

CACHE ALUMNI

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THE ALUMNI



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Recharge and reflect: self-care and development in practice

30 November 2023
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Magda and Dawn in attendance at the CACHE Alumni fifth birthday party.

Editor's letter

Hello and welcome to the latest issue of Aluminate, packed full of autumn activities, reflections and news. Continuing with our celebrations of CACHE Alumni's fifth year, we're pleased to announce that, alongside this brand-new issue of the member magazine, we've launched a new season of POD-CACHE, with the first episode of season 5 live now (in all of the usual podcast places). This season marks a new schedule for us, with new episodes going live every second week instead of once a month. We're excited to meet twice as many interesting new guests and ask them lots of nosy questions! If you have something you'd like to chat to us about for POD-CACHE, please get in touch.

Following our last event in June, supporting careers advice, we're really looking forward to a great November event, this time centred around [self-care for practitioners](#). Join us for sessions to help us to get started with journaling, some

gentle seated yoga and other tools to add to your wellbeing and self-care toolkit, so that you can always be the best you can be.

And now onto this issue's content. There's a brilliant article on the importance of creativity, and another talking about the journey from languish to love – helping you to find your spark again. Linking in with the theme of our next event, we have a piece which looks at wellbeing as four rooms and support for anyone who needs to understand what they can do about bullying or harassment at work. For more support with wellbeing, we have an article by a nutritional therapist, looking at processed foods and extra support with eating a seasonal diet. And as the seasons change, there's also support with maintaining outdoor activity and reminding ourselves that there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing choices!

Plus, as with every issue, we've compiled top news stories from education, health, social care and early years, and our careers advisor once again answers your burning careers questions in Careers Corner. Before we go, remember that you can write for us by letting us know your ideas at alumni@cache.org.uk.

We hope you enjoy this month's Aluminate!

Magda (Editor) and Dawn (Communities Manager)
The CACHE Alumni Editorial team

Cover art by Anna Deu

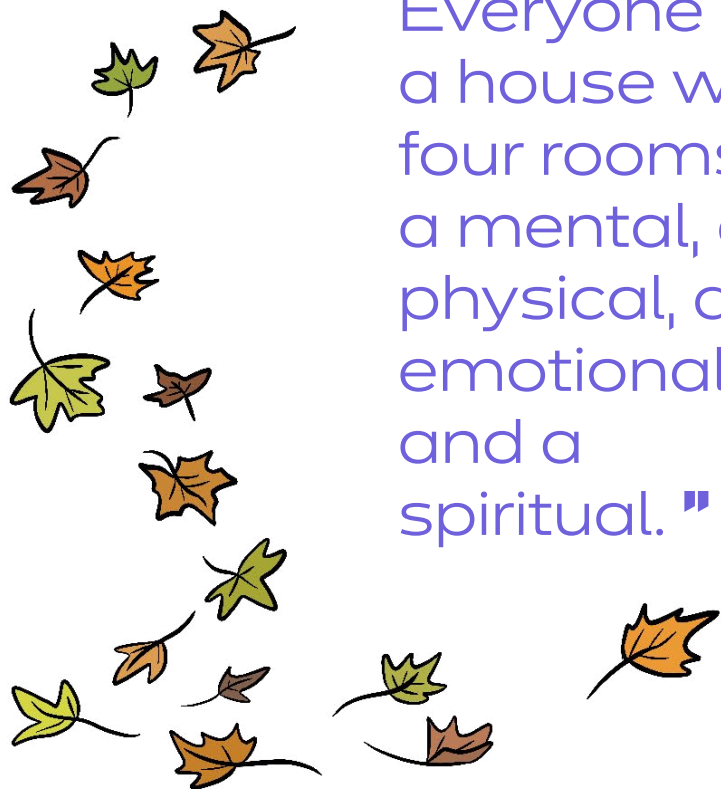
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The four rooms of your wellbeing

→ Annie Pendrey

Contributor bio



Everyone is a house with four rooms, a mental, a physical, an emotional and a spiritual."

With the start of a new academic year, you may have purchased and started using a new diary or planner, jotting down important dates, meetings and events, while gearing up for the year ahead and capturing the hustle and bustle of your life.

But have you ever noticed something intriguing about these planners? The weekdays seem to get ample space for detailing your work-related activities, while the weekend days are given considerably less. Why is there less room for those precious moments of pause, reflection, and self-care?

While my work commitments are now managed digitally, I still find time for my

reflections and self-care in my reflective journal, where I 'visit my four rooms'. According to an Indian proverb:

'Everyone is a house with four rooms, a mental, a physical, an emotional and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time but, unless we go into every room every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person'.

Rummer Godden

Your four rooms encompass the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional parts of your wellbeing. Each room has a door you must open, step through and spend some time in. Balancing these rooms during your working week may be challenging but with this article's help, you can start planning your visits and lead a more purposeful life.

Here are some suggestions to help you explore each room:

Physical room

Think about how you can incorporate more movement into your day, like achieving 10k steps a day. However, this isn't about setting rigid fitness goals or committing to pricey gym memberships; it's about keeping your mind and body active. While out walking, look up, look around you and absorb the sights and smells surrounding you. Also, remember to stay hydrated, maintain a well-balanced diet, and establish a consistent sleep routine. Life may throw disruptions your way, but heightened awareness of your physical needs is a crucial step towards your well-being.

Mental room

Dedicate time to mental stimulation through reading. But don't limit yourself to academic or professional material; allow time to read for pleasure. Explore writing, journaling, and creative activities, without worrying about producing a masterpiece. Enjoy the process and the flow of creativity.

Spiritual room

This room invites you to nurture your spiritual well-being. Light a candle, practice yoga, meditate, or listen to calming music. Take

moments to pause and reflect on the sources of joy and peace in your day or week. Consider keeping a joyful journal to capture your thoughts and reflections. Additionally, explore opportunities to give back to others through volunteering, which can uplift your spiritual wellness.

Emotional room

In this room, practice gratitude and journaling. Create a gratitude journal where you reflect on three things you are thankful for each day, either in the morning or evening. This practice serves as a greeting and farewell to your day. Additionally, be mindful of your support networks and communities of practice that can provide support when you feel overwhelmed or stressed. Take time to pay attention to your emotions and feelings. Focus on your self-care – it's not selfish.

Conclusion

Remember that your 'house' and your 'four rooms' won't resemble mine or anyone else's. Everyone's house is unique, as our needs and life intentions differ. Whatever you choose to do in your four rooms, I hope it brings you peace and self-reflection, helping you lead a more balanced and purposeful life.

If you'd like to find out more about this journaling practice, register for CACHE Alumni's upcoming event '[Recharge and reflect: self-care and development in practice](#)', where I'll walk you through beginning your own reflective journal.



The value of creativity in education

→ Emma Harrington

Contributor bio

Creativity is a challenging concept to define as it often defies clear boundaries, particularly in education. It can be understood as the capacity to generate something new, whether it's a new solution to a problem, an innovative method or tool, or a creation. This creative process emerges through the interplay of various factors, including the learning environment (both physical and social), the attitudes and qualities of educators and learners, and a well-defined problem-solving approach. The outcome of this process may result in a tangible product, such as an object, or it can be an intangible idea or process.

The primary aim of this article is to champion and advocate for the importance of creative education. It aims to highlight the unique and transformative power of creative education.

Our objective is to inspire readers to passionately endorse and advocate for creative educational approaches.

The creative industries play a major role in the UK economy;

"In 2019 the creative industries contributed £115.9 billion to the UK and there were over 2.1 million people employed in the creative industries"

(saveoursubjects.org)

Yet...

- Creative skills have been devalued by government policy and deprioritised within the national curriculum.
- For many learners, particularly those facing significant disadvantages, the only opportunity to gain access to creative education is at school.
- The last 12 years have seen

a decline in the number of young people taking creative subjects at school and college.

- Schools have been faced with severe funding and resource challenges, with clear evidence that this has impacted on their provision of creative education.
- Since April 2021, higher education providers have received 50% less funding to deliver these courses.

It stands to reason that this will, and is, impacting on a skills shortage within the creative industries sector.

"In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, this summer's results, show that the decline in arts subjects has worsened yet again. At both GCSE and A-level, every arts subject is being taught to a smaller proportion of entrants than was the case in 2010. It has major implications for the education and aspirations of our young people, the arts education workforce and the health and diversity of our creative industries."

At GCSE, arts entries have declined by 47% since 2010

At A-level, arts entries have declined by 29% since 2010

(Campaign for the Arts, 2023)

"A high-quality curriculum in art, craft and design, together with teachers who have sufficient expertise to teach it well, enables pupils to develop sophisticated knowledge about subject content, as well as love of

a subject that is genuinely fascinating and a source of inspiration".

(Ofsted research review: art and design, 2023)

The role that creative education plays: 5 key areas

Fostering well-rounded learners: Creative subjects play a critical role in education. They encourage learners to explore different perspectives, challenge their own preconceptions, and think critically. Creativity is an inherent part of learning. It builds cognitive complexity – whenever we try something new, there is an element of creativity involved. It boosts

resilience, character, and confidence. Developing these attributes can also help translate into other subjects and help learners engage in lessons they may have been previously wary of. The act of being creative not only provides personal fulfilment but also fosters social connections by bringing people together through shared creative experiences.

Nurturing creative skills for the workforce: In a rapidly changing world, employers increasingly value workers with creative skills. The ability to think creatively, solve complex problems, communicate effectively, and

adapt to new challenges is essential in many professions. Creativity in education is when learners can use imagination and critical thinking to create new and meaningful ideas where they can take risks, be independent and flexible. Creativity prepares them with the flexible skills they will need to face an uncertain future. Business leaders have recognised the importance of a curriculum that fosters these skills, as it prepares individuals for the evolving demands of the workforce.

Economic contribution: The creative industries make a substantial contribution to the UK's economy. These industries encompass a wide range of fields, including film, design, fashion, game design and advertising businesses, as well as support a wide range of other sectors, from hospitality to retail, engineering and medicine, transport to tourism. The creative industries not only generate revenue but also fuel innovation and entrepreneurship.

Positive impact on health and well-being: Engaging in creative activity has been linked to positive effects on mental and physical health. Participating in artistic activities, whether as a creator or an audience member, can reduce anxiety and stress, enhance emotional well-being, and contribute to an overall sense of happiness. Learners who are encouraged to think creatively show increased levels of motivation and self-esteem.



Illustrations by Anna Deu

Cultural value: The creative arts are a source of cultural identity and play a vital role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. They contribute to a nation's cultural richness and provide a means of expressing the shared values and stories of a society. Moreover, the arts can promote social cohesion by bringing communities together and providing platforms for shared experiences and dialogue.

