

The impact of parenting on children's outcomes

Parents and carers serve as children's first educators and teachers. This is something most people can agree on, yet offering parents advice on how they can best perform these important roles is something of a taboo. Home and family life is rightly private and pushing tired, stretched parents to do more and more can come across as patronising, 'parent-shaming' or simply tone deaf in today's difficult economic climate.

Yet, getting parenting right has the potential to shape a child's growth, development and life course for the better, irrespective of socioeconomic background or circumstance. More recently, government agencies, charities, schools and even private companies have clocked the holistic benefits of parent-child interactions and various campaigns have emerged on the topic such as the BBC's [Tiny Happy People](#) and the NHS' [Start for Life](#).

As the conversation around parenting gets louder, some are calling for further action. Lee Elliot Major, Professor of Social Mobility at Exeter University, says in the first episode of our Social Mobility Talks podcast: "There are too many parents who are not given the information of what you can do to help your children".

At the Social Mobility Commission, we have looked into the activities parents can do with their children to support their child's development. This work has shown that the early years are an essential window to act, as the experiences a child has in their first 5 years provide the building blocks for their life.

In these early years, there is great opportunity, but also great risk, as children that get ahead tend to stay ahead whilst those that fall behind struggle to catch up. To bring this home, on average, the poorest children start school 4.5 months behind all others and leave school at age 18 a staggering 18.1 months of learning behind their more advantaged peers (Education Policy Institute, Annual Report, 2020).

What parents can do

Simple interactions between a parent and child can be learning moments for children in their early years, in ways likely more significant than at any other period in the child's life. Therefore, giving a child a leg up can be as simple as talking, playing and reading with them. Regardless of whether a child has the ability or vocabulary to respond, engaging in reciprocal communication can develop their cognitive and language skills and using an array of words is one of the strongest predictors of children's early language development.

In terms of play, 'guided play' – where a parent joins in a playful activity with their child – can lead to improvements in a child's understanding and

retention of things like shapes and names compared with those who play alone. Learning through play also contributes to all kinds of healthy development features such as planning, self-regulation and mental flexibility.

For educational attainment reading is a big ticket item, but, as drawn out in our podcast episode on parenting, reading only reaches its potential impact if it is consistent – at least 3 times a week for 15 minutes. Reading with a child has been shown to improve their socio-emotional skills as well as literacy and numeracy and it is linked with lifelong benefits for cognition, vocabulary and pattern construction.

As often said, it takes a village to raise a child, and therefore every adult that's around in a child's early years has the potential to engage with them in productive interactions that can seed countless lasting benefits.

How we can help parents

To avoid shaming, patronising, nannying or burdening parents who are already trying to do the best for their children, policy makers, the health services and government departments need to find ways to offer empathetic but proactive guidance, confidence and support.

Parents need to be made aware that talking to their baby is beneficial, even if they are too young to respond – and assured that reading does not have to mean long complicated books but can be any words they see around them.

Research also shows that lack of confidence plays a key role in why parents do or do not engage with their children. For parents in general, but particularly those that might not have experienced this style of parenting themselves, wavering belief in their own abilities and skills may contribute to stress, anxiety and unhappiness which can itself act as a barrier to supporting their child's learning.

We therefore need to translate these findings into constructive action which fills the gaps in parents' knowledge and empowers them with the tools and confidence to interact more effectively with their children. We need to do this while recognising that parents operate within a wider environment, juggling raising their children with other challenges – such as getting food on the table, working long hours, keeping up with rising energy bills and finding secure housing.

The SMC will therefore be looking to increase parents' understanding of how they can nurture their children's talent in the early years whilst at the same time, considering how other factors, like improving education, growing the economy and creating more opportunities for more people in more places are so crucial. To succeed, we need to provide parents knowledge along with the time, resources and a favourable environment to act on it.

To shape our thinking, we will explore the impact of government-led initiatives that have targeted families to understand 'what works' in terms of enabling every child to fulfil their potential.

To listen to our podcast on the topic of parenting, a conversation between our Chair, Katharine Birbalsingh and Lee Elliot Major, Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter, follow one of the links below:

[Privy Council appointments: 1 November 2022](#)

Press release

The King has approved the following new appointments to His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council



The King has been pleased to approve that Rachel Reeves MP and Baron Kennedy of Southwark be sworn of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council.

