



# “Champions of childhood: Celebrating early years heroes” West Sussex Early Years and Childcare Conference 2025

**Friday 7 March** - Field Place, Worthing  
**Saturday 8 March** - County Hall North, Horsham  
9.00am to 3.30pm

## **Aim:**

To energize and enhance play practices to positively impact the lives of young children and parents/carers within West Sussex.

## **Objectives:**

Gather learning and practical activities related to playful approaches to learning in the form of creative play and story telling, risky and challenging play, and wellbeing and compassion within your staff team.

## **Cost: £75**

Join us for a day of wellbeing and reaffirmation of the vital part you play in the lives of West Sussex children. You'll enjoy high quality speakers and workshops, a two course lunch and wellbeing activities. Book your space now, on one of two dates:

[Friday 7 March - Worthing](#)  
[Saturday 8 March - Horsham](#)



# Conference Schedule

09:00	<b>Registration and Refreshments</b>	
09:30	<b>Welcome and Housekeeping</b>	Katie Crompton, Early Years and Childcare Strategic Lead, West Sussex County Council
09:45	<b>Keynote:</b> Playful Brains – The Neuroscience of Play	Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children
10.45	<b>Refreshments, networking and exhibitor viewing</b>	
11:15	<b>Workshop 1:</b> Fostering kindness, compassion and self-compassion	Nicola Burke, Linden Learning
	<b>Workshop 2:</b> Exhilarating Play – Essential Risk and Challenge in Early Years and Beyond	Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children
	<b>Workshop 3:</b> Extending the Story	Ruth Moyler, Linden Learning
12:00	<b>Lunch, networking and wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture your inner early years superhero in our fun photo booth</li> <li>• Explore our marketplace, with stalls from WSCC teams and early years businesses</li> <li>• Enjoy the wellbeing activities on offer</li> </ul>
13:30	<b>Workshop 1:</b> Fostering kindness, compassion and self-compassion	Nicola Burke, Linden Learning
	<b>Workshop 2:</b> Exhilarating Play – Essential Risk and Challenge in Early Years and Beyond	Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children
	<b>Workshop 3:</b> Extending the Story	Ruth Moyler, Linden Learning
14:15	<b>Refreshments, Networking and Exhibitor Viewing</b>	
14:45 – 15:30	<b>Closing:</b> Early Years Heroes - The Vital Role of the Early Years Practitioner	Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children
15:30	<b>Close</b>	



# Keynote and Workshops

## Keynote Address - Playful Brains – The Neuroscience of Play

Delivered by Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children

This transformative keynote explores exactly what happens in children's brains when they play and demonstrates that an understanding of how the brain works enables us to support our children to experience the most amazing play opportunities. The keynote then explores the vital role of Play in developing and growing children's brains, highlighting the profound importance of play for brain growth, wellbeing and even life expectancy. Ben Kingston-Hughes makes a compelling argument that play is a fundamental building block for every aspect of well-being and development. This session is entertaining, thought-provoking and might just help us build the brains of the future!

## Workshop - Fostering kindness, compassion and self-compassion

Delivered by Nicola Burke, Linden Learning

This workshop aimed at leaders and managers will explore the art of listening and support participants to delve into traits such as kindness, compassion and self-compassion. Participants will explore how developing emotional intelligence can help to put others at ease and better understand feelings, leading to more meaningful interactions and connections with others. The workshop will be a respectful space to reflect on human qualities, behaviours and emotions.

## Workshop - Exhilarating Play – Essential Risk and Challenge in Early Years and Beyond\*

Delivered by Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children

This invaluable practical session illustrates why it is vital for children's wellbeing that they experience exhilarating play and risk and challenge in their environments. We are not looking to put children in danger but to give them a vibrant and stimulating childhood that will ultimately help them assess danger for themselves. The session delves into the fascinating new neuroscience of risky play and how catastrophic it can be to overprotect our children. The session also explores practical ideas for supporting children to challenge themselves. Looking at brain growth, mental health and even life expectancy this session shows what we can do to give our young children back the exciting childhood they deserve and need.

\*Allergy warning – May contain crocodiles



## Workshop - Extending the Story

Delivered by Ruth Moyler, Linden Learning

This workshop, designed for early years practitioners and teachers, revisits the art of screen-free storytelling and its importance within a 21st Century context. Participants will see demonstrations, childrens' drawings and photographic evidence illustrating how personalization of a story with the handling of real objects can greatly enhance the engagement and understanding of young children. Current research emphasises the need that young children have for significance in a fast-paced society; repetitive storytelling is one of the tools we have to address this need. This practical workshop makes use of accessible technology to explore exciting possibilities around young children authoring and starring in, their own storybooks, when space is made to further develop imaginative play.

