

# Sound foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three <sup>[1]</sup>


Implications for policy and practice

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Attachment	Si
 <a href="#">Sound foundations: A review of the research evidence on quality of early childhood education and care for children under three</a> <sup>[2]</sup>	1.

## EXCERPTS

The first three years of life are a period like no other. During these early years, babies and young children experience phenomenal growth in brain development, and in their understanding of themselves and the world around them. They are active and curious learners from birth, able to lead their own learning within the context of close, intimate and supportive relationships with responsive adults.

While we know a great deal about the kinds of environments in which babies and toddlers thrive, there is still much to learn about how to create these environments in the context of early childhood education and care. There is a new consensus that pedagogy for children under three needs to be specialised, and different to provision for older children.<sup>1</sup> With increasing numbers of children under three attending early-years settings, it is vitally important that the latest research be made available to guide the development of practice and policy which can shape and support these young minds.

In this report, we present an evidence-based review designed to answer the following question:

**What does research tell us about the quality of early childhood education and care for children under three, and what are the implications for policy and practice?**

We draw on international research into the dimensions of quality in early years education and care that facilitate the learning and development of children from birth to three, collating the findings of research reviews conducted primarily in the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand.





Our review considers the needs of all children from birth to three. However, given growing recognition of the role that early years provision can play in supporting children from poorer backgrounds to overcome their early disadvantage, we target our recommendations largely towards meeting the needs of this group.

The Coalition Government has promised to provide free early education places for the most disadvantaged 40 per cent of two year olds. This represents one of the most ambitious government initiatives in recent years, and one which is based on sound research evidence demonstrating the benefits of early years provision for children from less well off backgrounds.





However, although the programme has significant potential to narrow the attainment gap and improve outcomes for children, the research evidence is clear that developmental benefits will only be achieved if children are able to attend good quality provision.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on the evidence, we set out ten steps to ensure the success of the early education programme for two-year-old children; and a further two recommendations for promoting good quality pedagogy for all children under the age of three.


## Key Findings

1. Our review of the research evidence has identified four key dimensions of good quality pedagogy for all children under three:

-  Stable relationships and interactions with sensitive and responsive adults
-  A focus on play-based activities and routines which allow children to take the lead in their own learning
-  Support for communication and language
-  Opportunities to move and be physically active.

2. In order to deliver high quality pedagogy, practitioners need to be skilled and knowledgeable and to work within environments which support them in their practice. Our review of the research evidence suggests five 'key conditions' for quality:

-  Knowledgeable and capable practitioners, supported by strong leaders
-  A stable staff team with a low turnover
-  Effective staff deployment (e.g. favourable ratios, staff continuity)
-  Secure yet stimulating physical environments

-  Engaged and involved families.

**Region:** Europe <sup>[3]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/14/01/sound-foundations-review-research-evidence-quality-early> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/Sound%20Foundations.pdf> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe>