



Cambridgeshire
County Council



early years childcare and
school readiness service

50
things to do **before you're**
five

Using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five as a Health Visitor



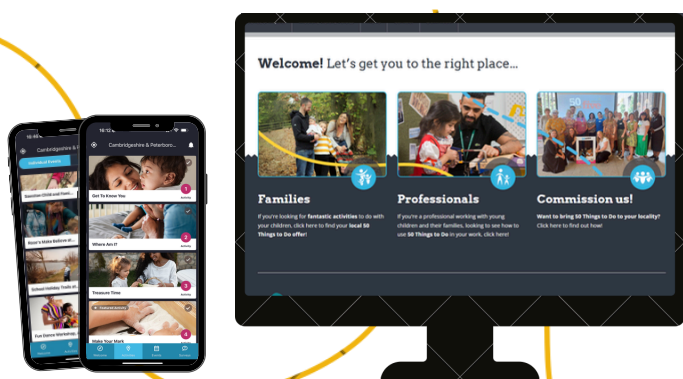
What is 50 Things to Do Before You're Five?

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is a multi-platform offer, free for families, comprising an app and website, also supported by a range of printable resources and social media campaigns.

50 Things to Do is based on the simple notion that access to fun, low or no-cost experiences with your family, indoors and outdoors, is a great way to support children's development. Our activities help children thrive by learning through play and establishing healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

50 Things to Do was developed by a team of health, education and early years specialists in Bradford, using theories of learning, child development and play. But what parents really need to know is that 50 Things to Do is full of loads of fun things to do with their children!

50 Things to Do can be used by health visiting teams, nurseries, schools and community organisations, or by anyone who wants to improve outcomes for young children.



Our Digital Offer

Our localised apps and websites contain drop-down boxes, to help families engage with each activity.



Our printed resources

- ✓ Card packs
- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Leaflets
- ✓ Fold out flyers
- ✓ QR code sticker (for inside red health visitor books)
- ✓ Bespoke resources as requested

"I love introducing the 50 Things resource with parents, especially when they are new to the area or lacking in confidence in what to do or where to go with their little ones. They really like the variety and ease of the activities and frequently comment "I never would have thought of that."

**Vicki
Health Visitor**



Why use 50 Things to Do Before You're Five as a Health Visitor?

Working with Families

Whether you are looking at a targeted service, a universal offer or considering your community offer, 50 Things to Do Before You're Five is there to support your work. You play a crucial role in improving the health and wellbeing of children. 50 Things to Do Before You're Five is based on such a simple idea: fun, low or no-cost experiences for the whole family, indoors and outdoors, are great ways to support children's development.



Action for Children reminds us that health visiting and family support are vital elements of local systems for families. They interlink closely, rely on one another, and build connections between families and different types of support available. 50 Things to Do Before You're Five, provides you with the ideal resource to build connections and help children get the best possible start in life.

"Health visitors have trusted relationships with families and play a vital role in supporting young children's health and wellbeing."

Professor Viv Bennett, Chief Nurse at Public Health England

Universal in Reach - Targeted where Needed

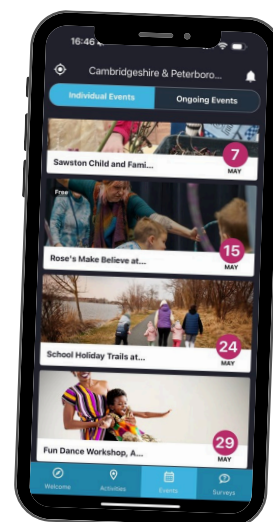
There are many ways to implement 50 Things to Do Before You're Five as a Health Visitor. For example, as a Universal offer, some Health Visitors signpost their families to the 50 Things to Do app or website activities during their home visits. They might use the card packs to talk through some of the activities. Some teams add a QR code sticker to the red baby books, and others provide printed posters for families. In some areas, health visiting teams have embedded the activities into their Home Visiting Schedule and focus on particular activities for discussion. You can read more about this in our How You Can Use 50 Things to Do Before You're Five in your Home Visiting Schedule document.

