

# Title: Listening to Parents: Lessons from the Impact of Lockdown on Two-Year-Olds in

## England

Lianna Wilding, University of Chichester. ORCID: 0000-0001-5767-2228. l.wilding@chi.ac.uk

Lorna Earle, University of Chichester. ORCID: 0000-0001-6196-1575

Debra Laxton, University of Chichester. ORCID: 0000-0001-7088-3257

## Abstract

Policy and funding for two-year-old children in England has focused upon widening access to early education and care (ECEC) but there is limited evidence that the approach has resulted in positive educational outcomes. This paper captures parental perceptions of the impact of a pause in ECEC for two-year-olds during a nationwide lockdown in England during the Spring of 2020. An online questionnaire collected both qualitative and quantitative data from 827 parents of two-year-old children who attended ECEC prior to the lockdown. 6% of parents identified themselves as being in receipt of government funding for disadvantaged<sup>[1]</sup> two-year-olds. Findings revealed that most parents (39%) believed the overall impact of lockdown upon their child was positive. A further 34% felt the impact was neither positive nor negative, with 27% reporting a negative impact. Quantitative data revealed the perceived impact on personal, social and emotional development (PSED) for two-year-old children was nuanced and this was reflected within the qualitative themes. Positive qualitative themes focused on the time gained for family relationships, time outdoors, toileting milestones and communication. Recommendations include recognising the value of *time* for unhurried adult-child interactions as a quality indicator of ECEC and facilitating parental choice for families wishing to invest in time with their two-year-old children.

<sup>[1]</sup>Disadvantaged is the term adopted by the Department for Education in England to describe families of two-year-old children eligible for specific funded entitlement (FE) to childcare schemes. The criterion for this funding is outlined within the paper.

**Keywords:** Two-year-olds; COVID Lockdown; Parents; Personal, Social & Emotional Development; Time; Early Childhood Care and Education

## Statements and Declarations

The authors have no financial or proprietary interests in any material discussed in this article.

**Ethics Approval**

Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of Chichester.