

Small steps, big futures.

with 50 things to do

*How **50 Things to Do Before You're Five** supports the Best Start in Life Strategy*

Briefing Paper 3

Learning Begins at Home: Everyday Experiences that Build a Strong Home Learning Environment

Learning begins at home

Children's learning begins long before they enter early years provision or school. From birth, brain development is shaped by everyday interactions with parents, carers and the environment around them. A rich and responsive home learning environment in early childhood is one of the strongest predictors of later success in education and life. For leaders seeking to reduce inequalities and improve school readiness, supporting learning in the home must be a strategic priority.

Everyday experiences matter

The majority of early learning happens through ordinary, everyday moments. These include daily conversations, shared reading and storytelling, playful interactions, and opportunities for children to explore the world around them. When parents and carers understand that these simple experiences matter, they are more likely to engage confidently in their child's learning. However, when learning is seen as something that only happens in early years settings or schools, valuable opportunities are missed.

A 2024 National Literacy Trust survey highlights this challenge, showing that the number of parents who play with their child at least once a day has fallen from 76% to 50%



50 Things to Do Before You're Five and the home learning environment

Through its place-based, playful experiences, 50 Things to Do Before You're Five helps young children get the best possible start in life by inspiring families to make their homes rich learning environments. While the programme is underpinned by evidence-informed pedagogies and effective parenting approaches, its strength lies in its simplicity: it offers families fun, accessible activities to enjoy together. Even a few minutes of play each day can create relaxed and enjoyable moments, support positive mental health for both children and adults, and strengthen relationships through shared experiences.

50 Things to Do is an exciting initiative offering 50, screen-free, low or no-cost activities for families with young children, helping them reach their social, emotional and physical milestones and ultimately, improving their life outcomes.

50 things to do before you're five

BEST START IN LIFE

Supporting the Best Start in Life Agenda

The Best Start in Life agenda emphasises prevention, early intervention and the importance of supporting families from pregnancy through the early years. Offered to families from pregnancy to age five, 50 Things directly supports these priorities by strengthening early communication and language, building parental confidence, enriching the home learning environment, and improving school readiness.

Because the programme focuses on everyday experiences, it is easily understood by families and avoids the stigma often associated with targeted interventions. Used universally, 50 Things supports population-level improvement and helps reduce developmental gaps. When applied in a proportionate, targeted way, it continues to demonstrate strong impact for children most at risk of not meeting a Good Level of Development and experiencing poorer life outcomes. Across the British Isles, 50 Things is already embedded within health visiting pathways, family hubs, early years settings and voluntary sector services, improving outcomes without duplicating existing provision.



Making a Bigger Impact

Learning starts at home through playful, everyday interactions that build language, confidence and curiosity. When parents feel supported to recognise these moments as learning opportunities, children are better prepared for school and for life. 50 Things to Do turns evidence about early development into simple, low- or no-cost activities that fit easily into daily routines, helping local systems make a meaningful difference from the very start.

“Parents who regularly involve their children in early home learning activities that ‘stretch a child’s mind’ can enhance their children’s learning and development.”

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project (2004)

What difference could 50 Things to Do make in your area?

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If you are interested in commissioning 50 Things to Do in your local area, email us at info@50thingstodo.org, or call us on **01274 543282**.

Get in touch:

 info@50thingstodo.org

 [50thingstodo.org](https://www.50thingstodo.org)

