

Communication and Language



Eileen Pollock – Birth to Three

Kirsten Moore – Confidence, Creativity and Curiosity

Wellbeing
and
Learning

Achievement
and
Progress

Networked
Learning
Organisation

Connected
Learning

Engagement,
Participation
and Inclusion



Aims

- To explore the link between relationships, communication, language and music.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the importance of relationships and music in the development of communication and language.
- To gain practical information to help you create interactions, experiences and spaces to support communication and language.
- Time and space to evaluate current practice against the 'Quality Improvement Framework for ELC'.

Supporting Documents

- [How can we create a language and communication supportive environment in ELC settings \(Education Scotland, 2025\)](#)
- [Realising the Ambition: Being Me \(Education Scotland, 2020\)](#)
- [Quality Improvement Framework for ELC \(Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate, 2025\)](#)
- [Speech, Language and Communication and Skills Matrix for Early Years Workforce](#)
- [Singing with Young children \(2025\)](#)
- [Song's Rhyme and Finger Plays: Froebel Trust Pamphlet \(Dyke, 2019\)](#)
- [Communicative Musical Play with Young Children: Froebel Trust Pamphlet \(Pitt, 2023\)](#)
- ["Musicality: Communicating the vitality and interests of life" \(Trevarthen & Malloch, 2009\)](#)
- [Starcatchers - The Voice of the Baby](#)

These documents will support this training.

We recommend you take time to look at these before and after the training.

Transforming support for children and young people with communication needs in Scotland: A partnership approach



More children in Scotland are presenting with communication needs, particularly in the early years.

These needs are linked to a wide range of outcomes, from learning and wellbeing to employment and justice involvement.

Supporting children's communication development is fundamental to achieving inclusion, equity and human rights.

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Scotland (RCSLT) and Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) collaboratively produced 'Transforming support for children and young people with communication needs in Scotland: A partnership approach' in August 2025.

Communication skills: What's the problem?



1 in 4 children and young people in Scotland have a predicted **speech, language and communication** need.¹

Public Health Scotland reported a **significant increase** in communication needs following the **pandemic**.²



89% of staff surveyed in **nurseries** reported an **increase** in the numbers and **complexity** of children with **communication needs**.³

By **age 5** there is a **13 month gap** in **expressive vocabulary** between children from the **richest and poorest** backgrounds.⁴



Sources

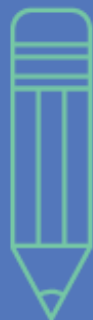
1. Equity for All (2021)

2. Public Health Scotland Report (2023)

3. RCSLT & Early Years Scotland Survey: Children's communication difficulties increase since COVID (2023)

4. Growing up in Scotland (2015)

Communication: Why does it matter?



LEARNING

Early spoken language emerges as the **most important factor** influencing **literacy levels at age eleven.**¹



BEHAVIOUR

Studies consistently observe **higher levels of behaviour challenges** amongst people identified with **communication needs.**²

EMPLOYMENT



88% of long term unemployed young men

were found to have a speech, language or communication need.³



WELLBEING

Children with **vocabulary difficulties** at **age five are three times** as likely to have **mental health problems** when they reach adulthood⁴



JUSTICE

60% of people in contact with the law were found to have a **speech, language or communication difficulty.**⁵



HUMAN RIGHTS

Children's communication rights are specifically enshrined within Article 12 and 13 of the UNCRC, and has been **enshrined in Scots law.**⁶

Sources

1. Moss, G and Washbrook, E (2016) The Gender Gap in Language and Literacy Development. Bristol: Uni of Bristol
2. Pickles, A, Durkin, K, Mok, P., Toseeb, U., and Conti-Ramsden, G. (2016). Conduct problems occur with hyperactivity in children with language impairment: A longitudinal study from childhood to adolescence.
3. Elliott N (2011). <https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/an-investigation-into-the-communication-skills-of-unemployed-young>

4. Botting, N., Toseeb, U., Pickles, A., Durkin, K., & Conti-Ramsden, G. Depression and anxiety change from adolescence to adulthood in individuals with and without language impairment. PloS one, 11(7), e0156678. Centre for Mental Health (2018)
5. Bryan, K., Freer, J. and Furlong, C. (2007). Language and Communication Difficulties in Juvenile Offenders. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 42 (5), 505-520.
6. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 20, 1989, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3.

Singing...



"What other ... experience enhances our general feeling of well-being, develops physical co-ordination, improves verbal memory, helps us learn languages, generates strong community spirit?"

Peter Kendall (2001)



Nursery Rhyme Challenge

- How many nursery rhymes/songs can you list in 2 minutes?

Ice Breaker



In small groups take it in turn to:

Task 1: Hum a traditional rhyme for others to guess.

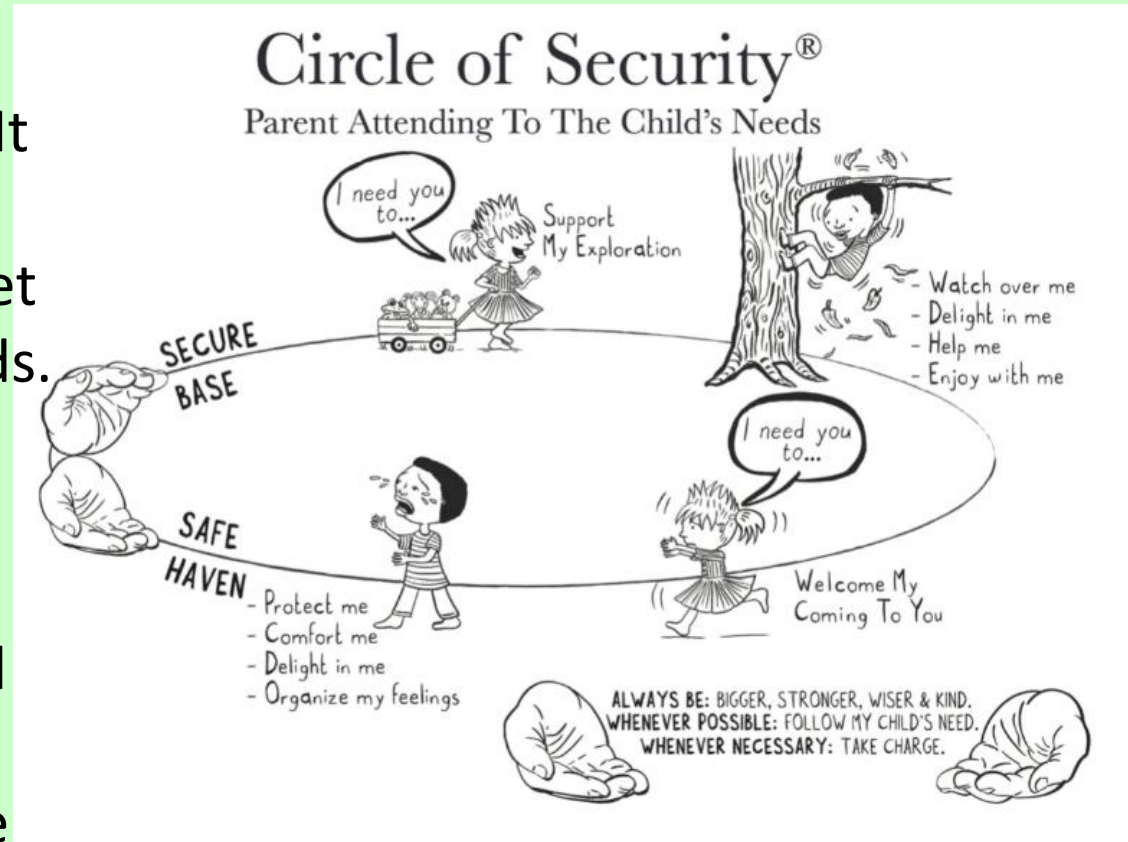
Task 2: Act out a traditional nursery rhymes for others to guess.

1,2,3,4,5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive	Rock A-Bye, Baby
A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea	Row, Row, Row Your Boat
Down in the Jungle	Sing a Song of Sixpence
Heads, Shoulders, Knees & Toes	Ten Green Bottles
Horsie, Horsie Don't You Stop	Ten in a Bed
I Can Sing a Rainbow	The Grand Old Duke of York
If You're Happy and You Know It	The Hokey Cokey
London Bridge is Falling Down	The Wheels on the Bus
Old MacDonald Had a Farm	This Old Man
Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses	Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
3 Crows	5 Little Ducks
Jeely Piece Song	Hickory Dickory Dock
The Bear Went Over the Moutain	3 Blind Mice
The Big Ship Sails	Hey Diddle Diddle
5 Little Men in a Flying Saucer	I hear Thunder
Wind the Bobbin Up	My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean

The importance of Relationships

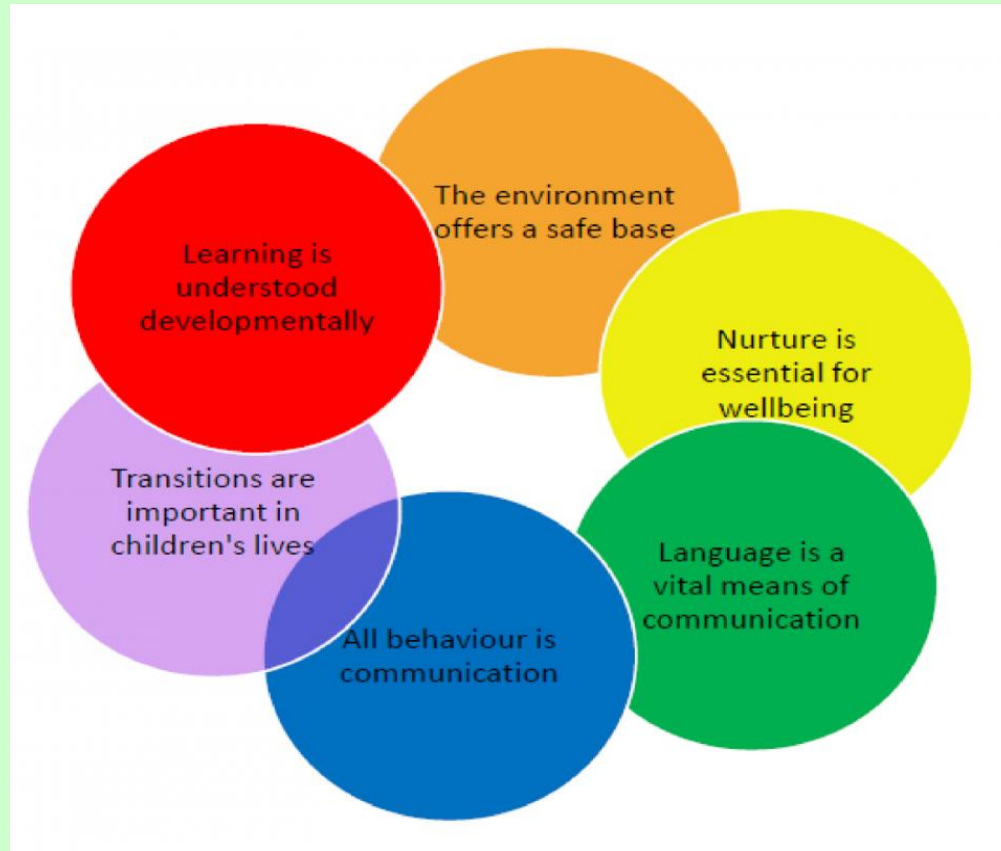
The **Circle of Security** is a visual map of attachment. It is used to help caregivers better understand and meet children's attachment needs.

