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and how we, in our roles as early years educators, choose to tailor our curriculum according to our selected methodology.

What a perfect moment, especially as September begins, to delve into the topic of ‘pedagogical approaches.’ It’s all about choosing methods and practices that truly align with the children’s needs. No matter which approach (or approaches) you embrace in your setting, the focus is on the children, helping parents grasp your approach and how they can contribute to their child’s development at home. Check out page 30 for some incredibly valuable insights on how to navigate various pedagogies in your setting. And don’t forget, this month’s webinar is a must-attend – we’re diving deep into pedagogy with the wonderful Gina Bale and Dr. Kathryn Peckham. Secure your spot at www.parenta.com/webinars, and remember, attending will earn you a CPD certificate!

Speaking of lending a hand to parents, we’re excited to introduce a fresh face to the Parenta family – the lovely Dr. Helen Simmons! She’s here to chat about something near and dear: why it’s crucial for practitioners to truly appreciate the day-to-day journey of new parents. She’s even urging us to “listen to the real experts”!

Please spread the magazine magic with your friends, colleagues and parents. They can receive their own copy, either in digital or now in printed format by signing up at www.parenta.com/magazine.

Allan



24



30



36

Regulars

- 8 Write for us
- 34 EYFS Activities: Physical Development

News

- 4 Parenta Trust expands its footprint to Rwanda
- 6 Childcare News and Views
- 39 Congratulations to our Parenta Learners

Advice

- 12 Climate change – what can we do?
- 20 National Fitness Day
- 24 Supporting colleagues and staff going through a difficult time
- 30 Exploring different pedagogical approaches

Industry Experts

- 10 Is your room too sensory?
- 14 Cost of living crisis - how to support children’s nutritional needs
- 18 How motivated are your children to learn?
- 22 Coaching in early years
- 26 Supporting new parents - listening to the real experts
- 28 Taking the lead - how to develop the skills of aspiring leaders in your setting
- 32 “Video killed the radio star” - Creative digital drawing in the early years
- 36 “Role-playing” - Empowering child-led adventures with ‘Teacher in Role’!

Parenta Trust expands its footprint to Rwanda

Sixth School Commissioned for 200 Orphaned and Disadvantaged Nursery-Aged Children

Parenta Trust, the charitable arm of the Parenta Group of Companies is thrilled to announce the construction of its sixth school in Eastern Africa, to complement the existing five schools in Uganda. This new school will provide quality education, care, and hope to 200 orphaned and disadvantaged children, all under the age of 6, furthering Parenta Trust's mission to contribute to vulnerable communities across Africa.

"We are delighted to announce the building of our sixth school in Eastern Africa," said Allan Presland, Founder of Parenta Trust and Chairman of Parenta Group. "Our commitment to providing education to children in disadvantaged communities has only grown stronger over the years. With this new school, we will be able to positively impact the lives of even more children, giving them the tools they need to succeed and thrive".

Parenta Trust has a proven track record of building and developing schools in Africa, with the existing schools looking after and educating up to 1200 children concurrently.

By expanding into Rwanda, Parenta Trust seeks to strengthen its ties with the local community and engage with stakeholders to create lasting, positive change. The new school will be in Bikamba village in Kajevuba cell, Ntarabana sector. This is an area



of stone quarries and sugarcane plantations which leads to children starting work at a young age and in turn facilitates the vicious cycle of poverty in the area. Parenta Trust firmly believes in the power of collaboration and aims to work closely with the Rwandan community and its partner on the ground in Africa, Fields of Life, to uplift the lives of these vulnerable children. The new building will be constructed alongside a holistic programme which includes providing sanitation, a sustainable feeding programme, teacher training, a well-thought-through Early Childhood development curriculum and will work together with local government and the Church of Rwanda.

Allan Presland continued; "Parenta Trust continues its commitment and mission to keep building new schools in East Africa to transform communities and the lives of desperate children.

We are currently raising money for our seventh and eighth schools and we invite individuals, nurseries, schools, corporations, and organisations to support this transformative project through donations, sponsorships, and partnerships. Together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of disadvantaged children, providing them with the hope and opportunity they need to shape a better future."

About Parenta Trust Charity:

Parenta Trust is the charitable arm of the Parenta Group of Companies, which includes Parenta Training – the largest provider of apprenticeships to the childcare sector in England, and Parenta Software, a leading provider of childcare management software. The Charity was formed in 2015 and seeks to transform lives for orphaned and disadvantaged children in areas of abject poverty.

These little people need your help too!

We know how much giving children a quality education means to you.

Parenta Trust supports disadvantaged children in deprived areas of the world by providing them with a pre-school education.

Without this, they miss the opportunity they deserve to develop to their full potential.

Sponsoring a Parenta Trust child helps the children in your care with *understanding the world, language and communication* – they love receiving a hand-written letter from the child many miles away!

Sponsoring a child provides:

- A pre-school education
- Access to clean water
- A school uniform
- A daily hot meal
- School supplies
- The knowledge that someone truly cares

56p a day **WILL** make a difference to a child's life!



www.parentatrust.com/sponsor-a-child

ParentaTrust
Helping those who care for children

Childcare news and views



New childcare coalition's goal is to help shape early years policy

A coalition has been formed comprising early years and childcare organisations and charities, coming together to challenge the Government to invest in an early education system that works for all.

The Early Education and Childcare Coalition (EECC), which is made up of more than 30 organisations and charities across England is calling on not just the Government, but all political parties to urge them to prioritise early years education and childcare at the next general election.

The organisations and charities involved include:

- Save the Children
- PACEY
- TUC
- National Children's Bureau
- The Federation of Small Businesses
- The Fatherhood Institute
- The Early Years Alliance
- UNICEF
- Pregnant Then Screwed
- NDNA
- Oxfam



The coalition says it will "work with all political parties to shape the future of policy", bringing insight and learning from experts in the sector as well as those with lived experience of the challenges on the ground."

The work it will carry out includes research into public models of funding and how to scale the early years workforce to meet the expected increased demand for care when the expanded funded entitlement comes in. The coalition will also publish a report on public attitudes towards early education.

You can read the full story, as published in Nursery World, on their website: www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/.

Every English region struggling to recruit childcare workers: TUC report

A new analysis by the TUC, using Coram Family and Childcare data reveals that each region in England is struggling to recruit into the early years sector.

Nearly all (95%) of English councils who responded to a survey told Coram that childcare providers in their area were having difficulty recruiting childcare workers with the right skills and experience to do the job – and eight in 10 (80%) local authorities described it as "very difficult".

The analysis suggests childcare recruitment is most difficult in the East of England, the West Midlands and the North East – where 100% of councils said childcare providers found it "very difficult" to recruit sufficient staff with the right skills and experience.

Purnima Tanuku OBE, Chief Executive of the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) said: "We have been shouting about the workforce crisis in early years for over five years, with the pandemic and the cost of living crisis only making the situation worse. These figures lay bare the impact of Government underinvestment and underfunding as well as the scale of the challenge facing the sector.

"A child's first five years count in shaping their futures and research shows that being supported by highly skilled, well-qualified and experienced practitioners has the biggest impact on

their life chances. Employers want to be able to recognise and reward staff who are vital to their setting's success and their children's outcomes.

However, hourly funding rates have not kept pace with staffing costs and crippling inflation, so providers' costs have soared well above their income, leaving them with little to no wriggle room for paying the wages their staff deserve. Since 2018 the National Living Wage has risen by 33% and yet the funding rate has only gone up by an average of 9% over the same period.

Due to the cost of living crisis, huge numbers of staff have been leaving to get higher wages and less responsibility in supermarkets and other sectors. The Government must now recognise this and make meaningful investments in our children's early years if they want the skilled staff to be there for their planned childcare expansion from April next year."

The full TUC report can be found here: www.tuc.org.uk/news/tuc-every-english-region-struggling-recruit-childcare-workers.

A round-up of some news stories that have caught our eye over the month

Do you have an early years news story you'd like to see featured in the Parenta Magazine?

Send one in today to marketing@parenta.com to be featured in next month's edition!

We can't wait to read all about it!



Germany's largest childcare provider expands into UK

Kinderzimmer, has expanded to the UK, opening its first setting in North London...

Read the full story on: www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news



DfE announces an extra 2,000 funded SENCo training places

The DfE has made available an extra 2,000 free places on the accredited level 3 early years special educational needs...

Read the full story on: www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news



Landlords urged to allow childminders to work from home

Childminders in rented housing should be allowed to run their business at home...

Read the full story on: www.eyalliance.org.uk/news

Write for us!

We're always on the lookout for new authors to contribute insightful articles to our monthly magazine.

If you've got a topic you'd like to write about, why not send an article to us and be in with a chance of winning? Each month, we'll be giving away Amazon vouchers to our "Guest Author of the Month". You can find all the details here:

<https://www.parenta.com/sponsored-content/>



Congratulations

to our guest author competition winner, **Joanna Grace!**

Congratulations to Joanna Grace, our guest author of the month! Her article, "Why engage your senses for learning?" explores how having sensory experiences in early development is not simply a nice bit of fun, it is how the brain gets wired!

Well done, Joanna!

A massive thank you to all of our guest authors for writing for us. You can find all of the past articles from our guest authors on our website:

www.parenta.com/parentablog/guest-authors



FREE DOWNLOAD!

Pssst... Get your **FREE Littlemagictrain™** adventure today!

"Littlemagictrain has helped children to develop their confidence and desire to communicate, describe, understand, and use new vocabulary. By week 6, I observed clear improvement in attention, memory and narrative skills."
Liz Shoreman, Senior Speech and Language Therapist and Manager, The Speech Bubble

"The staff always join in and I can honestly say it's one of the best products we've ever invested in!"
Nicky Sanford, Early Years Teacher, Marcham Pre-school

Scan Me!

www.littlemagictrain.com
Or email: Hello@littlemagictrain.com

CPD COURSES..

How Food Shapes Your Child Series

By **Louise Mercieca**
Award winning Author
Early Years Nutrition

Nutrition is the missing piece

- Building a brain
- Shaping food relationships
- Building a Skeleton

JOIN NOW

<https://rb.gy/3hac6>
or
[mycpdgroup.com - search](http://mycpdgroup.com-search)
Louise Mercieca

£22 each or 3 for £44

Online Courses and Accreditations Nurturing Children in their Early Years

- Courses, talks and guides:** Written for parents and professionals. Allowing us to work together, with the child at the centre of all we do.
- Online access:** Available any time, any where. Scheduled to meet your needs and your time frame. Never miss a training session again.
- Designed and delivered by experts:** Both in the field of child development and practice. Understanding the challenges you face and how to meet them.
- Supporting you:** Recognising the foundational experiences children need and celebrating the work you are doing to offer them.

For more information and free samples of the course go to: www.NurturingChildhoods.co.uk/parenta



We provide Coaching in the Early Years sector for:

- Leaders
- All staff
- Parents

EnRich also provides training in the following areas:

- Coaching in Early Years
- Leadership & Management; a Coaching Approach
- Dealing with Grief and Loss in the Workplace
- Coping with Stress
- Bespoke training, identifying then meeting the needs of your own settings

Training and coaching can be done face-to-face or over Zoom.

We would love the opportunity to chat with you about how our coaching and training can lift the standards, skill-sets and morale of your team.

Our details are shown below.
www.enrich4educators.com
info@enrich4educators.com
Early Years training - EnRich For Educators
(enrich4educators.com)

EnRich
Coaching for Educators

info@EnRich4Educators.com | 07393 712 442 | www.enrich4educators.com



Joanna Grace

Is your room too sensory?

I'm Jo Grace: a Sensory Engagement and Inclusion Specialist and Founder of The Sensory Projects. In this series of 10 articles, I am going to share some of my passion for understanding the sensory world with you.



Somewhere in the back of all our minds is an image of an old-fashioned classroom with tiny windows at the top of high walls – high up so the children cooped up inside could not get distracted by looking outside. At the front is a blackboard and an adult droning on, the children must all sit still, look this way, listen and copy. In this room there is no independent thought, there is no recognition of the children as autonomous human beings, there is no creativity, and there is nothing other than rote copying and boredom. We do not want our rooms to be like this.

There was a time a little after our first imagining, when adults frustrated by children getting bored and zoning out from the teaching and gazing around the room daydreaming, decided to slap educative materials up on the walls. They figured if they weren't going to comply with looking towards the front, they would get the information into them through their eyeballs, so up went the ABCs and the times tables charts.

Now when you walk into most education settings you're met with a dazzling array of colour floor to ceiling, across the ceiling,

across the room, even the tables in early years and primary settings, are likely to be bright bold colours. No, nothing is boring about our environments anymore. We are NOT like those old-fashioned rooms in which children were imprisoned in boredom.

But have you ever wondered if we have gone too far? Perhaps a day when you had a headache and it all felt a bit much visually for you!

It is a lot. Sensing things is work if your environment is full of sensation it is full of



work for children's brains to do. And whilst providing things to do is wonderful, if it is indiscriminate, it can end up drowning out the gorgeous focused work of play itself, the marvellous flow state of total absorption in a task. Recently I took my two-year-old to the beach. Living rurally we are lucky enough to be able to find beaches with no one else on. It was a grey day, the pebbles on the beach were grey, the waves before him grey, and his focus was spectacular. He hunted for stones, chatting quietly to himself about which would be best for skimming (no he cannot skim a stone, but in his mind he can, he is on his way to being able to do it like his Daddy and his Grandpa).

We all have different sensory needs, (just look at the differences in how we choose to decorate our homes). For some children, these differences will be more pronounced than others. There are children for whom the average brightly decorated classroom/nursery environment is physically painful. Often when children are very young they do not have the language to tell you this. They might not even know it is because of the over stimulation of the environment, they just feel what their bodies feel, and it is too much for them.

In my next two articles, we are going to look at how we can adapt to meet

the differing sensory needs of our neurodiverse population. But for now, it is worth reflecting on other environments you have been in with the children, or chatting to their families about the other environments they occupy. How are they different when they are outside beneath the sky instead of inside surrounded by brightly coloured walls? Do their families report their behaviour changing at noisy family gatherings, or a preference for being in water (itself such a unique sensory environment)?

There is a brilliant equation to consider when it comes to behaviour: Behaviour = the individual x the environment. Often, when we are looking to change behaviour, we try to change the individual; we reprimand, we guide, we motivate, we coax... it may have some effect. But environments are far easier to change than people, spending some time considering how yours could be adjusted could be a really useful way to change the energy in your room. In this article, I have mostly been talking about the visual environment, but of course, this applies across all the sensory systems, sound map your space, smell map it... explore it at a sensory level. Is what it holds, is too much, too little, or just right? We are looking to find those 'Goldilocks moments' in the space for all the children in our care.

In my next article, we will explore how we could create different provisions within one space. Until then, enjoy engaging your senses in a reflective audit of your space and feel free to connect with me on social media to watch my current sensory adventures unfurl. All the connection links can be found on my website www.TheSensoryProjects.co.uk

Scan here for more resources from Joanna:



Climate change – what can we do?

There is no doubt now that climate change is happening, and it is happening at a rate that even the most optimistic scientist would shudder at. We no longer need to wait for the research papers to come in from the polar regions to confirm it, as countries across the globe struggle to adjust to the effects of higher temperatures, more extreme weather, and rising sea temperatures.

Evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that the world is already 1.2°C warmer than pre-industrial times and whilst we may not register fractions of a degree in our homes and offices, in terms of climate change, every 0.1°C counts. If we reach a milestone of plus 2°C from pre-industrial levels, research suggests that we can expect more intense droughts, wildfires, storms, and floods across the globe. And some landmass areas will disappear completely.

What causes climate change?

The Earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old, and in its time, it has seen a number of warmer and cooler periods than we are experiencing now. The Earth has had glacial periods (ice ages) lasting millions of years, and periods which have been much hotter, and these changes have all affected the ability of life on Earth to survive. Homo sapiens (humans) first appeared on Earth approximately 800,000 years ago and it is only really in the last 10,000 years that we have formed human civilisations and settlements as we would recognise today. If we are not careful, we may be one of the shortest-lived species our planet has ever seen as it is we humans who are now having the biggest environmental and climate effect on the planet. Since the industrial revolution of the 1800s, global temperatures have risen

at a much higher rate than before, and temperatures are still increasing. This is due to us burning fossil fuels and releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which acts as a greenhouse gas, trapping warmth and effectively wrapping the world in a 'gas blanket', causing even greater temperature rises.

What can we do?

As Niklaus Hagelberg, UNEP's Climate Change Coordinator, said: "The climate emergency demands action from all of us. We need to get to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and everyone has a role to play." Whether it's giving up eating as much meat, switching to low-carbon fuel systems, or reviewing our holiday destinations, we can all do something. Read on to find out some simple things we can all do to reduce our carbon footprint. Remember too that these ideas can be done as individuals and as a nursery setting.

1. Switch to green energy

Many of us are still using fossil fuels such as gas and coal to heat our homes but we are being encouraged to switch to energy providers who use greener technologies as they emerge. Renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and wave power are increasing, so make sure you check with your energy supplier or switch to greener sources. The Government are offering grants to help individuals and businesses switch to heat pumps as they do not use fossil fuels and are more efficient than traditional methods.

2. Review transport use

Petrol and diesel cars are major sources of greenhouse gases, so switching to electrical vehicles will help. Think about cycling or walking

for short journeys or using public transport. Car sharing and minimising air travel are other ways to reduce fuel consumption and emissions and help clean up the environment and air quality too.

3. Review what you eat

The food we eat (and waste) is also contributing to climate change. Eating less red meat (beef and lamb) means that we could reduce the number of cattle/sheep producing methane, a greenhouse gas. Eating more seasonal foods and food sourced locally will also cut down on transport emissions. Remember to only buy what you need – the UK wastes over 9 million tonnes of food each year which creates more than 20 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK (the same as 3.5 million cars).

4. Review consumption - the 6 Rs

One way to effect change is to think about your consumption and use the 6 Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle, and Rot. Think carefully about what you buy, how you use it and how you dispose of it once you have finished with it.

5. Calculate/reduce/offset your carbon footprint

The goal of many of these actions is to reduce your carbon footprint. There are companies and websites that can calculate an average carbon footprint for you or your business through a simple questionnaire. If you can't reduce your carbon footprint, then you can aim to become carbon neutral (zero overall carbon emissions) by offsetting your carbon footprint by supporting schemes that take CO₂ out of the atmosphere. These are schemes like tree planting initiatives or investing in green projects.

6. Tell other people/campaign

One important way to help the planet is to talk about climate change and tell others what you are doing and encourage them to do the same. You can use your nursery setting as a platform to inform your staff, children, and their families of things they can do to help. You can also join in more actively by campaigning with a charity such as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth or writing to your local MP or council to demand change.



Specific things that nursery settings can do

In a nursery setting, you can look at all the above actions and see how you can address them, but also think about:

- Reducing plastic waste – ban things like plastic straws, plates, cups and clingfilm as there are more sustainable and recyclable alternatives available such as beeswax wrappers and paper alternatives. Encourage your parents to send in packed lunches which adhere to principles that reduce climate change too
- Find alternatives to glitter which have less of an impact on the planet – this is not strictly to do with climate change but it is definitely an environmental issue
- Think about your food deliveries and see if there are refillable options, for example, milk – can you use returnable glass bottles instead of plastic?
- Many tea bags use plastic so look for eco-friendly alternative

- Educate your children about climate change – see www.funkidslive.com/learn/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-and-what-can-we-do-to-reduce-it/ for some fun, child-friendly ideas

The climate change clock is ticking, and it's up to all of us to sit up and take action before it's too late.

Scan here for more references & information:





Louise Mercieca

Cost of living crisis

How to support children's nutritional needs



In recent years, there has been a steady stream of global events which have had, and are continuing to have a detrimental impact on individuals and families with children. We had already seen an increase before COVID-19 and the Ukraine war in food bank usage of 123%.