As a Targeted offer, 50 Things to Do Before You're Five can be used as a tool for Social Prescribing. One way to do this is to develop small, focused 'play' groups, which meet regularly to work through the 50 activities. Some areas have threaded 50 Things to Do Before You're Five into Speech and Language programmes.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is the perfect resource to deliver the **Community** element of the Healthy Child Programme, which reminds us that Health Visitors are ideally placed to provide information on activities and local groups. The events element of the 50 Things to Do app/website is perfect to enable you to encourage your families to attend opportunities in their local area, such as baby moves sessions, sensory activities and parent: baby groups.

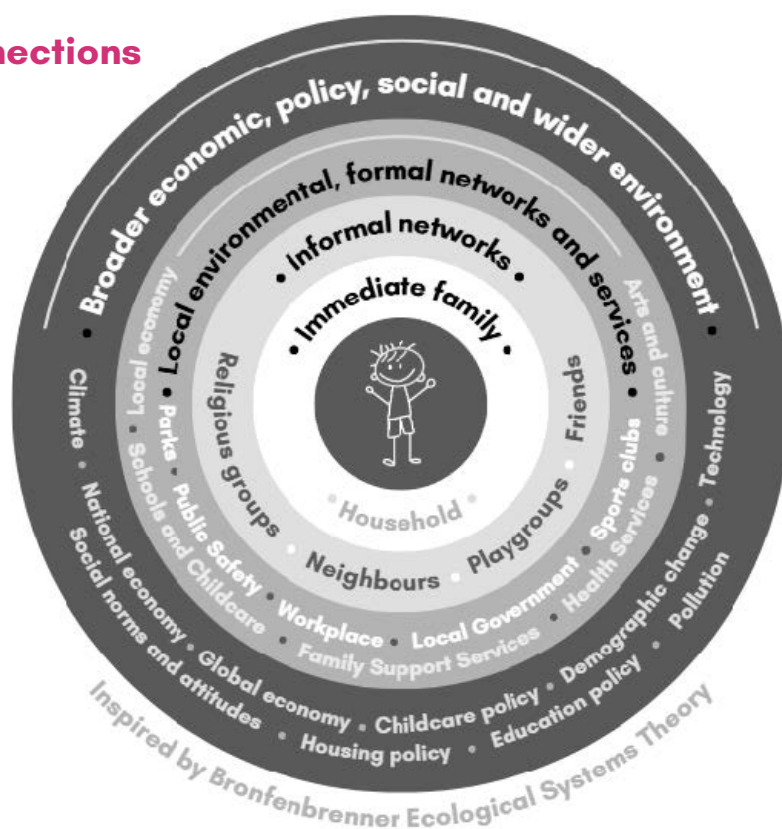
"Service and community connection was particularly associated with positive child development, parent confidence and mental health impacts."

Health Visitor, cited in Kemp et al, 2022



Encouraging Community Connections

We recognise that children's development is not exclusively dependent on the input of parents, professionals such as health visitors, or their early years setting. Children grow up in a locality and are part of a community. Encouraging your families and their children to find opportunities to be part of their local area provides them with a sense of place and a greater connection to their community. Our localised approach not only highlights local groups to attend, it also encourages the engagement of local museums, libraries, community hubs, faith groups and local businesses.



This provides children and their families with more opportunities to be part of their local community. The initiative also encourages connections between health, social care, early years and other agencies that work with families. It helps individual agencies to achieve their targets whilst recognising a shared purpose: improved life chances for all children.



"Health visitors can play a crucial role in ensuring that families get good, joined up support at the start of life. They work with communities to build and use the strengths within those communities to improve health and well being and reduce inequalities."

(Department of Health and Social Care, Jan 2012)

Promoting all areas of Child Development

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is there for you to use in a way that suits you and your parents best. The initiative is underpinned by evidence-informed, impactful pedagogies and parenting approaches, but what your families really need to know is that it is full of fun stuff to do with their children! The focus on families having fun together is a deliberate approach, promoting an inclusive, non-judgmental way for parents to engage fully with their children.

Please note: Families who use English as an additional language (EAL) can also engage with the website using the translate feature.

