

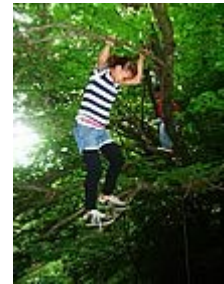


Alliance for Childhood 3rd International Conference

Childhood in Balance

Budapest, Hungary 13-16 October 2010

During the four-day conference, we have a valuable opportunity to explore the subject of **'childhood in balance'**. This theme is meant to encompass the entirety of the formative years, from birth until adulthood.



In recognition of our host country, there will be special focus on the situation in Hungary. In addition, the Alliance for Childhood, associated sponsors and supporting organisations want to share new insights into the themes of early childhood and care; the effect of the media and IT on children; and poverty and exclusion'. We will seek to find ways in which to support and encourage each other in what we do and to develop concrete policy proposals for the various levels on which we operate.

By coming together in this way, we strengthen the community working to improve the quality of childhood, which will help us to form alliances with those who wish to extend this idea to a local, regional, national and ultimately international level.

The conference is open to everyone who shares a concern for these questions. We hope you will be able to join us for this important event!

Please find [here](#) further details including the conference programme timetable and registration form.

Our main theme for 2010-Technology and Brain Development

Well Connected? - The Biological Implications of 'Social Networking'

Dr Aric Sigman has published this paper in the spring edition of *Biologist*, Vol. 56(1), the Journal of the Institute of Biology. Find it [here](#)

This has been misrepresented by many news reports as claiming that social networking causes cancer or disease. This is not true. The paper addresses the extent to which time online may be displacing face-to-face contact, and that lack of social connection is associated with physiological changes, increased incidence of illness and higher premature mortality.

Children's Food Campaign

Help protect free school meals for some of England's poorest children

The government has announced that it is dropping plans for primary school children from low income working families to receive free school meals. This breaks a commitment from the new government to protect the poorest from cuts to government spending, and is very likely to discourage parents from finding work.

Michael Gove also announced cuts to pilot projects to provide free school meals to every primary school child in five local authorities. Sustain needs as many people as possible to write to Mr Gove now, asking him to reconsider these cuts. Details of how to do this are [here](#)

Play England - Playday 2010

Tell us how you're celebrating Playday 2010 by [registering](#) your event today!

From junk modelling and water fun in Runnymede, to mud slides and gunge pools in Kilmarnock, there are already hundreds of events planned across the UK this summer to celebrate Playday 2010. Register your Playday event on the Playday website today and receive a free registration pack to kick-start the celebrations! When you register, you can also choose to make your event details public to increase publicity. Free resources, including Playday posters, postcards and the Get organised! guide are available to download or order via the Playday website.

Further promotional items are available to buy via the [Playday web shop](#).

Join in the fun on **Wednesday, 4 August** and celebrate children's right to play. <http://www.playday.org.uk>

Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood

Consuming Kids: The Commercialisation of Childhood (Trailer)

Susan Linn from CCFC has made a series of videos on the effect of advertising and promotions on childhood. You can access them [here](#)

Alliance for Childhood on Facebook

Join the Alliance on Facebook

The Alliance for Childhood will soon have a page on Facebook. See the US page [here](#)

The Alliance in Brussels

Improving the Quality of Childhood in the European Union

The Alliance for Childhood European Network Group has produced, along with the European Council of Steiner Education and the Botin Foundation, Santander, a compilation of talks given at the Quality of Childhood (QoC) meetings held in the European parliament in Brussels. It covers a wide range of themes by researchers well known in their own countries and now given the opportunity to be heard Europe wide. Contributors include John Bennet and Sir Richard Bowlby from the UK, Dr Boris Cyrulnik of France and Rene Diekstra from Holland; covering subjects from education in the European Union to attachment and the changing face of adolescence.

Copies are available from the address below. They are £10, plus £3.50 postage. The £10 goes to support the work of the Alliance for Childhood.

Latest News

A fifth of children have no idea where they live - because they no longer walk to school

An article by [Tamara Cohen](#)

Thousands of children have no idea where they live because they no longer walk to school. Being ferried around in the car by their parents has destroyed their local awareness and knowledge, a survey has found. Three-quarters of primary school children in South-East England could not give their postcode, and a fifth did not know their home address.

Can a child be too young to learn to read?

An article by [Sarah Ebner](#)

So when should children learn to read? Can they be damaged (or put off reading) by starting too early or fall behind if they start too late? It's an important question with no simple answer — even though educationists have very strong opinions.

"Up to the age of 6 or 7, the true foundations of literacy are caught, not taught. We have to invest in training practitioners in how to help children catch them," says Sue Palmer, the former primary headteacher and literacy expert and author of *Toxic Childhood*.

Palmer thinks there's "no rush" to teach children to read, and is particularly unhappy about the targets set in the English early years curriculum. She points to Finland, with its very high literacy rates. Finnish children — like the Welsh — don't start formal reading until 7.

Food for Thought

Children's physical development in the pre-school years provides the foundation on which higher cognitive learning is built. The integration of infant reflexes in the first year of life takes place as a result of maturation *and* interaction with the physical environment. Tummy time when awake is important, but so also is free movement (unrestricted by the confines of a baby seat), regular human interactive play and conversation. Children learn with their bodies before they learn with their minds, but this important developmental stage is increasingly being by-passed as modern equipment and technology makes life easier for busy parents while ignoring the child's need to practice physical skills in order to train the brain.

Sally Goddard Blyth *in a Letter to the Times 10 November 2008*

The Alliance for Childhood

Funding News

The Alliance has received some funding from the toy firm Community Products which will be shared between the Alliance in the UK, US and Brussels. We also received a grant from the Botin Foundation in Spain. In addition, income from the sale of the Quality of Childhood book (mentioned above) will go to funding our work in the UK. This is a big boost to our activity.

We rely on gifts and donations to maintain our website and to build up our network of partners worldwide. If you would like to make a donation, please get in touch or make a payment through our website – www.alliancechildhood.org.

Unless otherwise stated, more information on any item or on the Alliance for Childhood can be obtained by contacting the Alliance for Childhood office. Contact details are below.

Working Together for Childhood

The Alliance for Childhood serves as a network that facilitates reflection and action by people with concerns about the care and education of children. It is not a conventional organisation, but an expression of a willingness to work together for the betterment of the experience of childhood. It exists in the shared work and spirit of cooperation whereby all partners can find mutual support. It is a collaborative approach that is created by commitment and by the activity itself.

Alliance for Childhood

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