According to the ONS (Office of National Statistics), there are 12.7 million children in the UK. Over a third of these children (an estimated 4.3 million) are living in poverty. These statistics come before the latest wave of cost increases, the energy crisis and all the associated cost implications of our current cost of living crisis which look set to make the coming winter months extremely difficult for many.

What does the cost of living crisis really mean for children's health? Put simply, children going hungry has wide-reaching health, wealth and social implications. When we consider children living in poverty and the associated health issues, we are also potentially forecasting their future health outcomes.

"We could see the first generation of children to be expected to have shorter life spans than their parents if current trends on obesity, nutrition and lifestyle continue."

Source - The Lancet Volume, 371, Issue 9607.

What can we do?

You are probably feeling the pinch as costs increase as we all know the current stark financial reality felt by many households, with as many as 90% of adults seeing an increase in their cost of living.

Source - Children's society.

When changes need to be made, particularly on menu planning to tie in with increasing food prices, how can we ensure that the overall nutritional balance is not adversely affected?

Cost saving nutrition

It is undoubtedly more expensive to buy healthy food, this is the sad reality. In fact, according to the Food Foundation Broken Plate 2021, "healthier foods are nearly three times more expensive calorie for calorie than less healthy foods".

When you consider this, it is easy to see how we have such an escalating health and wealth divide in the UK.

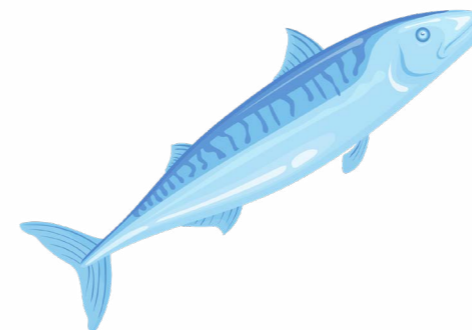
It is possible to source nutritious economical foods but it does take some planning. When planning menus, there are several key features to always include whatever the budget. Let's take a look at what's needed and how to incorporate these on a budget.

Essential Fatty Acids (EFA's) and children's brain development

A lot of the energy children consume in the early years goes to building and developing their brains, in fact, 50% of a child's daily calories are utilised by the brain. The most important nutritional consideration in this brain growth and development is the intake of Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs). These should be included three to four times a week.

One of the best food sources of EFAs is fish, but many types of fish can be expensive. How can you ensure that you are covering the nutritional needs for brain development on a budget?

Switch from salmon to mackerel. Mackerel is a much cheaper fish making it more accessible but it remains an extremely healthy source of EFAs especially omega 3 fatty acids. As mackerel can be considered a 'fishy fish' it will need to be blended and combined with other flavours to make it appealing to young children.



An idea to include mackerel:

MY SHOPPING LIST MACKEREL PÂTÉ

- COOKED MACKEREL FILLETS (TAKE CARE TO REMOVE ALL BONES!)
- 1 TUB OF SOFT CHEESE
- 1 TUB OF GREEK YOGHURT
- A SQUEEZE OF LEMON JUICE



Instructions:

1. Flake the mackerel fillets, being really careful to remove all bones
2. Add to a processor
3. Squeeze in the lemon juice
4. Add the soft cheese and Greek yogurt and blitz to your desired consistency

This pâté is a great way to get children to eat oily fish, as mackerel tends to have quite a strong fishy taste that can put some children off. This pâté makes it creamy and more palatable to children. Serve on wholemeal toast or with pitta bread with thin cucumber slices.

It is a difficult time for most people and swaps will have to be made but as childhood development depends on the energy and nutrients provided to the brain at this crucial time of life, it's important that when making economic decisions on the menu, that the nutritional elements remain present.

Scan here for more recipes & resources from Louise:



BREAKING NEWS

Introducing the Market's Lowest-Priced Nursery Management Software

~~£89~~ Starting from £35 + VAT!

Software Reduced On Price, Not Benefits

- Foster Stronger Parent Engagement for Lasting Relationships
- Embrace Flexibility with Hassle-Free Contracts
- Instant Insights: Access Actionable Reports on the Fly
- Your Time Matters: Reduce Admin Time By 50%
- Limitless Collaboration: Empower Your Entire Team



What's included?

- ✓ Nursery Management
- ✓ Daily Diaries
- ✓ EYFS Tracker
- ✓ Parent Communication App



Scan NOW to book a demo. Limited appointments available this month!



Call 0800 002 9242 and quote 'Magazine'



Solve your unskilled staff crisis - recruit an apprentice today!

Agencies Are Expensive, Choose Parenta's FREE RECRUITMENT SERVICE.



We have 100s of candidates available for interview immediately!

Our apprentice recruitment service is specifically designed to help you recruit the right apprentice for your team.

Scan NOW or miss out!



Let's keep those ratios at 100% and let us find the perfect apprentice for your team today - **FREE of charge**

Don't delay - get in touch today - we'll kick-start the search right away!



Call 0800 002 9242 and quote 'Magazine'





Dr. Kathryn Peckham

How motivated are your children to learn?

Throughout their early childhood, children are undergoing a dramatic period of mental growth and development. Forming more than 200 trillion brain cell connections (synapses), they have mapped out the structure and workings of their developing brain. Forming around 80 percent of their basic brain architecture, these social and emotional structures are now established for life.

These connections have been dependent on every experience and opportunity that each child has been afforded. Meaning that they are entirely unique and extremely personal, readying each individual as they prepare to embark on the next stage of their journey and the evolving experiences still to come - wherever that may take them.

It is then somewhat of a fool's errand to expect children to react in the same way to any experience that we offer them to need the same things from it or to progress through it at the same rate. And yet, whole class teaching can, for some young children, be a common experience of learning. As many find the pace too fast or too slow, they may become distracted, disengaging from activities that are either too easy, too hard or too repetitive. This is not an efficient way of learning and for many, is quite detrimental in the long term.

Children need experiences that they are personally interested in, with challenges that match their abilities and developmental stage. And they need to be offered the time and support required to develop their understanding before moving on. To do otherwise, risks deeply un-fulfilling learning experiences, leading to greater reluctance to engage next



time. As a vicious cycle establishes, their achievements as well as their belief in themselves as a learner can be affected, as well as any motivation to apply the necessary effort going forward.

But what does it mean for a child to be motivated? Motivation is rooted in the belief that your actions are going to result in you achieving your goal. Unfortunately, once you start doubting that your actions have that kind of potential, you are unlikely to keep trying. But if we surround our children with routines, rules and expectations, with little or no power to

influence events within their lives, they are unlikely to set their own goals. Or attempt to achieve them.

If this continues, they may simply become content with any situation their life puts them in. If this is a toxic relationship, they may be unable to find their way out. And is certainly no way of breaking the poverty cycle many children find themselves born into.

To be motivated enough to persevere with something also requires you to be engaged in it. One study looking into the

importance of engagement observed artists at work. Noticing their complete absorption, they were seen to lose track of time and self-consciousness, becoming entirely immersed in the creative process. The study also noted that when people have something this exhilarating and profoundly satisfying in their lives, the happier they were.

Engagement is more than a willingness to discover, learn and grow, it implies a deep interest and involvement in something considered to be worth the effort. When you think of the deep engagement you see in a child learning to walk or the fascination with cause and effect when they first splash in a puddle, you will remember a level of motivation when nothing could stand in their way. How amazing would it be if children retained this level of motivation and eagerness to learn?

When we encourage children's free choice and personal ownership through a range of activities and learning opportunities, they are far more likely to lose themselves in engrossing and challenging activities. When they are provided with creative environments, where they can experience things in real terms, to practice and support the abstract concepts they are thinking about, their learning is far deeper and more satisfying. And where play is recognised as fundamentally important to a child's processes of learning, it is accessed at a rate and in a style that is

right for them – in every moment. Instead of scheduling breaks away from the playroom to be physically active, offer children constant access to the outside if you can. Extending their range of movements and experience – a necessity for growing, developing children.

Support their intrinsic motivations with opportunities to be physical, building confidence through their attempts at a challenge. As you recognise, understand and value their efforts, you help build this sense of achievement through their efforts – a stable variable that they can control, rather than focusing on outcomes which may take a while to perfect and feel demotivating.

You might want to introduce a project-based approach to activities, where children work on a task, plan an adventure or solve a problem of their choosing. This may last a significant portion of the day or for many days. It may occupy a side table or the whole environment as many children and ideas join the excitement.

Sometimes, practitioners can worry that this less-structured approach will not fit well with parents' expectations. They are concerned that their parents may question the value of the learning their child is receiving. Or a prospective family viewing the setting on a visit may be put off considering it for their child.

For someone who doesn't understand early childhood development, this may appear somewhat chaotic. To see children playing and exploring, rather than "learning" may prompt some questions. Especially if this engagement is becoming excited, passionate or somewhat less ordered than it was at the start of the day.

But we need to help our families to understand the deep level learning that is occurring. And indeed, learning things that children cannot master while sitting quietly or following the moment-to-moment instructions of an adult. But to do this at a committed enough level to achieve complete buy-in is something as practitioners we can struggle to find the time for.

Next month I will begin a new series as we look at supporting our families in everything we do. If you would like to know more, visit the new Nurturing Childhoods Academy, academy.nurturingchildhoods.co.uk. Here you and your families can take courses and join community groups together as we share in the conversations, bringing children back to the centre of all we do. You can even take your professional development to a whole new level with a Nurturing Childhoods Accreditation as together we really begin developing the potential of all children throughout their early years.



Scan here for more resources from Kathryn:

National Fitness Day

Come on, get up, let's go and play
On this year's National Fitness Day!

National Fitness Day 2023 is on Wednesday 20th September. This is a great day to highlight the role that physical activity plays in keeping us healthy and encourage everyone to take part in some activities to have fun and raise their fitness level. Physical activity is crucial to keeping our bodies working properly and what better place to start than teaching our young people these important lessons in the early years?

This year, the organisers want to shift the focus and say: "While bringing people together through physical activity on National Fitness Day has a hugely positive impact, we're encouraging you to view this day as just one step in a much bigger journey. Because after all, **your health is for life.**"

A brief history of National Fitness Day

The origins of campaigns to raise fitness in countries have been credited to a number of groups, individuals and organisations across the world, and over 100 countries now participate in some way with their own version of National Fitness Day. The organisers of the UK event, UK Active, credit the late Energie Fitness founder, Jan Spaticchia, with organising the first day in 2011. They have subsequently, founded an award in his honour.

National Fitness Day has grown almost exponentially from its humble beginnings and over the last decade, more and more people, clubs and businesses have been involved. Nowadays, the day reaches over 20 million people, of all ages and across the whole of the UK, as they participate in one way or another, be that a one-mile walk/run, a yoga class or a sponsored gym session. There are free events up and down the country and many TV channels raise awareness of the day too.

What does fitness mean?

Some people may have negative reactions to the word 'fitness' as they remember school cross-country runs in the pouring rain, cold showers or feeling uncomfortable in largely male-dominated gym environments. But these negative thoughts do not account for the changes that have happened over time and the huge burgeoning in fitness research and businesses over the last twenty years.





Fitness is not about having a certain body shape or looking like a bodybuilder. Fitness is about doing enough physical activity to keep your body healthy, your joints moving well and to help maintain mental health too. Getting fit can also be whatever you want it to be as long as it involves some physical activity. It can be running, swimming, dancing, yoga, the list goes on! You don't even have to leave the house nowadays as there are many online courses and webinars that you can join in with from the comfort of your own living room.

The benefits of physical activity

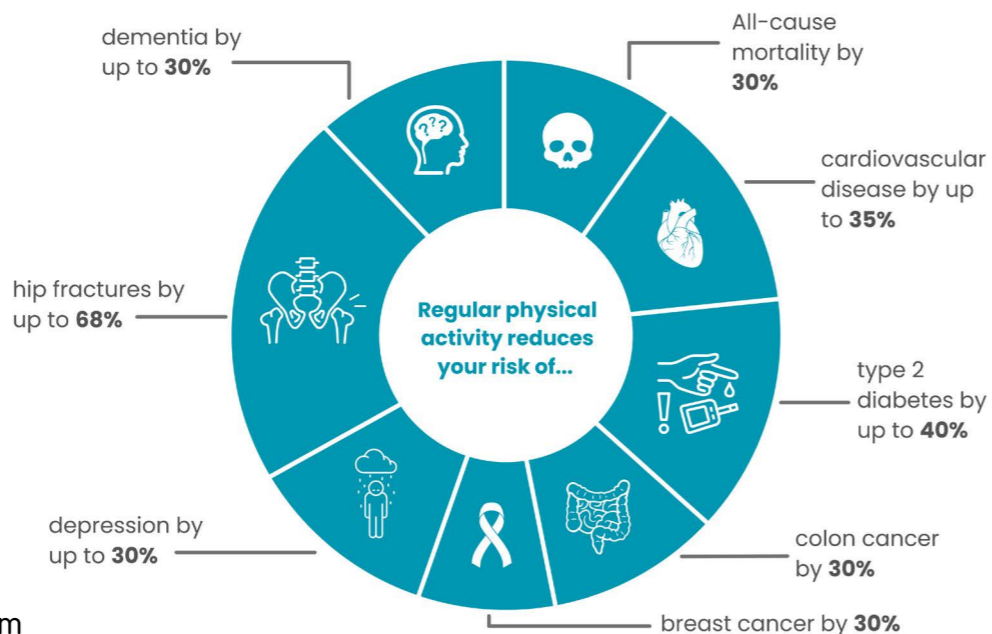
Gov.uk reports many benefits from physical activity (see diagram below), and the links between physical activity and mental health have long been established now.







What's important is that as early years practitioners, we understand the need to pass on the important messages about healthy living to the next generation. It's also important to remember that children pick up on our unconscious bias, so we need to be careful not to let any of our own potentially negative attitudes to physical activity undermine the positive messages we need to give.

The Government guidelines recommend 180 minutes per day of physical activity for 1-5s but this can include the following:

-  Swimming
-  Walking
-  Dancing
-  Messy play

What are the health benefits of physical activity?



-  Scooting
-  Cycling
-  Skipping
-  Climbing
-  Playing in the playground
-  Participating in organised games and sports

This is not an exhaustive list, but it gives an idea of things that count as physical activity. For under-1s, the recommendation is for at least 30 minutes of tummy time each day.

How to get involved in National Fitness Day

The great thing about National Fitness Day is that there are a lot of resources already available to help you plan your own day but here are some ideas we've come up with.

Visit the National Fitness Day website

Visit www.nationalfitnessday.com to register your interest and find lots of information about local events that are running in your area. There is also a toolkit with lots of digital resources, and a link to the ITN campaign, Fitness for Everyone, with lots of videos to inform and guide people about healthy activity.

Do a YouTube search for relevant fitness videos

A few years ago in lockdown, Joe Wicks became a household name for his fitness videos and thousands of school children (and adults) in lockdown used his videos every morning to energise themselves for the day. He subsequently did some BBC Children in Need videos called the "Five Minute Move" suitable for early years which you can access online. There are lots of similar videos online too so look around.

Invite a local provider in to run some sessions

Many local sports or physical activity providers would welcome the chance to come into your setting and run a



free session. It will help them with their marketing, and it is a free and easy way to introduce the children to different activities. Think about local sports clubs, dance and gym clubs as well as things like taekwondo, judo and yoga. You could even make a week or month of it and have different sessions each day.

Set up a diary or display



Keep a record of the physical activity that you do over the day. You could do this like a diary, a picture board or other display. Identify everything that counts as physical activity and link this to keeping fit so that the children start to equate many activities with ways to stay fit.







Visit Twinkl

Twinkl (www.twinkl.co.uk) have a lot of National Fitness Day resources and ideas on their website from activity cards and work out videos to yoga stories and posters to help with personal hygiene after doing sports.

And finally...

If the ideas above are not enough, try some of these:

-  Set up an indoor or outdoor obstacle course
-  Hold a sponsored event involving a physical activity

-  Find a shallow hill to roll down and climb up
-  Play tag
-  Jump in muddy puddles
-  Learn a country dance
-  Dig in the sand/garden
-  Sing some activity songs such as "Head, shoulders, knees and toes"

Whatever you do, remember to send us your photos and stories to hello@parenta.com.

Scan here for more references & information:





Pam McFarlane

Coaching in early years



Over the last few years, Ofsted has begun highlighting the need for managers and leaders to mentor and coach their staff. If managers and leaders are expected to coach their staff, it is only right that we look at what coaching means and how it impacts our settings.

There are many examples in Ofsted reports published in 2022 and 2023 that mention coaching. Two are shown below. The first extract is from an outstanding report and reflects the use of coaching in practice whilst the second one is an action to be taken by a manager.

- › The manager provides staff with supervisions that identify and target weaknesses in their practice, and ensure they receive effective coaching, mentoring and professional development that raises the quality of the provision even further
- › Action: strengthen the use of supervision, training and coaching to raise the quality of teaching further

From these and other examples, it is clear firstly that coaching is a practice that Ofsted requires. Secondly, it is evident that training, mentoring and coaching are three different practices.

Most managers and leaders understand what training entails and are familiar with the concept of teaching and mentoring. Managers also know that they are expected to be positive role models for their staff.

However, coaching is a term that is not too familiar within the early years, so this concept and practice thereof will be explored in this article.

The most understood definition of coaching with which we are familiar is that which refers to coaching a sports team. At the time of writing, the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 is underway and the brilliant Sarina Wiegman is the Lionesses' football coach.

Some aspects of work and life coaching can mirror sports coaching. Certainly, Sarina has the best interests of the team at heart, she is fully supportive and committed to the team's progress and development and she cheers them on, celebrating every achievement. However, coaching in the context of life and work coaching, including within the early years sector, is significantly different.

The Coaching Academy defines coaching in the following way.

"It is about setting and achieving goals... a coach uses insightful questioning to help their clients identify the goals they want to achieve, recognise their current circumstances, consider all the options open to them and choose which actions they will take within a defined time frame. (Life) coaching centres around the belief that everyone can achieve their goals through acknowledging and using their own resources, rather than being told what to do."

So, with regard to leaders within early years, coaching has the one key difference to training, teaching, mentoring and modelling; wisdom comes from inside, not from someone else.

As EnRich coaches, we empower leaders to find the answers themselves, to effectively prioritise tasks, to know their strengths and weaknesses so they can

pace themselves accordingly and to develop the ability to accurately reflect in order to find the best ways forward. Embracing a coaching approach in a setting enables a team to grow and thrive in a positive way, to find answers within (developing independent thought and fostering initiative) and enabling them to set achievable goals for themselves, the children and for the setting as a whole.

If we, as managers and leaders, want to develop our coaching in practice, there are two foundational coaching skills to consider and they are both to do with communication – active listening and effective questioning.

The VeryWellMind company describes active listening as "a communication skill that involves going beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks but also seeking to understand the meaning and intent behind them. It requires being an active participant in the communication process."

An active listener is fully present in the conversation, shows interest by practising good eye contact and notices non-verbal cues. They listen before responding, withholding judgement and advice.

However, there are barriers to active listening and it is important to be mindful of these.

Barriers can be mental, physical or environmental. One example of a mental barrier is the manager or leader having assumptions or preconceived ideas about the team member. A physical barrier could be as simple as seat placement, or the team member being hungry or thirsty or feeling unwell. Environmental barriers

include too much noise nearby or being in a room that is too hot or too cold for comfort.

Active listening flows into effective questioning. It's important to focus on the person with interest and an open mind, reflecting back what is heard at times. This tells the team member they have been heard, and helps the manager or leader move away from making assumptions. Reflective questions could include; "So what I hear you're saying is...?" or "So, is it true to say your experience has been...?"