Advocating for the sector

The Government is developing a cultural education plan for release at the end of 2023. Its objectives are to support all children and young people to access high-quality cultural education and tackle disparities in opportunity and outcomes in cultural education. Supporting the plan, are a panel of 22 creative industries experts, including teachers, education leaders, and representatives from the performing arts, museums, heritage and youth sectors. The panel's role will be to advise the government on the development of the plan which will articulate and highlight the importance of high-quality cultural education in schools.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb said:

"It is important that schools provide an extensive knowledge-rich curriculum that includes the arts, music and heritage."

The cultural education plan will help pupils instil a love and interest in culture throughout their education,

along with guidance for those who wish to pursue creative and cultural industry careers."

(GOV.UK)

There are many organisations who work tirelessly to drive forward creative education in England.

- [Crafts Council: the national charity for craft](#) - Facilitates many facets of the sector to inspire, empower learning and support the craft industry, including advocating for policy changes that support the growth and development of the sector.
- [NSEAD \(National Society for Education in Art and Design\)](#) - the secretariate of The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design (the APPG)

The APPG has published the **Art Now Inquiry** report (27 June 2023) which draws together research into the state of art and design teaching in early years foundation stage, primary and secondary education.

"The Art Now Inquiry explores the current state of art and design education across the four nations. It was commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education in response to concerns about the reduction in opportunities for children and young people to access high-quality art and design education."

(NSEAD - Art Now Inquiry)



"Art education is a tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to engage with heritage, and allows for self-expression which reflects and records unique and untold narratives from diverse backgrounds. The capacity for and development of visual literacy and perception is only possible through art education, and therefore access to high-quality art, craft and design education should not be a privilege, but a right for all. Through the APPG we have the capacity to discuss issues surrounding art, craft and design education in Parliament, and ensure art education remains on the agenda for policymakers."

(Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair of the APPG for Art, Craft and Design in Education, NSEAD)

What are the report's key findings?

- Art, craft, and design education offers benefits to learnings, including encouraging diverse ways of knowing, interpreting, evaluating, and feeling; supporting the development of a sense of individual and collective identity; increased social awareness and engagement and enhanced opportunities for vocational learning and subject-related careers.
- Ofsted (in England) are highlighting the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum. This is resulting in renewed investment and interest in some subject-specific specialist training and resources.

- There is a need for greater diversity and representation in the workforce.
- There is a deficit in training where prospective primary school teachers only receive between 3-12 hours of art and design training.
- Opportunities for teacher CPD are key to ensuring teachers develop and maintain their knowledge, confidence and skills in art and design. In the survey, 8% of secondary art and design teachers reported that they had never attended subject-specific training. Primary teachers had less access to art and design training than their secondary counterparts, with 21% reporting they had never attended any subject-specific CPD.

- 67% of art and design teachers (across all phases and nations) surveyed reported that they were thinking about leaving the profession. Four out of five art and design teacher respondents reported that wellbeing and workload were by far the two biggest disincentives to stay in teaching and that these had worsened since the pandemic.

- Nine out of ten respondents said that they had experienced negative changes resulting from the pandemic with only 11% saying there had been no change.

(NSEAD - Art Now Inquiry)

The Art Now Inquiry outlines five recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** Address the deficit in art and design primary ITE (initial teacher education).
- **Recommendation 2:** Invest in subject-specific continuing professional development for art and design teachers.
- **Recommendation 3:** Address art and design teacher wellbeing and workload.
- **Recommendation 4:** Address teacher recruitment, retention and representation in art and design.
- **Recommendation 5:** Investigate the impact of the pandemic on lost learning in art and design and the cost-of-living crisis on disadvantaged learners.

(NSEAD - Art Now Inquiry)

As educators, it is our collective responsibility to persistently advocate for the futureproofing of the workforce in our creative industries. This necessitates strong support and investment in creative subjects within schools.

The creative industry sector recognises that education and training are crucial investments in securing future growth and addressing skills deficits within the field.

Consequently, we are witnessing an increase in opportunities and initiatives aimed at supporting both

learners and educators in their creative endeavours. Emphasising partnerships and industry collaboration as the way forward, this approach should start early, as early as Key Stage 1 (KS1), by bridging the curriculum with real-life opportunities.

Examples could include live briefs and design processes that replicate the journey a designer might undertake. These initiatives can support authentic learning experiences that not only enhance vocational skills but also, prepare learners for success in the ever-evolving creative landscape.

By championing these efforts in our own capacity of curriculum development, we can empower the next generation to thrive in a rapidly evolving world, where creativity and innovation are invaluable assets.

What is next?

"Please be part of a movement for change. Support NSEAD and all the organisations that are working together to end this era of underfunded, undervalued arts education".

(Michele Gregson, NSEAD General Secretary)

Show your support by:

[Reading the 'Art Now Inquiry' report](#)

[Signing and sharing the petition calling on parliamentarians to save art, craft and design education](#)

[Showing your support to the #SaveOurSubjects campaign](#)

[Reading Ofsted's research review series: art and design](#)

[Following the developments of the government cultural education plan](#)

Engaging in collaboration with sector stakeholders and the creative industries to establish links between creative vocational experiences and your curriculum

Creative industries educational resources

Here are some examples of live projects, and national competitions spanning across KS1-KS4, all of which can be seamlessly integrated into curriculum planning.

[Craft School - Material World](#)

[Royal Opera House - Design Challenge](#)

[Sky Arts - Access All Arts week](#)

[The Design Museum](#)

[Paul Hamlyn Foundation - Teacher Development Fund](#)

[NSEAD \(National Society for Education in Art and Design\)](#)

[Junk Kouture](#)

[The National Gallery - Articulation](#)

[Discover! Creative Careers](#)

[Derby Museums - The Midlands Maker Challenge](#)

References

[#SaveOurSubjects campaign](#)

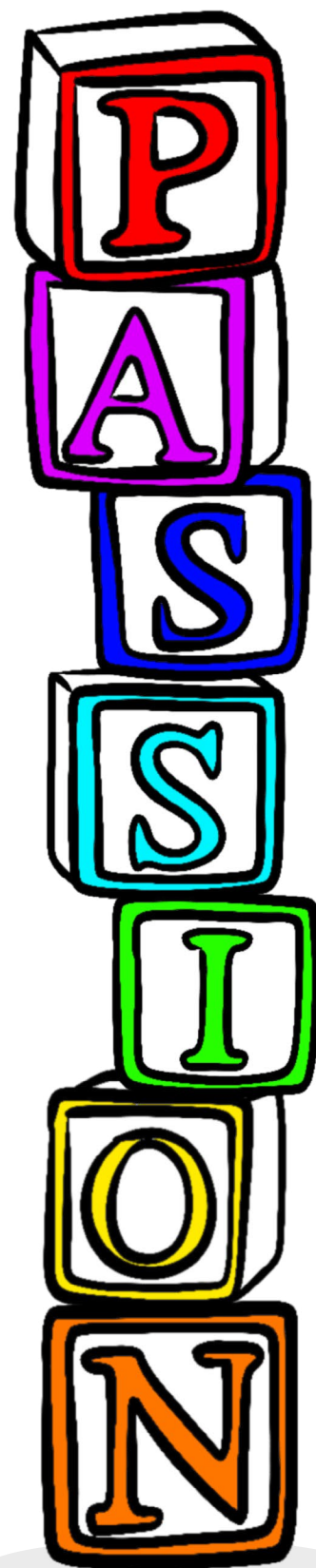
[Campaign for the Arts - Huge decline in arts subjects worsens at GCSE and A-level](#)

[Ofsted research review series: art and design](#)

[GOV.UK - Government appoints new panel to promote cultural education](#)

[NSEAD - Art Now Inquiry](#)





Languish to love - passion, presence and pedagogy

→ **Lucy Lewin**

Contributor bio

In the whirlwind of today's early years education landscape, educators grapple with numerous challenges. Funding cuts tighten resources, creating a cascade of additional pressures. Parents, influenced by media narratives, often possess heightened and sometimes unrealistic expectations. The intense scrutiny managers and educators face can lead to dwindling morale and motivation.

This cumulative burden gives rise to what has been termed 'languish' - a state of stagnation and emptiness. Such an environment not only impacts educators' well-being, it can also resonate in the experiences of the children in their care. Yet, amidst this backdrop, how can we transition from this state of 'languish' to 'love'? As an advocate of love-based practices and with years of experience in early years leadership, I assert that through strategic shifts and actionable measures, this transition is not just possible, but imperative.

Why passion matters

The foundation of any great early years educator's approach is passion. It's the fire that keeps us going when challenges seem impossible. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, underpinning practice in the UK, emphasises the importance of a child-centred approach, which requires a deep-seated passion. As educators, if we tap into our passion, we serve as an inspiration for young learners and we also rejuvenate our spirit, pushing languish to the side-lines.

The art of being present

Being present, truly in the moment, is one of the most potent tools an educator possesses. It's in these moments of genuine interaction that children learn the most. The EYFS places considerable emphasis on responsive relationships and personalised learning, both of which require educators to be present and attuned to each child's needs. The art of presence helps us transcend the mundanities of everyday life, making every interaction count and fostering a deeper love for what we do. Slow down, see everything as a teachable moment. Watch the children's faces as they think deeply and are fully involved in their play. Change every command and demand to a question. Get curious!

Pedagogical love

Love-based practice goes beyond just loving our job; it's about intertwining this love with our pedagogical approach. When educators infuse their teaching methods with compassion, understanding, and care, it creates an environment where every child feels valued. Such an atmosphere not only adheres to the EYFS's principle of ensuring each child's unique needs are met, but also fosters a culture where educators themselves thrive.

Leading with love

Drawing from my experience, I've found that leading with love is not a sign of weakness, but strength. As managers and leaders in early years settings, embracing love-based practices can

revolutionise our workspaces. It promotes trust, open communication, and, most importantly, helps keep the flame of passion alive.

The time for love is now

Amid global turmoil and challenges, there's never been a more pertinent time for love. As educators, our role is more than just transferring knowledge; it's to nurture, guide, and inspire. By moving from languish to love, we can uplift ourselves and also set a firm and positive precedent for the next generation. This transition, driven by actionable steps, can breathe life back into educators, providing rejuvenation and restoring purpose.

Practical pathways to cultivating love in early years education

Amidst the complexities of early years education, one powerful tool lies in understanding individual preferences and strengths. Here's an illustrative example: I recently conducted an activity where educators listed tasks they engage in daily - from reading stories to nappy changing. With a simple stand-and-sit exercise, we visually captured which tasks brought joy and engagement, and which felt more like a checklist item. The results were enlightening.

