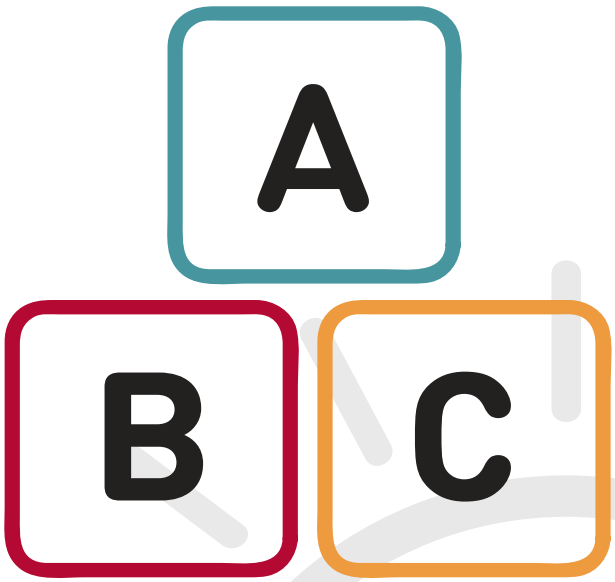
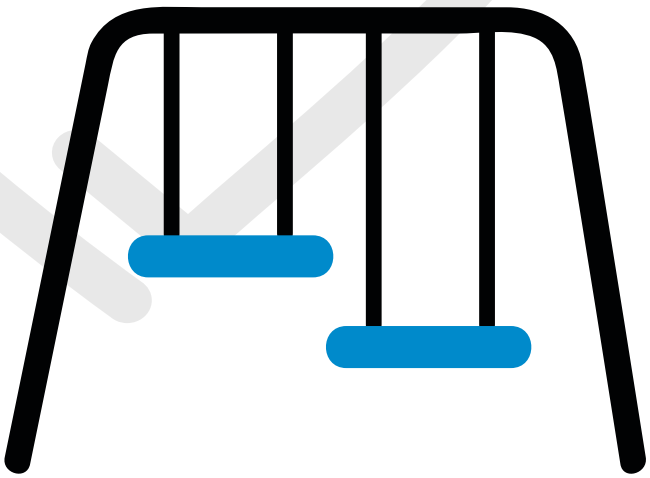
The Best Start in Life

A manifesto for physical activity in the early years





#BestStart

www.bhfactive.org.uk/beststart

BHF National Centre
physical activity+health

funded by
British Heart Foundation

Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines for the under fives

Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water-based activities in safe environments.

Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.

All under fives should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).



BHF National Centre
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This manifesto has been developed by the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (BHFNC) in partnership with BHFNC National Early Years Advisory Group – a partnership of experts in the field of early years who work collaboratively to promote a better understanding of the role that physical activity plays in the lives of infants and children in the early years (0-5 years).

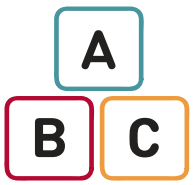
Only 9% of children aged 2-4 years meet the Chief Medical Officers' physical activity recommendations.

To ensure every child has access to high quality physical activity opportunities from birth we ask for the following changes:



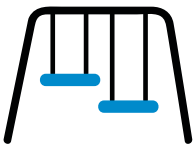
1. Awareness

Comprehensive awareness raising, to ensure health and education professionals and families are aware of, and act upon, the Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines for the early years (2011).



2. Education

Greater emphasis on the importance of physical activity across the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, alongside clear guidance and training for early years practitioners on how to promote and develop children's physical activity.



3. Environment

All children in the early years should have safe, stimulating and accessible physical activity and active travel opportunities in their community.

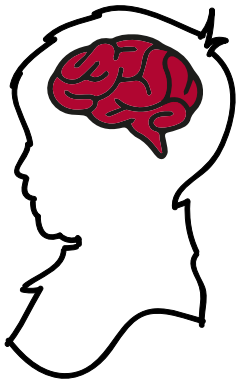


4. Health

Health professionals should track the physical activity levels of children in the early years alongside other health behaviours. These results should be shared with parents whilst supporting them to take positive action to increase physical activity levels among their children.