Ruth will share her powerful practice of stretching the imagination of young children using personalisation, props, real objects, rhyme and descriptive vocabulary. Having worked extensively with young children from different nations, and returning recently from working on a refugee project in Uganda, Ruth is a strong advocate of the importance of creative practice, using reclaimed materials to overcome budgetary restraints.

## Closing address - Early Years Heroes - The Vital Role of the Early Years Practitioner

Delivered by Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children

This inspiring and motivating endnote presents overwhelming evidence that Early Years practitioners have the most profound and life-long impact on their children. More than any other teacher a child will ever encounter throughout their life, the early years practitioner dramatically shapes, guides and supports a child to become their future self. From neuroscience to evolutionary biology, from behavioural sciences to global economics this endnote shows us once and for all that early years practitioners have more impact on a child than primary, secondary and even university educators.





# Conference speakers and workshop leaders

## Ben Kingston-Hughes, Inspired Children



Ben Kingston-Hughes is an international keynote speaker, author and multi award-winning trainer. He is also the Managing Director of Inspired Children and has worked with vulnerable children across the UK for over 30 years. He has appeared on television several times working on a variety of children's projects and his distinctive blend of humour, neuroscience and real-life practical experiences have made his training invaluable for anyone working with children. His groundbreaking book, "A Very Unusual Journey into Play." is now available and his new book "Why Children Need Joy" was a finalist for the Nursery World Professional Book of the Year 2024 where it was awarded "Highly Commended".

## Nicola Burke, Linden Learning



Nicola is a qualified Personal and Professional Performance Coach, with a Master's in Education and over 23 years of experience specialising in creating professional development programmes for individuals and organisations nationally and internationally. Nicola has led award winning research in listening, large workforce development projects for organisations globally, and coached leaders from a range of sectors on a 1-1 basis. Nicola's practice is rooted in creating spaces that are respectful, kind and compassionate to bring out the best in people, she specialises in supporting leaders and teams with a focus on helping them to communicate and collaborate effectively.

## Ruth Moyler, Linden Learning



Ruth is a consultant with Linden Learning. She is passionate about playful approaches to learning and has encouraged high quality creative practice in settings and schools arising from real experiences. Ruth believes in the vital importance of experiential learning and has developed innovative multi-sensory approaches to early years practice. A major strand has been developing oracy through complex play using 'Interplaylands.' Her work is original and emphasises 'screen-free' hands-on interaction with real objects. Here is a link to her latest article for Community Playthings; [Bringing learning to life with Interplaylands](#)



## Location

Field Place Manor House and Barns  
The Boulevard, Worthing BN13 1NP

[Field Place, Worthing](#)

Tel: 01903 446401



County Hall North, Horsham  
Madeira Avenue, Horsham RH12 1AB

[County Hall North, Horsham](#)

Tel: 0330 2225904



## Catering

The conference price includes a two-course buffet lunch. Vegetarian and Vegan options will be provided. For other dietary requirements please email [early.years.training@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:early.years.training@westsussex.gov.uk). Refreshments will be provided throughout the day.

## Pricing

The cost of the conference £75.

## Booking

Tickets are available by clicking the link below and paying by card.

[Friday 7 March - Worthing](#)

[Saturday 8 March - Horsham](#)

## How to get there

### Travelling by car:

- Free parking is available at the conference venue.

### Travelling by train:

- Horsham: The nearest train station Horsham.
- Worthing: The nearest train station Durrington-on-Sea.

### Useful Numbers:

- National Rail Enquiries: 03457 48 49 50.
- Contact on the day: 07742 067924.



## Booking Conditions

West Sussex County Council reserves the right to change the conference speakers and/or practice workshops in cases of illness or other conditions beyond its control. Speakers and facilitators confirmed at time of print. Our refund policy is available to view via West Sussex Services for Schools.



## Exhibitor Enquiries

For all exhibitor enquiries, please contact Jacqueline Harrison  
[Jacqueline.harrison@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Jacqueline.harrison@westsussex.gov.uk)

## Organiser

Early Years and Childcare Team  
West Sussex County Council  
County Hall, Chichester  
PO19 1RG



Website - [www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk)

Telephone - 01243 777807

Email - [early.years.training@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:early.years.training@westsussex.gov.uk)

Follow us on Facebook page [here](#) to get all the latest conference news and updates.