It depicts the interplay between a child's need for exploration (going out) and their need for comfort and safety (coming in), with the caregiver acting as both a Secure Base and a Safe Haven.



Circleofsecurityinternational.com

The 6 Nurture Principles



The 6 Nurture Principles

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally:

- Children learn at different paces and in different ways. The importance of tailoring learning experiences to individual needs and developmental stages, rather than expecting all children to progress at the same rate.

2. The classroom offers a safe base:

- A safe and nurturing classroom environment is crucial for children's emotional well-being and academic success. This includes physical safety, emotional security, and a sense of belonging.

3. The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing:

- Nurturing interactions and experiences help children develop positive self-esteem, emotional regulation skills, and a sense of resilience. This, in turn, contributes to their overall well-being and ability to cope with challenges.

4. Language is a vital means of communication:

- Language is more than just a skill to be learned; it's a fundamental tool for expressing feelings, thoughts, and needs. Nurturing environments encourage open communication and provide opportunities for children to develop their language skills.

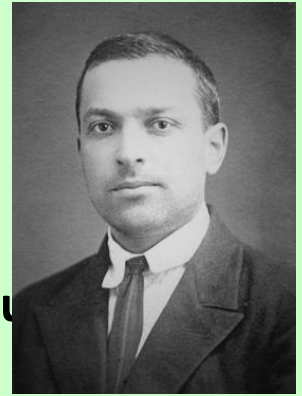
5. All behaviour is communication:

- Challenging behaviours are often a form of communication, indicating unmet needs or underlying emotional distress. Nurturing approaches involve trying to understand the message behind the behaviour and responding to the child's needs in a supportive way.

6. The importance of transition in children's lives:

- Transitions, such as moving from one class to another or starting a new school, can be stressful for children. Nurturing environments provide support and guidance during these transitions, helping children adjust and feel secure.

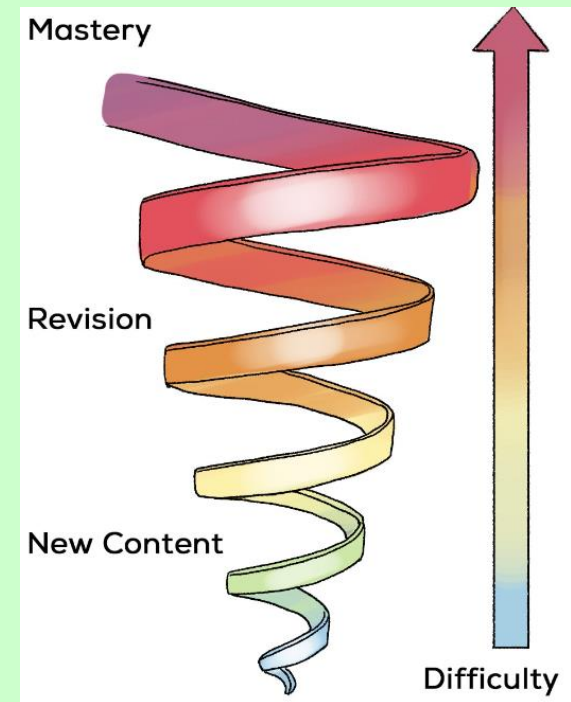
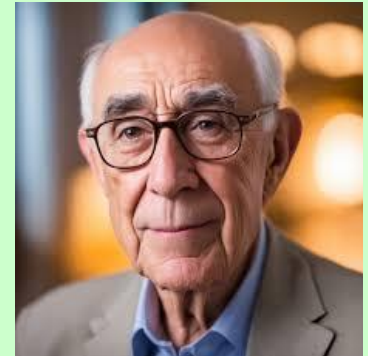
Lev Vygotsky's ZPD



- Vygotsky's theory introduced us to the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** which is the **distance between a child's actual developmental level and their potential level of development with guidance and support from adults or more skilled peers.**
- This zone is where the **most significant cognitive growth occurs**, as children are challenged just beyond their current capabilities but within reach of their potential development.
- **Scaffolding** is a teaching strategy derived from Vygotsky's theory – this involves **providing support and guidance within a child's ZPD** to help them learn and develop new skills.

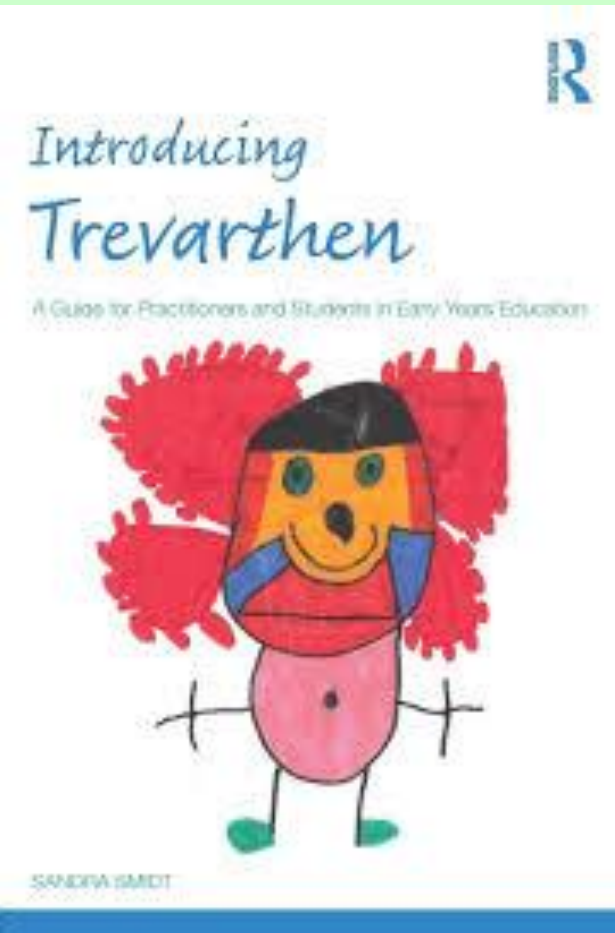
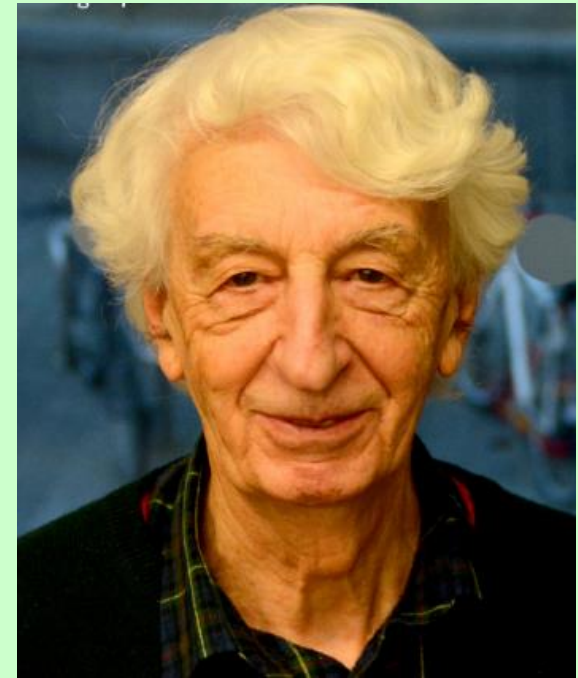
Bruner's Spiral Curriculum

- Children's development should **not** be seen as progression up a ladder.
- Bruner's (1977) concept of a **Spiral Curriculum** – as young children's abilities evolve they are able to explore an ever-widening world.
- They do not leave behind the interests and understandings of earlier stages but **add on to these to develop an increasingly complex view of the world and their relationship to it.**
- For example: The young child using her fingers to spread spilt food is developing an understanding of the way in which marks are made. She will build on this to develop an understanding of drawing and other forms of representation.



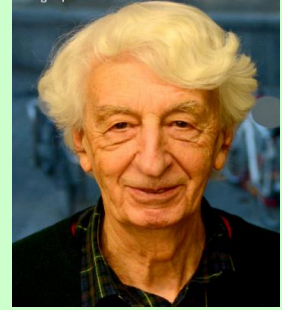
Colwyn Trevarthen

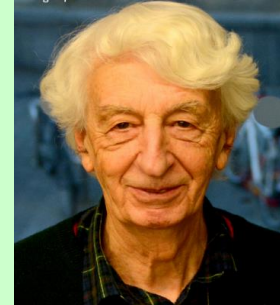
Colwyn Trevarthen was a pioneering developmental psychologist and neuroscientist.



He is best known for his groundbreaking research on infant communication and the fundamental role of early **human relationships** in cognitive and language development.

- **Core Idea:** Trevarthen emphasised that babies are **born as competent, social beings with an innate capacity for interpersonal communication**. From birth, babies engage in:
 - “**primary intersubjectivity**” — *a natural, emotional, and reciprocal exchange of signals such as **eye contact, facial expressions, and vocalisations** with caregivers.*
- **Importance of Attuned Relationships:** Trevarthen's research showed that babies **actively participate in these interactions**, co-creating shared meaning and developing their communication skills through **emotional attunement**—*when caregivers respond sensitively and synchronously to the infant's cues.*
- **Building Communication and Language:** Trevarthen proposed that language and higher cognitive abilities grow from these **early, embodied social interactions**. The infant's brain is wired to learn through **dynamic, face-to-face communication**, which forms the foundation for later language acquisition and social understanding.





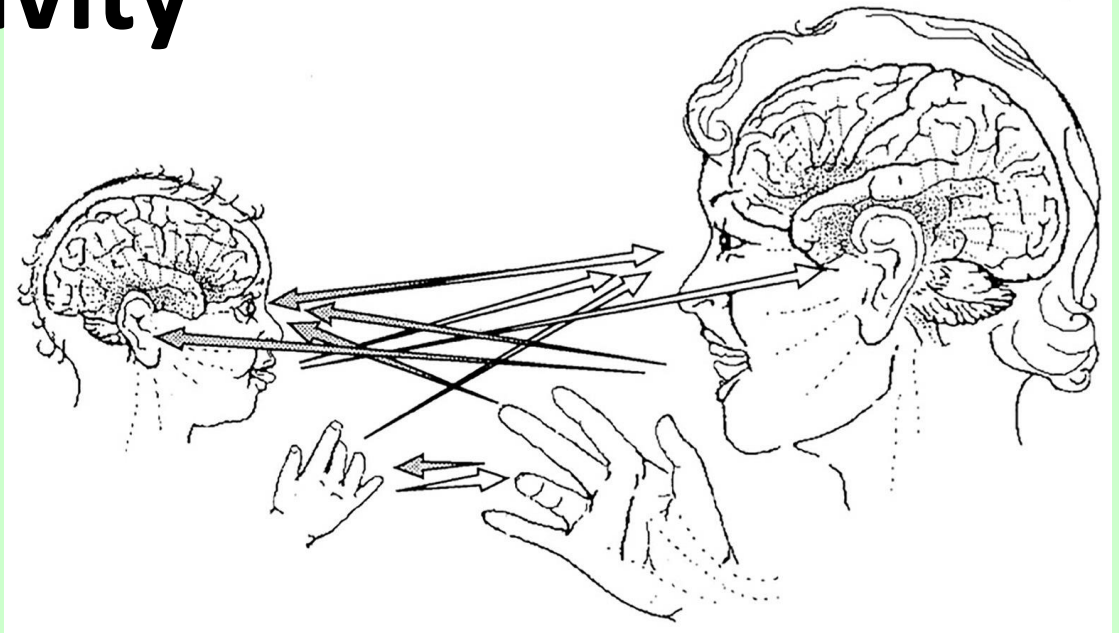
- Trevarthen's research contrasted with the common rhetoric at the time (1970s-1990s) and with earlier theorists such as Jean Piaget.
- **Piaget's View:** Babies were largely **egocentric and not yet capable of empathy or true social understanding**. He believed that babies learn mostly by exploring things on their own and using their senses and movements, and that understanding other people comes later.
- **Trevarthen's Contradiction:** Trevarthen's work challenged this view by demonstrating that babies are not passive learners but **actively relational and emotionally competent from birth**. His research suggests that **social engagement and emotional connection precede and are essential for cognitive development**, contrasting sharply with Piaget's more individualistic, stage-based model.

'Intersubjectivity'

Intersubjectivity, a concept developed by **Colwyn Trevarthen**, refers to the **shared emotional and mental connection** between a baby and their caregiver.

Trevarthen's research showed that even very young babies are **social and communicative beings**, capable of engaging in **face-to-face interactions** that are rich in emotional exchange.

He discovered that from birth, babies **seek eye contact, respond to facial expressions, and take turns**



in **“conversations”** using sounds, movements, and expressions—long before they speak actual words. These early interactions are known as **“proto-conversations.”**

Trevarthen’s work shows that **language doesn’t start with words—it starts with relationships.**

Face-to-face communication is not optional; it’s the core of how babies learn to connect, understand, and eventually speak.

'Motherese' / 'Parentese'

- **Motherese:** The specific way *mothers* speak to babies, focusing on exaggerated pitch, slower tempo, and simplified language. (The sing song way we speak to babies)
- **Parentese:** Inclusive of *all* caregivers. It acknowledges that any caregiver's sensitive, engaging speech benefits the infant's language development.
- Trevarthen's research on **primary intersubjectivity** and infant communication greatly deepened our understanding of the *why* behind motherese—why adults naturally adapt their speech to engage babies emotionally and socially. His work shows that these **early, attuned interactions are biologically driven and crucial for language and emotional development.**
- Trevarthen showed that infants are born ready for social connection, and caregivers naturally adjust their vocal patterns (motherese/parentese) to **support this connection**, fostering language and social development.

How can Music Support Communication and Language in Babies?

- Froebel understood that parents and carers, as the child's first educator, **communicate through music** what it is to be human in the world. **Pitch, pulse** and **rhythm** (the foundational elements of music) are natural expressions of humanity found across all cultures.
- The benefits of music include:
 - The development of language skills;
 - The flexibility in its meaning;
 - It can synchronise rhythmically co-ordinated play experience;
 - It is built on anticipation - tension and release - which leads to pleasure and shared good feelings;
 - It fosters a sense of belonging through shared experience in time.
- Music can be thought about as participation – something we all do. This 'musicking' is a communicative activity through which everyone connects and participates.

Pitt (2023)



Discussion Task

Are you familiar with 'parentese?' and the importance of music in the development of communication and language?

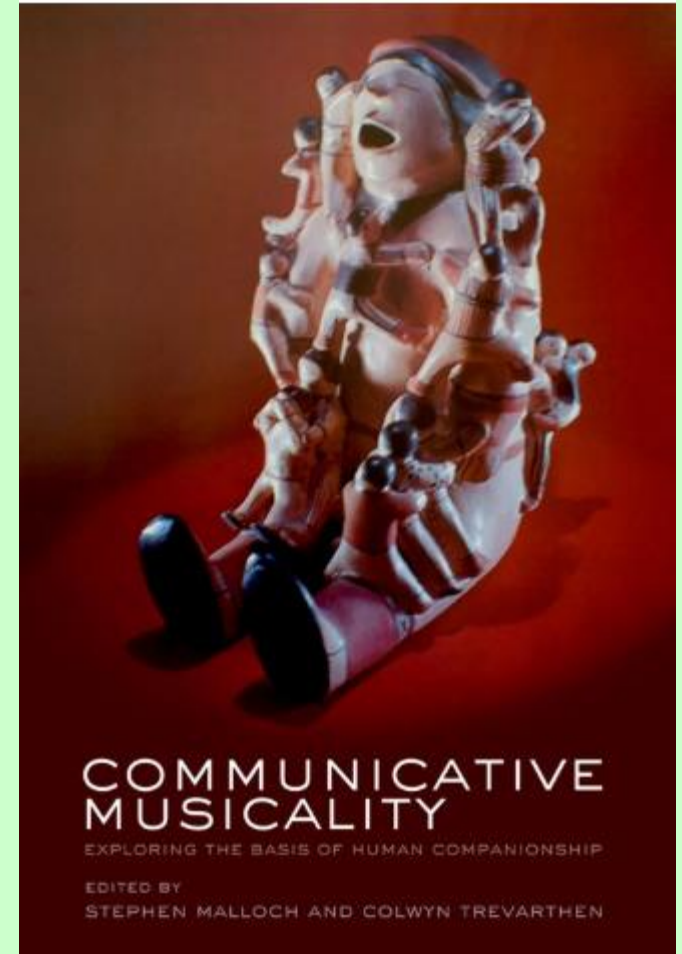
Do you think that your setting's community would benefit from support with these messages and if so, what could this look like?

Communicative Musicality

Communicative Musicality explores the **intrinsic musical nature of human interaction**. The theory of communicative musicality was developed from groundbreaking studies showing how in mother/baby communication there exist noticeable patterns of **timing, pulse, voice timbre, and gesture**.

Without intending to, the exchange between a **mother and her infant follow many of the rules of musical performance, including rhythm and timing**.

(Malloch and Trevarthen, 2010)



Communicative Musicality

Child Flourishing Symposium 2014



Naseera, born 3 months premature, with her father one month later.

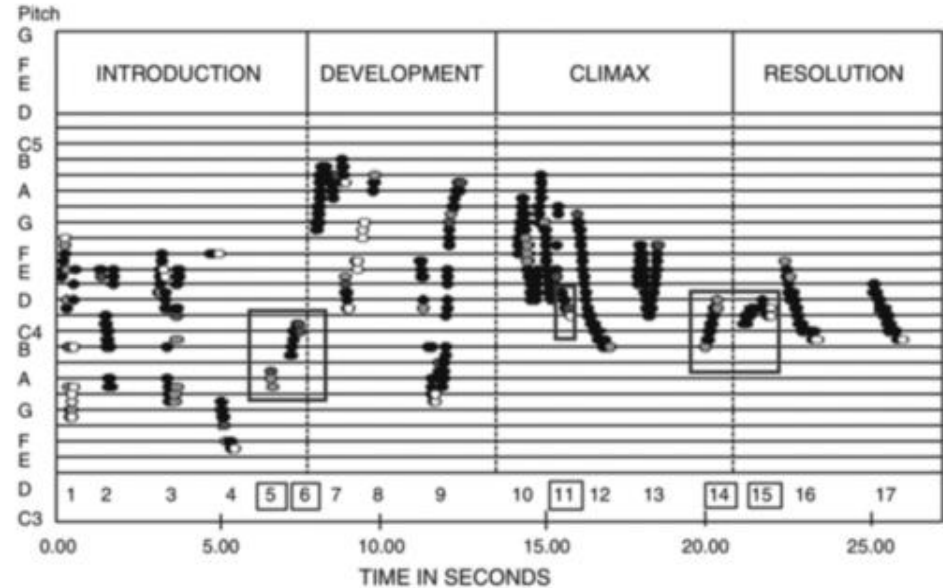
He imitates her gestures and vocal expressions.

In the conversation between baby Laura and her mother, their interaction shows that **parentese (the sing-song way adults talk to babies) is closely linked to musical structures** because:



- The mother uses **exaggerated pitch, rhythm, and tempo**—like a simple melody
- Laura **responds in time**, matching the **pauses and turn-taking** as if they are following a musical beat.
- Their exchange has a **call-and-response pattern**, similar to musical phrasing.
- Emotional expression is conveyed through **tone and dynamics**, not just words—like music does.

Their talk flows like a **musical duet**—with shared rhythm, melody-like tones, and coordinated timing—showing how parentese naturally mirrors musical structure.



