

#pullupachair

The importance of belonging, relationships and connections to prevent exclusion from school

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and primary school

Training resource 2 of 3

January 2023

Funded By



Partnered with



Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to the children who took part in my creative arts projects and research; without them this resource would not be possible. Thank you also to the following school leaders and teachers for participating in the many voice projects with me over the years:

- Donna Walker: The Link School, Sunderland
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- Catherine Forster: The Bridge, Durham

Without these partnerships, insight into the children's lived experiences would not have been captured and made into films. Their experiences have provided the foundations for this training resource.

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- United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) Participatory Research Fund 2021-2022
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Finally and importantly, many thanks to Ruth Johnson (Theatre Director), Pav Gajek (Film Maker) and Dr Wendy Thorley (Advisor) for your valued contribution to #pullupachair.

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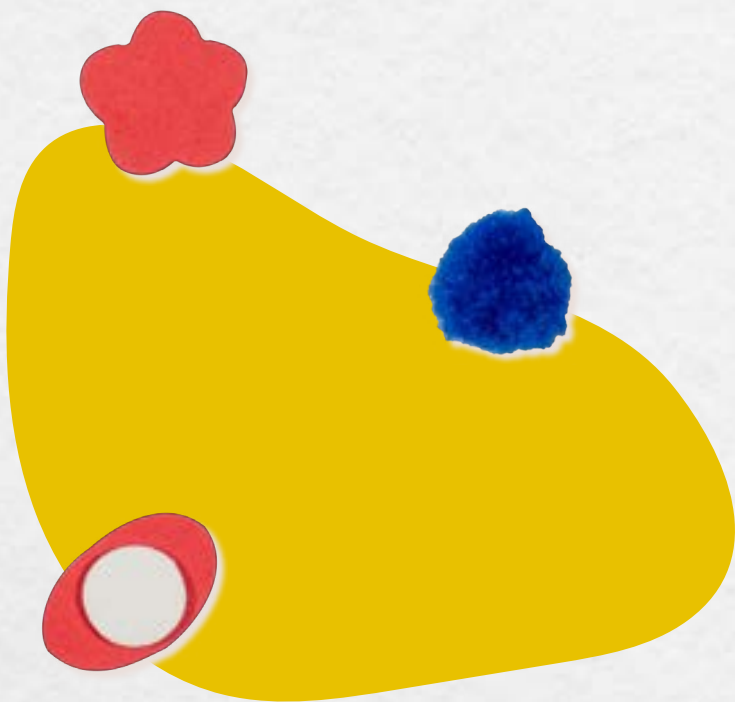
Acronyms

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
DfE	Department for Education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
LO	Learning Objective
UKRI	United Kingdom Research and Innovation
UoS	University of Sunderland



01

Introduction



Introduction

This training resource introduces discussion around the importance of belonging, relationships and connections in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and primary school to prevent exclusion from school.

Ethical considerations and permissions

Ethical approval was gained from the UoS Ethics Committee. Gatekeepers provided permission for caregivers to be approached for their children to participate in the research and the #seeme and #pullupachair creative arts projects. Caregivers were provided with information sheets explaining the purpose of the project. Only children whose caregivers consented to their child taking part were approached to participate. Caregivers of children aged eight and under provided the overarching consent. Where a child had a social worker, their consent was also sought. All children were provided with an information sheet (a comic strip) explaining the project and had a trusted adult explain how the film and audio of them would be used. If a caregiver gave consent for their child to take part, but the child did not, they were not included in the films. The children and caregivers were given choices as to what would be shared (film, audio, artworks) and how (social media, general media, UoS website). All ethical and privacy protocols were strictly enforced, including privacy statements issued to caregivers.

The purpose of the resource

The purpose of the resource, the two accompanying films and PowerPoint, is to help facilitate professionals and policymakers in better understanding the impact of exposure to adversity on the learning and development of children previously excluded from school.

This resource provides you, the lead/facilitator, a structure and guidance on how to deliver each of the three training sessions. It is therefore not a script for what you should say and how to explain key points. Rather, the resource is to support you in delivering key points and to ensure consistency in providing the content of the course. Additional reading and resources are provided at the end of this resource.

