

SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

Guide for Child Health Colleagues

The problem

- Not being school-ready has lifelong implications for health and education outcomes.
- Children in deprived areas are significantly less likely to access high-quality early years provision, deepening regional and social inequalities.
- A lack of coordination between health and education systems contributes to preventable delays in early development and readiness.

What you can do as a child health practitioner

- **Collaborate with early years settings to share health information** to support earlier identification of needs.
- **Support the implementation of school readiness initiatives**, such as developmental screening, language interventions, and nutrition programmes.
- **Join multi-agency teams and family hubs**, working alongside education, care, and voluntary services to co-deliver early support.
- **Support the training of staff in health, social care, and education settings** on child development, communication needs, and culturally-responsive practices.
- **Advocate for improved physical activity, play, and nutrition in preschool settings**, especially in deprived areas where obesity and inactivity are rising.

Evidence-based insights

Fewer than **10%** of two- to four-year-olds meet recommended physical activity levels, and **1 in 5 children** are overweight or obese by age five.

Children who are not school ready are **six times** more likely to require SEN(D) support, and **three times** more likely to become Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) by 16-17 years of age.

Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore:

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)

A 20-week oral language programme in nurseries that improved language outcomes by 3 months' progress for children with poor communication skills.

Natural Thinkers

An outdoor learning programme supporting children's language, wellbeing, and environmental awareness through nature-based activities.

Sheffield Small Talk

An innovative, no cost, speech and language therapy clinic supporting preschool children with SEN(D) to develop spoken language skills, and/or their most effective form of communication, enhancing school readiness and inclusion.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five

Provides ideas for fun, low or no-cost activities for families with young children resulting in improved communication and relationships between parents and children, as well as increased engagement of children.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider taking inspiration from these approaches to reflect on how you can help create positive change.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion with your colleagues about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.