Published 1 November 2022

[Welsh Secretary celebrates 40 years of S4C](#)

News story

The broadcaster has been a pillar for Wales and the Welsh language for the last four decades



Secretary of State David TC Davies has congratulated broadcaster S4C on its 40th anniversary.

Since 1982 S4C has entertained and served viewers throughout Wales and beyond. The channel celebrated its 40th birthday on 1 November.

The UK government continues to support S4C. Earlier this year the channel secured an improved funding deal which included £7.5m in new money each year to support its digital services.

Secretary of State for Wales David TC Davies said:

Congratulations to S4C on 40 years of broadcasting. The channel has educated and entertained generations of audiences and plays a crucial role in the creative industries in Wales.

As a government we continue to support S4C so it can create and broadcast the highest-quality content to audiences in Wales and across the world.

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[Merseyrail to manage fines using the Single Justice Procedure](#)

Anyone responding to a Single Justice Procedure (SJP) notice from Merseyrail, for an offence such as travelling without a valid ticket, can now enter their plea online.

If the defendant pleads guilty, their case can be managed without a court hearing. These cases are managed using Common Platform, our criminal case management system which supports SJP. This means defendants' cases can be resolved quickly, fairly and more efficiently.

As with all SJP cases, defendants can still choose to have their case heard in a court. They can also submit a plea on paper, rather than electronically.

Each Merseyrail case will be considered in the same way and the same penalties apply.

The rail provider is the first outside London to use Common Platform for prosecuting cases online.

Benefits to Merseyrail operations

Suzanne Grant, Commercial Director at Merseyrail, said:

I'm really pleased that we're the first regional train provider to use Common Platform to progress these types of cases.

Whilst the majority of passengers travelling on our network purchase a ticket, this new platform will allow us to deal with the small number that fail to do so promptly and efficiently.

It will benefit both Merseyrail and our customers. For our staff, it means less paperwork. For our customers, they'll be able to make a plea online and have their case resolved far more speedily, rather than it hanging over them for a month or more.

Working with HMCTS, we've rigorously trialled the new system, which delivered greater efficiencies and faster processes all round, so we're confident it'll be a huge asset to how we operate.

About the SJP

The SJP is part of the [Single Justice Service](#). This service supports magistrates' courts to deal with minor offences more efficiently, while still ensuring rigorous, open and fair justice.

A single magistrate, supported by a legal adviser, can decide adult, minor, non-imprisonable and victimless offences, such as fare evasion. People who plead guilty can resolve their case without going to court. This minimises delays and allows more court time for other cases.

It's already used to process SJP cases for other non-police prosecutors, including:

- Transport for London
- TV Licensing
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Future plans

We're planning to onboard more non-police prosecutors on to Common Platform.

More information

[Find out more about Common Platform](#), the case management system supporting SJP.

[New Geovation Accelerator Programme participants announced](#)

News story

Six firms with exciting ideas for using location and property data have been chosen as the latest to benefit from the award-winning Geovation Accelerator Programme.



Image credit: kitzcorner/Shutterstock.com

Geovation is an initiative for PropTech (property technology) and GeoTech (geospatial technology) start-up entrepreneurs to use location and property data in innovative ways, sponsored by HM Land Registry and Ordnance Survey. By coming up with solutions to existing problems or filling a gap in the market, these start-ups create products and services which benefit society and stimulate economic growth.

To date, 150 GeoTech and PropTech start-ups have been supported and more than 1,500 jobs created.

The PropTech start-ups are:

- [Pantera Solutions](#) – Transforming forecasting and strategy planning for commercial real estate.
- [Blocktype](#) – Helping developers and planners understand the development potential of land.
- [EverKnock](#) – A virtual concierge to manage your home move.

The GeoTech start-ups are:

- Wateraware Collective – Creating a living map of water quality data across the UK.
- [Civitem](#) – Advanced analytics for climate resilience planning in agriculture.
- [RouteZero](#) – RouteZero decarbonises business travel by 55% using digital tools.

Andrew Trigg, Chief Geospatial and Data Officer at HM Land Registry, commented:

By offering our data, grant funding and mentoring to the new participants over the next 12 months, we're fostering the next generation of data-led entrepreneurs, and we're excited to see how they go on to transform the property industry and beyond.

The Geovation Accelerator Programme offers 12 months bespoke support to help early-stage founders grow their business. Start-ups receive up to £20,000 in grant funding and the equivalent of over £100,000 in support during the programme including workshops, coaching and access to data from Ordnance Survey and HM Land Registry.

For more information visit [Accelerator – Geovation](#)

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