The three-part training resource has been designed to use as whole school training; including senior leaders, governors, teachers, support staff, placement

students and volunteers. It is recommended that the series is delivered in its entirety to build and secure knowledge and understanding of the arising themes. There may be circumstances where the training is delivered to individuals and small groups of staff, for example, when new staff are employed in the setting. This training session is expected to last 1 hour and 25 minutes and is structured as follows:

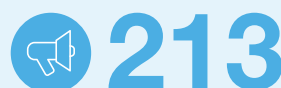
- Part 1: Recognising and responding to adversities
- **Part 2: *Belonging, relationships and connections***
- Part 3: Solutions to preventing school exclusions

Background to the training resources

Since 2017, each yearly data report from the Department of Education (DfE) has shown that Northeast England has the highest exclusion rates of any region in the United Kingdom (DfE, 2017-2021). Aside from during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which all exclusion rates dropped across the country, exclusions have risen steadily in the Northeast for the last five years. Nationally, the most common reason for a permanent exclusion or suspension is 'persistent disruptive behaviour'.

In 2018, Together for Children commissioned Sarah Martin-Denham at the UoS to *'investigate the factors that impact upon social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people from 3-16 years, which may lead to exclusion from school'*. 174 participants took part in the research, including: 55 children previously excluded from school, 41 of their caregivers and 78 education and health professionals. Sarah has twelve publications that give an insight into this complex world ([Items where Author is "Martin-Denham, Sarah" - SURE \(sunderland.ac.uk\)](#)).

#SeeMe #pullupachair was led by Sarah with funding from the UKRI Policy Support Fund 2021/2022 and the UoS, Interdisciplinary Research Network: Adverse Childhood Experiences. This project engaged 130 children aged 5-16 years in a creative arts project with four local artists. Of these 68 shared their views on school exclusion. A further 28 children aged 5-16 years, previously excluded from school, took part in a creative arts project, funded by the UoS interdisciplinary research network: Adverse Childhood Experiences 2021/2022, contributing to this resource.



213 voices were included in this resource. These voices have set the agenda for listening. **Let's get ready to pull up a chair.**

Access to the resources

The films, PowerPoint presentations and training resources are available through the UoS Interdisciplinary Research Network: Adverse Childhood Experiences website:



<https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/research/interdisciplinary-research-networks/adverse-childhood-experiences/>

Click on the navigation bar #pullupachair. The film number for this training is film **three**. You will also need the Secondary age phase film **eight** and to show at the end of this training session. The PowerPoints and this training resource can be downloaded, while the films can be streamed via the website.

Streaming the films

All films are in .mp4 format. Before screening the films, carry out a trial stream from the UoS website to check for adequate Wi-Fi strength and to ensure there is good sound quality from the device used. It is recommended that the films are played on a large screen in a dark environment (like a cinema experience). Ensure participants remain seated during the screening to prevent any slip or trip hazards.

Considerations when preparing to deliver training

Some participants may feel uncomfortable, upset or emotional during the training. This could be due to personal or professional experiences, or as they empathise with the children.



Begin each session by letting participants know that some films may be upsetting; let them know they can take time away if necessary. It is also recommended that organisations make mental health support available for participants during and following the sessions, and signpost to mental health organisations.

Some participants may wish to discuss aspects of the training sessions in more detail, including sharing personal experiences. Only the facilitator delivering the training can decide what is or is not appropriate to discuss. Facilitators will therefore need to use their own judgement in gauging when to build on discussion and when to move on.

The timings suggested are indicative and not prescriptive, to enable you to use your own professional judgement and bring your own knowledge, skills competencies and expertise as a trainer and professional with reference to the slide content. Due to the range of participants engaging in the training, it will be at your discretion to assess which areas require more or less discussion. It is the facilitator's role to ensure the training reflects the participants' specialisms, for example, children's services, youth offending teams or education services.

