

# Why Playful Starts Make for Happy Hearts

## Why play?

Play is beneficial for **EVERYONE**, from a tiny bump right into adulthood. It's crucial for building tiny brains, for supporting mental health, for physical development, and for building communication, as well as being a great way to develop social skills.

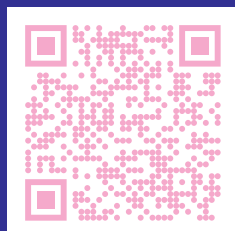
Somewhere between childhood and adulthood most of us stop playing, so treat this as your invitation to make room for play in **YOUR** life, as well as in the lives of the babies and children you support.

## Did you know?

**Everyone has a right to play.**

Children's right to play is recognised as so vital to their wellbeing and development that it is included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (1989). Play, both indoors and outdoors, is also a fundamental commitment to children throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Watch this UNICEF video to discover the power of play:



Compared to the 1970s, children now spend 50% less time on unstructured, outdoor play. There is growing recognition that we need to give children their childhoods back, and to tackle enormous challenges around poverty, mental health and obesity.

The **Raising the Nation** play commission is leading a national conversation about how to encourage and support children to play more, examining issues like the growth of technology and its impact on play, the importance of outdoor space, and whether parents'/carers' attitudes to play and children's safety have changed how children play.

Find out more at:

[bit.ly/bwb24-playcommission](https://bit.ly/bwb24-playcommission)

In Bradford, we have an ambition to become a more child-friendly district. This is reflected in our **Bradford District Children and Young People's Strategy**, which prioritises children's right to play, enjoy healthy childhoods and have fun.

Find out more at: [bit.ly/bwb24-cyps](https://bit.ly/bwb24-cyps)

# Some simple play activities - and why they're so magical and mighty

## 1 Make a splash

**In the bath, in a puddle, with a sponge, in a pool, in a bucket ... the possibilities are endless!**

Don't forget that washing hands for snack time and after messy play activities is a great opportunity for playing with water. Water play encourages babies to engage their fine and gross motor skills, test boundaries, use their imagination, as well as build their language and communication skills.

## 2 Play outside

**Go outside and play. What can you see, hear, touch? Breathe and enjoy.**

Outdoor play can happen whenever you are outside, for instance, the walk to nursery or a playgroup. Outdoor play not only builds children's brains, but it also benefits their mental and physical health and wellbeing too. Encouraging outdoor play from an early age has a long-lasting positive effect as children grow into adults.

## 3 Do the Baby Week Wiggle

**The benefits of dancing and moving to music are vast.**

Here are just a few:

- It's a fun way for us all to exercise, and a safe way to exercise when pregnant.
- It allows people of any age to express themselves.
- It's energising, captivating and mentally relaxing – you've heard of people getting 'lost' in a dance?

Scan here for the Baby Week Wiggle video



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## Play with odds and ends

**There's SO much fun to be had using things we would usually throw away or recycle.**

Let little imaginations run wild! Materials such as egg boxes, yoghurt pots, kitchen roll tubes, string - and so much more - can all be used to make a new game, instrument or vehicle.

The fun of playing with materials is as much about the process as the result.

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## Take five

**Life can be busy, so little moments in the day to press pause can add up to something much bigger.**

Set a clock and share five mindful minutes with your group. You could play a new game, find a new place, do some simple stretching – the choice is yours.

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## Share a Story

**Grab a favourite book or make up a story together. Books and stories are magical, fun, and little brains love them.**

Sharing stories is a great way to develop babies and young children's speech language and communication skills.

Did you know that making up stories together is a great way of building relationships as well as developing creativity and imagination?