50 Things to Do links in well with our vision to enhance children's health, wellbeing and quality of life through play.

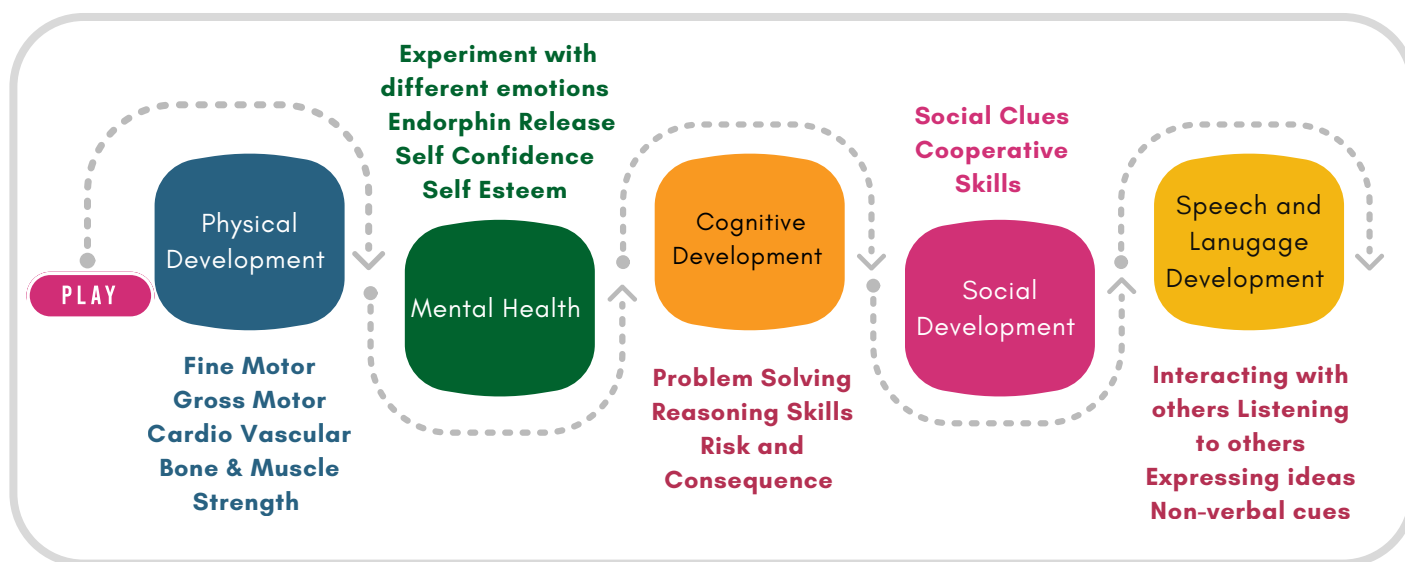
Sharon
50 Things Fife

The importance of play

The early years high-impact area 4 states that Health Visitors should promote physical activity at all mandated visits. Did you know that playing has been shown above to be a major contributor to children’s physical activity, consuming more calories per minute than the equivalent structured physical activity event (Mackett and Paskins, 2008)?

We are passionate about promoting play. It underpins all development and learning for young children. We know that playing, especially outside, positively impacts health later in life and children’s brain development. We help families establish active lifestyles through playing outside and connecting with nature. This improves mental wellbeing, coronary and respiratory health, and also maintains a healthy weight. We know that when parents confidently play with their children, there will be a positive impact on family health and wellbeing, and children’s achievements in the long-term

Across the British Isles, 50 Things to Do is helping families to make their home a great place to play and learn, supporting children’s development and contributing to improved life chances.



By encouraging families to play together, we are having a positive impact on the whole family’s mental wellbeing, reducing stress and boredom, while promoting feelings of joy and happiness.

By encouraging playful, positive interactions and improving communication, we are helping families bond. We are also improving parents’ confidence in supporting the development of children’s language, literacy and communication skills.

Of course, a great start to life goes on to positively impact achievements in primary and secondary school ages.



The impact in numbers

We regularly gather feedback from families and practitioners using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five, so you don't have to just take our word for it!

Social and Material Circumstances

"Family circumstances, vital for development in the early years, have deteriorated for many. Rates of child poverty have increased, and inequalities in many social and economic outcomes are widening. Parenting approaches are key to children's development in the early years, but it is important to recognise that parenting is also related to families' social and material circumstances." Public Health England (2021). Early years high impact area 6: Ready to learn and narrowing the word gap.