Equality Act 2010 and reasonable adjustments

The film subtitles, PowerPoint presentation and this training resource are presented in an accessible font, without underlining or highlighting, and on a non-white background, to support those who have specific learning difficulties. Please ensure any slides you add, to enhance your training session, are suitable for those accessing the training. Also ensure slides are not presented as black text on a white background, and that a dyslexia-friendly font is used.

If asking participants to read slides that contain discussion points or quotes, please make reasonable adjustments to the training as required. Adjustments could include allowing participants to view the slide content **prior** to the training session and permitting the use of assistive technology if the participant requires this (for example, using a laptop during the session for note-taking, or text to speech recognition).

Learning objectives

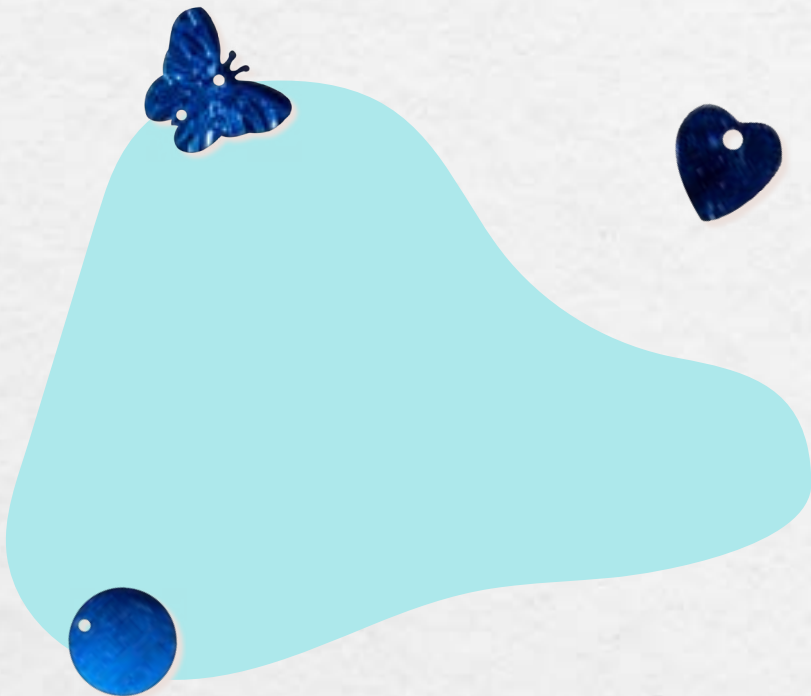
Upon successful completion, those participating in the training series - Part 2: Belonging, relationships and connections, should achieve the following learning objectives (LO):

- **LO1.** Consider what enables children to thrive
- **LO2.** Consider the importance of a sense of belonging in school
- **LO3.** Generate ideas about how you can find time to listen
- **LO4.** Critique school systems and processes that may be of detriment to some children
- **LO5.** Consider what you do or could do to further support children to develop and sustain friendships



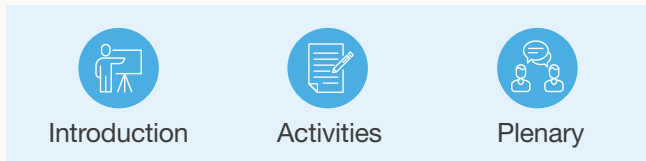
02

The training



The training

The training session is in three parts:



Part 1: Introduction

Duration: 5-10 minutes

PowerPoint slides: 1-2

1. Present PowerPoint slide 1. The slide requires no detailed discussion unless making introductions for those who do not know each other. Provide a brief welcome to the training session and share the focus, 'belonging, relationships and connections for children who attend EYFS and primary phase school settings', as an overarching aim of the training.
2. Present PowerPoint slide 2. Explain the purpose of the training; consider each of the five learning objectives and to reflect upon the overall aim of the training in promoting understanding of belonging, relationships and connections for those who attend EYFS or primary phase settings.
3. Explain how the learning objectives will be achieved as a training session:
 - First, the group will watch the film that is included in the training to hear the voices of children previously excluded from school
 - Second, after the film, the group will consider focused questions by sharing their thoughts with the people near to them as discussion points
 - Third, group feedback will be shared and recorded after the group discussion to develop a collective understanding
 - Fourth, key issues will be considered for moving forward in supporting children exposed to childhood adversity who are at risk of exclusion, or those who have experienced exclusion
4. Explain that at the end of the training session, a range of resources will be provided for those who wish to develop their knowledge and understanding further.