INTRODUCTION	DEVELOPMENT	CLIMAX	RESOLUTION
1 Come on	7 Oh yes!	10 Tell me some more then	15 Ch ch With INFANT
2 Again	8 Is that right?	11 INFANT	16 Ahgoo
3 Come on then	9 Well tell me some more then	12 Ooorrh	17 Goo
4 That's clever		13 Come on	
5 INFANT		14 Ch ch ch ch With INFANT	
6 INFANT			

'Protoconversations'

Early Mother and Infant Interactions - Trevarthen

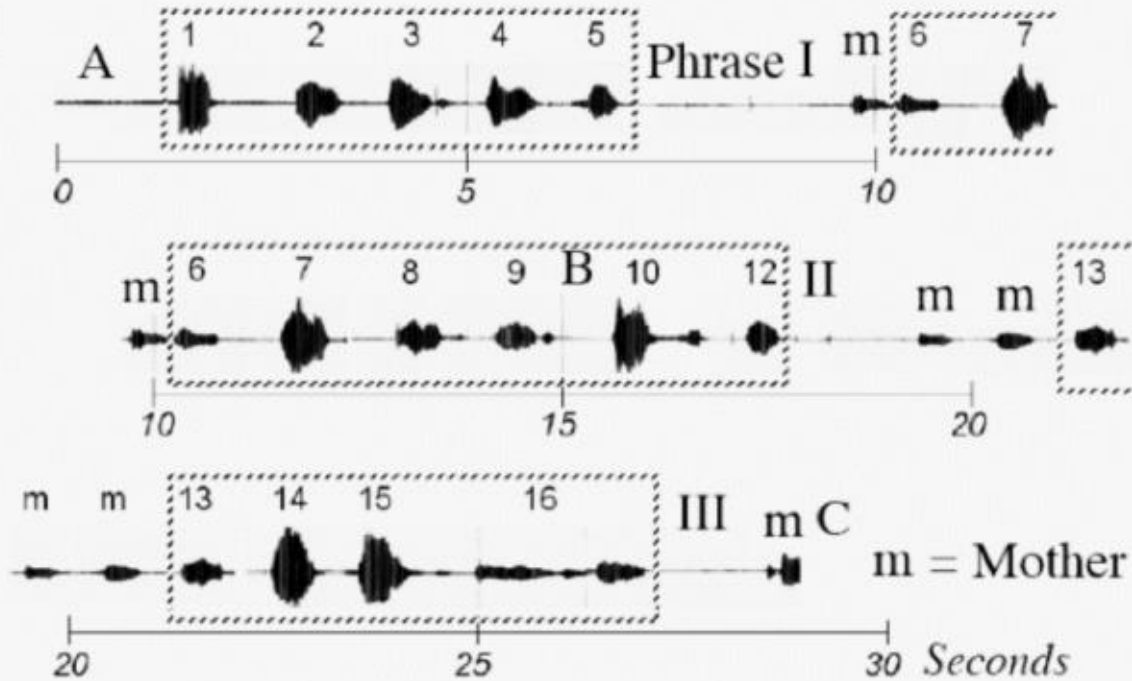




A

B

C



Dan Wuori - Ben and Mali

"Mali, say hurry!"



Parentese between siblings

Humans are Built to be Social Beings...

- What the human brain is looking for is **relationships...**
- "relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love" .
- "from birth, we seek intimate connections, bonds made possible by empathy — the ability to love and to share the feelings of others"

Dr Bruce Perry

- What kind of companion a practitioner should be? -
One that treats the baby with **playful human respect.**

Colwyn Trevarthen

Pre-Birth to Three: Professor Colwyn Trevarthen – Relationships (Education Scotland, 2016)

[Relationships Video](#)



Tea Break

Have a well
earned cuppa
and a chat....



Communicative musical play with young children

A Froebel Trust early childhood
research highlight by Dr Jessica Pitt



*"Musicality is an
innate and important
part of early bonding
and interaction."*

Dissanayake, E. (2000)

Colwyn Trevarthen and Stephen
Malloch's research shows us the **innate
musicality of humans** and its importance
in **communication and interaction.**

Trevarthen & Malloch (2000)

Communicative musical play with young children

A Froebel Trust early childhood
research highlight by Dr Jessica Pitt



Reading and Discussion Task



Take the time you need to read through this pamphlet:

- Can you see elements of what we have learned this morning?
- How could you practically implement messages from this within your practice?

Traditional Songs and Rhymes

Learning traditional rhymes and songs are so important for communication and language development.

- The repetition of familiar songs
- The repetition of the 'chorus'
- The 'safety' in familiarity'
- Rhymes, rhythms, patterns

Physiological and emotional positive wellbeing is increased through singing together.

Singing in the Moment

Singing in the moment

Including singing into your 'stories' can be a powerful way to support communication and language.

- Stories that naturally have a melody.
- Creating your own melody to stories/oral tales

Songs can also be viewed as 'open-ended' experiences. Once children are familiar with traditional songs and rhymes it is important that children can view these through a curious lens...

- Support children to play with these songs, lyrics, patters to make them their own.
- They can change them, make up their own, play with these.

Singing in the Moment

"Start from the pupil's own life and proceed from it like a bud or a sprout" (White, 1907)

Are nursery rhymes / songs still relevant to your children and families today?

Think about inclusion – culture, community, lived experiences of your children and families

If not, let's use AI to create bespoke songs and rhymes for YOUR setting that are relevant and meaningful for your children and families...

<https://copilot.microsoft.com/chats/HtTbEBo5g65SKUxzkc6xb>

Songs to Support Transitions

About Song Signifiers

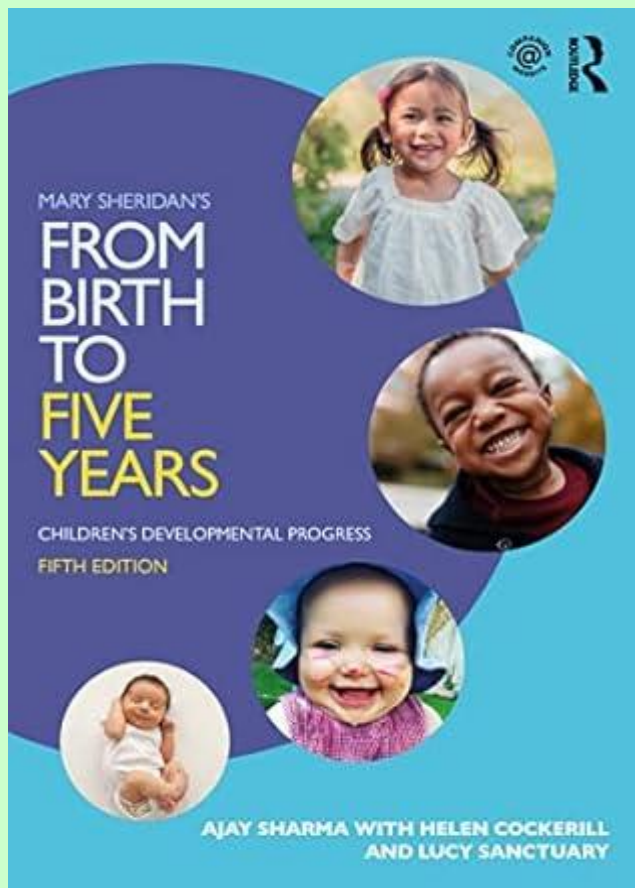
Oaklands School – Song Signifiers – examples of transition songs - Oaklandsedinburgh.com

Practical Task



- Think about stories and books your children are currently interested in.

- Practice/think about how can you include music into these:
 - Sing the story
 - Create a melody for the repeated phrase
 - Oral tales – singing sections
 - Reimagine traditional songs and rhymes to provide more relevance to your children today.
 - Songs to support transitions



Speech, Language and Communication: Milestones

Typically 12 months but earlier or later for many:

- Frequently responds to familiar songs by vocalising. Imitates playful adult vocalisations, e.g. 'uh-oh'

Typically 15 months but earlier or later for many:

- Uses jargon with intonation patterns that sound like connected speech.
- Communicates wishes and needs by pointing and vocalising.

Typically 18 months but earlier or later for many:

- Chatters continually to self during play, with conversational intonation and emotional inflections (mix of jargon and intelligible words).
- Enjoys nursery rhymes and tries to join in, attempts to sing.

Please remember that development is not linear and that there are many developmental pathways. www.diversepathways.org

Leadership (Heading)	Children Thrive and Develop in Quality Spaces	Children Play and Learn	Children are Supported to Achieve
Leadership and Management of Staff and Resources: (CI) (Quality Indicator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vision, values and aims (Theme) • self-evaluation, quality assurance and implementing change • staff recruitment and induction 	Children Experience High Quality Spaces (CI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality, safety and maintenance of spaces • Children influence and affect change • Information management 	Play and Learning (CI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s engagement • Quality of interactions • Child-centred planning and assessment 	Nurturing care and Support (CI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing care • Personal planning • Connections with families
Staff Skills, Knowledge, Values and Deployment (CI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff skills, knowledge and values • Staff deployment 		Curriculum (ES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum rationale and design • Continuity and progression in the curriculum • Partnerships • Skills for life and learning 	Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equality (ES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships and wellbeing • Universal support • Identification of learning needs and targeted support • Inclusion and equality
Leadership of Continuous Improvement (ES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical leadership • Leadership and professional learning • Planning and continuous improvement 		Learning, Teaching and Assessment (ES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s experiences and spaces • Interactions to support learning • Planning and assessment • Tracking and monitoring 	Children’s Progress (ES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress over time across all areas of learning • Overall quality of children’s achievements • Ensuring equity for all children Safeguarding and Child Protection (CI & ES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection • Children are safe, secure and protected from harm • National guidance and legislation

Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare

- **Children are Supported to Achieve** (heading)



- **Nurturing Care and Support**
(Quality Indicator)

- **Nurturing Care** (Theme)

'Very Good' Nurturing Care



Our practice is built on the understanding that **nurturing relationships are essential for children's growth and development**. Children experience **warm, consistent and responsive care** that fosters their wellbeing. They are **safe, sensitively cared for and skilfully helped to express their needs**.

We recognise the importance of **supportive transitions** and understand that their significance can vary for each child. We regularly **assess each child's individual needs and evaluate the effectiveness of our transition strategies**. We ensure **consistent relationships** to support smooth transitions and minimise disruptions to children's care and learning experiences.

Guided by best practice, such as Realising the ambition, we evaluate our approaches and **continually strive to improve our practice**. The **varied age groups** in the setting positively impact transitions because older children are encouraged to welcome, support and guide younger or newer children. Children's **privacy and dignity are respected**. We balance promoting children's independence with providing support where it is needed.

We continually **reflect on our practice** to ensure it **adapts to children's evolving needs and development**. We create **diverse spaces** that support children to socialise, play in small groups or alone if they wish. This positively impacts children's ability to regulate their emotions and build social skills.

Children's food choices are nutritious, **culturally appropriate** and safely prepared to account for any specific dietary needs, allergies or intolerances. They are aligned with current dietary guidelines including Setting the table and Food matters. Fresh water is readily available throughout the day. We consider daily routines, such as mealtimes, as valuable opportunities to promote children's involvement, independence and enhance their experiences.

