



THE 2025 NATIONAL EARLY YEARS CONFERENCE:

Leading the future in Early Years: achieving excellence in education

Thursday 6th March 2025 - ONLINE [Click here to book](#)



£114
+VAT

Time	Details			Location
8:45 – 9:00am	Conference registration			Main Stage
	Pre-recorded 'how to' and navigation			
9:00 – 9:15am	Conference Welcome			
9:15 – 10:15am	<p>Starting from the Child? The challenges of a child-friendly pedagogy</p> <p>Julie Fisher, Independent Early Years Adviser and Visiting Professor of Early Childhood Education, Oxford Brookes University</p> <p>Over recent years, some established principles of early childhood education have been eroded by a growing emphasis on the role of practitioners and what 'we' want children to learn. In her keynote Julie will examine the pressure to focus on the needs and interests of adults, rather than the needs and interests of children, and suggest ways to maintain a pedagogy and practices that holds the child at the heart of both.</p>			
10:15 – 10:20am	Vote of thanks and introduction to workshops			
10:20 – 10:35am	Break			
10:35 – 11:25am	Workshops			Workshop Rooms
	<p>Children's photography: Capturing the imagination</p> <p>Pete Moorhouse, Early Years Creative Consultant</p>	<p>The Oxford Brain Story; Building Brains for Lifelong Health</p> <p>Louise Dalton, Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist, University of Oxford</p>	<p>Exploring clay in the EYFS; reaching all children through motivating and meaningful provision</p> <p>Anna Hunter and Jennie Ferguson, District Early Years Advisers, HFL Education</p>	

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11:25 – 11:40am	Break			
11:40am – 2:30pm	Workshops			Workshop Rooms
	Love and Nurture in the Early Years. Developing a love and nurture culture Dr Aaron Bradbury, Principal Lecturer for Early Childhood Studies, Childhood, Early Years Apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications in Early Years at Nottingham Trent University, and the Co-Chair of the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network	The Oxford Brain Story; Building Brains for Lifelong Health Louise Dalton, Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist, University of Oxford	Empowering Excellence: Empowering families to become truly involved in their child’s learning and development through early years and beyond Emma Wild, Senior Early Years Consultant, HFL Education	
12:30 – 12:50pm	Lunch Break			
12:50 – 1:50pm	What if we gave childhood what it really wants? Greg Bottrill, Author and Childhood Advocate Join Greg as he invites us to explore how we can ensure childhood sings with magic, adventure and joy. Based on his wide-reaching action research project, The Quest, Greg will share how co-playing with children can unlock both them and us so that our days offer countless possibilities for imagination, nonsense, connection and growth. Prepare to action plan!			Main Stage
1:50 – 2:00pm	Final Thoughts And Conference Close			



WORKSHOPS

Time slot one choices 10:35 – 11:25am

Children's photography: Capturing the imagination

Pete Moorhouse, Early Years Creative Consultant

Photography is a powerful tool for communication and creative expression. It is open-ended and an extremely versatile medium. It is visual but it often becomes more about language - as it has so much capacity to stimulate and open up dialogue by allowing children to express their thoughts and their way of seeing the world, and then to talk about their images – all encouraging children's voice.

For the practitioner it gives us a unique insight into the children's interests, into the way they see their environment, friends, learning etc. Children use cameras in creative ways - unrestricted by convention - being so direct and curious and the results can be profound with the images becoming the starting point for further exploration. The children's use of cameras puts them at the centre of their learning - they can use the camera to document their investigations – creating their own learning stories. The images provide a wonderful way to reflect on learning and help evaluate. Photography can support all areas of children's research and exploration in this way and when children document their own work they are more engaged with the images and gain a deeper understanding of their own learning process. Photography demands a slow observation, with children taking time to select and compose their images.

We will look at the use of photography as a way of consulting with children and understand how photography can be used as a tool for self-evaluation. Photography is a holistic medium in that it can be seen to embrace all areas of learning and characteristics of effective learning and are a powerful addition to any classroom. In the webinar there will be information about the practicalities, looking at the best cameras for children and how to successfully introduce photography to young children.

The Oxford Brain Story; Building Brains for Lifelong Health

Louise Dalton, Associate Professor and Clinical Psychologist, University of Oxford

The Oxford Brain Story is a UK wide project that aims to engage policymakers, practitioners and the public with the Brain Story, a narrative framework that explains the key scientific knowledge about how early experiences affect our lifelong physical and mental health.

Professor Louise Dalton will discuss the core themes of the Brain Story which are a key public health message, similar to our community understanding about the importance of diet or exercise for our physical wellbeing.

The aim of this session is to establish a shared understanding and language across organisations and professional groups, to talk about the impact of adversity and our role in actively mitigating its effects across the life course. It is relevant to anyone who works with children, families or adults; the Brain Story team are working across the UK with partners from Education, Health and Social Care, Police, Judiciary and a range of voluntary organisations.

Exploring clay in the EYFS; reaching all children through motivating and meaningful provision

Anna Hunter and Jennie Ferguson, District Early Years Advisers, HFL Education

“To close gaps and reduce educational disadvantage, we need to think carefully about play environments that we provide and the role of the adult within them.” Reducing educational disadvantage: A strategic approach in the Early Years, Penny Tassoni, 2016

We will explore how to provide rich, enticing opportunities where all children can play and make meaning of their worlds. We will develop our understanding how Froebelian perspectives can be applied to create playful and meaningful environments which are supportive to all children, irrespective of possible disadvantage. We will have time to explore the creative and therapeutic benefits of exploring clay with young children, as well as the practical aspects pertaining to developing clay provision in the classroom, planning a progression of skills across the year, how best to build children’s understanding of shape, form and perspective, and how clay can give children another ‘language’ to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions about the world around them.

Time slot two choices 11:40am – 12:30pm

Love and Nurture in the Early Years. Developing a love and nurture culture

Dr Aaron Bradbury, Principal Lecturer for Early Childhood Studies, Childhood, Early Years Apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications in Early Years and the Co-Chair of the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network

Focusing on his new book 'A Child Centred EYFS' co-authored with Ruth Swailes, Aaron will discuss the continual changes of the EYFS in recent years, demonstrating what constitutes effective practice in the early childhood sector and the methods of implementing this application to children's learning.

Aaron will explore the roles of early years practitioners and focus on what truly matters within our settings 'a child-centred approach'.

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Empowering Excellence: Empowering families to become truly involved in their child's learning and development through early years and beyond

Emma Wild, Senior Early Years Consultant, HFL Education

Explore the critical role of parental engagement in achieving excellence in early years education. Educating parents about their child's early years educational journey is crucial for fostering a supportive learning environment both at home and in school. Join this workshop to explore key approaches to guide parents in this process.