Image 1. PowerPoint slide 1

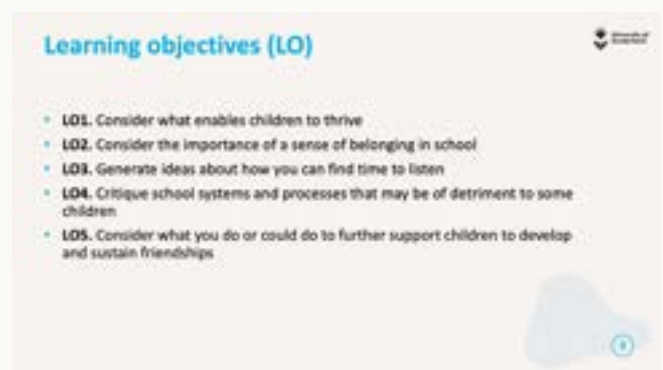


Image 2. PowerPoint slide 2



Part 2: Activities

Duration: 55 minutes

Activity 1 - 5 minutes

Activity 2 - 30 minutes

Activity 3 - 20 minutes

PowerPoint slides: 3-4

Activity 1: Film viewing

Activity 2: Small group discussion

Activity 3: Whole/small group discussion

Activity 1

Duration: 5 minutes

Go to:



<https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/research/interdisciplinary-research-networks/adverse-childhood-experiences/>

Play film 3: **'belonging, relationships and connections: EYFS and primary'** (3:55 minutes).

Activity 2

Duration: 30 minutes

PowerPoint slide: 3

1. Give participants a few minutes to talk in small groups to share reflections on the film. Some participants may need more time to process what they have watched, particularly those who are exposed to school exclusion in their personal or professional lives.
2. Present PowerPoint slide 3.
3. Facilitated discussion activity. Working in small groups with those near them, ask participants to consider the questions posed on slide 3 and to make notes of their thoughts to share.
4. Bring the participants together to discuss and gather their reflections. Capture the group's responses as collective notes, either by writing them yourself or by allocating someone in the group to keep notes during the group discussion.



Image 3. PowerPoint slide 3

Activity 3

Duration: 20 minutes

PowerPoint slide: 4

1. Bring the participants back together and, using the collective notes, recap the key points from the discussion in activity 2.
2. Present PowerPoint slide 4 and think collectively about what, if anything, needs to change to promote a sense of belonging and to enable enduring relationships.

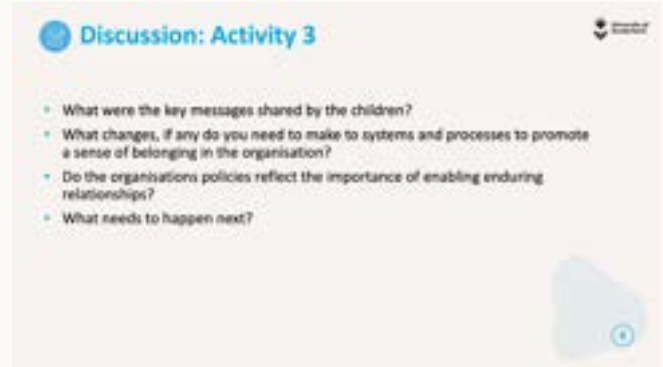


Image 4. PowerPoint slide 4



Part 3: Plenary

Duration: 20 minutes

PowerPoint slide: 5

Activity 4: Whole group discussion and viewing of secondary age phase film

Activity 4

Duration: 20 minutes

Present PowerPoint slide 5. Facilitate reflection on the training session against the learning objectives. Do the participants agree they have:

- **LO1.** Considered what enables children to thrive
- **LO2.** Considered the importance of a sense of belonging in school
- **LO3.** Generated ideas about how you can find time to listen
- **LO4.** Critiqued school systems and processes that may be of detriment to some children
- **LO5.** Considered what you do or could do to further support children to develop and sustain friendships

End the plenary by showing film 8, the secondary age phase film (6:21 minutes). The purpose of this is to stress the importance of early intervention, to identify and meet needs to prevent school exclusion.