We ensure **consistency in who provides a child's care and support** and how it is provided. Consistency in routines such as mealtimes, nap times and personal care provide our children with a sense of safety and security. We recognise these **daily routines provide rich opportunities to connect with children and support their growth and development**. We work closely with families and, when appropriate, children to administer medication safely. We are committed to the safety of all children and ensure our care and support approaches align with current best practice, guidance and policy.

HGIOS4?

2.4 Personalised Support

Universal support

All children and young people are benefitting from high-quality universal support. We have an effective strategy for securing positive relationships and behaviour which all staff and partners take responsibility for implementing. Children and young people are at the centre of all planning, as active participants in their learning and development. Our children and young people have frequent opportunities to discuss their learning with a key adult who knows them well, helping them to set appropriate next steps. This enables them to review their own learning and plan for next steps, gain access to learning activities which will meet their needs, work with a range of partners, and prepares and supports them through changes and choices. Learning targets are in place specific to individual learners, built on prior learning and reviewed and evaluated systematically with next steps based on their progress. All staff know and respond very well to the individual needs of children and young people and promote and support their wellbeing. Tasks, activities and resources are effectively differentiated to ensure appropriate pace and challenge for all learners. Our staff and partners work effectively together to increase their ability to meet the needs of our diverse learners through effective use of professional learning, support and specialist resources.

Evaluating Practice



- Take time to familiarise yourself with:
 - The new Shared Quality Improvement Framework theme '**Nurturing Care**'
 - **HGIOS4 QI 2.4 - Personalised Support**
- What are you currently doing well?
- How can you improve quality of practice?

The Importance of Responding to Baby's invitations



Explainers



<https://centreforearlychildhood.org/>

The Impact of not Responding



Save the
Children

**RESOURCE
CENTRE**

Tronick's Still Face Experiment [video](#) [Mary Catherine Bateson actually did this research first but did not publish it!]

Being Mindful of Phone Use...



Missed Opportunities

- Buses, cafes and walks are ideal experiences for children to observe human interactions and then engage in 'serve and return' interactions.
- How often are you in a public space and you automatically start to make faces and communicating with a baby?
- However, if children and/or adults are engrossed in 'screen time' then these vital human interactions are missed.



'Techno-ference and Child Development'

McDaniel and Radesky (2025)

A comprehensive study involving 14,900 participants across 21 studies found that parents' frequent use of digital devices around their children—termed "**technoference**"—is linked to poorer cognitive and prosocial development in children under five.

The study also noted increased behavioural issues and disrupted parent-child interactions, which are crucial for language development.

Why is human interaction so important?

- Kuhl et al. (2014) used brain imaging to investigate how infants process speech during live interaction versus screen exposure.
- The study found that **infants show significantly greater neural activity in language-related brain areas when engaged in face-to-face interaction with a live person** compared to watching or listening to recorded speech on a screen.
- Although babies may appear attentive to screens, their brains are less actively involved in processing and learning language in these situations.
- This research highlights **that active, social engagement with humans is crucial** for stimulating infant brain development and supporting effective language acquisition, emphasising that **screens cannot replace the benefits of real human interaction.**

Children's Screen Time and Parent-Child Communication

Brushe and colleagues (2024) found a negative association between children's screen time and measures of parent-child communication. The study focused on children **aged 12 to 36 months**, a critical period for language acquisition.

- **For every additional minute of daily screen time:**
 - Children heard **6.6 fewer adult words**
 - Children produced **4.9 fewer vocalizations**
 - Children experienced **1.1 fewer conversational turns** (back-and-forth interactions)
- **Hourly impact:**
When extrapolated to an hour, this equates to approximately:
 - **397 fewer adult words spoken around the child**
 - **294 fewer child vocalizations**
 - **68 fewer conversational turns**
- These reductions in verbal interactions and conversational turns can limit children's opportunities for learning and practicing language, potentially affecting communication skills and cognitive development.

The study suggests that **screen time displaces these crucial face-to-face interactions.**

Screen Time Recommendations By Age



Under 1 year
No screen time at all, except for video chatting (e.g., FaceTime) with caregivers to maintain social connection.



1 to 2 years If screen time is introduced, it should be **no more than 1 hour per day**, less is better. Limited to **high-quality**, educational content, and **always watched together** with a caregiver to help children understand and relate to what they see.



2 to 5 years

Limit screen time to **no more than 1 hour per day** of sedentary screen time (e.g., TV, tablets) with emphasis on **educational and interactive** content, ideally **co-viewed** with a caregiver.

(World Health Organisation, 2019)

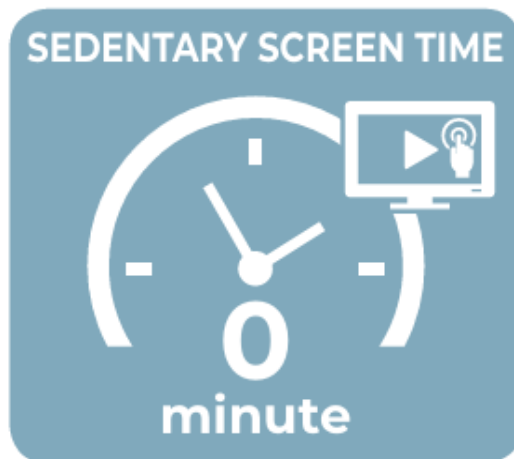
WHO Guidelines

infants (less than 1 year) should:

Be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways, particularly through interactive floor-based play; more is better. For those not yet mobile, this includes **at least 30 minutes in prone position** (tummy time) spread throughout the day while awake.

Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back). Screen time is not recommended. When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.

Have 14–17 hours (0–3 months of age) or 12–16 hours (4–11 months of age) of **good quality sleep**, including naps.

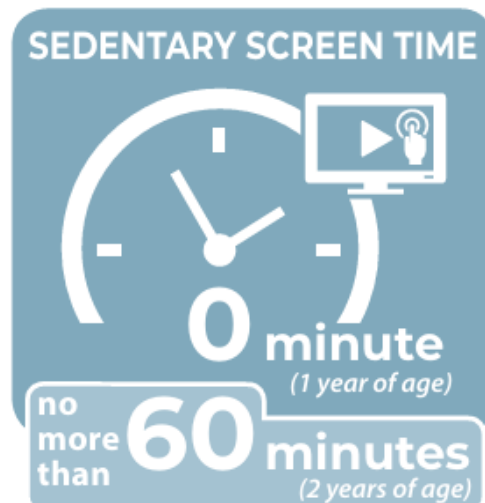


children 1–2 years of age should:

Spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, including moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day; more is better.

Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/ strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back) or sit for extended periods of time. **For 1-year-olds, sedentary screen time (such as watching TV or videos, playing computer games) is not recommended. For those aged 2 years, sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better.** When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.

Have 11–14 hours of good quality sleep, including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

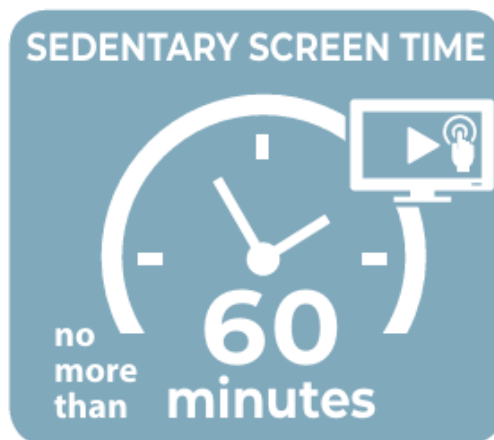


children 3–4 years of age should:

Spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, of which at least 60 minutes is moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day; more is better.

Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/ strollers) or sit for extended periods of time. **Sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better.** When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.

Have 10–13 hours of good quality sleep, which may include a nap, with regular sleep and wake-up times.



A major new national study of two-year-olds in **England** has just been published, offering a clear picture of early childhood today.

How Much Screen Time do Two-Year Olds Have?

- **Almost all children (98%)** use screens every day
- They spend **about 127 minutes per day on average** (just over 2 hours)
- Only **34% meet WHO guidance** (less than 1 hour per day)

Impact on Language development

- **Higher screen time is linked to poorer vocabulary**
- Children with **very high screen time (5+ hours/day)** knew fewer words than those with low screen time

Impact on Behaviour and emotional development

- More screen time is linked to **higher rates of behavioural/emotional difficulties**
- Example:
 - **39%** of high screen-time children had possible difficulties
 - Compared to **17%** of low screen-time children

Children of the 2020s: second survey of families at age 2 years

Research report

February 2026

Dr. Laurel Fish^{*1}, Dr. Marialivia Bernardi^{*1}, Jessica van de Grint-Stoop², Dr. Jean Anne Heng², Sarah Knibbs³, Prof. Alissa Goodman¹, Prof. Lisa Calderwood¹, Dr. Sandra Mathers⁴, Kavita Deepchand³, Chris Ferguson³, Prof. George Ploubidis¹, Prof. Jacqueline Barnes⁵, Prof. Julie Dockrell¹, Prof. Claire Crawford¹, Prof. Lindsay MacMillan¹, Kevin Pickering³, Prof. Pasco Fearon^{1&2}.

* These authors contributed equally to this work and are joint first authors of this report.
¹ University College London, ² University of Cambridge, ³ Ipsos, ⁴ University of Oxford, ⁵ Birkbeck, University of London.

Although this recent study was for England, we can imagine that there may be a similar picture in Scotland.

[Link to Report](#)



NEW ADVICE FOR PARENTS ON SCREEN TIME FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

UK Screen Time Guidance 27th March 2026

For children under two, the guidance recommends avoiding screen time other than for shared activities that encourage bonding, interaction and conversation.

For two- to five-year-olds, parents are advised to aim for no more than one hour of screen time a day and to keep screens out of mealtimes and the hour before bed.

<https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/screen-time-under-5s/>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c53daf4a06660f085442a7/EYSTAG_report.pdf

What do these recommendations mean for Early Years?

- **Zero screen time with our babies** – our babies need that important human interaction and connection.
- **Limited (if any) screen time with our 2–3-year-olds**
- **Limited and educational with 3-5-year-olds.** We can look to our 'Film and Screen' and 'Technology' curriculum guidance to ensure engagement with screens are supporting creativity and problem solving and are not being used as a passive tool.

We must be very mindful that with our 3-5-year-olds, the guidance is **less than an hour a day** which includes the time they will spend engaged in screens at home.

