

Playing and Learning

"They say you experience second childhood when you get old. I experience it every time I play with my child. I'd forgotten what fun it can be!"

- Children of all ages learn through play
- Play is a vital part of your child's development
- Early childhood experiences affect children's attitude to learning
- Children need a safe and supportive environment where they can play, learn and develop
- There are all sorts of groups and programmes in your area to help your child to play and learn
- As a parent you have a continuing vital role in your child's play and learning
- Young children do not distinguish between work and play

Parents have a key role in play and learning

Playing is a natural way for your child to learn about the world around them. Children learn through play at home, at nurseries and playgroups, with their friends, at school and beyond. Play is a vital part of your child's development and you have an important role to play.

Early learning through everyday experiences

Children who are encouraged to express themselves freely through play tend to be more able to adapt, learn skills and perform better at school. As a parent it's important to spend time playing with your child, providing stimulation and interaction. Involving children in daily activities such as shopping, laying the table or cooking will provide 'real life' opportunities for children to learn. From birth your child begins to learn through play about using their senses, social interaction, language and mobility.

A helping hand

The government set up an initiative called Sure Start to improve the range and quality of services for young children and their families. There are all sorts of programmes, covering a wide range of services and support, particularly when it comes to play and learning.

Birth to Three matters framework

This values the learning through play of our youngest children and shows adults how they can help by playing with them. If your childcare provider is using it, why not ask for some information about how children develop in their first three precious years?

The Foundation stage

Any playgroup, nursery or reception class which is funded by the Government will be part of the Foundation Stage of learning which covers children aged 3 to 5 years old. Once again, play has been proved to be the best way for children to learn, and the guidance contains a whole chapter on the importance of valuing children's play. You can find out more about Birth to Three Matters and the Foundation Stage using the contact information at the back of this booklet.

School years

Primary schools recognise the value of play and employ it as a crucial learning tool throughout the school day. At home your child will begin to play more on their own or with friends, but it is still vital to be involved in your child's play activities, as well as any hobbies, artistic or sporting interests that they may develop as they grow. Giving your child time and encouragement is of even greater value than new toys or games, and being involved in their play means that you are part of their personal, social and emotional development.

As they grow older you will need to establish ground rules about playing out and visiting friends. Try to find a way of encouraging your child to get out and interact with others, whilst ensuring that you know where they are and that they are fully aware of dangers and threats to their safety.

As children, we all enjoyed playing once - perhaps we still do. Learning to play again with your child can be great fun. It will bring you closer to your child and play a vital role in preparing them for a full and active life.

WARNING SIGNS

If your child isn't receiving enough stimulation from you or from other carers, they may not be getting the opportunity they need to learn. It could seriously affect their development and future attitude to learning.

ACTION

Make time to have fun playing with your child. Make sure other carers have a positive attitude to play and learning. Find out about playgroups and other play activities that are available in your area.

WHAT TO SAY

Just go with the flow. Introduce as many different experiences as you can. Try to discover what sort of play interests your child and play along with them.

PREVENTION

Avoid letting your child get bored. Spend time with young children - keep them stimulated. Try to think up new activities for your child, especially ones for rainy days.

CONTACTS

- Bradford Area Play Association (BAPA) 01274 597704
- Bradford Toy Library for Children with Special Needs 01274 365463
- Albion Family Centre 01274 437503
- Burnett Fields Family Centre 01274 436500
- Farcliffe Family Centre 01274 543636
- Low Fold Family Centre 01274 437503
- Owllet Family Centre 01274 530877
- Humsaath 01274 769800
- Education Bradford Admissions 01274 385601/385604
- Holmewood Toy Library 01274 652059
- Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222

*Check the Bradford ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.bradford-acpc.com*