91%

of Health Visitors reported an increase in poverty affecting families over the past 12 months

100%

of the 50 Things to Do activities are low or no cost.

100%

of the 50 Things to Do events are low or no cost.

Speech and Language Development

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the outcomes gap, and set back children's learning and development - particularly in language and maths - and hit those from disadvantaged backgrounds hardest. DfE (c2022) COVID-19 Recovery Package, DfE Factsheet.

One serious effect of the nationwide lockdowns was the negative impact on children and young people's speech, language and communication. Nuffield Trust (2022). The impact of Covid-19 on health care for children and young people in England.

84%

of Health Visitors reported an increase in children with speech, language and communication delay. The Institute of Health Visiting (2023)

64%

of parents said that, since using **50 Things to Do Before You're Five**, they communicate more purposefully with their child whilst they are playing.

86%

of parents said that the **50 Things to Do** activities provide different opportunities to communicate with their child.

Parental Confidence

When parents feel competent in their parenting role, they are more likely to be engaged in their learning and development. “An individual’s belief in their ability to be successful in the role of parenting (for example, confidence) is an essential component of the quality and sustainability of parenting behaviours.” Belsky J, Jaffee SR (2006) The Multiple Determinants of Parenting. The role health visitors have, such as helping mothers to feel more confident and to interact with their child, can have huge benefits for both parent and infant (IHV, 2013). High-quality interactions between parent and child are fundamentally important. Yet, many families feel judged by professionals and services, and lack the self-esteem and confidence to engage in developmental activities with their children. Through utilising our initiative, Health Visitors are able to promote an inclusive, non-judgmental way for parents to engage fully with their children.

70%

of parents feel judged.

The line between feeling judged and feeling inadequate can be a fine one.
Royal Foundation, State of the Nation: Understanding Public Attitudes to the Early Years (2020).

67%

of parents said that, since using the 50 Things to Do Before You’re Five app they feel more confident to try new things with their children.

72%

of parents said that, since using 50 Things to Do Before You’re Five they feel able to help their child learn in more and different ways.



Mental Health

Evidence suggests playful times can be relaxing and enjoyable for children and adults, impacting positively on their mental health. By encouraging families to play together, we are having a positive impact on the whole family's mental wellbeing, reducing stress and boredom, while promoting feelings of joy and happiness.

83%

of Health Visitors reported an increase in perinatal mental illness.

82%

of settings said that, using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five has promoted playfulness in their children and families

76%

of settings said that their families are enjoying using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five

Physical Development

Time spent outdoors is a consistent predictor of children's physical activity. Playing has been shown above to be a major contributor to children's physical activity, consuming more calories per minute than the equivalent structured physical activity event. "Playing outside allows children to develop more advanced motor skills than children who spend most of their time indoors, including agility, balance and coordination. Children who spend time playing outdoors are more likely to move in ways that challenge their muscles, bones and physical endurance." Miracle Recreation.

12%

of toddlers and primary school aged children obese (NHS England, 2022)

75%

of parents said that, since using the 50 Things to Do Before You're Five app, their child has gone outside to play more often.





50 things to do **five** before you're

Health Visiting Schedule



How you can use 50 Things to Do Before You're Five in your Home Visiting Schedule

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is based on such a simple idea: Fun, low or no-cost experiences for the whole family, indoors and outdoors. It is a free bucket list of 'fun stuff', involving an app, website, and social media campaign. It provides Health Visitors with the perfect resource for supporting their families. This guide demonstrates how some of our 50 Things to Do can be threaded into your home visits.

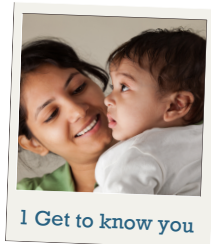
Note: We recognise that not all Health Visitors provide all of the outlined visits. This is designed as inspiration and, of course, there are many more activities in our 50 Things to Do offer that you may feel are appropriate to share!