To many parents, these **guidelines can feel unrealistic** in an increasingly busy and digital, tech-filled world. Since every child and environment is unique, it's worth repeating: *There is no magic number for how much screen time kids should have.* (Kowert, 2025, Nurture Academy)

It is important to support parents and to be non-judgemental.

How can we positively engage in 'screen time?'

- **Engage in Joint Media Use**
 - When adults and children interact together with media, it enhances learning and helps children apply what they see on screens to the real world.
- **Prioritise Interactive and Educational Content**
 - Not all screen time is equal. Dr. Barr suggests focusing on content that is interactive and educational, such as apps and programs that promote active participation and learning. *These types of media are more beneficial for children's cognitive development compared to passive viewing.*



Sundqvist, Koch, Barr (2025)

Engaging Together with Screens

video



Screen Time Discussion



- How do we support our children to embrace a digital world while also ensuring they are receiving the optimal human interactions necessary for positive communication and language development?
- How can we support families to 'replace' screen time with manageable hands-on experiential learning?

Intervention can lead to Impact

Abecedarian Project

- Study conducted in North Carolina in the 1970s and has tracked the progress of participants over 5 decades
- 2 groups – Randomly chosen – all received health, social and nutritional supports but half were also given high quality educational childcare.

The project aimed to determine the extent to which early education could prevent intellectual disabilities, promote cognitive and social development, and improve lifelong health and wellbeing.

Findings

- Improved cognitive development
- Lifelong Benefits – lower rates of hypertension, reduced risk of heart disease and other positive health outcomes
- Potential Crime Prevention
- Positive Social Outcomes
- Return on Investment

Lunch





A Froebelian approach

Singing with young children

by Paula Lester

"Children and adults are naturally drawn to music and musicality - they are important aspects of our human lives."

(Dykes, 2019)

Froebel believed that singing would help family members develop warm, close, affectionate and intimate relationships with young children.

"Learning new songs is as important as topping up the sand tray."

Marjorie Ouvry (2012)



A Froebelian approach

Singing with young children

by Paula Lester



Reading Task



Take some time to read through the '**Singing with Young Children**' pamphlet.

Think about how ideas from this pamphlet could impact on your current practice

Group Task



After reading through the '**Singing with Young Children**' pamphlet.

You will notice that Froebel's songs and rhymes follow a physical progression (p20).

Work in small groups to think of songs/rhymes for each stage...

Physical Progression of Froebel's Songs and Rhymes

Stage 1: **Lullabies**

Stage 2: Rhymes/Songs that use the **whole hand**

Stage 3: Rhymes/Songs that use the **fingers**

Stage 4: **Crossing the midline** (songs that encourage hand movement extending across body)

Stage 5: Rhymes/Songs that use the **whole body**

Stage 6: Rhymes/Songs that use the whole body and introduce **games/movement**

Stage 1: Lullabies

- **“Rock-a-bye Baby”** – soothing and rhythmic, supports trust and attachment.
- **“Hush, Little Baby”** – gentle repetition and reassurance.
- **“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”** – soft hand movements or gentle rocking.
- **“Row, Row, Row Your Boat”** – gentle lifting or rocking motions in sync with rhythm.
- **Action Game:** Gently sway or lift baby in rhythm to promote connection and early body awareness.

Stage 2: Whole Hand

- **“Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-Cake”** – clapping and patting develop whole-hand coordination.
- **“Open, Shut Them”** – reinforces intentional hand opening and closing.
- **“If You’re Happy and You Know It”** – clapping, stomping, whole-hand and body gestures.
- **Action Game:** Passing soft objects back and forth to match rhythm or words.

Stage 3 - Fingers

- **“This Little Piggy”** – isolating individual fingers, symbolic of each “piggy.”
- **“Tommy Thumb”** – isolating fingers and naming them.
- **“Five Little Ducks” / “Five Currant Buns”** – early counting and symbolic understanding.
- **Action Game:** Puppet play or small finger puppet songs.

Stage 4 - Crossing the Midline

Songs that encourage movement across the body and left-right coordination.

- **“Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”** – touching opposite sides of the body.
- **“Wind the Bobbin Up”** – circular hand and arm movements crossing midline.
- **“The Wheels on the Bus”** – repetitive circular and side-to-side motions.
- **Action Game:** “Simon Says” with cross-body actions (touch right hand to left knee, etc.).

Stage 5 – Whole Body on the Spot

Songs using full body movement without traveling.

- **“I’m a Little Teapot”** – full-body movements but largely stationary.
- **"Dingle Dangle Scarecrow"**
- **“Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”** – connecting body parts rhythmically.
- **Action Game:** “Stretch up tall, curl up small” movement imitation games.

Stage 6 – Full body movement, storytelling, and games

Songs and games that include moving around and imaginative play.

- **“The Grand Old Duke of York”** – marching and directional movement.
- **“We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”** – storytelling through movement and sound effects.
- **“Sleeping Bunnies”** – pretending, stillness, and then full movement.
- **“Hokey Cokey”** – full-body movement, following instructions, and group play.
- **“There was a Princess Long Ago”** - storytelling, singing, actions
- **Action Games:** Parachute play, movement storytelling, or circle games with rules (“Duck, Duck, Goose”).

Tiny Happy People

Helping parents in your setting to understand the importance of language development and giving them tools and strategies to use with their child at home

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/articles/z9mb6rd>
- *5 to Thrive*

Chatting Together

Watch and wait before joining in

I love it when you play alongside me, letting me take the lead.

Watch and wait to see how I choose to play and what I am interested in.

Join in by making a comment or taking a turn. Give me plenty of time to respond.



Scan here to see this idea in action on the BBC Tiny Happy People website or visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/d9ak3ewp>



How can we create a
Language and
Communication Supportive
Environment in Early
Learning and Childcare
settings?

August 2025

"Nurturing and responsive interactions lie at the heart of any language and communication supportive environment."

Education Scotland, p5 (2025)



Interactions



Research tells us that babies and young children benefit from both **quantity** and **quality** of interactions.

Such interactions should happen **regularly throughout the day** embedded within **all types of experience** in the ELC setting including daily routines, indoor and outdoor play and transitions.

Interactions



1. Adults are **responsive**
2. Adults get down to the **child's level**
3. Adults **adapt** their language
4. Adults **model** and **label**
5. Adults **have conversations** with babies and children
6. Adults balance **questions** with **comments**
7. Adults **expand** and **recast** by repeating their comment then adding words or details to make a fuller sentence.
8. Adults use **gesture, signing** and other **visuals**

STARCATCHERS ENGAGEMENT SIGNALS

These engagement signals were developed across with researchers from the University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter and the University of Strathclyde across our pilot and second phase of work with children aged 0-5. They were used to inform the different ways babies and young children engage in expressive arts experiences in both our productions and workshop settings. We're sharing them here because we think they can be useful for your early years practice.

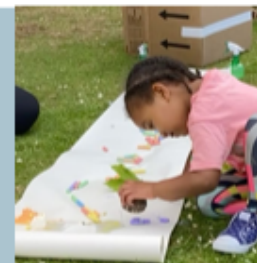
Attuned

When a baby or child is **intensely watching** and cued in to what is going on. This includes their eyes tracking or focusing on whatever, or whoever, they're attuned to. This doesn't necessarily mean eye contact - they may watch and follow your hands, or an object you're holding.



Absorbed

Intense attention for a period of time, including **ignoring any distraction**. This could be engaging an activity physically, or watching intensely (tying into **attuned**) for an extended period of time. There's no set period of time for it to be "extended", you know the children you work with and will be able to sense what has grabbed their attention for longer than usual.



Mirroring

Watching and reciprocating through **repeating** or **copying**. This could be physically mirroring - e.g., copying or slightly adapting your movements, or it could be vocal - they might copy the sounds or noises you make. They also may not copy people - if they see a character or object spin, they might try spinning too.



The Voice of the Baby Project

Glasgow City Council are working collaboratively with Starcatchers to use the **7 engagement signals** to ensure the voice of the baby is heard when making policy decisions (article 12 UNCRC)

Responsive

Signs of responding positively can include positive or open **body language** - smiling, nodding, reaching. They may also indicate they are following what's going on by nodding, or **responding** with suggestions or questions. It can also include **social referencing** - which is the process whereby babies or young children look at other's facial expressions to understand how they are feeling. For example, a wee one handed a paintbrush may look at a keyworker for confirmation before playing with it.



Interactive

Physically responding to someone else, this is similar to **responsive** but it's a **2 way exchange** with another person. They are watching the other person and engaging with their actions or movements. For example, clapping in time with someone else or taking it in turns to mark-make together.



Instigative

Provoking action in others through their own physical response or vocalisation. For example, making a noise doing a song that prompts the singer to incorporate it into the song, or making a suggestion for what should happen next in a story.



Experimental

Taking **individual action** with materials or props. This will be self-led **investigation**, where they will be **exploring** "what happens if..." for example playing with an instrument that's been brought out during singing or music.



Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare

- **Children Play and Learn**

(heading)

- **Playing, Learning and Developing** (Quality Indicator)

- **Quality of Interactions** (Theme)



Page 28

Quality of Interactions - 'Very Good'

Careful observation allows us to interpret children's interests and provide opportunities to **extend their thinking without directing their play**. We use a variety of approaches to respond to children's cues to **support development of self-regulation, empathy, confidence, creativity and curiosity**.

Responsive and caring interactions support the development of communication, language, movement and social development through effective modelling of these skills. We support children through approaches such as **sustained shared thinking, wondering aloud and balancing comments with developmentally appropriate questions to extend and expand their thinking**. We understand that interacting and exploring with children is a valuable way to **build vocabulary and foster understanding, and a sense of wonder and excitement about the world**. We enable next steps and give praise for trying things out.

Our children have **frequent, appropriate opportunities to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills through imaginative play and storytelling.** This helps children to extend their own thinking, practise new skills and consolidate their learning in ways which are meaningful to them.

We enable children to play and learn at their **own pace, having fun as they explore the world around them. We take time to understand children's verbal and nonverbal communication** which helps us to judge when to interact and when to wait and observe. We encourage children's **interactions with each other, recognising the important role other children have in enriching play.** This enables children to make the most of their interactions and experiences.

HGIOS 4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment–2.3 'Very Good'

Learning and engagement:

The ethos and culture of our school reflects a **commitment to children's rights and positive relationships**. Our children and young people are **eager and active participants who are fully engaged, resilient, highly-motivated and interact well** during activities. Learners' experiences are **appropriately challenging and enjoyable** and **well matched** to their needs and interests. Learners exercise choice, including the appropriate use of digital technology, and take increasing responsibility as they become more independent in their learning.