Educators had different tasks that they truly loved, revealing a rich tapestry of individual strengths and passions. Harnessing this insight, we could delegate tasks more aligned with individual love and strengths, transforming

daily routine from a state of languish to one of love.

Building on this approach and weaving in the principles of "red threads", a concept introduced by 'Love + Work' author Marcus Buckingham as "something you love to do, that puts you in the 'zone' - an almost spiritual state", here's how early years settings can pave the way from languish to love:

1. Discovering red threads through engaging activities:

Just as we identified tasks that brought joy through the stand-and-sit exercise, encourage educators to continually recognise their "red threads". By understanding and focusing on these passion-driven tasks, educators can frequently operate from a place of love and strength.

2. Reflective practice sessions:

Allocate time for educators to delve into their personal teaching journeys. Encouraging them to journal or discuss their discovered "red threads" can help them reconnect with their core motivations. This can be during the day, as the children engage in activities, ask the educators to reflect on how they feel in those moments.

3. Mindfulness and presence:

Begin the day with short grounding exercises, anchoring educators in the present and ensuring every interaction is genuine and meaningful. Share this with the children by using finger breathing - inhaling as you run your finger up hand and exhale down the other side.

4. **Red thread collaborative conversations:** Create a platform where educators share their "red threads" with peers, building on the stand-and-sit activity's insights. This collaborative sharing can lead to a symbiotic teaching environment where educators complement each other's strengths. Encourage more time in the tasks they enjoy, sharing the load.

5. **Tailored pedagogical approaches:** With an understanding of their "red threads" and personal preferences, educators can tailor their teaching methods, ensuring an authentic love-based approach.

6. **Feedback loops with a twist:** While regular feedback is essential, include a segment where educators discuss how they've integrated their "red threads" and personal loves into their methods. Celebrate successes and collaboratively address challenges.

7. **Parental and community engagement:** Share the concept of "red threads" and the insights from the stand-and-sit activity with the wider community. This transparency fosters deeper trust and collaboration.

8. **Continuous learning:** Motivate educators to pursue courses that align with their "red threads" and personal loves, ensuring they're refining their strengths.

9. **Nurturing environments:** Design spaces conducive to the strengths and loves of educators. If someone loves outdoor learning, ensure they have the resources and space to pursue that passion.

10. **Leadership embracing red threads:** Leaders should not only identify their own "red threads" but also foster an environment where educators feel empowered to express and pursue theirs.

With a comprehensive understanding of what educators truly love and where their strengths lie, early years settings can be transformed into hubs of passion and love, effectively moving away from a state of languish.

Dr. Donald O. Clifton, often referred to as the 'father of strengths-based psychology', said "What will happen when we think about what is right with people rather than fixating on what is wrong with them?"

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News in brief

Welcome to our round up of the latest news from social care, health, early years and education.

Lucy Nichol

Contributor bio

SOCIAL CARE

Taking care of carers

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has published a discussion paper looking at the psychosocial risks in the health and care sector, which employs over 1 in 10 workers in the EU. It identifies risks such as high workloads, third-party violence, irregular working hours and emotional demands. It also recognises an ageing work population, as well as workers having to support people coming to the end of their lives as a cause of stress. The paper is available on the EU Occupational Safety and Health site at osha.europa.eu

Kate Garraway speaks out about 'battling' the social care system

Campaigners are backing Kate Garraway who has spoken out about the struggles she is facing to sustain social care support for her husband, Derek Draper, who remains largely bed-bound since contracting Covid in 2020. As reported in The Guardian, Care Rights UK has said that Kate Garraway's experience is 'all too familiar' and that its helpline has been

receiving daily calls from families 'struggling to get the care they need to live with dignity.' Kate has written a second book about her family's predicament called 'The Strength of Love' saying that she wanted to 'share the reality of life for millions of people.'

Labour appoints new Shadow Minister of State for Social Care

Andrew Gwynne, MP, has been appointed to Shadow Minister of State for Social Care following a Labour re-shuffle at the start of September. A piece in Home Care Insight states that he is 'looking forward to taking on the new role and building on a care system fit for the future.'



EDUCATION

The Education Committee launches new inquiry into the effects of screen time on education and wellbeing

A new inquiry has been launched to look into how apps, the internet and access to smart phones and tablets can impact children's education and wellbeing. 2021 research by Ofcom found that 57% of five- to seven-year-olds have their own tablet, 14% have their own smartphone and 30% use social media. The inquiry is the result of evidence received on child exploitation and county lines that social media platforms have been used by criminal gangs to groom children. Further information is available on committees.parliament.uk

Committee finds Office for Students underperforming

A new report has found that the Office for Students has poor relations with providers, students, and lacks independence from the Government. It also states that it is failing to act on the looming financial crisis facing the higher education sector. Recommendations include conducting detailed

scoping work with students on how it defines 'the student interest', making it clear how it has taken the institutional autonomy of providers into account and reviewing how higher education is funded. Lord Hollick, Chair of the Industry and Regulators Committee said: "It is evident through our inquiry that the OfS is failing to deliver and does not command the trust or respect of either providers, or students, the very people whose interest it is supposed to defend."

ABC investigation explores how AI is used by both teachers and students in US schools and universities

An investigation by media outlet ABC has found that teachers and students are learning together how AI can benefit or negatively impact education. One senior lecturer, Andrew Yu from the University of California, says that AI is useful to structure and template assignment documents, but he says he would be careful not to go beyond that. Meanwhile, students are being flagged for use of AI in coursework by software such as Turnitin, which detects generative AI usage. However, some students are arguing that this isn't all that accurate either. The report says that, while some universities have strict guidelines about the use of generative AI, others say there is no 'one size fits all approach' and experts warn that AI is here to stay, so we need to learn to live with it instead of 'being afraid of it'.

HEALTH

Health and Social Care Secretary hosts roundtable to prepare NHS for winter

On 13 September, Steve Barclay MP hosted a roundtable, together with the Prime Minister and clinical leaders, to prepare the NHS for the winter months. The session discussed how to improve care for patients and increase access to urgent and emergency care and elective recovery services. It was also used as a forum to discuss the best ways to mitigate pressure on the health and care system during the winter. Attendees included: NHS England CEO, Amanda Pritchard; National Medical Director, Stephen Powis; National Clinical Director for Urgent and Emergency Care, Julian Redhead and Chief Nursing Officer, Ruth May.

Two in five inpatients report health decline while on NHS waiting list

A new CQC report has found that a growing number of patients feel there are too few nurses to care for them. Reported on by Denis Campbell, the Guardian's Health Policy Editor, the article states that two in five people admitted to hospital for planned care in England last year saw their health worsen while on the NHS waiting list. The results come from the CQC's annual survey of inpatients, with a significant sample of 63,000 people surveyed. About half felt their health had stayed the same, however, 24% said that 'it got a bit worse' and another 17% report that it got 'much worse.'



Landmark government women's health survey slammed for excluding over 55s

A landmark survey of women's health in England has sparked fury for excluding women aged over 55, according to a report in Personnel Today. The Women's Reproductive Health Survey, which was launched in early September, asked women aged 16-55 to share their experiences on topics such as period pain, accessing contraceptive services and how satisfied they were with any menopausal support they received. The purpose of the survey was to provide insight for the creation of future government policy on women's health. The age 55 cut-off has led to online criticism from women who feel their health needs, experiences, viewpoints and insights are being ignored. The Women's Rights Network also described the decision to ignore over 55s as 'utterly bizarre'.

EARLY YEARS

Second London Nursery closed due to mouse infestation

A Walthamstow nursery has been closed after inspectors found an active mouse infestation and evidence of poor hygiene practices. The September closure comes after a nursery in a London hospital complex was closed in May, due to fresh mouse droppings being found in the kitchen and children's play areas. Nurseries find themselves under increasing pressure with both staffing and budgets but it's important that hygiene standards are maintained to ensure the health and safety of children who use the setting. If you'd like to understand more about procedures for good hygiene or audit your own processes, you might find support in this article from Online Learning College.

New package launched to provide early years nutrition advice

A Nutrition Support Programme has been launched by The Early Years Alliance to support nurseries, pre-schools and childminders with provision of nutritious and engaging food, while supporting children to learn about the importance of a healthy diet. The programme will provide three levels of support including 10 hours of guidance in improvements of food provision; a Quality Mark package that provides 22 hours of support to achieve an assessed award; and a premium package that provides over 40 hours of comprehensive support across all aspects of health eating and hydration. To find out more visit eyalliance.org.uk

New report urges government to take action to make early years education fit for 21st century

A new report, entitled The Role of the Family in Early Years Education, as explored in an article in Nursery World, states that the Government must take action to ensure that the early years sector is fit for the challenges of the 21st century. It calls for increased scrutiny and more formal reviews, as well as increased funding for every region to have access to high quality digital initiatives to enable families to encourage learning at home. Tamsin Brewis, director of The Children's Alliance, said: "The post 1945 historic concept of nuclear families with men at work and women at home 'minding' their children wasn't fully representative at the time. It's even less relevant in 2023."



Relational health and wellbeing

→ Janet King

Contributor bio

We hear and read so much about mental health in the media, from very positive messages about crisis intervention or promoting self-help strategies, to more negative portrayals which place the responsibility for change on those suffering most. While these sources can be informative and educational, and contribute to our overall understanding of holistic health, it can be argued that our emotions and thoughts are fundamentally tied to the quality of our relationships and our sense of belonging. In this short article, let's take a step back and reflect on the importance of early relationships in fostering positive mental health and wellbeing. While discussing relationships with others, I was reminded of the components that define and shape meaningful relationships, hearing words like trust, empathy, making time, respect, value, love, communication,

honesty and sincerity. Relational health and wellbeing are fundamental to human functioning, and more specifically, are a vital feature of executive functioning (cognitive control) in children. Early exposure to relational health is critical in the building blocks of emotional security.

How we feel impacts the 'whole', our overall development, as supported by advancements in neuroscience, which show the correlation between emotions and brain development. How we feel, how we grow, how we socialise, how we think, how we self-regulate; ultimately, it all shapes the way we function in our everyday life. The emotional wellbeing of babies and young children is likely to lay the foundation for healthy relationships and foster positive holistic growth and development.

If we take a moment to consider executive functioning in children and how this connects with relational health, we learn that "well-developed executive function leads to better educational attainment as well as a healthier life" (Ofsted, TES, 2023). The quality of interaction might be judged by the sincerity of quality relationships and Development Matters (2023) reminds us of the impact of personal, social and emotional development as a prime area within the Early Years Foundation Stage, stating that 'through supported interaction with other children they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably'. The connection between emotional security and executive functioning is clearly identified in Development Matters as the child's ability to:

- hold information in their mind
- focus their attention
- think flexibly
- inhibit impulsive behaviour

These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to self-regulate:

- concentrate their thinking
- plan what to do next
- monitor what they are doing and adapt
- regulate strong feelings
- be patient for what they want
- bounce back when things get difficult

I recently spoke with Robin Sturman-Coombs, Senior Lecturer in Social Welfare, Childhood, Youth and Families at the University of Northampton about their postgraduate certificate in advanced practice in infant mental health and wellbeing, accredited by The Association of Infant Mental Health UK, (AiMH), which can be watched [here](#).

I learned that there are many routes into roles which specifically support children's relational health and wellbeing. Robin himself talked about his own journey into higher education and the way he became a social worker, which contained some challenges, and it was really lovely to hear about the university's approach to academic benchmarking and their search for 'sparkle' - the way that Robin describes the want to make people's lives better.

I was particularly happy to learn that AiMH has a commitment to 'raise awareness and to promote understanding of why infant mental health and early relational health is important, and to support the continuing professional development of all practitioners, early years workers and educators working to improve outcomes for parents, babies and toddlers'.

Conclusion

The professional role of a highly trained and qualified

early years workforce is fundamental for positive impact. Staff across the early years workforce are best placed to interact from a well-informed knowledge base and with the passion and playful engagement that is attributed to their role, they have daily quality interactions with babies, young children and families. The implications of sustained quality interactions are widely researched, and must neither be underestimated, nor undervalued, so whether you choose to study a degree or just wellbeing to ensure you're in the best place to offer support, being mindful of relational approaches can have a big impact.

Join our upcoming event - Recharge and reflect: self-care and development in practice

Self-care and reflective practice are key to co-regulation and relationship building for early years practitioners and those in caring professions. This is why we're bringing you this free, interactive and thought-provoking virtual event to support your CPD, as well as your personal development. This interactive, virtual event will frame self-care as a fundamental responsibility for early years and social care practitioners and support you to find new ways to put yourself first and unwind. You'll

leave the event with an understanding of how wellbeing affects your work, how looking after yourself might work in practice and to how to better understand the frameworks for staff wellbeing within care and early years settings. [Book your ticket now.](#)

Relevant NCFE qualifications

[NCFE CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Mental Health in the Early Years](#)

[NCFE CACHE Level 4 Award in Early Years Emotional Wellbeing](#)

References

[TES magazine - Executive function: what early years teachers need to know](#)

[GOV.UK - Ofsted: Research and analysis - Best start in life part 1](#)

[AiMH UK \(The Association for Infant Mental Health\)](#)

[Department for Education - Development Matters: Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage](#)

[University of Northampton - Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Practice in Infant Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

[NCFE webinar: Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Practice in Infant Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

[GOV.UK - Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)

From fiction to reality: How story-based learning prepares children for diverse careers

→ John Beattie

Contributor bio

Learning about careers has long been a preserve of secondary education, often with a focus on academic opportunities. A recent change in law intends to ensure young people learn about the variety of exciting career routes available to them, including technical routes to jobs, as well as academic. From 1 January 2023, all Year 8–13 pupils must have at least six opportunities to meet a range of providers of technical education.

However, by the age of 12, many will have already developed preconceived notions about certain careers, or have had limited exposure to the diversity of opportunities available. Evidence shows that children begin to form their ideas about the future much earlier, as early as when they step into primary school (The Careers & Enterprise Company, 2018). As the Government's new primary career programme is rolled out in select areas (DfE, 2023), I take a look at how we can embed careers education in all early years settings and primary schools.

The power of stories in early education

Early years and primary education is a time of wonder and curiosity. It's also a crucial period for introducing children to the rich tapestry of career options that await them. But how can we, as educators and caregivers, help them explore a world of careers and ideas that they may not encounter in their daily lives? The answer lies in the magic of stories.

Stories have an innate ability to captivate young minds. Whether it's the enchanting

adventures of fairy tales or the relatable struggles of a modern protagonist – stories resonate with children. Stories open doors to new worlds, introduce diverse characters, and present complex dilemmas that challenge young readers to think critically. By incorporating careers into our story times, we can tap into children's natural curiosity and enthusiasm, preparing them for a future filled with diverse career possibilities.

Stories to spark career exploration

Introducing children to stories that feature a wide range of careers can be simple, and effective. Picture books are a great way to introduce different careers. Often filled with opportunities for visual literacy, rhythm, and rhyme, the book doesn't even have to focus on a specific occupation to be a great way of talking about jobs. As children progress through primary school, they can delve into more complex narratives that explore a broader spectrum of professions.



Stories about real people who have achieved success in various fields can serve as powerful motivators.”

Career themes

We can create thematic units that revolve around specific careers. For instance, a month dedicated to 'careers in science' can include stories like 'Izzy Gizmo' (ages 3-6), by Pip Jones and Sara Ogilvie, or 'Rosie Revere, Engineer' (ages 4-8), by Andrea Beaty and David Roberts, to inspire young inventors. 'Look Up' (ages 3-6), by Nathan Bryan and Dapo Adeola, is a fantastic way to explore careers linked to space or astronomy.

A month dedicated to 'caring careers' could include 'Zog and the Flying Doctors' (ages 2-5), by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, with doctors who cure magical creatures. Or, you could even look at caring for animals with 'Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor' (ages

4-8), by Patricia Valdez. Why not follow up a story time about caring for animals with a visit from a local vet, or an animal rescue shelter?

Biographies and role models

Stories about real people who have achieved success in various fields can serve as powerful motivators. Biographies of incredible individuals can inspire children to dream big and pursue their passions. The Little People Big Dreams series is a great way for children aged 5 and up to discover the lives of outstanding people. From Marie Curie to Maya Angelou, David Attenborough to Marcus Rashford – all achieved incredible things, yet each began life as a child with a dream. Told as a story, with

a facts and photos section at the back, this series for kids celebrates triumph over adversity through some of history's favourite characters.

Breaking stereotypes

One of the most significant advantages of story-based learning is its ability to break down stereotypes associated with careers. Stories can depict female firefighters, male nurses, and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds excelling in traditionally underrepresented fields. Titles like 'Ada Twist, Scientist' (ages 5-8), by Andrea Beaty and David Roberts, and 'Malala's Magic Pencil' (ages 8-11), by Malala Yousafzai, challenge stereotypes and encourage children to embrace their interests, regardless of societal expectations.

Engagement beyond the book

Incorporating interactive activities like role-playing and classroom visits from professionals can further enhance the impact of story-based learning. For top tips on how to encourage engagement by linking activities to your story time, check out my 'How to develop storytelling sessions' article in the Summer 2023 issue of Aluminate magazine. The article includes resources, tips and ideas, which will help you plan a fun and engaging activity and inspire children to want to learn more.

The benefits of story-based learning can extend beyond the classroom. Parents and caregivers can play a

vital role by reading diverse books to their children and engaging in discussions about the characters' careers and experiences. Local libraries and community organisations can also host career-themed story hours or book clubs, further reinforcing the idea that careers are a subject of exploration and fascination.

Conclusion

Incorporating careers into story-based learning is a powerful way to prepare children for a diverse range of occupations. By exposing young learners to a wide array of professions through literature and interactive activities, we can nurture their curiosity, broaden their horizons, and break down stereotypes. Through story-based learning, children not only gain knowledge about different careers but also develop the critical thinking, empathy, and creativity necessary to navigate the complex world of work.

As we encourage children to dream big and explore their passions, let's remember that stories are not just a source of entertainment, but a gateway to a world of possibilities. By harnessing the magic of storytelling, we can help children transition from the realm of fiction to the exciting reality of their future careers, ensuring that they are well-prepared to pursue their ambitions with confidence and enthusiasm.

References

[The Careers & Enterprise Company \(2016\) - 'What works? Career-related learning in primary schools' PDF](#)
[GOV.UK website - Department for Education - Careers boost for young people \(2023\)](#)



POD-CACHE

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An award-winning podcast for everyone, from the specialists in care, health, childcare and education.

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Bullying and harassment at work

→ **Ruth McGuire**

Contributor bio

When even ministers working at the highest levels of government face allegations of bullying, it indicates that no workplace is immune from either bullying or harassment. In recent years at least two high profile government ministers have faced serious allegations of bullying, which in one case led to a resignation. Although most cases of bullying never hit the headlines like these two cases, both bullying and harassment are common causes of workplace distress in all types of industries and across all sectors.

What is bullying?

According to ACAS, bullying 'can be described as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting/an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.' Findings from a CIPD report 'show how bullying and harassment can occur across a wide spectrum of behaviour, ranging from extreme forms of intimidation, such as physical violence, to more subtle forms such as an inappropriate joke or ignoring someone.' Managing conflict in the modern workplace. CIPD. 2020.

Bullying behaviour in the workplace can therefore be overt or subtle. It can take place face-to-face, by email, social media or via text messages on mobile phones. Overt forms of bullying could involve a person repeatedly shouting or belittling a colleague in front of others. At a more subtle level, bullying could involve constantly undermining and criticising someone's work without justification. Whilst it is entirely reasonable for a manager to point out errors in someone's work or even problems with their attitude, doing so in a way

that demeans a person or is destructive rather than constructive is often a sign of bullying, rather than constructive criticism which intends to help an employee improve.

At the root of bullying is an intent to cause a person to feel disrespected, humiliated, distressed or devalued. This is the aim of the perpetrator. However, despite the damaging and sometimes devastating impact of bullying, there is no specific law against it – there is no legislation that defines bullying as an unlawful or illegal act.

What is harassment?

According to the Law Society: 'Harassment is defined in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic and which violates a person's dignity or has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.' If an employee believes that bullying behaviour is linked to or based on one of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act, then the employee may be able to take legal action for harassment.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are: age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. For example, if an employee believes they are being humiliated or constantly

belittled and bullied because of their race, they'll likely have good grounds for taking legal action against their employer on the grounds of harassment due to race.

Help and support

Even if unwanted behaviour is not based on a protected characteristic, it still requires intervention. Most employers will have an anti-bullying and harassment policy which outlines how a company or organisation deals with complaints of this nature. It should also outline the key stages of making both informal and formal complaints about bullying/harassment.

The ideal solution is for employees to try and resolve problems informally, if at all possible. Disciplinary and grievance policies usually advise employees to exhaust informal means of resolving issues before progressing to formal action. In workplaces where there are recognised unions, members will be able to obtain help from union representatives, who can provide more guidance about legal as well as informal means of resolution. They can also support members to take legal action against an employer.

