

Handout 1

How parents help babies and young children learn



Handout 2

Why parents are so important for their children's learning

A group of parents thought of these together – you may well think of many others.



1. We know our children better than anyone else – we can talk about when they were babies and how they have changed.
2. We make them feel loved and secure.
3. We know what our children like to do and to eat and drink, we know how to comfort them, how to help them sleep, what makes them laugh.
4. We are the main influence on our children – they copy what we do and learn what we know.
5. We create our children's home – we are a consistent and constant part of our children's lives.
6. Our children copy our voice and words – we help our children to think.
7. We make decisions for, and with, our children.
8. We know our children's world and what interests them.
9. We help our children to make friends and introduce them to new people and experiences.
10. We are special to our children and they like to do things with us.



Handout 3

What parents do is more important than who parents are



What parents do at home with their babies and young children has a real and lasting impact on their learning and development. This is true for all parents – it isn't just about how much money a parent has or what type of job they do, or how well they did at school. All parents can help their children learn – by playing and talking in ways that 'stretch a child's mind'.

A team of researchers looked at 3,000 children from when they were 3 to the age of 11. They found that as early as 3, children can say and understand more words, think more deeply, and are more confident and sociable when their parents play with them, talk and read stories with them, and encourage them to think – right from birth. Children who have a strong early home learning environment go on to do well at school when they are 7, and are still doing well at age 11.

Early learning at home really matters because:

Babies and very young children learn to talk and think and to do things with their family. They learn from doing things with those who are around them most of the time – their mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends and all other carers.

Parents who know that they can help their babies and children to learn – by playing, talking, reading, going out on visits and making opportunities to play with friends – give their children a real interest in the world and enthusiasm for learning.

Sylva, K and others (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report*. London: University of London, Institute of Education, DfES.

Sammons, P and others (2007) *Influences on Children's Attainment and Progress in Key Stage 2: Cognitive Outcomes in Year 5*. Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3–11 (EPPE 3-11). London: University of London, Institute of Education, DfES.

Desforges, C (2003) *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A literature review*. Research Report 433. London: DfES.



Handout 4

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – working with parents

The EYFS is the national framework that sets out how all those who work with babies and young children aged from birth to five years must work to support children's care, learning and development.

It says that all early years settings (nurseries, children's centres, childminders, pre-schools and reception classes in schools) should work with parents as partners in children's learning. This means they should:

- tell you who the key person is for your child – this is someone who should get to know you and your child well
- listen to what you have to say about your child, and talk to you regularly about your child's progress and what happens in the setting
- give you ideas to support your child's learning at home.

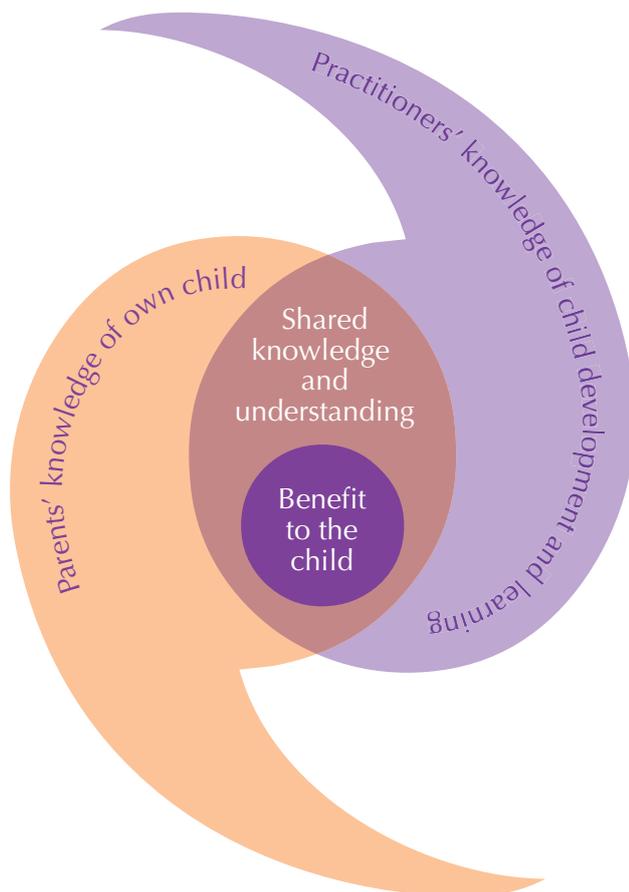
They might:



Handout 5

How sharing what we know helps children to learn

The diagram below represents how parents and practitioners can work together, sharing stories about a child in response to questions such as: what does the child like to do, what have they said or just learned, what are they interested in at the moment? Parents and practitioners can then plan together and think through ideas for how to help a child move forward.



Harry's grandmother told Narinder (his key person) how interested he is in bridges. Harry's grandmother lives near a large viaduct, and Harry sees it every day. His key person put some photographs of large bridges from around the world on display in the nursery, and found some picture storybooks with bridges for Harry to read at home. She set up some play in the nursery with blocks, and in the garden with planks and wooden bricks, then encouraged Harry to build bridges with other children – rolling cars, trucks and sail boats over and underneath them. This play lasted for several days, with the children discussing their ideas about length, width and strength of bridges in considerable detail. A digital camera was given to use at home, so that Harry could take a photo of his viaduct and bring it to nursery.



Amarei is seven months old, and attends nursery two days a week. His father told Karen (his key person) how he found that the best way to settle Amarei when he was tired was to sing a particular song to him in his home language. Karen helped his father make a recording of the song, so that Amarei could listen to this at nursery sometimes. She also wrote down some words for Amarei's family of the rhyme 'Round and round the garden' – as Amarei had particularly enjoyed this rhyme at nursery, with Karen making circles on his hand.

Handout 6: Learning Story A

Child's Name _____

Date _____

Learning Story – A
William paints a cup for Mother's Day

Belonging	Taking an interest	<p>W dips the brush into yellow paint, lets it drip down side of cup.</p> <p>Says, 'Mum drinks tea.'</p> <p>Turns cup round to paint other side, follows shape of handle with brush.</p> <p>'I want to use pink', paints some shapes and then watches paint drip from brush.</p> <p>Adult asks if W wants to write 'Mum' inside. Adult writes and W paints over the letters. When he paints over 'M' he says, 'It's like in my name [last letter]. I like the yellow on my cup', and goes to wash his hands.</p>
Well-being	Being involved	
Exploration	Persisting with difficulty, engaging with challenge	
Communication	Expressing ideas or feelings	
Contribution	Taking responsibility	

Future learning priorities

Handout 7: Learning Story B

Child's Name _____

Date _____

Learning Story – B
This story was told to a practitioner by Nuux's mum via a parent interpreter, and scribed for her

Belonging	Taking an interest	<p>Nuux is 2 years and 7 months. He went to a paddling pool with his mum, older brother and other families from nursery. It was the first time he had been in a pool and he held on to his mother tightly. He walked away from her but slipped and fell over and cried and cried.</p> <p>Mum thought he wouldn't go in again and so started to get him dressed, but he pulled away and followed his brother back in. He spent a long time just watching but then started to splash his brother. He sat down and then got up and jumped. He laughed and shouted and stayed in the water a long time – then he wouldn't come out.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 20px;">   </div>
Well-being	Being involved	
Exploration	Persisting with difficulty, engaging with challenge	
Communication	Expressing ideas or feelings	
Contribution	Taking responsibility	

Future learning priorities

Carr, M (2001) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning Stories*. Paul Chapman Publishing.

Handout 8:

Child's Name _____

Date _____

A Learning Story

Belonging	Taking an interest	
Well-being	Being involved	
Exploration	Persisting with difficulty, engaging with challenge	
Communication	Expressing ideas or feelings	
Contribution	Taking responsibility	

Future learning priorities

Handout 9:

Parents' guide to Stop, Look, Listen – listening to children's learning stories

'Stop, Look, Listen' is a process of observing children that encourages effective partnerships between the setting and the home. Parents and practitioners watch the child in different situations, share their observations, and together plan for the child's future learning.

By engaging in 'Stop, Look, Listen', parents and practitioners:

- **Stop** – take time out to focus on the child, and share their view of the child's learning, using a consistent format
- **Look** – observe, with an emphasis on the child's personal, social and emotional development as a basis for assessing that child's particular needs
- **Listen** – take note of what the child says and shows interest in, and use shared observations to plan together for the next steps of learning and development.

How does the process work?

- You can watch your child in many different situations: at play, eating, reading, playing with friends or family, and so on. When you observe your child, sit quietly and watch (unless he or she wants to interact with you, don't interrupt your child). As you watch, take note of what your child is doing, saying, or asking. If you are happy to write, note down exactly what is happening, without making any judgements.
- Your child's setting will give you the observation format that is used for 'Stop, Look, Listen'. For shared understanding, we call this format a 'Learning Story'. The practitioners in the setting also use the same format.
- If you are not able to write down a learning story, feel free to take pictures or record it with audio or video equipment, or just verbally share the learning story.
- The practitioner will also note down a learning story of your child in the setting.
- When you and your child's key person meet together to share the learning story, you will have the opportunity to get to know how your child interacts in the setting.

- At the same time, the practitioner will have the privilege of knowing what your child is like within the family environment.
- Both of you will have the opportunity to discuss what your child's needs and interests are, what attitudes he or she shows towards learning, and together plan future learning opportunities for your child, both in the setting and at home.
- This sharing of learning stories can be arranged at a mutually convenient time for both you and the practitioner. In this way, your child's development is tracked through what he or she is involved in.
- It is a fabulous opportunity to be rightly proud of your child's interests, personality and achievements.

Benefits

- A meaningful partnership is developed between parent, practitioner and child.
- The child is listened to and feels confident to share ideas.
- The child's speaking and listening skills are developed.
- The child's future learning is planned from their interests.
- The child's potential is realised as levels of well-being are raised.

Carr, M (2001) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning Stories. Assessing children's learning*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZER).

Department for Education and Skills (2007) *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five*. London: DfES (revised 2008).

Lancaster, YP and Broadbent, V (2003) *Listening to Young Children*. Oxford University Press.

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