They understand the purpose of their learning and have opportunities to **lead the learning**. Our learners are successful, confident and responsible. They contribute effectively to the life of the school and wider community in a range of well-planned activities. **They know that their views are sought, valued and acted upon.**

Interaction Task



- Use the SQIF 'Quality of Interactions' / HGIOS4? QI2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment to evaluate your current practice. What is working well?
- How could you improve your interactions to further support communication and language within your setting?



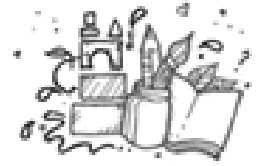
Experiences



Babies and children should have the opportunity to participate in a variety of child-initiated, adult initiated and adult-directed experiences appropriate to their developmental stage and in response to any identified language and communication concerns or needs.



Experiences



1. **Song, rhythm and rhyme**
2. Child-led **play** involving adults
3. **Sharing books and stories**
4. **Small groups**
5. Encounters with **vocabulary**
6. **Considered** use of screen-based technology
7. **Involvement of parents**

EDITED BY
TINA BRUCE, LYNN MCNAIR
AND JANE WHINNETT

**PUTTING
STORYTELLING
AT THE HEART OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PRACTICE**

A Reflective Guide for
Early Years Practitioners

ROUTLEDGE

This is a wonderful book filled with practical ideas on how to put story telling at the heart of your early years practice.

Remember storytelling is so much more than reading books. How do you regularly engage in oral tales, creating stories, helicopter stories etc?

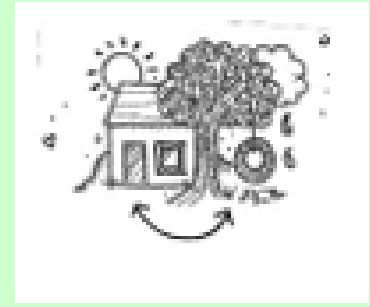
Experiences Discussion



- Thinking about your own setting, how are these practices reflected in current experiences?
- How often do educators share stories with children? What does this look like?
- How could you improve your experiences to further support communication and language within your setting?



Spaces



1. Noise management
2. Books and stories
3. Labelling of resources and areas
4. Quiet spaces

The Importance of Literacy Rich Environments

“Literacy specialists urge teachers to create a literacy rich environment in which children are motivated to start reading and writing for themselves, picking up the necessary knowledge through exposure to print and ad hoc adult support. This ‘emergent literacy’ approach is generally much more motivating than a heavy emphasis on decoding/encoding.”

Generally, in Scotland this encoding/decoding is taught when they enter school however in Finland pedagogues support and encourage ‘emergent literacy’ until the age of 7. Formal teaching then begins after this stage.

(Sue Palmer, 2020)

Tips and Hints to Creating a Literacy Rich Environment

- **'Singing and Rhyming'** - Singing and Rhyming, Singing and Rhyming and more Singing and Rhyming
- **'Sounds'** - Using the language of 'sound' from an early age e.g. "what **sound** does the cow make?" Encourages children to understand this vocabulary. Work with the children to create a bespoke 'sound alphabet' that is relevant to your children and settings e.g. a – Adam, B- Bella etc
- **'Author of the Moment'** - this empowers children to strengthen their identity as a reader e.g. "I love Mo Williams because his books are so funny and I love Julia Donaldson because her books rhyme"
- **'Children as Authors'** - Include the children's books within the reading area (scribed, pictures, emergent writing, audio stories, book creator, stop motion animations etc) - Select children to be 'celebrated authors' - this again strengthens their identity as story tellers and authors
- **'Give Children Agency to Categorise the Library'** - Children will decide how best to organise e.g. scary books, funny books, books about seasons etc. Handing the ownership over to them you will be amazed with how they decide to organise these.

Encouraging a Love of Reading...

Open-ended experiences with stories:

Aidan Chambers' 'Tell Me' approach - strategy encourages open-ended, reflective discussions about books rather than focusing on “right or wrong” answers. It helps readers make meaning through dialogue, personal reflection, and connection-making. Chambers suggests readers think about and discuss books through three main areas:

1. Personal Response (Likes & Dislikes / Relevant)

- What did you enjoy?
- What didn't you enjoy?
- What stood out as important or meaningful?
→ Helps readers clarify what resonates personally.

2. Puzzles & Questions

- What confused you?
- What questions do you still have?
- Was anything unclear or surprising?
→ Encourages curiosity, critical thinking, and exploring ambiguities.

3. Connections

- Does this remind you of another story, poem, film, or life experience?
- How does it link to what you already know about the world?
→ Helps situate the text within broader experiences and knowledge.

Children's Agency

Children's agency is the capacity of children to make decisions, express their views, and take actions that shape their own experiences and the environments they are part of.

"We often talk about 'giving children a voice' or 'offering them choice.' The language sounds generous, but it hides a dangerous assumption."

"Agency is not a gift adults bestow. It is not ours to give. Children are born with it. They make decisions from their first breath, negotiate meaning from the first gaze, and shape their worlds long before we design charts with two options."

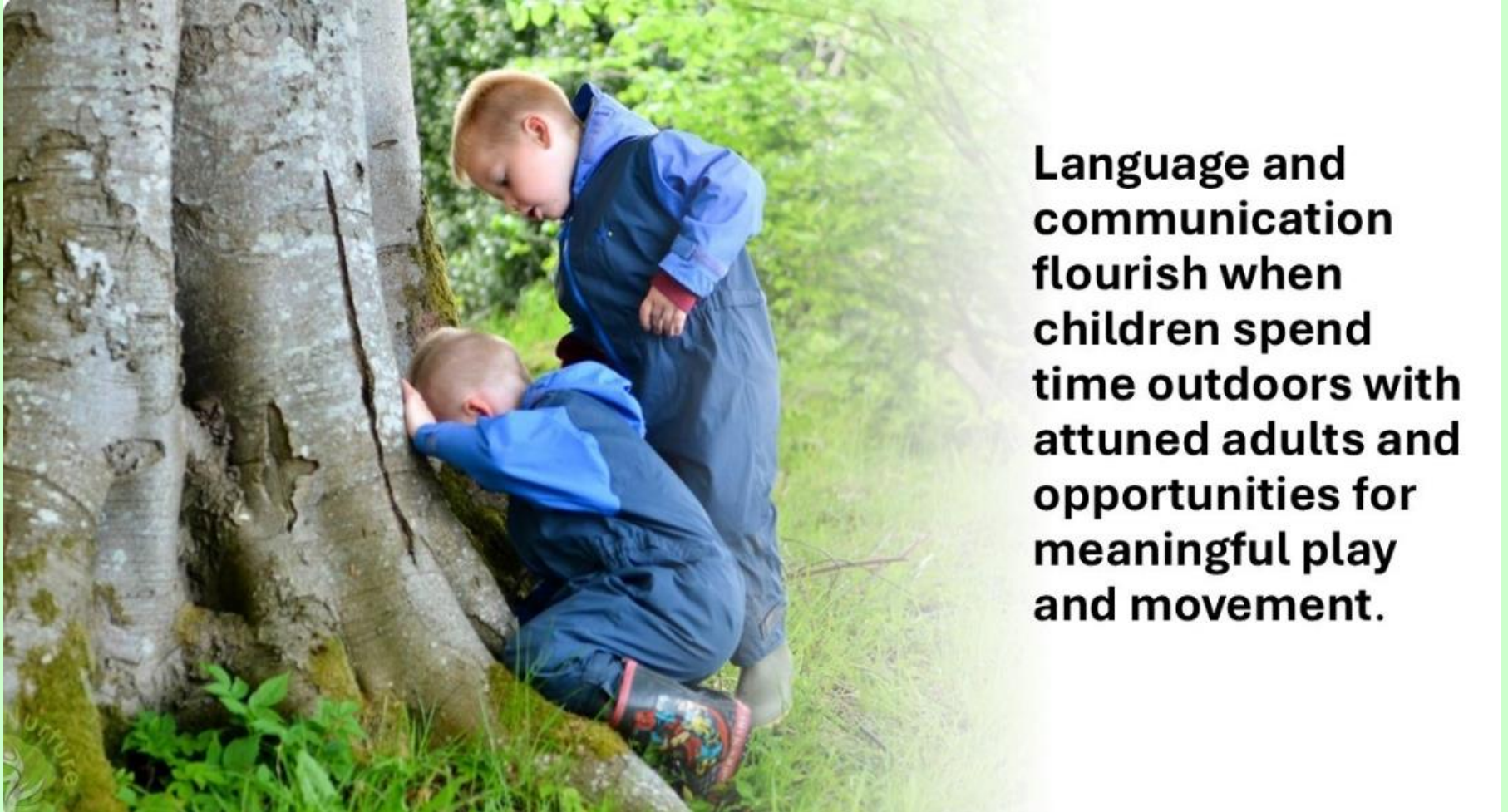
"Play is the ultimate act of agency. In play children decide the rules, change the rules, or break them altogether. They choose materials, invent roles, negotiate conflicts, and imagine futures. In play they act with freedom and purpose, and they know their actions matter."

"Agency is not choosing between red and blue pencils. It is having real influence on learning, relationships, and community life"

Aga Chojnacka (Play and Agency Activist September 2025)

Why Children Often Talk More Outside

Harrison (March 2026)



Language and communication flourish when children spend time outdoors with attuned adults and opportunities for meaningful play and movement.

- Research by Cameron-Faulkner and colleagues (2018) found that **children were more talkative outdoors, and that conversations between adults and children became more connected and responsive in natural settings** compared with indoor environments.
- Outdoor spaces are more open-ended e.g. a stick can be a wand, a spoon, a fishing rod. Researchers describe these kinds of spaces as **high-affordance environments** — environments that offer many opportunities for action and exploration.
- Outdoor play is also often **rich in narrative**. Children invent shared stories and imaginary worlds. These narrative experiences help develop the language structures that underpin later literacy.
- Neuroscience research shows that the brain systems involved in movement and language are closely connected. Regions involved in speech production also play a role in planning complex motor actions.

Why Children Often Talk More Outside

Harrison (2026)

Natural environments may provide powerful conditions in which language and communication can flourish. Language grows when children:

- feel emotionally safe
- are engaged in meaningful activity
- have responsive adults who listen and respond
- share attention around interesting experiences
- move, explore and collaborate together

These conditions are often present in well-facilitated outdoor learning environments. For practitioners and educators, this raises an important question.

If we want children to communicate more confidently, **should we sometimes move the conversation outside?**

Babies Outdoors

Recent research has shown that when evaluating outdoor spaces for babies there can be a severe lack in 'nature spaces'.

There is growing evidence that it can be beneficial to babies in many ways to spend time outdoors. For example, it can be beneficial to their learning, to their wellbeing, to their health and to their overall development. At the same time it can benefit the people who look after and care for them.

The 'baby nature engaging and nature enhancing (NENE) toolkit offers ways to be outdoors with very young children. It will help you think about how the environment can be enhanced both for young children and for biodiversity. It will also help you consider some of your practices and the dispositions you would like to encourage the children to develop. The website is filled with useful videos and support materials.



The babyNENE Toolkit

PILOT

Jo Josephidou, Nicola Kemp and Polly Bolshaw



<https://babiesoutdoors.co.uk/>

Kemp, N., Josephidou, J. and Bolshaw, P. (2026)

LCFE

The Language and Communication Friendly Establishment



SUPPORTING GLASGOW'S LEARNERS: POLICY INTO PRACTICE

August 2025



The **Glasgow City Council Language and Communication Friendly Establishment (LCFE) framework** is a whole-setting approach designed to help settings create environments that actively support and develop children's speech, language and communication skills.

It provides clear guidance and self-evaluation tools to improve practice across five key areas:

- The physical environment
- Adult talk
- Adult interaction styles
- Supportive learning strategies
- Staff training

By embedding these principles, nurseries can make simple, effective changes—such as using visual supports, modelling rich language, and creating responsive, language-rich spaces—that enable all children to participate, express themselves, and build strong foundations for learning.

Updated Version August 2025

LCFE KEY INDICATORS: EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE



1. Physical Environment (What It Looks Like)

Indicator 1: A calm, welcoming and predictable Physical Environment that enhances opportunities for language and communication experiences for all children

The playroom/classroom is organised to emphasise open space	Children can see and reach resources which are labelled with consistent visuals and words
All areas of the establishment are clearly defined	Resources are representative of the population of the establishment, relevant to children's experiences and interests
Learning areas are clearly and consistently labelled using visuals and words	Outdoor spaces facilitate opportunities for structured and imaginative play
Adults are aware of background noise levels, manage these to promote calm, allowing children and adults to hear each other with ease	Transition times are predictable, calm and supported so that children know what to expect
Quiet areas are available for children to access when they need it, with appropriate labelling and resources	A range of visuals appropriate to children's developmental stages are used to facilitate understanding and engagement with routines e.g. objects, photographs, drawings and symbols
There are visually soothing areas for quiet reading, story time and small group activities	There is consistency across spaces within the establishment to support children's transitions e.g. furniture, location of calm areas and visual timetables
Displays are purposeful and graphically calming and well-spaced out/not too busy	Musical instruments / noise makers are available
Displays are interactive, including items that invite comments from children	Good quality materials, small world objects, and real natural resources are available
Children's work is displayed and labelled appropriately and celebrated by all	The environment shows value of different cultures, languages and families to support relationship building which are necessary to jointly support children's language and communication development

Speech, Language and Communication Knowledge and Skills Matrix for the Early Years Workforce



The matrix is made up of 5 practice areas, aligned with the key drivers in Scotland's Early Language Theory of Change: **Family, Environment, Identification, Intervention, Workforce**

Together, these practice areas are essential to the delivery of SLC support for infants and children. Three levels of skill are identified within each practice area:

Foundation, Enhanced and Leadership Level.

Environment



Your knowledge, skills and confidence in providing a language and communication supporting environment

Foundation

I understand that an infant or child's language and communication environment includes the physical space and the quality of the interactions with adults within that environment.

I understand the importance of providing language nurturing interactions that support communication development in any home or early learning and childcare setting.

I can describe what a communication supportive environment looks like in any home or early learning and childcare setting.

Enhanced

I actively model, promote and develop a language and communication supportive environment where I work.

I coach others in providing a language and communication supportive environment including any home or early learning and childcare setting.

I can provide adaptations to the environment to accommodate infant/ children's differing communication styles and stages.

I can identify and address potential barriers to a language and communication supportive environment in my setting.

I know how to access support to ensure an appropriate language and communication environment for all infants and children in my setting.

Leadership

I ensure staff receive training in providing a language and communication supportive environment.

I assure the quality of the language and communication supportive environment in my setting/service area

I ensure that language and communication supportive environments are prioritised in local improvement plans.

I know about SLC environment resources and tools appropriate to my setting and can support staff to use these.

I engage with multi-agency colleagues to ensure language and communication supportive practice is embedded across my area of responsibility.

Examples of Practice

I use observation and reflection to notice opportunities to support communication in my setting.

I learn from more experienced colleagues through coaching and shadowing.

I seek opportunities for learning in relation to a language and communication supportive environment.

As an EY practitioner, I organise my setting to provide well defined areas e.g. quiet areas, talking areas etc with symbols, pictures, and labels.

I seek opportunities to responsively interact with infants and children within play activities and daily routines and encourage other to do the same.

As a health visitor, I model being at baby's eye level and coach parents to notice how their baby is feeling.

I demonstrate language and communication supportive strategies such as following the child's lead, to parents and colleagues.

As a childminder, I make sure background noise is kept down to provide the best language learning environment for the children in my care.

I embed our selected communication environment standards into setting development plans.

I encourage and support staff evaluate the language and communication environment using a suitable self-reflection tool.

I support staff to access professional learning from appropriate multi-agency colleagues as available.

Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare

- **Children Thrive and Develop in High Quality Spaces**(heading)
 - **Children Experience High Quality Spaces** (Quality Indicator)
 - **Children Influence and Affect Change** (Theme)



Children Influence and Affect Change 'Very Good'

Children have **high levels of involvement in influencing the design and use of spaces**, which gives them a strong, clear message that **they matter**. We actively engage with children to enable them to direct their play and experiences **in the way they choose**. Children are **listened to and know that their views matter**. We understand the **capabilities of all children, including babies**. We adapt our practice to **meet their needs and enable their voices**.

Our environment provides opportunities for children to **make decisions and act independently within the safe boundaries of our setting**. They are encouraged to **lead most aspects of their play**, and we guide them to take on responsibilities at times like snack or when they are in the garden. Through outdoor play, children are learning about sustainability, gaining a deeper understanding of how to care for and preserve their natural environment. **Our approach keeps children engaged and increases their confidence**.

We have an **inclusive environment where children have a belief in their abilities. Carefully selected and well-positioned furniture and resources support all children to make choices and freely play.** Resources and materials available to children are **varied, adaptive and responsive,** catering to children's **individual abilities, needs and interests.** We understand the positive impact that **rich, multi-sensory play** has on children's learning, resilience and wellbeing.

We have a supportive environment where children are **valued and celebrated.** High-quality resources and spaces promote **diversity, equity and inclusion. Children, their families and wider communities are positively reflected in the resources, spaces and experiences available.** Children feel **seen and included.** Our enriching setting fully supports children to develop their **knowledge, respect and understanding of their community and wider world.**

HGIOS4?

2.2 Curriculum

Development of the curriculum

Our curriculum is regularly reviewed and refreshed by an informed awareness of current education thinking and evolves through ongoing debate within the school community. We work well with partners to ensure creative and innovative approaches to curriculum development are encouraged and support positive outcomes for learners. The development of our curriculum is underpinned by a coherent whole school approach to learning for sustainability.

Spaces Discussion



- How could you improve your spaces to further support communication and language?
- Read through the discussed evaluative tools to evaluate your current practice.
- Evaluative tools:
 - **The baby NENE Toolkit**
 - **LCFE key indicators (p10-14)**
 - **Shared Improvement Framework – Children Thrive and Develop in High Quality Spaces – Children Influence and Affect Change P22**
 - **HGIOS4? 2.2 Curriculum**
 - **Speech Language and Communication Knowledge and Skills Matrix**

Reflection

- We have tried to pitch today's training within your current 'zone of proximal development'.
- We hope that this training has been aspirational enough for you to have high standards when engaging with the babies and young children of Glasgow.
- Take time to reflect on how this training has supported your skills, knowledge and values as an early years educator...

Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare

- **Leadership** (heading)
 - **Staff Skills, Knowledge and Deployment** (Quality Indicator)
 - **Staff Skills, Knowledge and Values** (Theme)



'Very Good' - Staff Skills, Knowledge and Values



We have a **clear understanding of how children learn and develop**, having **high aspirations for children's achievements**. We make **very good use of professional development opportunities** that link directly to **enhanced outcomes for children**, their individual learning needs and our improvement plan. **Research, best practice, national and local policy, underpinning legislation, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Health and Social Care Standards are used in this process.**

A wide range of opportunities are available for staff to hold **professional discussions** and we use these to inform practice. We are **highly reflective** and we **engage in these workbased discussions** to build individual and team knowledge and effectiveness. We maintain **meaningful records of the impact** of our learning and development and have a clear learning action plan.

'Very Good' - Staff Skills, Knowledge and Values



Highly effective supervision enables us to be clear about our responsibilities. **Celebrating success and learning from mistakes** is an integral part of our ethos, leading to a **culture of openness** where we feel **proud to work in our setting** and **safe to discuss practice when errors occur**.

Shared values guide our work and result in **positive outcomes for children**. Where required, staff maintain registration with a professional body and follow the codes of practice effectively.

Primary Sector Colleagues

GTCS Standards – Full Registration/Middle Leadership

1.1 Professional Values

Social Justice

Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities now and in the future.

- Promoting health and wellbeing of self, colleagues and the children and young people in my care.
- Building and fostering positive relationships in the learning community which are respectful of individuals.
- Embracing global educational and social values of sustainability, equality, equity, and justice and recognising children's rights.
- Respecting the rights of all learners as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and their entitlement to be included in decisions regarding their learning experiences and have all aspects of their wellbeing developed and supported.
- Demonstrating a commitment to engaging learners in real world issues to enhance learning experiences and outcomes, and to encourage learning our way to a better future.
- Committing to social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive, and sustainable policies and practices in relation to protected characteristics, (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation) and intersectionality.
- Valuing, as well as respecting, social, ecological, cultural, religious, and racial diversity and promoting the principles and practices of sustainable development and local and global citizenship for all learners.
- Demonstrating a commitment to motivating, and including all learners, understanding the influence of gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds on experiences of learning, taking account of specific learning needs and seeking to reduce barriers to learning.
- Demonstrating a commitment to supporting learners who are experiencing or who have experienced trauma, children and young people from a care experienced background and understanding responsibilities as a corporate parent.
- Understanding and challenging discrimination in all its forms, particularly that which is defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Discussion Task

Professional Skills, Knowledge and Values



- After reading the Quality Improvement Framework/GTCS Standards how do you feel today's course has supported your professional knowledge, skills and values?

Evaluation and Thank you!



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