Through lack of physical activity 91%

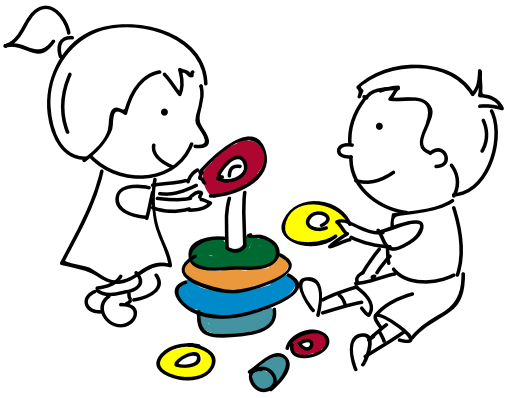
SUPPORT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

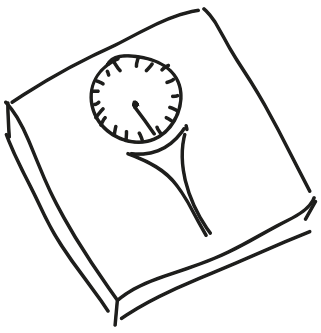




SUPPORT ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT[1,2]

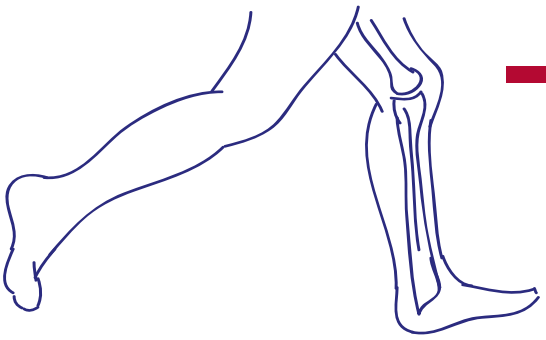
DEVELOP SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE SKILLS AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING[2]





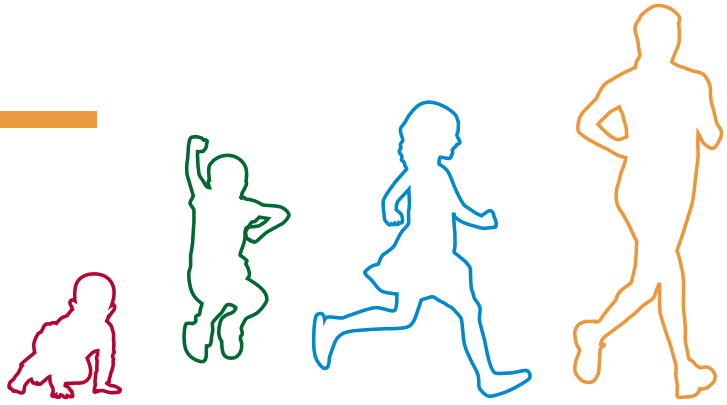
HELP PREVENT OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

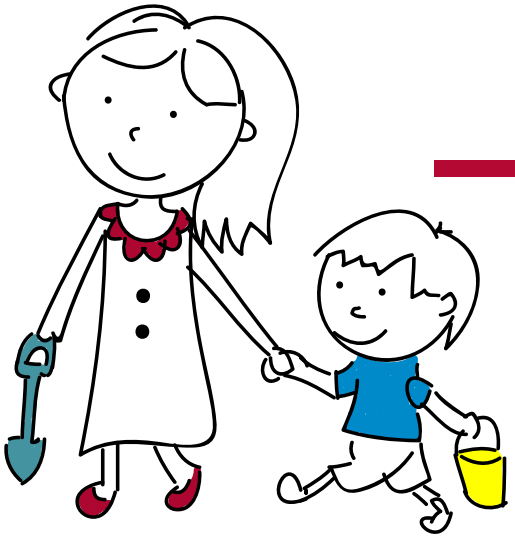
# of children aged 2-4 years are missing opportunities to:



ENHANCE BONE HEALTH AND MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT

PROGRESS THEIR PHYSICAL LITERACY JOURNEY[1]





CONTINUE AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE INTO CHILDHOOD AND BEYOND

For the supporting evidence base on the benefits of physical activity in the early years please refer to the BHFNC early years evidence briefing **www.bhfactive.org.uk/early-years-resources-and-publications**

1. See glossary for the definition of terms used for the purpose of this manifesto.
2. Based on expert opinion and emerging evidence.

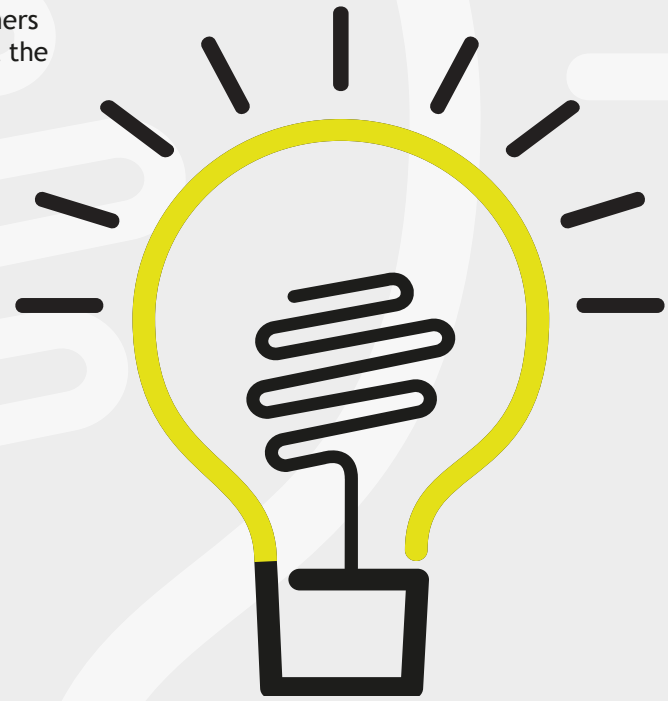
Steps to the best start in life

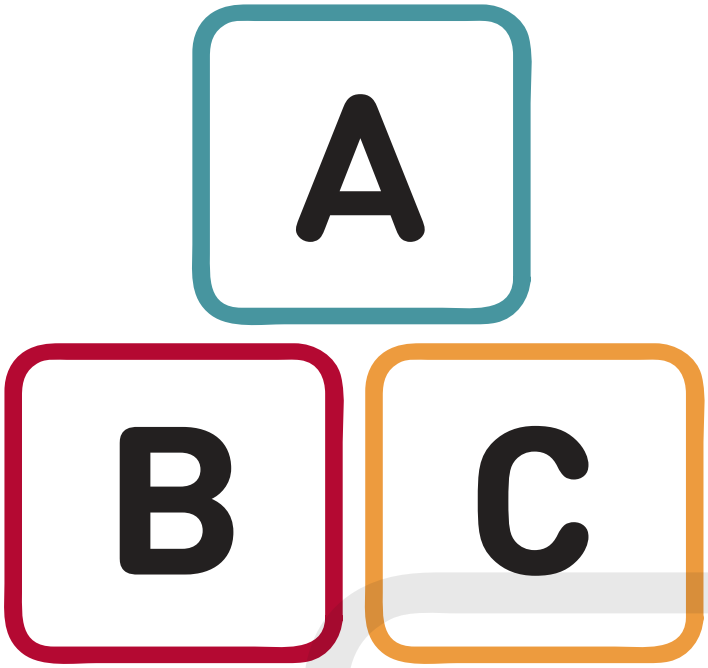
Early years physical activity should be embedded into physical activity policy nationally, regionally and locally to ensure physical activity is supported across the UK at home, in early years settings and in the community. Within this supportive policy environment, we have four key asks.

