

THE NATIONAL EARLY YEARS CONFERENCE 2027.



BEYOND LIMITS: TRANSFORMING MINDSETS IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

ROTHAMSTED CONFERENCE CENTRE, HARPENDEN, AL5 2JQ

Thursday 11th March 2027 9:00 – 16:35

Time	Details	Location
8:30 – 9:00	Conference registration and exhibitor networking Tea, coffee and pastries served in Function Room	Plaza
09:00 – 09:10	Conference Welcome Anne Peck, Director of Education Services (Primary and Early Years), HFL Education	Auditorium
09:10 – 10:10	I AM, I CAN & I WILL: How the stories we feed shape the life that we lead Matt Bawler, Head of Early Years & Wellbeing Author of The Courage Club	
10:15 – 10:45	Headline Sponsor Keynote & Dragons Den Showcase	
10:45 – 11:10	Refreshments and exhibitor networking	
11:15 – 12:00	Having high expectations is not equal to more formal provision Jennifer Ferguson, District Early Years Adviser, HFL Education	Seminar Rooms
	Hats off to Inclusion Sukhbinder Kaur, Author, Educator, Puppeteer and Founder of SK Author Workshops	
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch and exhibitor networking	

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13:05 – 14:05	Move to Improve: Ways to Impact and Balance Digital Childhood Shonette Bason-Wood, Early Years Innovator and Motivational Speaker	Auditorium
14:10 – 14:55	Supporting Boys to Thrive Tracey Dawson, Early Years Consultant, HFL Education Belonging from the Start: Inclusion, Equity and Opportunity in the Early Years Angela Atkinson-Thurtle, Early Years Adviser, HFL Education	Seminar Rooms
14:55 – 15:20	Refreshments and exhibitor networking	
15:25 – 16:25	Growing Up in a Busy World: What Young Children Need From Us Gemma Goldenberg, Deputy Director, ISEY	Auditorium
16:25 – 16:35	Conference Close: Emma Wild & Louise Jennings	

Session Details

I AM, I CAN & I WILL: How the stories we feed shape the life that we lead

From our earliest years, experiences shape the stories we tell ourselves about who we are, what we're capable of and how we respond when life gets hard. Exploring the 3 core foundations of I AM, I CAN and I WILL, Matt invites us to consider the stories we feed in ourselves — and how these can shape the possibilities children see in themselves.

Having high expectations is not equal to more formal provision

Having high expectations of the children and adults in your school/setting does not mean that you must operate a more formal style of provision or routine. Vice versa, having a more formal teaching and learning approach does not indicate that you have high expectations. This session will provide an opportunity to explore whether the expectations we hold for our children in the EYFS are realistic and how they inform the provision we offer.

Hats off to Inclusion

This session is an interactive workshop inspired by Sukhy Kaur's children's book, *Is That Paras' Turban?*, demonstrating how storytelling and puppetry can be used to explore diversity, inclusion, belonging, and cultural awareness with young children. Designed for school leaders and educators, the session unpacks the educational approach behind the workshop and provides practical strategies that can be adapted to create meaningful, inclusive learning experiences within your own settings

Move to Improve: Ways to Impact and Balance Digital Childhood

Digital childhood is here, but what does it mean for the children arriving in our settings and classrooms?

In this high-energy, thought-provoking keynote, Shonette Bason explores the impact of changing childhoods on movement, physical development, readiness to write, attention and learning and, more importantly, what we can actually do about it.

Packed with research, practical solutions, laughter and Shonette's trademark happiness, Move to Improve will challenge leaders and practitioners to rethink how we balance digital childhood, get children moving and create happy, motivated teams that help children thrive and standards rise.

Supporting Boys to Thrive

National and local EYFS data shows that boys, as a group, are less likely than girls to achieve a good level of development.

This workshop will explore how you can create an environment, both physically and emotionally that supports boys learning.

We will consider the factors that might influence boys' engagement and explore strategies to ensure provision matches the needs of every child.

Belonging from the Start: Inclusion, Equity and Opportunity in the Early Years

Every child deserves to feel they belong. This thought-provoking session explores how our beliefs, expectations, and practice influence children's experiences from the earliest years. Attendees will reflect on unconscious bias, consider the role of equity in creating inclusive environments, and identify practical strategies to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Growing Up in a Busy World: What Young Children Need From Us

Young children are growing up in a world that looks very different from the one many adults experienced. But what does that mean for developing brains, attention, behaviour and learning? This session explores how changes in modern childhood shape young children's experiences, while also considering the strengths and opportunities of growing up today. Drawing on research from developmental science and early education, it will offer practical ideas for how early years environments can help children thrive.