As a priority, anyone who feels bullied or harassed at work should talk to a trusted colleague, manager or union representative in the first instance. Trying to resolve a problem informally is always better than the formal route. It is far less stressful and could open the way for constructive dialogue to resolve a conflict.

Whatever route an employee decides to take, as soon as they become aware of unwanted behaviour that leaves them feeling humiliated or distressed, they should keep a record and details of the incident (subsequent incidents), record dates/times and names of any witnesses to incidents.

Although it is an unfortunate fact of workplace life, nobody should ever feel defined by unwanted bullying or harassment, nor should they feel alone. Outside of work, legal firms or organisations such as Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) and Citizens Advice can provide help, support and information to help an employee deal with workplace conflicts.

Further reading

[Acas website - Discrimination and bullying](#)
[Citizens Advice website](#)
[GOV.UK website - Workplace bullying and harassment](#)

Music and movement

→ **Ryan Humphrey**

Contributor bio

Music and movement go hand in hand; one need only look at how both are often featured simultaneously in different rituals and ceremonies worldwide. From an educational perspective, numerous studies highlight music and movement's profound impact on children and young people from an early age. For instance, a study by Bobbie Jo Pogue (2018), 'Scholar in Education', highlights how promoting opportunities for music and movement in the classroom can enhance children's brain development and support the development of a range of skills, including literacy and gross motor skills.

As someone with vast experience of working with very young children between the ages of 0-11 and their families, I've seen first-hand the profound impacts of incorporating music and movement in my music

sessions. In this article, I'll outline a few activities that use music and movement and their impact.

Activity one: Simple action songs

When you think of engaging in music whilst in a nursery or the very early years of primary school, you might remember singing with your group and the different actions that went along with the songs, such as 'Wind the Bobbin Up' or 'Wheels on the Bus'. At the time, you likely thought you were doing the actions just for fun, but research has demonstrated that such songs can help support the development of fine and gross motor control skills (Bennett, 2019). These are the skills that children need to develop an active lifestyle in the future and to help them develop everyday skills, such as doing up buttons and laces.

A simple action song cannot be overlooked in a music session. In many of my sessions, I've often made the decision to start the music-making with a simple song such as 'Wind the Bobbin Up', asking the children to follow the actions of 'winding a bobbin' and 'pointing to different parts of the room'. Not only are the songs incredibly catchy and usually well-known, but they also provide a lot of scope for you to build on the activity, so you don't have to reinvent

the wheel continuously. For instance, you can have the children and young people sing and move at a regular speed before either slowing it down or speeding it up. You could ask them to move their legs or elbows instead of their arms to promote different ways of moving, or you could even ask them to name a body part they could move. Practising moving at different speeds and with different body parts can provide a new learning opportunity for children. Also, learning to

move in time with the music is one of the components of the Statutory Framework for Early Years (SFEY, 2023).

Activity two: Dancing to the music

Although I'm not a dancer, I'll always try to incorporate a session that involves children getting up on their feet and dancing around the room. Dance can be such an expressive medium and, when used, can nurture children's imagination and creativity. As a form of movement, it can be critical for promoting fine and gross motor skills, supporting balance and posture, and helping children learn to synchronise their bodies.

While for some of us, the word 'dance' might strike fear, it's important to recognise how dance can incorporate a range of movements and styles. If you're feeling brave, you can try a specific form of dance, such as ballet. Otherwise, you can



...promoting opportunities for music and movement in the classroom can enhance children's brain development..."



do something as simple as put on the latest child-friendly pop song and let the children move around the room however they like. Both options work equally well for promoting the various movement skills critical to the children's development.

In the past, I'd use a simple song called 'Walk and Stop' as a dance-based movement activity that involves children moving around the room to the beat of the ukulele until they hear the word 'stop', at which point they freeze like a statue. Although the activity begins by walking, you can ask the children what they might like to do next and incorporate it into the song – jumping, skipping, hopping, and dancing are usually a firm favourite. All it requires is changing the lyrics of the song from 'Well we walk and we walk and we walk and we stop' to 'Well we jump and we jump and we jump and we stop' before finishing with 'and

we dance around'. Finding ways to incorporate the children's ideas supports their engagement and helps them feel that their voices are being heard and acknowledged.

Conclusion

As this article aims to demonstrate, combining music and movement in educational settings not only brings joy, but it can also help children develop a variety of skills, such as fine and gross motor skills. These are all vital, as they set the stage for a healthy and active life as children grow up. The simple action songs and dance-based activities I discussed are just some of the many ways educators can support children, giving them a chance to grow, be creative and express themselves.

References

[PACEY website - The importance of nursery rhymes in early childhood - Claire Bennett](#)

[NWCommons website - Using Music and Movement to Enhance Cognitive Development - Bobbie Jo Pogue](#)

[GOV.UK website - Early Years Statutory Framework PDF \(2023\)](#)



Careers corner

CACHE Alumni Communities Manager, Dawn Newman, answers career questions sent in by our members.

Do you have a career question?

Email our team at careers@cachealumni.org.uk. We'll answer all questions directly and feature an anonymised selection in our next issue.

Use our innovative career bot from [Skillzminer](#) to help you find your way.

People keep telling me that I could do more, but I don't have a lot of confidence. How can I find a role that makes me feel good about myself when I'm not sure of my skills?

It can be difficult to identify our skills because they're so engrained in our every day, but the things that you think are easy are often the things that are most impressive to others. Looking at job adverts that interest you can actually be a really good way to identify the skills that you already have, as well as and the ones that you might want to develop. Open a blank document (or grab a pen) when you browse sites like Indeed, Monster and LinkedIn and write down the skills that you already have when you find jobs that you might like to do, or that you've already done. Don't worry about fitting them to a particular job role yet, just gather your list of skills and use it to get to know yourself better. Once you've got a good understanding of your skills and strengths, it'll be much easier to decide on your next steps.

If you're short on time or want some help with this, try using [Skillzminer](#) on the CACHE Alumni website which can help to do this for you. Chatting to the Skillzminer chatbot for just six minutes will help you to identify your skills and map them to currently advertised jobs, so that you know what's available to you based on your experience and interests. Give it a try today.

I work in early years and don't know how to progress. I don't want to be a room leader or manager, but I don't want to stay as a Level 2 for the rest of my life. Help!

Finding progression within early years can be confusing, because there's not a lot of advertising for progression routes outside of leadership, but there are lots of opportunities to follow your passion within education and a lot of scope to shape your own future. If you haven't already, it might be a good idea to talk to your own manager, to ask what options are available to you for progression at work. Settings are increasingly interested in developing their team to include roles like Physical Activity and Nutrition Coordinators (PANCOs) and trauma informed practitioners, with education in Neuroscience.

Whatever you're interested in, there's probably a route for you in early years. Studying as a PANCO might be right for you, or taking a qualification in Neuroscience, or it might be that you'd like to spend more time focussing on one area of your practice to develop this within your setting and carve your own path.

Spend time thinking about the parts of your role that you enjoy best. Is there room in your current setting to do more of this, or a qualification that might help you to build a role around your strengths?

If you can't see any opportunities to progress within your own setting or organisation, you might want to look at popular job sites such as Indeed or Monster, to see what sort of roles are available elsewhere, or to join LinkedIn to do some professional networking, making links with other professionals in your area of interest.

In short, there are opportunities everywhere and they're not limited to the roles that you can see immediately around you. Take some time to explore and, if you need to chat things through, send us your questions to careers@cachealumni.org.uk so that we can offer more personalised advice.

I work in residential childcare and I am ready for a management role, though none are currently available in my workplace. Whilst I'm waiting for progression, I'd like to complete my Level 5 to help me move towards my goal. Can I do this when I'm not currently in a management role to demonstrate my skills?

It's great that you're considering ways to support your progression whilst you look for your next step, and that you're happy enough at work that you'd like to remain with your current employer. Whilst it is a requirement that learners are working in the role of Deputy or Manager in an appropriate setting, or have the opportunity to carry out responsibilities associated with these roles to be able to study for the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England), this could be something

that your employer is able to provide as a progression opportunity to you whilst you train. If you're willing to take on extra responsibilities as part of your current role, it might be a good idea to talk to your employer and ask about the option of 'acting up' whilst you study as a way to gain experience and demonstrate your learning. That way, as well as gaining the qualification, you'll also have some solid experience in your workplace ahead of applying for your next role.

As well as speaking to your employer, it's also worth speaking to local training providers who offer the Level 5. They'll be able to talk to you about the requirements in more detail and might even be able to offer support to your employer to ensure they get the right things in place to support you to achieve.

Alternatively, if you are open to moving into a new workplace, you might want to consider applying for progression in other settings or through an apprenticeship, where you might be able to gain the skills and qualification you need at the same time as working in your new role.

I know what my next steps are but I'm struggling to make a CV. I've got one that was made for me, but it doesn't reflect my skills anymore and I don't know what to do about it. What's the best way to make a CV that works for the jobs I want to apply to?

CVs can be tricky to tailor and there's a lot of conflicting advice available online, so it's great that you're looking for help if you're unsure. A good CV will tell recruiters what you've done, whilst your cover letter is often best placed to tell them more about who you are. It can be really helpful to have a basic version of each, ready to tailor for each job role as appropriate, but it can be understandably difficult to keep it all relevant.

One way to achieve this is to look at the job descriptions and person specifications on the types of roles that you'd like to apply to. What is it that they're asking for? Consider each point as a question and use your CV to show how you meet their criteria.

For example, when a job description asks that you're 'able to work well under pressure' you could consider your job roles and assign this as a skill or requirement in that role.

Once you have addressed all of the skills in your common roles, you can 'fill in the blanks' with more of your role-specific achievements to really make your CV reflective of your skills and achievements.

Another way to find your skills is to use the tools available in Skillzminer, which is free for CACHE Alumni members to use. As well as showing you your key skills and where you grew them, Skillzminer can help you to contextualise these to the different jobs that you match with.

Either way (or both!) it's good to focus on the job you want now and then work backwards through your journey to where you first started, mapping your achievements and skills gained along the way.

Looking for more careers advice?

Send in your questions to careers@cachealumni.org.uk and we'll feature our answers to your questions in the next issue of Aluminate.

PUZZLE SPOOKY PUZZLE

Try our puzzles

Keep your brain active and give them a go! Find the answers on page 36.



Spooky riddles

Can you solve our spooky riddles?

A priceless mirror, six feet tall with a beautiful silver frame, was stolen from a legendary haunted house. The top three suspects are the Halloween monsters last seen in the house: a witch, a vampire and a werewolf. So, who stole the mirror?

