

Held in mind

Supporting staff, families and children to feel settled in unsettling times.

London Borough of Hounslow

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Working with families and early years practitioners for over 10 years with a focus on how and why developing play and talk impacts positively on **early language development and well being.**

Attended TTYB conference since 2009!



Debbie Brace
baby talk & play

Let's Talk Together (Hounslow)
Early language development programme
Inspired by ECaT to become LTT



Let's Talk Together – 9 years

50+ Early years settings. Working towards providing an exemplary environment both indoors and out for children to have **meaningful conversations** where they will develop **good speech, language and communication** within an **emotionally connected approach**

- Speech and Language Therapy Expertise (Bhavna Acharya)
- Education and Infant Mental Health Expertise (Debbie Brace)



What does it mean to be or to feel settled?

'Settled' is EY sector lingo used to describe a positive emotional state of well being.

To me, it means that a child feels comfortable and relaxed in their mind and body in their educational/childcare setting away from their home and their primary attachment figure.

In order to feel comfortable and relaxed in mind and body, we need to be able to both **feel** and **express** our emotions with someone we trust.



Key Thread: If we have repeated positive experiences of being thought about and comforted in moments of stress and upset/distress, '**held in mind**', we are likely to feel emotionally **settled** in our mind and body as well as be better able to manage unsettled feelings in our future.



Reference threads:

Mind-mindedness – Meins, E., Fernyhough, C., Fradley, E., Tuckey, M. (2001) 'Rethinking maternal sensitivity: mothers' comments on infants' mental processes predict security of attachment at 12 months', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 42(5), pp. 637-648.

Internal Teddy Bear – Zeedyk, S. (2020) *Sabre Tooth Tigers & Teddy Bears: The connected baby guide to attachment*.

If the staff feel **held in mind**,
then they can **hold the children and families in mind**.



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What have LTT settings been doing to hold each other in mind?



Personalised staff postcard



Hi,

We thought we'd give you some
memories to see,
At a time when we don't know what
will be.

Things have been hard for everyone,
All the uncertainty has not been fun.
We hope you're all ok where you are,
But know if you need us we are never
far.

A big crazy family we will always be,
Hopefully soon we'll be in each other's
company.

lots of love
Sophie, Dan and Sam



Care packs



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Emotionally connected interactions which emotionally contain (rather than avoid) distress on separation.



Brace, D. (2021) 'Settling In': *Exploring the complexities of observing and responding to young children's communications of distress as they start day care*, *Infant Observation*, DOI: [10.1080/13698036.2021.1875869](https://doi.org/10.1080/13698036.2021.1875869)



Bump into familiar faces in play



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Small things have made and continue to make a BIG positive difference

- IF staff feel '**held in mind**' – formally and informally
- THEN **everyone** is more likely to feel emotionally settled and have a better sense of well being. (Bigger take up of places, less anxious phone calls, less staff absence, children settled back well and ready to take part/learn)