1. AWARENESS

Comprehensive awareness raising, to ensure health and education professionals and families are aware of, and act upon, the Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines for the early years (2011). This can be supported by:

- Ensuring all key professionals are aware of, and understand, the Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines for the early years (2011) and how they can support these in practice.
- Targeting parents/carers by ensuring physical activity in early years is a core component of relevant public health campaigns.
- Supporting professionals working with families to ensure the sharing of important healthy lifestyle messages during any pre-school family contact.
- Maximising each contact between early years practitioners and healthcare professionals to influence parents about the importance of early movement opportunities.





2. EDUCATION

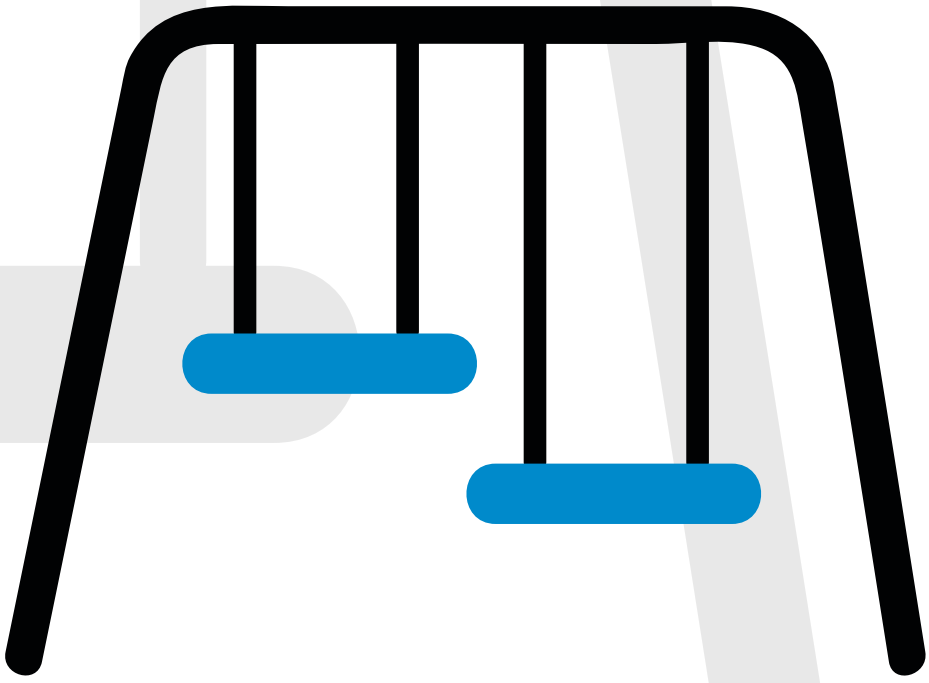
Greater emphasis on the importance of physical activity across the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, alongside clear guidance and training for early years practitioners on how to promote and develop children's physical activity. This can be supported by:

- Embedding of knowledge and understanding of physical activity across all initial training.
- Providing ongoing and accessible physical activity and physical development training opportunities for new and existing early years practitioners.
- Ensuring inspectors have a coherent vision and understanding of physical development.
- Ensuring inspectors have clarity and guidance to inspect settings in respect of physical activity provision and practice.
- Prioritising the role of physical activity in assessment of physical development in the early years curriculum.
- Establishing a Healthy Early Years Award/Framework to support the delivery of physical development and physical activity within the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Ensuring a consistent and systematic sharing of information between early years settings and schools regarding individual children's physical development and activity levels prior to transition.

3. ENVIRONMENT

All children in the early years should have stimulating, accessible and safe physical activity and active travel opportunities in their community. This can be supported by:

- Educating planners to support the implementation of policy to develop structured, unstructured, adult-led and free play opportunities.
- Designing indoor and outdoor leisure facilities that are suitable for the provision of early years physical activity.
- Promoting active travel through provision of appropriate, safe and attractive environments.
- Ensuring existing and new environments are stimulating, inclusive and safe.