Probe a bit deeper, ask questions that clarify answers and encourage further conversation. A helpful way to start the question could be; "Tell me more about that..." or "Help me understand that a bit more..."

Once we begin to develop our active listening and questioning skills, how do we use coaching effectively within our practice?

We can do this in two ways, **informally** and **formally**.

Informal coaching happens on the floor, during tea breaks or during walk-arounds. By using open-ended questions and phrases we can connect strongly with our team members. Being curious and genuinely wanting to know more encourages them to express their individuality and their ideas. We could say: "This looks so interesting! What has been the children's feedback? How could you add even more to this activity?" Or: "I am intrigued...where did you get your

inspiration from to set up such a delightful book corner?" Even if an activity is not going as planned, we can come alongside them, jointly assess reasons for this not going well and quickly explore ways in which the situation can be turned around.

Formal coaching tends to happen at set times in the yearly calendar or at times when urgent action is required. These times can include supervisions, appraisals and professional discussions.

The manager's preparation is key for a rich outcome. Ensure a safe, quiet space with comfortable seating has been arranged (a tricky task for some nurseries!). Have water available to drink and pens for note-taking. Be aware of active listening techniques. Ask open-ended, reflective and clarifying questions.

Always start with a celebratory tone. "What has gone really well for you over the last few weeks?" is a good opening question. Be sure to acknowledge improvement or success. An example of this could be: "At our last supervision, one of your action points was to streamline the lunchtime process. I can see there is a calm, orderly atmosphere now and the children are very familiar with the new routine. How did you achieve this?"

Then it's time to delve into current challenges. Ask questions that invoke a thoughtful response, such as: "What has not gone so well? What do you think are the contributing factors to this situation?"

Allowing time for the team member to talk freely about difficulties without judgement

builds trust and lays the foundation for open and frank communication in the future. By exploring ways in which things could have been done differently, the team member begins to see themselves as part of the solution. They start to feel empowered, which boosts their self-belief. They are then able to move on to the next step, setting action points.

Agreeing on action points together encourages team members to develop a sense of ownership of their own performance and professional growth. Through talking about celebrations and challenges, they know where they are currently. It's time now to explore where they want to be and what they need to do to get there.

Action points need to be doable. They need to have a time frame for completion and they need to be relevant. Think SMART. Choose one to three actions to do with this in mind. Provide resources if needed. Following the formal meeting, check in with the team member often, encouraging them and celebrating every success.

It takes time and practice to learn how to coach effectively. Practising active listening and effective questioning is a good start to developing a coaching approach as a leader.

We'd love to hear your stories at marketing@parenta.com, so do let us know how using coaching has made a difference in your place of work!

Scan here for more resources

from Pam:



Supporting colleagues and staff going through a difficult time

There's no doubt that the last few years have been tough on everyone in many ways. First the pandemic, then the war in Ukraine affecting oil/gas prices, then the cost of living crisis and currently, people are struggling with the impact of NHS and other strikes, and monetary policies to curb inflation. Add to that the funding crisis in early years and you have the ingredients of a 'perfect storm' for many early years practitioners.

Many of us are facing a very uncertain future which is affecting many businesses in lots of sectors, and this is filtering down to ordinary working people through redundancies and the increase in zero-hours contracts. And in all this, some people will also be facing their own personal crises such as relationship issues (breakups/divorce), bereavement or struggles with mental and physical health.

Depending on which research you read, the top stressors we all face in life vary, however, there are some consistent headliners which appear again and again, including:

- ♥ Divorce or separation

- ♥ Death of a close family member
- ♥ Incarcerated (prison)
- ♥ Financial issues and debt
- ♥ Major personal injury or illness
- ♥ Major illness/accident of a close family member (e.g. parents/children)
- ♥ Redundancy
- ♥ Moving house
- ♥ Getting married
- ♥ Reconciling with a partner
- ♥ Retirement
- ♥ Exams
- ♥ Problems at work/legal issues
- ♥ Major life transitions e.g. teenage years, old age

Sooner or later, we will all face at least one or two of these issues, and how we cope can depend a lot on the help received from our friends and family, but also on the support we get from our work. So how do you help your colleagues and staff members during their difficult times?

Stage 1: Firefighting

Some situations can be anticipated such as a wedding, moving house or a retirement, and as such, more planning can go into the solutions to help minimise stress. Other events could be more acute and immediate such as a family bereavement, a medical diagnosis, or a sudden change in relationship status. In these situations, it is important to understand the needs of the person in the immediate aftermath. They may be in shock, need to sit or lie down or they may need to immediately leave work and rush to a hospital. Think about their immediate needs and see what help you can offer.

Do they need someone to collect their children from school for example, or a lift somewhere if they do not drive or are not in a fit state to drive?

In cases of relationship breakdowns, a person may turn up to work one day in an emotional state and may be unable to focus on the demands of the job, especially if this requires them to supervise young children. In all these situations, empathy and understanding are needed; put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself what you would like your boss to do in these situations.

It is also important to remain calm and apply a practical approach to the problem. You will need to make sure you can cover their shifts, so a team effort may be needed. Talk to the person involved and ask them how long they think they will need to sort things out and try to be as flexible as you can.

Stage 2: Longer-term help

Once the immediacy of the initial crisis has passed, it's time to support your colleague as they start to work on a longer-term solution. This is where your management style, people skills and organisation can really help. Think about:

- ♥ Reorganising their responsibilities and shifts, for example to fit in with visiting times, hospital appointments or childcare
- ♥ Reducing their workload or transfer parts of it to others temporarily
- ♥ Extending holidays
- ♥ Allowing the person to work from home or with more flexible hours
- ♥ Offering them unpaid leave
- ♥ Giving them a buddy who can help cover or follow through on any paperwork or liaising with parents, for example
- ♥ Offer them regular check-ins to discuss how they are and what other help they need

It may be appropriate to inform other staff of the issue, but you should always ask the person involved first if they are happy for you to share the information on a need-to-know basis. They may want or need to keep things confidential which you must respect, and remember too, that as an employer, you have a duty to keep certain information confidential anyway.



This is also the time that you can offer more advice or information such as links or contact numbers to local charities, NHS services or other local organisations that can help. However, there is a fine line between offering information and coming across as bossy or telling people what is best for them.

Helping people before the event

In any emergency, the planning that happens before the event is often crucial in determining outcomes, or at least, minimising the impact of the event. For example, if people live in an earthquake zone, the design and construction of the buildings can have a huge impact on the number of casualties in the event the worst happens. The same is true for managing staff too. There are certain things that organisations and employers can do to help staff through difficult situations even before they happen.

Think about the benefits package that your organisation offers – does it include healthcare benefits or health insurance for long-term sickness? If so, this might alleviate worries staff have about receiving healthcare in a timely manner. Could you promote health and well-being more in your setting so that you can help people identify problems sooner, minimising the risk? This could be something as simple as having a policy to allow staff time off for medical appointments or check-ups during working hours, regular check-ins, or opportunities to talk through well-being issues, or a comprehensive in-house medical screening programme which could reduce other general sickness days too.

Bereavement leave is another benefit that you could work into your employment

contracts. Some companies offer up to a week as paid compassionate leave.

Could you encourage staff to join a union or subsidise some legal insurance so that staff have access to free legal advice should they need it?

Consider setting up an emergency fund to help staff through a financial emergency. This could be something administered by the HR department, where they have the ability to pay people early or set up a short-term loan against the employee's salary.

Think too about the mental health provision you offer and ask yourself is it enough, or could you improve this?

Helping people when they need it most, shows compassion and understanding but it also makes good business sense and will be much appreciated by staff.

Scan here for more references & information:





Dr. Helen Simmons

Supporting new parents

Listening to the real experts

In recent years, we have seen a rise in awareness of the critical period of development that occurs within the first 2-3 years of a child's life. Those working in early childhood welcome this attention, to finally shine the spotlight on our youngest children. This period of life is fundamental, a time to be nurtured and not simply a stepping stone to the school years. However, this recognition has also brought with it as much attention, even pressure, on parenting and on family life. Recommendations in government reports are bursting with parenting intervention, parenting programmes, and parenting education.

The experience of becoming a new parent is like no other, the love and feelings of

protection for this new life are exceptional but it can also be very scary. Parents can feel overwhelmed, they may feel out of their depth or frustrated, or even that they are losing a sense of their own identity. All these feelings are natural but when coupled with unreachable representations of perfect parenting (particularly in the media and on social media) it is little wonder that parents may find it difficult to be open and honest about how they are feeling.

The transition into parenting often includes difficult decisions about feeding, sleep arrangements, routines and all other aspects of home and family life. These decisions can seem, from a societal perspective, rather mundane, even trivial.

But anyone who is pregnant or who has a newborn knows, the fear of 'getting it wrong' can be all-consuming and overwhelming. Parents can face a huge amount of pressure as they navigate the bumpy road into a new reality. This includes lots of decisions about managing the changes to home, family and working life. Building effective partnerships with parents and carers in early childhood is therefore essential. Trusting relationships, a space to be honest and open and to share experiences may make all the difference to a new parent.

It is so important, therefore, for those practitioners to understand the daily realities of becoming new parents, and to provide meaningful, inclusive, and respectful support to families, not imposed targets or measures. With many opportunities to support parents and families, early childhood practitioners can reflect on their role in providing this support.

This can begin with the following questions:

- ♥ Where do new parents go for support?
- ♥ What do new parents need help with?
- ♥ Is current support effective?
- ♥ How can we support parents better?

By asking these questions, and properly listening to the responses, we can provide the space and support that families are asking for help with. We know that support that is too prescriptive or formulaic is off-putting and does not work, we have tried

this in the past and we must now learn from the lessons. If delivering a top-down, one size fits all approach doesn't work, then working alongside families and communities to break down barriers to support might.

This can begin with a shift in perspective – to see that, as professionals, are in fact, not the 'experts' in individual family life. We have, for many years, acknowledged the importance of the unique child, now this must extend to parents and families. Parenting is not context-free, nor are families 'hard to reach'; they are the opposite and if we really want to support families, then this must come from a place of co-production.

With the development of Family Hubs well underway, there is an opportunity for those in the field of early childhood, those who understand childhood best, to extend that understanding to parents and families. By speaking to parents in your local community, we can hear about any barriers and challenges that families may face in accessing support. Do families know where to go for support with feeding? Do they know how to meet other parents? Do they know where to look for tips about managing the rising costs of family life?

As practitioners and educators, we can challenge our own thinking and perceptions and see the wealth of knowledge and values within our own communities. Meaningful support for new parents comes from engaging with those values and finding ways to build that into provision. Global approaches have demonstrated this already, placing local people, their narratives, histories, oral traditions, songs and play at the heart of community developments.

If parents are supported to see that they are the real experts, then perhaps the narrative can change. Instead of feeling, as new parents often do, out of control and searching for expert guidance from others, a true partnership can emerge; with all parties benefiting from the learning that comes from reciprocal relationships. Co-production doesn't have to be large-scale or demanding. It can just be a conversation, ideally with questions – starting with: "What is your name?" (Because by the way, it isn't 'mum'!) leading to important conversations where parents feel valued, respected, and heard.



This is why, in support of new parents, the importance of friendship, trust, empathy, and humour cannot be underestimated – it is essential that parents can share their feelings with practitioners and with other parents, and not be scared about being judged. It is the silence in parenting that will ultimately create the biggest and most long-term issues. Co-produced strategies that facilitate social interaction, the development of support networks and reduction in isolation will help to forge lasting and valuable relationships between parents and practitioners.

Each chapter:

- ♥ Asks current and future practitioners to reflect on and challenge their current practice
- ♥ Considers the perspectives of parents/carers that are marginalised by current practice
- ♥ Provokes thinking about how settings can become more inclusive in their practice

"Partnerships with Parents in Early Childhood Today"

Philippa Thompson and Helen Simmons (editors) 2023

Published in April 2023 by Learning Matters, Sage Publishers.

This newly published book aims to explore the importance of building effective partnerships with parents and carers in early childhood. It considers the role of early childhood practice in understanding the needs of parents and carers today. Each chapter considers families that may be marginalised in practice. The book suggests respectful, co-productive ways for students and early childhood practitioners, across the sectors, to work together.

Scan here for more resources

from Helen:





Kayla Halls

Taking the lead

How to develop the skills of aspiring leaders in your setting

Formal leadership development programmes provide crucial professional learning experiences for aspiring early years (EY) leaders. But when time and money for formal professional learning are short, we also need to look for opportunities to help aspiring leaders develop their leadership skills in settings on a day-to-day basis. We recently conducted research with 15 baby room leaders across the UK on how they develop the leadership skills of others. We found opportunities to support aspiring leaders through:

- ★ Building aspiring leaders' confidence
- ★ Working together as a team
- ★ Providing opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles

Building aspiring leaders' confidence

Providing positive feedback can help aspiring leaders feel confident in their natural abilities. When chatting with Evie McGarrity, a baby room leader at Archfield House Nursery, she shared that her nursery has "smile cards which we use when we've noticed someone has done something amazing. We just write a little card for them to say well done." Openly and consistently praising aspiring leaders can help them take inventory of the leadership skills they have, empowering them to feel confident as they consider entering a more formal leadership role.

During feedback sessions, while it's important to point out areas your staff needs support, it's also essential to highlight their strengths. In conversation with Joanne Mellor, a baby room leader at Acorns Nursery School Cirencester, she noted that: "If you need to say something negative when giving feedback, always have something positive to back it up with. That's how you build confidence." Aspiring leaders need to know that they can take on leadership roles and responsibilities, even when they have areas that require growth. Building them up with positivity will help them feel confident in their abilities.

Here are some more tips on how to build aspiring leaders' confidence:

- ★ Take time at the end of each week to share one thing each staff member did well
- ★ During feedback sessions, try to 'sandwich' critiques with praise by starting and ending on a positive note

- ★ Make sure to voice supportive remarks throughout the day - if a staff member tried something new or helpfully took the initiative, tell them. It sounds simple but makes a world of difference to confidence and staff morale

Work together as a team

Teamwork is essential to having a smooth day in any EY setting. However, it can also be used to develop the skills of aspiring leaders. One key part of this is listening to staff's ideas. When talking with Joanne, she shared: "You must let everyone have a voice. Just because I've done something one way for many years doesn't mean that somebody else can't come in and have a good opinion on how to do something differently." When we listen to our staff's input, we show them that their ideas matter and are worthy of being implemented, building up their confidence in their leadership capabilities.



In addition to listening to staff's ideas, it can be helpful for aspiring leaders to reflect as a team. Reflection is an essential skill set for EY leaders, empowering them to understand the decisions they've made and make even better ones in the future. In conversation with Evie, she shared that: "At the end of the day, I'll sit down and ask how my staff would rate the day on a scale of 1-10 and to think about how we could get to a 10. I make sure everyone gets their input." When we reflect together with aspiring leaders, we can provide a safe space to practice the essential leadership skill of reflection.

Provide opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles

Once leaders feel more confident in their abilities, they can take on leadership responsibilities. When chatting with Isobel Lambert, a baby room leader at Blue Door Nursery, she shared how she holds space for staff to try new things. "Instead of me always saying 'Oh, I'll call that parent', I say 'Do you want me to talk you through how to have that conversation with them?'" Aspiring leaders need opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities, giving them the hands-on experience, they will need in the future.

When we provide staff with opportunities to develop leadership experience, we must offer guidance and support. In conversation with Lyndsey Smith, a baby room leader at The Nest Nursery Copper Beech, she shared that: "It's about letting staff take on those leadership roles and responsibilities and being there to support them. I encourage them to think about whether it will work, and then have those discussions with them after just to see whether it did work and what we could do better." Creating a safe space for staff to try out new things and reflect on the impact develops key leadership skills and sets them up for success in the future.

Here are some suggestions for where to let aspiring leaders take on leadership roles and responsibilities:

- ★ Let staff members take the lead on difficult phone calls with parents. You can support them by setting out a list of talking points beforehand and reflecting on how the call went afterwards
- ★ Swap roles with staff members during transitions by letting an aspiring leader take the lead while you act as support

- ★ Encourage staff members to contribute new ideas to the learning environment. This could range from piloting new resources to introducing new themes and areas in the learning environment. Then, reflect with them on how the changes have impacted the room and the next steps they might take

Supporting aspiring leaders in everyday ways is about building their confidence and providing opportunities for them to practice key leadership skills. When we do this, we empower the leaders of tomorrow, today.

Scan here to learn more about Kayla:









Exploring different pedagogical approaches



What is pedagogy?

The term 'pedagogy' is used to describe the art and science of teaching. It comes from the Greek word 'paidagogos,' which itself is a combination of 'paidos' (child) and 'agogos' (leader/teacher) and really refers to **how** things are taught when referring to education. Pedagogy can cover:

-  The method used in teaching (e.g. 'chalk and talk', hands-on, visual-learning etc.)
-  The things (practices) used to impart information (e.g. rote learning, repetition, learning through play)
-  The input and autonomy of child and teacher (child-led or teacher-led)

-  How the interactions between the teacher and the student affect the outcome for the student
-  The mindset of both the student and the teacher
-  Where and when the education takes place

Looking at your early years practice in terms of the above concept will help you get an idea of how pedagogies differ and begin to determine which ones you prefer.

Who can start a pedagogy?

Anyone can introduce a new pedagogy into current thinking. That was what



people like Rudolph Steiner, Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori did in the late 1800s/early 1900s. They looked at what was happening in education, challenged it and came up with a different approach. This is still happening today, through current research. It can also be happening in your own setting as you assess and re-evaluate your own practice. Nowadays, practice tends to be evidence-based, whether national, international or within your own setting.

What is pedagogy for?

Some pedagogical approaches may help children to learn better than others but there is no hard and fast rule as to which will be better for which children. That is why having an evidence-based approach is important. Where researchers can

prove that certain practices are helping in teaching, these practices can be adopted to benefit others. For example, using phonics to help children learn to read has been adopted by many schools and is championed by Ofsted. However, it is not the only method to teach children to read. What is important when considering which pedagogy to follow, is to look at the children in your cohort and choose methods and practices which will best suit their needs.

Pedagogies usually fall into one of two categories:

-  A pedagogical approach that encompasses a broad teaching philosophy (e.g. Forest schools, child-centred learning)
-  A pedagogy attributed to the theories of a particular person (e.g. Steiner, Montessori, Dweck)

It is not possible to discuss all relevant pedagogies in detail in this article, although we hope to give you a flavour of a few, and a place to begin your own research.

Different educational pedagogies

Forest School

Forest School originated in Denmark in the last century, and focuses on creating opportunities to learn through hands-on experiences in an outdoor/woodland environment. Almost all learning takes place outside where children are trusted to explore and discover and engage in 'risky play', overseen by specially-trained staff.

Constructivist

In constructivism, learners are believed to create their own understanding of the world around them, based on their own experiences in everyday life. This approach would allow children to take a more active role in their learning, using their existing knowledge as a foundation on which to build more. Practitioners may use a lot of hands-on techniques and ask children to form their own conclusions about their discoveries for example; "the taller you build the blocks, the more likely they are to tumble".

Child-centred

Adopting a child-centred approach to learning is similar to the constructivist approach in that children lead their own learning, and the practitioners are facilitators, helping and enabling the students to learn. In practice this means that children are no longer confined to desks, listening to the teacher impart information. Children are encouraged to find their own project through play, move around as the motivation takes them and learn as they go.

Influential thinkers in educational pedagogy (in no particular order)

Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori opened a house for children in 1907 in Italy. She taught five main curriculum areas: practical life, sensorial, maths, language and culture and used a prepared environment to help her children learn. She often advocated a less-cluttered environment with more space and open-ended resources that allow children to make their own decisions.