I have no feet to dance, I have no eyes to see, I have no life to live or die, but yet I do all three. What am I?

Wordsearch

This issue we have an Autumn themed wordsearch! See how many words you can find.

AUTUMN
SCARECROW
PUMPKIN
LEAVES
HIBERNATE
APPLES

TRICK
TREAT
SPOOKY
BATS
WITCH
SPIDERS



A	X	S	C	Y	F	M	A	R	J	X	L	C	U
D	U	K	P	H	I	B	E	R	N	A	T	E	X
G	H	T	R	I	W	X	U	N	P	Z	P	J	R
B	W	C	U	J	D	H	L	Z	L	K	P	M	C
N	L	O	U	M	U	E	P	A	A	S	U	M	S
I	A	E	T	R	N	T	R	E	A	T	M	W	C
T	R	P	A	V	P	O	V	S	S	R	P	I	A
V	L	H	P	V	D	O	O	Y	V	S	K	T	R
I	E	J	C	L	E	F	Y	W	G	P	I	C	E
A	M	A	W	U	E	S	N	J	E	O	N	H	C
N	H	R	G	W	T	S	G	P	E	O	Q	H	R
S	J	A	Z	P	M	X	K	P	V	K	D	F	O
P	W	J	S	V	B	A	T	S	S	Y	K	T	W
X	T	I	A	R	L	N	G	T	R	I	C	K	A



What is social care research and why does it matter?

→ **Victoria Bartle**

Contributor bio

NIHR and social care research

In 2021, the Government produced a white paper to outline their plans to improve social care over the next 10 years. The National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHR), the research arm of the NHS, has expanded and focused their efforts in social care research to align with the priorities identified in the paper. This year, to support these plans, they've launched a new Social Care funding stream, which will fund research projects specifically focused on social care to identify opportunities and provide evidence to support improvements in how social care is designed and delivered.

Previously, the NIHR had the Research for Social Care funding call which allocated £13 million to research projects since it was launched in 2019. They also have the School for Social Care research and the Social Care Incubator to support social care research in the UK. The school is a collaboration between seven leading UK universities focused on developing research that is strong enough to influence policy

and ultimately improve social care in the UK. Meanwhile, the Incubator has the goal of supporting researchers in social care, identifying research career pathways for care professionals and providing training to support people working in social care research.

Through these mechanisms and infrastructure, the NIHR is able to invest in training and support people to work in social care research (The Incubator), provide resources and facilities to conduct the research (The School for Social Care Research) and allocate funding for research priorities through the Research Programme for Social Care.

Patients and the public are involved in all of these aspects of social care research.

Public contributors (who can be people with lived experience of social care, family members of people receiving care, unpaid or professional carers) are members of the funding committees, involved in all of the research projects overseen by the school for social care, as well as being members of their governance processes.

The research community generally accepts that research which includes people with lived experience of the condition, treatment or situation that they are studying improves the research. The NHS Health Research Authority (HRA), who oversee the interests of the public in health and social care research say that "Good public involvement... can lead to the development of higher quality research... this is because the research is more likely to be designed and conducted in a way which is acceptable to [the public]"

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) defines public involvement in research as "research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them." Of the top four priorities highlighted in the Government's white paper, number four is to "embed realism and coproduction throughout the process". This shows that the government is also committed to including lived experience in any improvements to social care. Thus, public involvement in health and social care research is now an essential part of most research projects.

My involvement

Since my health conditions progressed in such a way that I wasn't able to work anymore, I have been volunteering as a public contributor for health and social care research. This means that I listen to researchers describe their ideas, give them feedback on whether I think it's going to be beneficial for the public or not, and help them to integrate public voices into their research.

I have been contributing to research for over six years and have been a member of public and patient involvement (PPI) groups in numerous studies. I have reviewed lots of patient participation documents, funding applications and papers explaining study results. I'm a co-applicant on a research project looking at how people with multiple long-term conditions are treated in the hospital and a member of a funding committee. I'm on the board of Fuse, the research collaborative of the North East universities, a member of the partnership group for the local clinical research network for the region and part of the national clinical research network PPI strategic planning group. I work with universities, health trusts and researchers across the country and present at conferences highlighting the research that I have been involved with.

With all of my experience of research over a number of years, I have only been involved in one social care research project and I wanted to find out why there didn't seem to be as much research happening in social care. What little research I have seen has been based around care homes for the elderly. Personally, I am more interested in home care, as this is what I have experienced - so when I was asked to speak at the Northern Social Care conference, I jumped at the chance.

The NIHR Northern Social Care conference was held in June 2023, with sessions discussing research funding opportunities, methodology and training for social care researchers, as well as Q&A sessions with people who

have lived experience of using social care services and a couple of examples of research that is currently being carried out. There are even short videos on how care homes can get involved in research, links to sites with advice on how health and care staff can get involved in research and clips explaining how local authorities support social care research, which can influence local and national policies.

My personal experiences of social care can be described as challenging but also highly beneficial. I had to have home care for a couple of years when my health conditions led to me being extremely limited in terms of mobility, strength and stamina, and I was struggling to look after myself. I found the process of accessing care challenging and exhausting and felt as if I was managing the entire process myself when I was feeling at my worst. The actual care was great. The carers who worked with me were lovely and really made my life easier. The admin was a bit of a nightmare. Calls were changed, carers reorganised, bills were wrong and communication with the care company was difficult, and not what I needed at the time. A couple of years after I stopped receiving care, a close friend of mine was diagnosed with a terminal condition, and I helped her to organise her care. Again, the carers themselves were lovely and extremely helpful - however, the admin and organisation of implementing the care was constantly challenging and felt like a full-time job. I took on the majority of this as she was not well enough to manage it.

Both experiences left me wondering how people without support managed their care? Why was the system so confusing, time-consuming and frustrating? Surely there must be better ways of assessing people for care needs, managing the financials of receiving care, training and supporting care staff and supporting the people receiving care to navigate the system. This is where research should come in. To make life easier for the people receiving care, and what I hope to see a great deal more of in the near future with the renewed focus on developing, supporting and implementing social care research to benefit those of us receiving care and also those working within the current system.

In part 2 of this article in the winter issue of Aluminate, I will be delving more into social care research being carried out and ways in which you can get involved.

References:

[GOV.UK - Government sets out next steps to support social care](#)
[NIHR - NIHR launches £10m funding programme for social care research](#)
[NIHR - School for Social Care Research](#)
[NIHR - Incubator for Social Care](#)
[NIHR - Research Care Programme for Social Care](#)
[NHS - Health Research Authority](#)
[NIHR - Briefing notes for researchers](#)
[Local Government Association - Four priorities for the adult social care white paper](#)

Residential childcare

→ Laura Thornley

Contributor bio

The context

A career in working with vulnerable children can be one of the most challenging vocations one can pursue, however, it's also one of the most rewarding. Children within the care system have often endured traumatic experiences and to ensure positive outcomes for their futures, it's crucial that caregivers have a deep understanding of their needs. With this knowledge, they can put interventions and plans into place to help the children reach their full potential.

However, the residential care sector currently faces a pressing issue: the sustainability of recruitment, due to the pressures and demands of the role. Those who enter this profession are typically caring and compassionate individuals, dedicated to providing high levels of care, who have often transitioned from previous vocational roles. Yet, they are often confronted with the daunting task of attaining Level 3 diplomas to comply with the Social Care Common Inspection Framework regulations.

The Level 3 Diploma for Residential Care is an extensive qualification, which can be a challenge for those who are struggling with an already demanding role. This qualification requirement, set by government, can deter prospective applicants, particularly those who are vocational learners or individuals who have previously struggled with formal education. In 2014,

Ofsted introduced changes mandating that everyone working with vulnerable children must be fully qualified to the Level 3 standard and complete the diploma within two years of their employment. For many, this is a scary thought, and often seen as too time-consuming, given their daily commitments to their work. Employers and colleges insisted that all staff, regardless of prior learning, would need to complete the whole diploma and it would need to be undertaken in their own time, which has discouraged many potential candidates, who already possess a qualification in working with children.

Level 3 qualifications, such as Children and Young People's Workforce (CYPW), Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools and Early Years Education (EYE). Still, they were asked to complete the full diploma in residential care, which equates to 19 units, requires a substantial time commitment, and duplicates a lot of work that had already been completed in their prior learning.

After careful examination of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, I reflected on why this was happening and how we could bridge the gaps in knowledge between their existing qualifications and the



A career in working with vulnerable children can be one of the most challenging vocations one can pursue."

Our bridging programme

In 2018, when I started working for My Choice Children's Homes, I initially worked as an assessor supporting a local authority college, before transitioning to a private training centre. I quickly became aware of the challenges of the role and how staff needed to balance their personal lives with their professional responsibilities. Many staff members recruited already held equivalent

residential childcare diploma. I specifically evaluated the wording in this document around qualification requirements and decided to write our own qualification to help reduce the amount of duplication between the prior learning that people had completed and the requirements of the diploma.

Recognising that many of our staff were vocational learners entering a vocational profession, and not academics,

we looked at ways we could enhance their knowledge in critical areas such as attachment and trauma, safety, positive outcomes and most importantly, the reasons behind children being in the care system and the associated legalities.

Many educational institutions struggled to understand that this role is unlike any other, as it involves round-the-clock support in children's homes, where emotions and behaviours are expressed freely. The children's needs always take priority over any additional staff learning that may be required.

In response to this, we now provide a non-regulated, NCFE CACHE-endorsed qualification known as 'The Bridging Programme'. This provides a pathway for individuals interested in working for this industry to meet the regulatory requirements, without needing to complete the Level 3 diploma on top of their existing qualifications. By offering this alternative, those with existing qualifications in children's services could fast-track their compliance with Ofsted regulations, while focusing on their primary role of supporting children's needs and wellbeing. Additionally, the overwhelmingly positive feedback we've received from Ofsted and our monthly Reg 44 inspections attest to the program's success, helping to reduce burnout, increase staff retention and, as a result, improve colleague commitment and dedication to the role.

Conclusion

Working in residential childcare is very rewarding, with opportunities to use a diverse range of skills sets. However staff retention is a key element to maintaining effective teams, and our experience demonstrates that the bridging programme has managed this challenge effectively and efficiently.

References

[GOV.UK website - Social care common inspection framework \(SCCIF\)](#)
[Legislation.gov.uk website - The Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)

The bridging programme is currently being offered internally only, however if you'd like to find out more information about the programme, please get in touch with Laura at [My Choice Children's Homes](#).

If you'd like to find out more about developing your own qualifications to solve challenges in your sector, visit the [NCFE website](#) to find out more about NCFE's Accreditation and Employer Services.

PUZZLE PUZZLE PUZZLE

Here are the answers to all of the puzzles on page 31.

Did you get them right?

Spooky riddles

A priceless mirror, six feet tall with a beautiful silver frame, was stolen from a legendary haunted house. The top three suspects are the Halloween monsters last seen in the house: a witch, a vampire and a werewolf. So, who stole the mirror?

Answer: The witch, vampires have no reflection and werewolves are scared of silver!

I have no feet to dance, I have no eyes to see, I have no life to live or die, but yet I do all three. What am I?

Answer: Fire

Wordsearch

A	X	S	C	Y	F	M	A	R	J	X	L	C	U
D	U	K	P	H	I	B	E	R	N	A	T	E	X
G	H	T	R	I	W	X	U	N	P	Z	P	J	R
B	W	C	U	J	D	H	L	Z	L	K	P	M	C
N	L	O	U	M	U	E	P	A	A	S	U	M	S
I	A	E	T	R	N	T	R	E	A	T	M	W	C
T	R	P	A	V	P	O	V	S	S	R	P	I	A
V	L	H	P	V	D	O	O	Y	V	S	K	T	R
I	E	J	C	L	E	F	Y	W	G	P	I	C	E
A	M	A	W	U	E	S	N	J	E	O	N	H	C
N	H	R	G	W	T	S	G	P	E	O	Q	H	R
S	J	A	Z	P	M	X	K	P	V	K	D	F	O
P	W	J	S	V	B	A	T	S	S	V	K	T	W
X	T	I	A	R	L	N	G	T	R	I	C	K	A

NUTRITION

Ultra-processed foods - what's all the fuss about?

→ **Ruth McGuire**

Contributor bio

Ever since humans have lived on the planet, they have processed food. Just the simple process of peeling the skin of potatoes prior to cooking is a form of food 'processing.' However, as the way we shop for food and prepare meals has evolved over the centuries, the science of processing food has also evolved. In some ways this has been a positive development because, for example, it ensures that food is preserved whilst on the shelves of shops and supermarkets and remains safe to eat at home. The pasteurisation of milk, which was developed by the French scientist Louis Pasteur, is another example of a positive development in processing food which is used to remove harmful bacteria from milk. Then there is also the convenience of being able to just put a ready meal in the microwave and have a fully prepared meal in minutes.

However, despite all these benefits, there are growing concerns about the impact of 'ultra-processed foods' on our health.

What are they?

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) has produced a helpful list of the difference between 'processed' and 'ultra-processed' foods.

These are defined as follows:

- Processed culinary ingredients: Sugar, salt, butter, lard, oils, vinegar.
- Processed food: Freshly made, unpackaged bread, tinned fruits and vegetables, salted nuts, ham, bacon, tinned fish, and cheese.
- Ultra processed food: Ice cream, ham, sausages, crisps, mass-produced bread, breakfast cereals, biscuits, carbonated drinks, fruit-flavoured yogurts, instant soups, and some alcoholic drinks including whisky, gin, and rum.

What's the problem?

Although research into the impact of ultra-processed foods on health is still ongoing, research carried out so far indicates that excessive consumption of ultra-processed foods has negative health consequences. One study published in the British Medical Journal in 2019 reported that the 'higher consumption of ultra-processed foods was associated with higher risks of cardiovascular, coronary heart, and cerebrovascular diseases.' Another study on the Lancet found that ultra processed foods 'have on average a poorer nutritional quality' and contain 'products which have undergone several intense processes (e.g. molding, high-temperature extrusion) and contain cosmetic food additives and/or other industrial ingredients used to enhance the flavor and the palatability of the final product.'



Just the simple process of peeling the skin of potatoes prior to cooking is a form of food 'processing.'"

What's the solution?

The perfect solution would be to avoid ultra-processed completely and to make and cook everything from scratch such as sauces, seasonings, and bread, as well as complete meals. However, the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) has sounded a note of caution about condemning all processed foods. It said that 'Demonising all processed foods could foster feelings of guilt and stigma around food choices, adversely impacting intake of more affordable sources of nutrients.' In other words, avoiding all processed foods might make it difficult for some people to access more affordable forms of nutrition. This is important advice for parents and for practitioners who work with parents and families. Whilst promoting healthy eating is important, for some families, being able to access all the ingredients to cook healthy meals from scratch and having the time and skill to cook such meals is a huge challenge. For many parents trying to prepare lunch boxes for their children based only on unprocessed foods would be almost impossible. The solution therefore is to take a balanced approach and to try and reduce the amount of ultra processed foods that we include in our diets.

Read the labels

According to the British Heart Foundation 'Ultra-processed foods often contain high levels of saturated fat, salt and sugar and when we eat them, we leave less room in our diets for more nutritious foods.' Being able to identify which foods contain these ingredients is one way of reducing our intake of ultra processed foods. Thankfully, many food items now come with colour coded food labels which makes it easy to identify foods that have a high fat, sugar or salt content. NHS guidance states that 'Red means high, amber means medium and green means low. In general, a food or drink that has all or mostly green on the label is a healthier choice.'

As for what constitutes high and low fats, sugars and salts, these are specified as follows:

Total fat

High: more than 17.5g of fat per 100g

Low: 3g of fat or less per 100g

Saturated fat

High: more than 5g of saturated fat per 100g

Low: 1.5g of saturated fat or less per 100g

Sugars

High: more than 22.5g of total sugars per 100g

Low: 5g of total sugars or less per 100g

Salt

High: more than 1.5g of salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium)

Low: 0.3g of salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium)



Getting the balance right

For ideas on how to get the balance right and 'live and eat well', the NHS offers many suggestions at [NHS - Eat well](#). For meal planning ideas for adults and children, including lunch box ideas for children, visit the [British Nutrition Foundation](#) site and for guidance on healthy eating for different ages and stages in life see also [BNF - Life stages](#).

References

[British Heart Foundation - Ultra-processed foods: how bad are they for your health?](#)

[British Medical Journal - Ultra-processed food intake and risk of cardiovascular disease: prospective cohort study](#)

[The Lancet - Ultra-processed foods and human health: What do we already know and what will further research tell us?](#)

[British Nutrition Foundation - Position statement on the concept of ultra-processed foods \(UPF\)](#)

[NHS - Food labels](#)

Further resources and help

[British Heart Foundation - Healthy eating](#)

[Public Health England - Healthy steps resources](#)

[BUPA - Seven tips for a healthy and well-balanced diet](#)

No such thing as bad weather

'I am 1 year old. In 365 days, I will more ably walk, talk, climb, help myself in dressing, toileting, feeding. I will be able to use pencils, paints, build things, knock things down. I may even be able to ride some sort of truck or scooter. But when there is any overcast, cloudy, wet, or cold day and you don't like it and I don't go out, then I will never learn as fast or competently as I need to!'

Much of the issue of weather is down to clothing and attitude. Wear the right clothing and have the right approach and you are set to have a great time outside, regardless of the weather!

→ **Helen Bilton**

Contributor bio

1. Get togged up

Adults and children in the setting must have all the right gear. For colder, rainy weather, this could include waterproof trousers, a waterproof coat, Wellington boots, a hat, gloves, warm socks and a scarf. Keeping dry and warm is essential to enjoying outside. For sunny weather, hats and long-sleeved t-shirts are recommended.

Given the current financial challenges faced by many families, it may be unreasonable to require them to dress the children in a variety of weather-specific items of clothing. With that in mind, we have to ensure that as practitioners, we provide the right clothing for all children in our setting and that when they are with us, the children get out as much as possible.

Children and adults need to be warm before they go out, so always check their feet and hands are warm, as well as your own. Also, since feet tend to sweat a lot, children may need to change their socks a couple of times when outside.



2. Don't timetable outdoor play

In and out are a combined environment, this is my first principle of outdoor play (see Bilton, H. (2010). Outdoor Learning in the Early Years. Management and Innovation. Routledge). Therefore, it follows that outdoors is not an event, it is a flexible teaching environment. Imagine it's 10am, the time when you normally go out, but it's pouring rain and so you don't go out. What a missed opportunity! But at 9am it wasn't raining, and you could have gone out. To make the most of the day, embrace flexibility in your schedule about when you go out and work with the weather – do not be defeated by it.



Looking at the two images above, of course, outdoors doesn't look as inviting in January, even to me! But children grow fast, and we cannot hinder their development because we are not wearing the right clothing.

4. Planning for events that always happen, but you don't know when

There are many things that happen every year, but you don't necessarily know when: it will rain a lot, it will be sunny during a January day, it will snow, a bird will build a nest, the garden will flood, there will be roadworks outside, the clouds will move fast. To respond and get the most from these happenings, you need to have a plan and resources – otherwise they just drift past you, and both you and the children lose out. By way of example, think of clouds.



Clouds are with us most of the time, so use them to help children learn. Check out organisations like the Met Office. They have resources, although targeted at older children, which can easily be adapted for younger children. The site shows how you can make a cloud, for example, and identify different clouds.

How about making cards with pictures of different types of cloud so that children can play at cloud spotting, matching the card to the cloud?

There is a really useful set of links and resources on the FutureLearn free online course: [Teaching Climate and Sustainability in Primary Schools: An Outdoor Learning Approach](#)

For example, you can access lots of help and advice with the [Royal Horticultural Society gardening resources](#) or the [NASA](#) site has lots of useful resources.

5. Weather is weather

Try and embrace weather for its beauty, rather than its uncertainty. In the book *Exploring Outdoors Ages 3–11, A Guide for Schools* (Bilton, H & Crook, A. (2016)), we describe the change that came over one teaching assistant who helped outside in the Explorers club. She went from only being happy in nice weather, to embracing all types of weather. One day she said this: "I'm not an outdoor type of girl and Explorers club is taking me out of my comfort zone, but do you know what, I'm really enjoying it!". She got waterproof warm clothing, checked the weather forecasts and was always appropriately dressed and therefore happy regardless of the weather.

Children grow up fast – let them grow in a place that nurtures them.



References

Book: Bilton, H. (2010). *Outdoor Learning in the Early Years*. Management and Innovation. Routledge

Book: Bilton, H. (2024). *Planning and outdoor learning*. A guide for early years. Routledge.

[Met Office - DIY activities and experiments](#)

[FutureLearn - Course: Teaching Climate and Sustainability in Primary Schools: An Outdoor Learning Approach](#)

[Royal Horticultural Society \(RHS\) gardening resources](#)

[NASA - Climate Kids](#)

3. Get some knowledge - create weather boxes

Weather boxes are boxes ready and full of resources, around different weather features: wind, snow, rain, sun. These are everyday events and there for us to harness the learning potential. Have a look at the weather box for rain. Collect all the resources so you can carry out the experiments. Add books and poems, maths and language games to the box of resources. Make your own for all weather features.