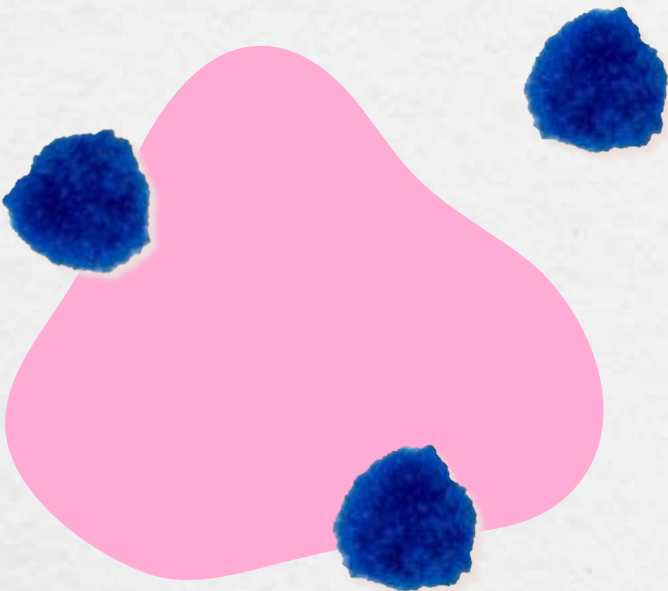
Close session

Inform participants that you will ensure the collective notes are distributed to all those taking part. Discuss the date and time of the next training session, **'finding solutions to prevent exclusion from school'**.



03

Recommended reading



Recommended reading

Research monographs

Allen, T., Riley, K. and Coates, M. (2020) *Belonging, behaviour and inclusion in schools: What does research tell us?* London: University College London.

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) *An investigation into the perceived enablers and barriers to mainstream schooling: The voices of children excluded from school, their caregivers and professionals*. Project Report. Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) *The enablers and barriers to successful managed moves: The voice of children, caregivers, and professionals*. Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) *A review of school exclusion on the mental health, well-being of children and young people in the City of Sunderland*. Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Riley, K., Coates, M. and Allen, T. (2020) *Place and belonging in school: Why it matters today*. London: University College London.

Journal articles

Hatton, C. (2018) School absences and exclusions experienced by children with learning disabilities and autistic children in 2016/17', *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, 23(4), pp. 207-212.

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) 'Riding the rollercoaster of school exclusion coupled with drug misuse: The lived experience of caregivers', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 25(3-4), pp. 244– 263. doi:10.1080/13632752.2020.1848985.

Martin-Denham, S. (2021) 'Defining, identifying, and recognising underlying causes of social, emotional, and mental health difficulties: Thematic analysis of interviews with headteachers in England', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 26(4) pp. 187–205. doi:10.1080/13632752.2021.1930909.

Martin-Denham, S. (2021) 'School exclusion, substance misuse and use of weapons: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of interviews with children', *Support for Learning*, 36(4), pp. 532-554. doi:10.1111/1467-9604.12379.

Martin-Denham, S. (2021) 'Alternatives to school exclusion: Interviews with headteachers in England', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, pp. 375– 393. doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2021.1983326.

Over, H. (2016) 'The origins of belonging: Social motivation in infants and young children', *Philosophical Transactions Royal Society Biological Science*, 19(371), pp. 1–8. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2015.0072.

Books

Martin-Denham, S. and Watts, S. (2019) *SENCO handbook: Leading provision and practice*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Martin-Denham, S. (2022) *Co-producing SMART targets for children with SEND: Capturing the authentic voice of children, young people and their caregivers*. London: Routledge.

Other publications

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (2023) Relationships and belonging. Available at: <https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/relationships-and-belonging/>. Accessed (5 January 2023).

IntegratED (2021) *IntegratED annual report 2021*. Available at: <https://www.integrated.org.uk/2022/04/20/integrated-annual-report-2021/>. Accessed (5 January 2023).



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