

# Teaching and Learning

## Professional love



What is meant by professional love?

Dr Jools Page led a team of researchers at the University of Sheffield, to explore the relationships developed between practitioner and child in a professional setting. Theories regarding attachment, building relationships and making connections with key children and their families etc. are well documented in the early years field. The positive impact of meaningful relationships in the early years is unquestioned. However, with many high-profile safeguarding cases in the media and with the ever present need to remain vigilant with our safeguarding policies and practices, Dr Page's research found that this can at times conflict with the value of professional love, causing anxiety within the early years workforce in demonstrating 'professional love'.

As practitioners, we should strive to be emotionally available to the children in our care, to enable us to meet their emotional care needs.

What words come to mind when you hear the term professional love?

Care... Affection... Kindness... Attention...



## Task

Acknowledging anxieties:

Discuss as a team your feelings regarding professional love. Is there anything about showing love and affection towards children in your care, that makes you anxious? If so, why?

What is the impact of not showing love and affection towards a child in your care?

Building confidence in practitioners:

Reflect on your existing policies and procedures. Do you have guidance for practitioners of what safe contact looks like? Are hugs permitted? Cuddles whilst sitting on the adult's knee? Stroking a child's hair to help them to get to sleep?

How are staff supported to establish healthy boundaries that are applied consistently? How do they allow for individual children's needs?

There is much to be considered and ongoing reading, training and discussion will be needed amongst practitioners to ensure that whilst safeguarding remains paramount, we do not compromise the meaningful impact of showing professional love towards children in the early years.