



## **Starting School : How young is too young??**

Schools should open their doors to children as young as 2. So says Liz Truss, the Minister for Education and Childcare. Ms Truss is to write to local authorities urging them to encourage nurseries to offer longer sessions and to accept younger children. (Times, Feb 5)

At Brent Parent and Toddler Network we are very concerned about such a proposal. Our current coalition government has already made clear its intention to side-line 'stay at home' parents, and even 'air-brush' them out of discussions and considerations around childcare and early years matters. The priority, as with this latest proposal, is how to help people back to work, regardless of what impact that may have on the parent/child relationship.

We realise that many people do face difficult choices, and are constantly juggling many responsibilities, but we will continue to 'fly a flag' for those who make the choice to stay at home and look after their own children during the vital formative years. That considered choice often means sacrifice, particularly in terms of income, but the benefits are great in terms of your relationship with your child.

One of the aims of the Brent Parent and Toddler Network is to encourage parents to develop their confidence and gifts within supportive groups. Do not underestimate the importance of investing time in your children. Mums and Dads play a vital role in a child's life right from the start - their input is important in building good foundations for later life.

Your relationship with your child is unique. Being with your child in those very early formative years will help you form a strong emotional attachment to each other.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project showed that parents who are fully involved in activities with their children are giving them the best start in life.

The most important activities included:

- Reading with their child
- Teaching songs and nursery rhymes
- Painting and drawing
- Playing with letters and numbers
- Visiting the library, museums and other places
- Creating regular opportunities to play with friends

So taking your child to a Toddler group really helps your child learn to talk and play with others.

Our government seems to want to encourage people to spend very little time with their own children. At the Brent Parent and Toddler Network, on the other hand, we want to encourage people to enjoy their children, and to savour those early years which will be gone all too quickly.

