

## **Why the first years last forever**

**21 April 2009**

### ***Talk To Your Baby conference highlights the power of early brain development and what clever communicators babies are***

Textbooks are having to be re-written at an extraordinary rate as research on brain development shows us so much more than we ever knew before about how babies' brains develop. Following on from the success of last year's conference, this year's Talk To Your Baby (TTYB) conference will look at the vital links between the maturing brain and early communication development, highlighting the establishment of secure infant mental health. Alongside discussion on emotional communication will be illumination on another aspect of a young child's immense skill: the ability to become bilingual.

The first years last forever: the imperative of developing good communication from birth will feature consultant child psychotherapist, Robin Balbernie, who will talk about the importance of early relationships on the developing brain of the baby.

Charmian Kenner, lecturer of educational studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, will share research about young children growing up bilingual.

Other speakers include Emily Hunka from the Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre, who will talk about creativity and inclusion with early years, and Cathy Hamer, TTYB project manager, who will discuss early communication strategy guidance for local authorities.

In addition, practical early language projects will be showcased to inspire and enhance the day-to-day work of delegates.

Liz Attenborough, Manager, Talk To Your Baby said:

"The new and growing knowledge that we have about early child development is fascinating, and needs to inform both our thinking and our work.

"Bilingualism is a topic often mentioned by delegates as something they need to know more about, so this will be an excellent opportunity to learn about theory and practice."

The conference takes place at Savoy Place in London on Tuesday 6 October 2009. It is designed for anyone working with families with young children including early years practitioners, speech and language therapists, teachers, nursery staff, family literacy professionals, midwives and health visitors, early years librarians, educational and clinical psychologists.

There is an early booking price of £195 for those booking before 15 August 2009 after which the conference costs £220 per delegate. Discounts are available for multiple bookings from the same organisation. More information and online booking can be found at [www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk)

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## Notes to editors:

### 1. About Talk To Your Baby

Talk To Your Baby is a campaign run by the National Literacy Trust to encourage parents and carers to talk more to children from birth to three. For more information visit [www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk).

### 2. Background to Talk To Your Baby

There is concern that increasing numbers of children are suffering from communication difficulties, and teachers and nursery workers feel young children's speaking and listening skills are on the decline. One of the contributing factors is believed to be the lack of time adults and young children spend talking together. A survey showed that among nursery workers, 89% are worried that the occurrence of speech, language and communication difficulties amongst pre-school children is growing. The lack of adult and child time spent talking together was highlighted as the key reason by 92% of them (ICAN, 2004). TTYB's advocacy work includes campaigning to change the way that buggies face, to better facilitate adult/infant interaction. A research report, published in November 2008, showed that children in forward-facing buggies were less likely to talk, laugh, and interact with their parents, than those in buggies that face the pusher. 2,722 parent-infant pairs across the country were observed and according to Dr Suzanne Zeedyk, Developmental Psychologist at Dundee University's School of Psychology who carried out the research, 'Our experimental study showed that, simply by turning the buggy around, parents' rate of talking to their baby doubled.'

### 3. National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that changes lives through literacy. It links home, school and the wider community to inspire learners and create opportunities for everyone. [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales, no. 1116260, and a company limited by guarantee, no. 5836486, Registered office: 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL

### 4. About the last conference

The TTYB 2008 conference, Communication: the child's perspective, occurred on the 2 October. Feedback from delegates was resoundingly positive; 144 evaluation forms were completed (182 delegates attended the conference), of which 99% said the day was very good (78%) or good (22%). The buggy research was the highlight of the conference with 100% delegates rating it as very good (95%) or good (5%).