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**YOUTH
SPORT
TRUST**

Key facts about...

early childhood



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87% of parents of babies, toddlers, and children under 5 years say that they are worried about their children's future life chances ([Unicef and YouGov, 2024](#)).

More than half of UK parents (55%) report their child aged 3-7 years has or may have been recently struggling with their emotions, and the frequency rises steadily as the child gets older ([Embers the Dragon, 2024](#)).

65% of teachers strongly believe children entering reception are not as school ready as children were prior to COVID-19, highlighting communication, interpersonal challenges, attention and concentration as key issues ([Youth Sport Trust and YouGov, 2024](#)).

In September 2023, 9 in 10 teachers state the lack of school readiness in Reception children impacts the rest of the class with estimates of 2.5 hours of teaching time lost every day ([KindredSquared, 2024](#)).

Globally, more than 75% of children younger than 2 years, and 64% of children aged 2 to 5 years exceeded the recommended screen time guidelines ([McArthur et al., 2022](#)).

Only 13% of 1-5 year olds are getting recommended access to play in families with an income below £30,000, compared with 23% where household income was greater than £50,000 ([Early Intervention Foundation, 2022](#)).

The attainment gap (difference in academic attainment between learners from different social backgrounds) widens at every stage of education following early years; it more than doubles to 9.5 months by the end of primary school, and then more than doubles again, to 19.3 months, by the end of secondary school ([Education Endowment Foundation, 2018](#)).

In England, infant girls have seen no long-term growth in physical activity levels, whereas boys have seen an increase of 3.5%. The gender gap for this age group has grown to 9.2% ([Sport England, 2023](#)).

Early Years settings with physical activity policies and experienced/well trained staff, as well as those who encourage active play, and in particular outdoor play, support physical activity in young children ([Coates et al., 2023](#)).

19% of UK children aged 1-5 years are meeting physical activity guidelines of 180 minutes per day ([Early Intervention Foundation, 2022](#)).

Physical activity can have a beneficial effect on the language domain of cognitive development in early childhood ([Zeng et al., 2017](#)).

There are barriers that Early Years Educators face when supporting PE and physical activity in their settings, including lack of confidence in teaching PE/fundamental movement skills, as well as low parental involvement ([Dobell et al., 2023](#)).