Antenatal Contact (after 28 weeks of pregnancy)

Visit aim: The Health Visitor will complete a full assessment of the family's needs, with a focus on health and emotional wellbeing, preparation for parenthood, and the parent-infant relationship. This is also an opportunity to share key health messages with parents.

50 Things to Do Activity Suggestion

#1 Get to know you: Your baby can recognise your voice as early as 24 weeks so by talking, singing and reading stories to them this will support the attachment between mother and baby. Creating a bond and attachment will support your child's attachment throughout their life.



1 Get to know you

HCP Visit Schedule	
Contact	Timing
Antenatal contact	After 28 weeks of pregnancy
New birth visit	10-14 days after the birth of the baby
Postnatal review	When the baby is six to eight weeks old
three to four month contact	When the baby is three to four months old
12 month review	Offered between nine and 12 months old
two year review	Before the child reaches two years and six months

New Birth-Visit (10-14 days after the birth of the baby)

Visit aim: The Health Visitor will assess how things are going for the family and will offer support for health and emotional wellbeing and the parent-infant relationship. They will also assess the baby, including a top-to-toe observation, weighing and taking measurements. The Health Visitor can offer support on a range of issues including feeding, child development and key health messages.

50 Things to Do Activity Suggestion

#1 Getting to know you: talking, singing and reading stories to your child will support attachment between mother and baby.

#6 Rhyme time: this is a fun activity that can help develop language from a very early age. Even at this very early stage of your baby's life, the sing-song rhythm is soothing. Language and Communication is one of the fundamental skills we develop that helps us in all areas of our lives.



1 Get to know you



6 Rhyme Time



Postnatal Review (when the baby is six to eight weeks old)

Visit aim: This includes a health and emotional wellbeing assessment for parents/carers and their baby, and it is a chance to get support for any concerns. The baby can also be weighed and measured.

50 Things to Do Activity Suggestion

#1 Get to know you

#6 Rhyme time

#10 Sharing Books: Reading books to your baby will enhance the bond you have already created, and the sound of your voice will be very soothing to your baby. By introducing stories you will be exposing your baby to new vocabulary and building their knowledge of spoken words.

#21 Gigglebox: Sensory stimulation is an enjoyable way to interact with your baby. Playing games such as peek-a-boo or making silly faces or noises can engage your baby to use their senses and begin to explore the world around them.

#32 Where Have I Gone?: Babies love to play peek-a-boo. This engages their eye contact and strengthens the attachment bond you have already created, and promotes their imagination.



1 Get to know you



6 Rhyme Time



10 Sharing Books



21 Gigglebox



32 Where Have I Gone?



Three to four month contact

Visit aim: This contact will focus on the emotional wellbeing of the mother and is an opportunity to discuss their baby's health and development. It is also a chance to share key health advice such as when to introduce solid foods.

50 Things to Do Activity Suggestion

#1 Get to know you

#6 Rhyme time

#10 Sharing Books

#21 Gigglebox

#2 Where Am I?: Describing the world around your baby helps to create that safe and secure environment that we want all children to learn and develop in. It again allows you to introduce new vocabulary to your baby, by describing what and who you can see.

#3 Treasure Time: Babies begin to explore things around them with their hands and mouth, this allows babies to have a sensory experience. This activity will also provide an opportunity for your baby to have some Tummy Time to help strengthen their neck and core muscles.

#8 Bubbles: Creating bubbles enhances your baby's visual skills, as their eyes learn to fix, track and focus. This activity also allows Tummy Time for your baby again, helping improve their gross motor skills of moving their head.

#39 Talking Signs: Using simple, easy signs helps to promote your baby's language, and encourages them to communicate their wants and needs.



2 Where am I?



3 Treasure Time



8 Bubbles



39 Talking Signs

12-month review (offered between nine and 12 months old)

Visit aim: This contact is an opportunity to assess the baby's growth and development. The team will also give support with physical health and emotional wellbeing concerns and share important health messages.

50 Things to Do Activity Suggestion

#4 Make Your Mark: This activity creates an opportunity for your baby to engage with their senses by using different materials to make marks. It also provides an opportunity to introduce new words with your baby by naming the different materials you are using. This activity also encourages gross and fine motor skills for your baby, they can do big circular movements to make marks or begin to grasp the item in their hand.