Friedrich Froebel

This German pedagogue is known as the father of kindergartens and his work outlined the importance of play in learning.

Carol Dweck

Carol Dweck first coined the term 'growth mindset' which proports that intelligence and learning can be developed and improved. It is the opposite of a 'fixed mindset' in which the person believes that they have a limited intelligence or set of abilities that cannot be extended beyond a certain limit.

Jean Piaget

Piaget influenced pedagogy with his theories of cognitive development. He suggested that children differ from adults in their view of the world and the best way to understand them was to see the world from their perspective and understand how they develop over time.

Howard Gardner

Gardner suggested that there are 'multiple intelligences', and some children naturally lean towards maths say, whilst others gravitate towards arts or music, with none seen as better than the others. His theories suggest an individual approach to

teaching. One article states that: "Gardner points out that: everyone has strengths and weaknesses in various intelligences, which is why educators should decide how best to present course material given the subject-matter and individual class of students".

Lev Vygotsky

This Russian theorist focused on the value of play and how children learn based on their environment and coined the term 'zone of proximal development'. He suggested that children learn with the help of a 'more knowledgeable other' (the teacher/practitioner) who helps them develop their knowledge to the next level. His work has influenced our view of 'scaffolding' where children are helped to learn something new in small steps.

How to approach different pedagogies in your setting

Many early years settings use a mixture of pedagogies and it is useful to research and read about different pedagogical approaches and how to use them in your own everyday work. You can always try out an idea and evaluate whether it has improved the outcomes for your children. If it does, you can adopt it into your practice. If not, then you can adapt it or research and try something else. Learning is not just for the children in our care... we also need to keep learning too!

Scan here for more references & information:





Frances Turnbull

“Video killed the radio star”

Creative digital drawing in the early years

This current 6-part series of early years music articles features a new activity each month from a number of arts activities trialled for 1 and 2-year-old children, along with musical suggestions, with recordings on YouTube.



In our last article, I commented on the passions of individuals leading to change, specifically technology gurus, Elon Musk, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Not only are they known for their passion but they are also known for their influence and progress on technology.

Technology has changed so many aspects of life, with far-reaching and sometimes unexpected results. For a start, the way

we communicate and stay in touch with people has become so much quicker and more immediate. Two clear effects are that this has reduced a lot of privacy that we used to take for granted, and made people feel obliged to be available and accountable more than ever. Surprisingly, it has also resulted in reduced teenage births, increased access to education, and greater global awareness in new generations.

Other aspects of life, like shopping, banking and health, have also become much quicker and more available. Managed properly, this should allow us to spend less time in queues and more time doing the things we enjoy. Interestingly, we often end up using that free time on ... technology, and that is either on shopping or social media!

Music has been affected through technology, too, with interesting results. Depending on where you live or the types of instruments used in performances, the note A may be tuned to different frequencies and there has been some debate that tuning to 432Hz (instead of the standard concert 440Hz) is more natural and pleasing – it actually sounds just a little lower than 440Hz. This has led to some debate in different fields, with claims of “432” music being more calming for different thinkers or more natural, and a medical study (Calamassi and Pomponi, 2019) found that heart rate was reduced, with breathing and blood pressure slightly reduced, and people feeling more focussed and satisfied by listening to music set at the lower frequency. Similar findings were identified with using 432Hz music with spinal patients (2020) and COVID emergency nurses (2022). So it was only then a matter of time before the art world was affected by this trend to not only share old works but also create new works.

These were the 6 ideas that the Finnish study by Lehtikoinen used to involve 1- and 2-year-olds in creative activities by getting them to participate:

- ♪ Dance-painting – paint feet, move to song
- ♪ Magic dough – create play-dough objects from songs
- ♪ Digital drawing – digital communication
- ♪ Musical drawing
- ♪ Balloon painting
- ♪ Snow-painting

This month, we are focusing on **digital communication**. The songs below all include suggestions of incorporating technology in a teacher-led environment, but this can easily be flipped on its head to become child-led. By leaving children with technology, they could take pictures with tablets or phones, and explain the importance of the item they pictured. Alternatively, technology can be used in ‘painting’ programmes, where different shapes and colours may be used to express ideas or feelings about songs.

Aiken Drum

*There was a man lived in the moon
Lived in the moon, lived in in the moon
There was a man lived in the moon
And his name was Aiken Drum*

*And he played upon a ladle
A ladle, a ladle
And he played upon a ladle
And his name was Aiken Drum*

*And his hat was made of good cream
cheese...
And his coat was made of good roast
beef...
And his buttons made of penny loaves...
And his waistcoat was made of crust
pies...
And his breeches made of haggis bags...*

This ‘other world’ song about the ‘Man in the Moon’ can have any suggestion included in how his clothes were made – his hat was made of Samsung phones, his coat was made of Google glass, his buttons made of iPads... now imagine the pictures, videos and drawings children would take!

How many miles to babylon

*How many miles to Babylon?
Three score and ten
Will you get back before I do?
Yes and back again
Open the gates and let us through
Not without a beck and bow
Here’s the beck, here’s the bow
Open the gates and let us through*

This song talks about different types of measurement for distance, and this could be used to introduce children to different ways of counting things – how many groups of things, and dividing groups of things between others. Pictures and electronic drawings would bring a richness to the child’s point of view.

Hickory dickory dock

*Hickory dickory dock
The mouse ran up the clock
The clock struck one
The mouse ran down
Hickory dickory dock*

The notes in this rhyme are often too wide for most new singers to sing accurately and successfully, but it should not stop being played or sung to children. The use of numbers, specifically one-zero and the up-and-down comparison to the use of on-off in technology can easily be used to develop a simple understanding of the binary system and the importance of numbers in technology. Pictures and drawings not only show understanding but also feedback on what it means to children where they are.

And finally...

Video killed the radio star

*Video killed the radio star
Video killed the radio star
Pictures came and broke your heart
Oh-a-a-a oh*

While our title – and final song – focus on the loss of auditory-only entertainment, we can bring a positive view to the way that technology is used. In an ever-changing world of developments, technology should enhance, not replace, creative endeavours. And when we understand the ways in which technology can be used and how we can express ourselves through technology, we can enhance our own worlds.

Scan here for more resources from Frances:



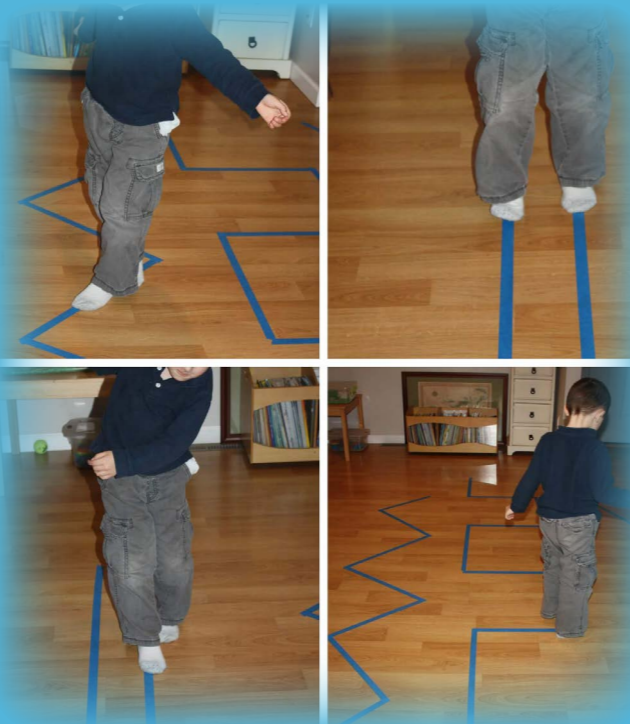
EYFS activities: Physical development

Physical development plays a crucial role in the EYFS. It lays the foundation for various aspects of a child's overall development and is closely linked to cognitive, social, and emotional development. It involves the enhancement of both gross motor skills (using large muscle groups for activities like running, jumping, and balancing) and fine motor skills (using smaller muscle groups for tasks like writing, drawing, and manipulating small objects). These skills are essential for a child's ability to perform various tasks and activities throughout their lives, including academic pursuits.

Line walking

This is such a popular activity to do with the children, as it can be done in the smallest of spaces, or you can spread the game wide if you have a larger outside space.

1. Grab a roll of painter's tape and create lines across the floor. These can be straight lines, zig-zags or jagged lines; whichever you fancy! Create a variety of paths if you can, to maximise the fun.
2. Encourage the children to walk the lines, heel to toe or any other way they can think of.
3. They can even jump in different ways, twisting and stretching to move around the lines.
4. If you have a ball to hand, either a basketball or another slightly weighted ball, the children can explore the lines further by carefully rolling the ball over the tape lines. Alternatively, the children can sit on either end of the lines and roll the ball back and forth to each other, which can be equally entertaining.



More on this activity and others can be found here: www.littlebinsforlittlehands.com.

Let's balance!

Turn your outdoor space into a balancing world! You can easily utilise a few basic materials, to create a wonderful balancing playground for the children.

1. Place some flat rocks on the ground to form a line of stepping stones, and watch the little ones carefully balance as they step from one to another.
2. If you know anyone cutting down a tree, you might be able to use a few pieces of the trunk for an extra level of fun. Dig them into the ground slightly by approximately an inch, using sand to level and settle them. They are great for balancing on and if you place them near each other, they are great for stepping from one to another.
3. Alternatively, you can create a homemade playground balance beam. Simply get a plank of wood, with a couple of wider pieces screwed to the bottom at each end of the beam, to ensure stability when the children are balancing on it.

Each of these simple balancing tools form a wonderful playground for young children, as they grow and develop their balancing skills.

More on this activity and others can be found here: www.happyhooligans.ca.



On your marks!

Build children's small muscle strength by exploring mark-making with different tools on different surfaces and see where the learning journey leads you.