4. HEALTH

Health professionals should track the physical activity levels of children in the early years alongside other health behaviours. These results should be shared with parents whilst supporting them to take positive action to increase physical activity levels among their children. This can be supported by:

- Strengthening the evidence base for physical activity for health in the early years.
- Developing a tool and indicator to for health professionals to assess the achievement of the Chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines (2011) for the early years.
- Acknowledging the role of physical activity in child development within the Integrated Review for 2 to 2½ year old children.

About the BHFNC and the BHFNC National Early Years Advisory Group

BHF National Centre
physical activity+health

The BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (BHFNC) was established in 2000 and is funded by the British Heart Foundation. We are part of the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine, based at Loughborough University and are well recognised across the UK for leadership in the promotion of physical activity across the lifecourse.

For more information visit: www.bhfactive.org.uk

The BHFNC identified early years as a key work stream because there is currently little guidance and support for early years practitioners. There is a growing awareness that early life experiences impact upon future health outcomes and the rising prevalence of overweight and obesity in this population. The BHFNC National Early Years Advisory Group is an expert group which informs and supports the early years work within the BHFNC and provides a sounding board for the development of ideas. Members have been drawn from early years organisations, as well as specialists with expertise and an understanding of early years provision and the structures that support this work.

We would like to thank the following BHFNC National Early Years Advisory Group Members for their contribution to this document.

Len Almond, Visiting Professor, St Mary's University

Patricia Maude, Emeritus Fellow and Tutor, Homerton College, University of Cambridge

Liz Prosser, Healthy Schools Manager, Healthy Schools London

Karl Rogerson, Vice Principal, Billesley Primary School

Sue Trotman, Director DanceDesk Ltd and Consultant to National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA) and Association of Physical Education (afPE)

Ingrid Wilkinson, School Play Advisor OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) North East

Chris Wright, Head of Health & Wellbeing, Youth Sport Trust

Philippa Youlden, Consultant to BHFNC

References

Please refer to the BHFNC early years evidence briefing for supporting evidence on the benefits of physical activity in the early years.

www.bhfactive.org.uk/early-years-resources-and-publications

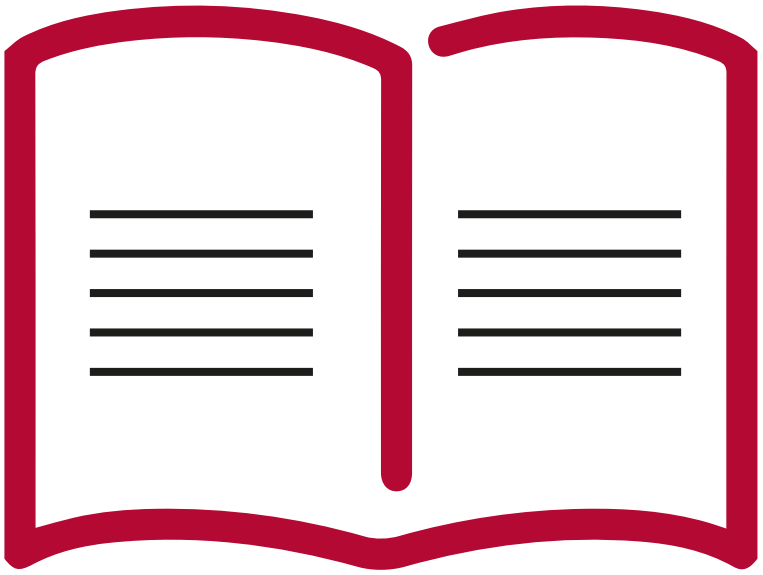
Glossary of terms

For the purpose of this document the definitions used are as follows:

Achievement: 'A thing done successfully with effort, skill, or courage'. *Oxford English Dictionary*

Attainment: 'The action or fact of achieving a goal towards which one has worked'. *Oxford Dictionaries*

Physical literacy: 'Physical literacy can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.' *(Whitehead, 2014)*



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