Rain

Cover three child size umbrellas with different materials: bubble wrap, wool, foil. When children take them outside, get them to listen to the sound of the rain falling on the different materials. Build up word banks describing the differing sounds.

Ask children to put different shape containers outside in the rain and ask them which one will collect the most water. Put the containers out at the same time and collect in at the same time.

Put a couple of drops of oil in a puddle, see what happens.

Rather than avoid puddles, let children play in them, add objects to them to see what happens.

Observe the clouds, draw them, write about the images they conjure up.

Put two dolls outside, one with waterproof clothing and one with non waterproof. Leave overnight. Investigate what happens.

Have long pieces of plastic sheeting and blocks/bricks. Wait for a really rainy period and put the sheeting out, having banked it and blocked the ends. Watch the collection of water from the rain. This is the recreation of a stream.

Chalk round a puddle on a day after rain but on the day of chalking fair weather is expected. Later go out and draw round it again. And later draw round it again. See what happens to the puddle.

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Good mood food: Changing seasons and how nutrition can support our wellbeing

→ Louise Mercieca

Contributor bio

As summer has come to an end, and we have now entered autumn, many of us may experience a shift in our moods. Changing seasons, particularly from summer to autumn, bring about many changes in our lives and even in our biology. This seasonal shift can have a profound impact on our physical health and emotional wellbeing. In this article, we will explore this change in moods and delve into the crucial role that nutrition plays in managing our emotions and health.

Some people may experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which is typically associated with colder, darker months and with symptoms such as lower energy, fatigue, weight gain, feeling sad, lacking in motivation, difficulty concentrating and irritability. These symptoms are generally linked to a decline in sunlight, which is linked to the regulation of our circadian rhythm (sleep-wake cycle) and to serotonin levels - low levels of which can be linked to depression. Whilst we can't create more sunlight, there are ways in which we can support those with SAD, such as using light therapy, where a special lamp is used to simulate the body's exposure to sunlight. Nutritious foods can also support the body in boosting its melatonin stores and, whilst the end of summer

can impact our mood, we can influence this by managing what we eat and how we nourish ourselves. Here are some examples:

- Consume plenty of omega-3 fatty acids such as oily fish (salmon and mackerel), flaxseeds and walnuts. These fatty acids have been linked to an improved mood and to reduced symptoms of depression (National Library of Medicine, 2019).
- Eating foods which contain the amino acid tryptophan. This converts to serotonin and to tie in with our circadian rhythm, serotonin converts to melatonin (this is a hormone which aids relaxation and sleep).

Foods include: -

- dairy produce - a glass of

milk before bed may be just what is needed!

- tuna
- turkey and chicken
- nuts and seeds
- oats
- cheese - cheese can be linked to weird dreams, but this may be a tenuous link; cheese is a good source of vitamin B6 which enhances memory, so you may just remember your dreams more after cheese!
- Stay hydrated (even in colder months). Being dehydrated can lead to fatigue, difficulty concentrating, eating more and mood disturbances - staying hydrated can help to maintain energy levels and overall wellbeing.

- Limit or avoid ultra processed foods (UPF) and HFSS (foods high in fat, sugar and salt), as these can increase mood fluctuations and depression. Sticking to more stable blood sugar levels will help maintain a more stable mood.
- Being aware of what we are eating - i.e., mindful eating; taking the time to chew food properly, sitting down to eat, eating away from other activities - these can all help us to connect with food, feel fuller and more satisfied, which helps with mood regulation.
- Activity and time outdoors - moving around makes us feel more energised and happier and we benefit from time outdoors, even in the colder weather. Wrap up and embrace that autumnal walk.

The end of summer can be welcome, with many embracing the colder weather, darker evenings and the excitement of seasonal holidays such as Halloween and Christmas. But for those who experience SAD or some end of summer blues, it's essential to pay attention to your emotional wellbeing and remember the role which nutrition plays in supporting our overall health and a more positive mood.

References

- [NHS - SAD \(Seasonal Affective Disorder\)](#)
- [National Library of Medicine - Efficacy of omega-3 PUFAs in depression: A meta-analysis](#)



Intergenerational connectivity - spanning the generation divide

→ Jenny Phillips

Contributor bio

Further reading:

[Early years alliance - Fun and learning for all ages at intergenerational event](#)

[Manor and Castle Development Trust - People are living longer than ever](#)

[The Creation Station - Sixteen benefits intergenerational activities](#)

[The Together Project - Connecting the generations during Global Intergenerational Week](#)

There is a buzz in the world of social care provision about intergenerational activities and connections, and the potential benefits for those involved in these interventions. But for those who may not know the term or concept, what does it mean?

Intergenerational activities are a form of social engagement and interaction, which bring together both the younger and older generations for a common purpose. This form of interaction and connection allows for the building of different strengths that different generations have to offer, while nurturing understanding and a mutual respect across the age spectrum, as well as challenging ageism through the attainment of various community and educational goals.

There are different theories supporting this approach, including:

Erikson's lifespan approach - based on a viewpoint that relationships between older

people and children bring different benefits for both generations. Erikson identifies that in relation to development stages, there are parallel needs in a unique synergy between the generations.

Allport's contact theory - identifies and highlights that contact between members of different age groups can facilitate reduction of negative attitudes and foster positive attitude change.

Attention restoration theory - proposes that activities and engagement within nature is not only enjoyable but can also improve focus and concentration, meaning that intergenerational activities undertaken within nature can support all generations in developing their attention.



There are four identified cognitive states of attention along the way to restoration:

1. Clear head or concentration
2. Mental fatigue recovery
3. Soft fascination or interest
4. Reflection and restoration

There has been a shift in recent times in how human development theories are viewed, with various modifications to current theories. It is argued that a new intergenerational theory of human development should be created which accounts for the increase in life span, contemporary societal values and the role and influence of environmental variables in shaping behaviour and thinking. This new approach to generational development would emphasise the importance of all members

having the potential to learn from each other through social interaction and connection.

The benefits of intergenerational approaches include:

For children and young adults:

- development of positive attitudes towards older generations
- improved social skills and relationship / friendship formation
- the opportunity to become aware that older people were young once and have led interesting lives
- development of team working skills
- opportunity to learn and understand the reality of the human life cycle
- development of values and norms and how to interact with older people from

different backgrounds and cultures.

For older adults:

- increase in physical, mental, and creative activity
- reductions in isolation and feelings of loneliness
- increased opportunity for social inclusion
- increased feelings of invigoration and better general health and wellbeing
- keeping up to date with current trends and thinking
- increased self-esteem and self-worth
- the opportunity to share knowledge and skills with others.

For both generations:

- richer everyday experiences and opportunities
- opportunities to be viewed as a knowledge and skills holder in specific matters
- increased understanding and respect
- the opportunity to discover and learn things from each other (interests, likes, dislikes etc.)
- Enjoy fun activities while spending time with others and interacting
- Richer and diverse everyday experiences
- The chance to make new friends.

There are also wider social benefits to these types of interactions, such as:

- better connections between generations, which help to build bridges and close gaps
- reduction of fear in relation to crime through better understanding of younger generations
- an increase in levels of active citizens in the community,
- the sharing of spaces, resources and facilities
- improved social bonds and solidarity between generations
- enhanced satisfaction levels and feelings with home and local community.

Intergenerational interventions and programmes can be divided into different categories depending on their intended purpose:

- older adults serving or supporting the young
- young people serving or supporting older adults
- both older and younger

- generations collaborating to support the local community
- older adults and younger people participating in shared activities
- older adults and younger people sharing facilities and spaces.

There are many different activities that are provided within the intergenerational approach, which utilise a diverse range of opportunities to support growth, development, and engagement. Some utilise one specific aspect and all interactions are centred and focused around the one aspect, while others use a combination of activity types and styles. The activity approaches (either individually or combined) include:

- **Educational activities** - designed to develop academic knowledge and skills or positive psychological changes in and between generations
- **Leisure or artistic activities** - gardening music, arts, and crafts, reading
- **Health approaches** - increase physical health and activity with sports, games, nature exploration, cooking, walking
- **Open ended activities** - promoting informal spontaneous intergenerational interactions like singing, talking, community projects, role-play.

The role of animals in the intergenerational approach

Animals have many benefits to people of all ages and abilities. They hold a natural

fascination and interest across the generational divide and invite everyone to engage with them. This natural phenomenon has become more predominant over the last few years and their abilities to support and facilitate human health (physical and mental), wellbeing, development and growth has become more widely recognised and understood. This recognition is evidenced in the social prescribing being received (these include animal interaction prescriptions) and the 'one health approach' being encouraged (more on this in my next article in winter issue of Aluminate).

! Yes, GPs and health care professionals are prescribing animal handling sessions.

Animals provide a great opportunity to bring together different generations and encourage interaction. There are various ways to do this depending on your objectives, available time and space. You can choose from activities that don't rely on real animals, but instead are centred around animal-related themes like stories, arts and crafts, discussions about pets and trips to zoos and farms. You can also incorporate animal-themed items such as treasure baskets, sensory bags and discussion boxes, or circle time activities. Another option is to arrange visits with therapy animals or your settings' own animals (if you have any), or organise trips into local green spaces, city farms or other environments with animals.

In light of the modern approach and thinking in relation to intergenerational growth and development, Elizabeth Beth Martini's eight levels of resident functioning (for older adults in care facilities) can be seen as applicable in today's diverse social care environments, encompassing various age groups, particularly in relation to animal interactions.

Level	Functionality
1	Sensory integration - Animals are a natural sensory experience, integrating all the main senses in one animal, one experience.
2	Sensory stimulation - Animals stimulate all the senses, holding, touching, and interacting with an animal is very effective.
3	Validation - Listening to others' experiences of animals, animal discussions and other animal-based communication methods validate a person's worth.
4	Remotivating and reminiscing - Most people of any age just seem to talk more generally when animals are present, in some cases people who do not normally speak, do, and issues that worry, scare or stress people are freely spoken and communicated to an animal.
5	Re-socialising - Animals are a natural focus of attention and groups of people (all ages) naturally gravitate towards them. Groups can work together to interact, care for animals etc.
6	Cognitive stimulation and retraining - Animals prove to be a good motivator for this aspect.
7	Short term rehab - Animal therapy approaches are effective for many to support development and rehab development, depending on age and situation.
8	Community integration - Animals are a good motivator for people of all ages to come together and interact in intergenerational activities.



Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Albert Einstein

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