

Early Years Healthy Development Review: Response to Call for Evidence

Name of organisation: Mothers at Home Matter

Role of organisation: (Volunteer campaign and support group)

Where is organisation based: (England)

1. What outcomes do you think are most important for an early years vision?

As an organisation we fully support the vision for early years set out by the 1001 Days Movement. The most important outcomes for an early years vision are children who have experienced consistent, loving relationships and are as a result physically healthy and emotionally secure and able to contribute to society in ways that are meaningful to them.

2. What else would help to develop 'excellence' in early years healthy development?

We know that early relationships have an enormous influence on babies' brains and their social and emotional development. We believe that one of the most significant (and unnecessary, both socially and economically) barriers faced by parents in forming rich and rewarding relationships with their children is the social expectation and financial pressure for both to be in paid work when the baby is very young. We believe that supporting one parent (or another relative) to remain the primary carer for the first two years would make an enormous difference to the social and emotional wellbeing of children. This may be especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Caring for one's own child during the early years is not simply a "lifestyle choice" but a potentially life-changing decision that can have long-lasting benefit for children as well as a positive impact on society. It should not therefore be an option that is available only for a privileged few families, but ought to (and could) be a real possibility for all families who wish it for themselves and their children.

We believe the healthy development of children in the early years will be helped by recognising that there are many different routes to 'excellence'.

Children can only benefit from social policies which enhance freedom of choice for individuals and families and which celebrate a diverse range of circumstances, priorities and experiences. A significant step in the right direction would be taxation policies which treat families with one parent working in the home as equal to families where both parents are working outside of the home. Another step would be for childcare funding to follow the child rather than be tied to placement in a professional childcare setting. We would be delighted to open a dialogue about these and many other proposals