

NAFIS Q&A with Connie Barrett from Hungry Little Minds
Friday 12th June 2020, 2pm – 3pm
Hosted on Microsoft Teams

1. What impact has COVID-19 had on early years outcomes and how can parents ease the potential learning loss?

Connie: The impact can be significant, because the early years are important. For example, an additional term of early education has been shown to have an impact on outcomes at the age of 5 and beyond, and the impact is greater still for disadvantaged children. That is why it is important that we do what we can to help parents support their children's learning at home through this difficult period.

We know that the Home Learning Environment is crucial for child development, and it will be even more so if children have less access to early education. There is a wealth of resources available for parents – via the government's Hungry Little Minds website (<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>), the BBC (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>), and the National Literacy Trust (<https://literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/>) amongst others, which local authorities and other partners can signpost parents to. We will be working with our partners to ensure that we give parents the best support we can, to help their children's learning at home.

2. Major problem with hungry little tummies in our LA due to lack of Govt support for FSM vouchers for EY children not in childcare and education during lockdown so it is hard to engage families with home learning.

Connie: We all know that children's brains are like sponges, they take everything in. 'Hungry Little Minds' reflects this. During testing of the campaign, parents did not relate "Hungry Little Minds" with food. Parents found the phrase "Hungry Little Minds" motivating and memorable.

Under the benefits-based criteria, 1.1 million of the most disadvantaged pupils are eligible for and claiming a free school meal – saving families hundreds of pounds each year. The Government remains committed to tackling poverty so that we can make a lasting difference to long-term outcomes. Both rates and numbers of people in absolute poverty remain lower than 2010, and since 2010, there are 100,000 fewer children living in absolute poverty.

Our focus today is, rightly, on what the Government can do to support people financially through these unprecedented times. We have increased Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by £1,000 a year from 6 April 2020 for one year, benefiting over 4 million of the most vulnerable households, and increased Local Housing Allowance rates, putting an average of £600 into people's pockets this year.

3. With many older children currently at home will the campaign age be extended?

Connie: The Hungry Little Minds Campaign was carefully developed around the needs of the 0-5 year old age group and has been tested with many parents with

children of this age. The department is working to support children up the age range to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

4. How will we measure the success of the Hungry Little Minds campaign?

Connie: Evaluation will be an integral part of the campaign helping us to monitor its reach and impact in empowering parents to chat, play and read more with their children. In addition to this, the Department of Education already runs an annual childcare and early years survey of parents which includes questions about how often parents do these sorts of activities with their children