

Why Early Years Matters

Key Definitions

Attachment

Within attachment theory, attachment is defined as an affectional bond between an individual and an attachment figure (usually a caregiver/guardian). Such bonds may be reciprocal between a child and a caregiver, and are based on the child's need for safety, security, and protection, which is most important in infancy and childhood.



Attunement

Attunement refers to individual(s) being aware of, and responsive to, another person, including recognising and responding to another's emotional needs. In the context of early childhood, attunement is understood in the responsiveness of a parent or carer to their baby or child's needs.

Early Learning

Early learning in this context refers to the learning and development of babies and young children, both formally through education, health, and care services, and informally, such as at home and in the community.

Experiences of adversity

Experiences or events in childhood that are associated with an increased risk of poor health and other problems in later life. Sometimes, these can be referred to specifically as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can include:

- abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- neglect
- living in a household with domestic violence, substance or alcohol misuse, or criminal behaviour
- living with a caregiver with mental illness
- or living in poverty

Home Learning Environment

The home learning environment is the experiences and opportunities to play and learn that parents provide for their children outside of school and nursery.