1. Provide trays of sand, flour, powder paint, shaving foam and cornflour mix and a range of sticks, feathers, pieces of string, vehicles, toy animals, combs, and brushes with which children can make marks in the material. Additionally, give them some pipettes so they can make patterns in the dry material by squeezing water onto it. This will build up muscle strength in their fingers and help to prepare them for gripping traditional writing instruments.
2. For an outdoor activity, set up a large tray outside with paper and provide sticks, mud, leaves, grass and flowers so that children can make marks using natural materials. You could also add bits of fruits and vegetables so that children can explore what happens when they crush these items or drag them across the paper.

More on this activity and others can be found here: www.earlyyearseducator.co.uk.





Gina Bale

“Role-playing”

Empowering child-led adventures with ‘Teacher in Role’!

Welcome to the magical world of ‘Teacher in Role’ (TIR) an area that I am passionate about. TIR is a thrilling teaching strategy, as you, the teacher, become a master of disguise, taking on the person or a fascinating character that ties into the topic or theme at hand. Whether it’s a brave astronaut exploring the wonders of space or a quirky scientist concocting wild experiments, the possibilities are as boundless as a child’s imagination!

“But how does this work with child-initiated play?” I hear you ask.... TIR and child-initiated play in early years are closely linked. They both focus on and emphasise active experiential learning. This is done by fostering engagement and creativity in your little ones. Some children need guidance to discover and explore while others learn best by discovering at their own pace. As all children, and adults, are unique it is important to ensure that you are utilising as many strategies as possible to engage your little ones.

Just look at how child-initiated play and TIR complement each other. This applies universally, and the optimal approach to learning involves a blend of self-directed and guided activities.



Take a peek!

1. Child-centred approach

TIR and child-initiated play prioritise your little ones’ interests, needs and choices. In child-initiated play, children are encouraged to take the lead and explore activities that interest them, while TIR responds to these interests by incorporating them into role-play scenarios and adventures. This ensures that the learning experiences are meaningful and relevant to the children, promoting active engagement.

2. Imagination and creativity

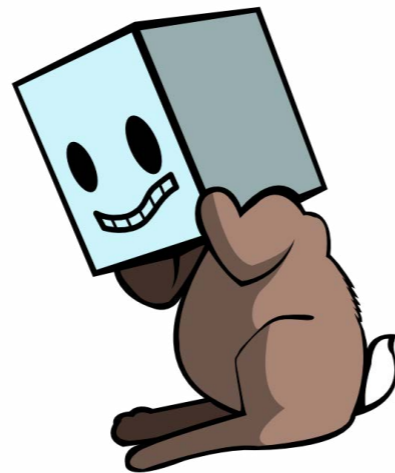
Child-initiated play and TIR encourage imaginative play and creativity. In child-initiated play, your little ones are free to use their imagination to create scenarios and stories, while in TIR, your adoption of a character role sparks their imagination and invites them to participate in the narrative developing their creativity.

3. Role-modelling and empathy

In child-initiated play and TIR, your little ones can take on different roles, whether they are real or imaginary. This allows them to develop empathy by understanding the different perspectives and feelings of the role they are playing.

4. Active participation

Both approaches promote active participation. In the child-initiated play, your little ones engage in self-directed activities, while in TIR, they interact with you and your character,



encouraging them to ask questions, solve problems and explore the subject/activity deeper.

5. Language development

TIR and child-initiated play contribute to language and vocabulary development. Children use language to communicate and negotiate roles during their play. In TIR, they engage in meaningful conversations with you allowing you to develop and enrich their vocabulary and communication skills.

6. Flexible and playful learning environment

Child-initiated play and TIR foster a playful and flexible learning environment. In child-initiated play, children explore and experiment at their own pace, while in TIR, role-play allows for spontaneity and adaptability as you respond to your little one’s actions and ideas.

7. Playful learning

Both approaches make learning enjoyable and fun. Whether it’s spontaneous play or guided role-play, your little ones experience fun which fosters enthusiasm to learn and motivates their curiosity to explore and discover.

8. Critical thinking

Child-initiated play and TIR helps your little one’s critical thinking and creativity soar to new heights. These strategies encourage them to think outside the box and come up with imaginative solutions to problems.

The real magic lies in how TIR turns education into an adventure. Transporting children on a journey of knowledge and discovery. Creating a rollercoaster ride of learning, complete with loops of excitement and drops of wonderment!

But...

The success of TIR does depend on your ability to commit to the role you are playing to engage your little ones. When this is done effectively, it transforms the learning experience into an exciting and memorable adventure that they won’t forget. It leaves a lasting impact on their understanding and interest in the subject matter you were working on together.

Key to success

Role-play like you have never done before. Unleash your inner diva and turn your space into a captivating stage where everything comes to life! By immersing yourself in the role you are going to ignite a spark in their minds.

Just think how “Horrible Histories” engaged you or your children and I bet you can still recite some of the songs! You as the TIR would be a member of the cast bringing your little one’s interests to life.

Some ideas

If your little ones are ‘dino mad’ take the role of an explorer in search for the biggest dinosaur in the world. Think of all the fun you can have on your adventure, hiding from a scary T-Rex or taking a ride on a friendly Vegesaur.

If creepy crawlies are their thing... get ready for a trip to the Amazon and meet a hairy, scary, hungry tarantula!

There is no end to the TIR opportunities as you can dive into the depths of the sea in a submarine or, get out the sun cream, hat and binoculars for an African safari. Journey through all the realms leaving your little ones wide-eyed with wonder!

So, buckle up, embrace the wonder of ‘Teacher in Role’ and let your passion for educating shine brightly. As you journey with your children through the realms of knowledge, remember you hold the key to unlocking the gates of curiosity to ignite the flames of inspiration. Enhance the joy of exploration and discovery for your little ones.

Let the adventure begin! My fellow enchanters of education!

Scan here for more resources from Gina:



What do our customers say this month?



★ Trustpilot Excellent

"We have always had a great relationship with Angie, I always know where my learners are at all times as she keeps me posted about their development. She is very thorough and I feel my staff are comfortable around her. Therefore, their learning is the best it can be. She makes them feel at ease when she observes them and this is so important.

Thank you Angie, we love working with you!"

Lisa Southon
My First Word

"We would like to say a special thank you to Julie Holt, who has been so very supportive and caring towards Millie. Julie fully understood the need to breakdown tasks so that Millie could complete them without feeling overwhelmed."

Jo Gunne
Treetops Preschool

"Emma Drury is an amazing teacher with a great sense of responsibility. During my apprenticeship time at Parenta, she kept in touch with me and followed up on my progress, answered my questions when I had them and gave me confidence when things got difficult. I am honoured to have a teacher like her to support me in my childcare journey."

Yingxiao Qin

"Rachelle is an absolute star, she is very supportive of all my apprentices. She always keeps me informed of their progress and any support they may need. She goes above and beyond to support her students and makes sure they are given the necessary support needed to complete their apprenticeship. She is also quick to respond to any calls or emails I make."

Julie Conteh
Benjamin Rabbit Nursery

"Since starting in September 2022 to complete my level 3 I have had Lauren as my tutor. She has helped me a great deal in getting ahead of my target. Lauren is kind, helpful and always available to help when needed. Couldn't ask for a better tutor."

Alayna Baker

"Very professional. They are always available to answer any issues you have. I would highly recommend their website design service."

Muhammed Khan

"Embarking on the journey to becoming a nursery teacher is no easy feat, but this course has been nothing short of fantastic! From the get-go, it has been a fun, informative, and engaging learning experience that has significantly influenced my perspective on early childhood education."

Alketa Lala

"An amazing experience. I have felt no pressure and have had exceptional support throughout my course. My tutor has been amazing, thank you Mandy. I highly recommend Parenta!"

Laycie Friday

"I did my Level 3 Early Years, Maths and English Functional Skills with Parenta, and they were fabulous. My maths tutor, Nour, was excellent. She went above and beyond to help me pass first time! Thank you all that helped me."

Zoe Wells

Congratulations to all our Parenta learners!

Massive CONGRATULATIONS to all our Parenta learners who have completed their apprenticeships and gained their qualifications!

A special shout-out this month goes to **Daniel from Kiddies Corner Day Care** and **Sophia from Angela Smith Childcare** who have both successfully passed their Level 2 Childcare EYP – what a fantastic start to a long and rewarding career in childcare!



Supercharge Your Childcare Business With A Powerful Website!



Generate new enquiries **IMMEDIATELY**, reach your local community and increase your occupancy with our **Ofsted compliant** websites.

Parenta-Powered Childcare Websites:



Ignite engagement from parents anytime, anywhere



Promote higher visibility on the leading search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo)



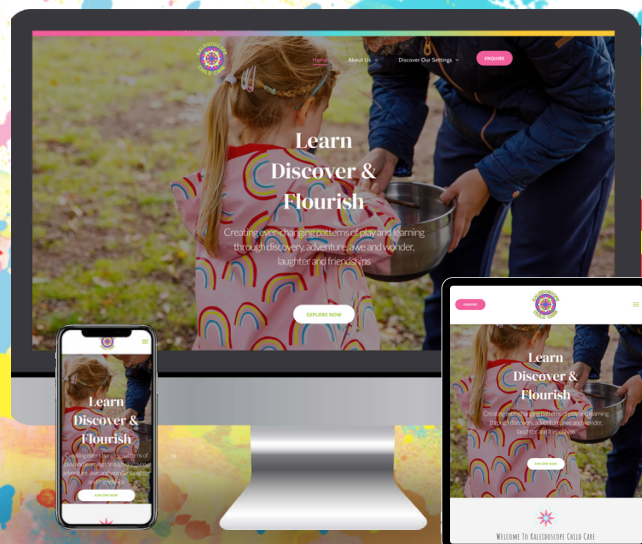
Are guaranteed to generate new leads **AND** boost occupancy levels



Empower you for a successful Ofsted visit



Provide you with unparalleled peace of mind with top-tier security



Have empty spaces in your setting?

Don't delay, let us help you fill them today!

Limited spaces available, act now to avoid disappointment.



"A very easy website process. Love the end results, and that is coming from someone who did not have a clue where to start!"



Call **0800 002 9242** and quote 'Magazine'

