

Who you gonna call? Early years myth busters!

→ Annie Pendrey

Contributor bio

Have you ever heard of the film Ghostbusters or found yourself humming along to its catchy theme tune? The film is centred around a group of friends who spend their time venturing through time, battling, and eradicating supernatural spirits, armed with a backpack of supernatural ghost-busting ingredients. But today, we're about to embark on a different kind of adventure, one that involves dispelling the myths surrounding the role of early years practitioners.

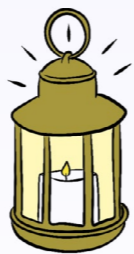
You see, throughout my journey in the early years sector, from being a nursery nurse to a lecturer and an author, I have constantly encountered misconceptions about what we do. There is often an assumption that our work solely revolves around play, failing to grasp that play is, in fact, the very vehicle for learning and development.

In a way, I've felt like a character in the Ghostbusters movie, not fighting supernatural spirits, but rather seeking to eradicate the misunderstandings surrounding my profession. And so, I feel that up until this very day I am a myth buster

So, in the spirit of the Ghostbusters, I ask you, 'Who you gonna call? Myth busters!' It's us, the reflective activists and advocates of the early years sector. Together, we carry the myth buster backpack, aiming to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for the crucial work we do every day.

So, what's in my myth buster backpack?

At the top, you'll find a collection of letters that, when rearranged, spell LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT. These



Illustrations by Anna Deu

letters represent the areas of child development we study and apply in our practice: physical, intellectual, language and communication, emotional and social development. We divide each area into months and years, using this knowledge to inform our professional judgment in supporting every child. It guides us in planning and meeting individual needs, offering a personalised, child-centred approach to learning and development.

The next item in my backpack is a key, which we use to unlock every child's potential. This key unlocks the door to children's discovery and creativity, allowing children to explore their environments and learn through play. Play is the gateway to exploration, discovery and holistic development.

My backpack also contains a

little pot of glitter, symbolising curiosity. As practitioners, we celebrate and nurture children's inquisitive minds by providing play opportunities that encourage their curiosity. We answer countless questions, joyfully embracing the word 'why.'

I carry a lantern too, as a beacon to share with others. As practitioners, we use our expertise in play, learning, and development to shine a light on the abilities of young children. We celebrate their small steps, make reasonable adjustments, and ensure every child has the opportunity to shine. We reflect light through play!

My backpack also holds a journal, representing joy, awe, and wonder. In this journal, I capture the children's play – the spontaneous, joyful moments of learning. I apply all the observation skills I acquired to record children's learning and development. I then reflect on these

observations and share them with peers, as well as the children and their families.

And finally, buried somewhere in the bottom of my backpack are tissues. Yes, that's where tissues always end up, isn't it? These tissues represent our role as nurturers. We support children through transitions, providing unconditional love and creating a sense of belonging. We wipe away the tears and boogies, always there to offer comfort and care.

Of course, there are many more items in my myth buster backpack, but to anyone who claims, 'you only play', let us all continue to be reflective activists and myth busters. Let's share the contents of our myth buster backpacks and shed light on the invaluable work we do.

So, what's in your backpack today?