#5 Squidgy Sand: This is a great sensory experience for your baby. They can feel a different texture of material on their hands and feet. You can extend the play in #32 Where have you gone, and hide objects. Babies can use their gross motor skills to dig in the sand. New vocabulary can also be introduced, such as pour, sprinkle, dig, fill and empty.

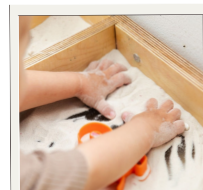
#7 Making Music: This is a very enjoyable activity for your baby. They will enjoy using a variety of household objects to create different sounds. If you clap along and show your enjoyment, this will encourage them to enjoy the activity even more. This is a fun and loud activity to enjoy together and encourages listening skills for your baby. When they begin to use phonics at school they will already be honing in on listening to a variety of sounds.

#11 Making Connections: Babies enjoy fastening items together. Train tracks, inset jigsaws and building blocks all help to promote hand-eye coordination for babies.

#22 My Secret Treasures: Natural curiosity should be promoted from an early age, encouraging babies to explore the objects in their environment. Play can be anything your baby wants it to be!

#26 Splish, Splash, Splosh: Water play is very enjoyable for babies and can enhance their language skills by hearing the different words that are associated with water play. This style of play also sparks babies' investigative skills, by discovering which items may float or sink, which can hold water and what leaks. All of this investigative work supports babies understand the world and carrying out science experiments.

#49 Grass Gazing: This activity allows you and your baby to enjoy using your different senses, such as listening, feeling and smelling. It creates peace and stillness, and promotes language by discussing what you can see and hear.



4 Make Your Mark



5 Squidgy Sand



7 Making Music



11 Making Connections



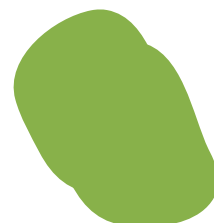
22 My Secret Treasures



26 Splish, Splash, Splosh



49 Grass Gazing



Two Year Review (before the child reaches two years and six months)

Visit aim: This is a key developmental assessment of the child. A questionnaire to understand the child's development will be sent to parents/carers before the visit and will be discussed during the assessment.

50 Things to Do Activity Suggestion

#9 Mini Beasts and Bug Hunting: An opportunity for you to teach your children not only about nature, but how to care for mini beasts such as handling them carefully.

#20 Mini Artists: You can make marks anywhere with your child but what could be more fun than decorating the walls outside your home using chalks or even water? This promotes their gross motor development.

#25 Creative Junk: Playing with a cardboard box has limitless possibilities - it encourages children's imagination and exploration interests! A box can be anything to a child and encouraging this play gives them the opportunity to grow their imagination. With your support, their language skills, as well as new words and story lines, can be introduced in this style of play.

#42 The Rough and the Smooth: This style of tactile play is so important when it comes to your child's writing skills. By manipulating dough, your child is strengthening their fine motor skills in preparation for holding a pencil and creating marks.

#48 Natural Art: By collecting items out in the natural environment you can discuss how different items feel such as leaves, twigs or conkers, introducing new language and describing words to your child. Once the items have been collected, you can then create a picture that promotes your child's imagination.



9 Mini Beasts and Bug Hunting



20 Mini Artists



25 Creative Junk



42 The Rough and the Smooth



48 Natural Art



50 things to do



50 Things to Do Before You're Five is a free resource for practitioners and families to use in 24 areas of the British Isles.

You can download the app here:



Or find your local website here:



The local website will give details of the team leading the initiative in your area, get in touch with them to see what additional resources are available for you to use.



Calderdale 1

Bradford 2

Leeds 3

Oldham 4

Kirklees 5

Wakefield 6

Sheffield 7

Birmingham 8

Warwickshire 9

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough 10

Norfolk 11

Bedfordshire 12

Oxfordshire 13

West Berkshire 14

Southwark 15

East Sussex 16

Jersey 17

Suffolk 18

Fife 19

Coventry 20


Hounslow 21

Portsmouth 22

Can not see us in your area?

50 Things to Do Local offers are commissioned by agencies, often based in local authorities. If you are interested in finding out more, do get in touch.

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