

Children and Youth Annual Report 2023/2024

A playful year

For 2023/2024 we focused our activities around play as a central aspect of childhood. Play unites work across all three faculties represented in the Centre, enabling consideration of creative and cultural play, landscape, physical health and activity, and most importantly play as an end in and of itself.

Using play as a focus we ran three successful networking and research events.

Wor Culture

In partnership with the HASS Engagement and Place team we ran a 'Wor Culture' event on play, bringing together creative and cultural practitioners from across the North East to think about how and why play is important in their work. Kicking off with provocations from Richard O'Neill from Seven Stories: the Centre for Children's Books and Ben Dickenson from Theatre Hullabaloo, we had a lively conversation focused on the meaning of play to childhood, the importance of risky play, and the significance of intergenerational play.

Come and Play

With support from the ESRC IAA fund, we continued and expanded the conversations from the Wor Culture event with researchers from across the University and external partners in our Centre's 'Come and Play' event. This event started with a practical exploration of play facilitated by Paula Turner which opened up the possibilities of play as a means of connection, a disrupter of hierarchies and boundaries, and a space of discomfort and challenge. Following up with provocations from university researchers and external partners, we expanded our thinking about what play is and can do, before finishing with a more practical consideration of play and place through a focus on Newcastle's Heath Innovation Neighbourhood as a potential space for play. See the attached event report for further details of the whole event!

Postgraduate play

We were pleased to invite our PGR colleague to join us at a special event hosted at Seven Stories. We were given an introduction to the Centre for Children and Youth by Liz Todd and treated to a storytelling workshop from a play facilitator from Seven Stories, where we were introduced to the power of storytelling and able to consider the value of this within our own research and dissemination. Afterwards, PGR colleagues delivered a series of excellent presentations to showcase their research, how it connects with the centre, and how it benefits children, young people, their families and the community.

We look forward to engaging with PGR colleagues in the year to come to connect their important research with the work that we do here at the Centre for Children and Youth.

Play for the future: watch this space

We continue to work with our collaborators from this year to continue the conversations from these events. We expect to be able to circulate news of some further events which will support more research in this area in the new academic year.

Partnerships beyond the University: Coram

One of the hallmarks of our rich research culture around children and youth is the diversity of partnership working across the University. This year we've continued to work with the children's charity [Coram](#) to develop new links with their work.

ECLS co-hosted an event with Coram Life Education: **A whole-community approach to children's wellbeing: helping all children to thrive**. The focus of the event was on the wellbeing of young people, and was aimed to engage with and facilitate discussions between schools, community partners and researchers. It was well-attended by an impressive range of people from within and beyond the university.

Coram's work is very diverse and they welcome collaboration with researchers: please get in touch if you would like to make contact with them.

Looking ahead: the first hundred days

We'll enter into the new academic year just as we come to the end of Labour's first hundred days in power. A new government represents a key opportunity to shape policy directions, and the King's Speech has already foregrounded children and youth with the Children's Wellbeing Bill. In the new academic year we'll be seeking to support Newcastle researchers in engaging with this new environment.

Get involved

The Centre is the sum of its parts! We are keen to support research activities from across the University, led by either staff or students. We expect to have a small budget next year to support activities: if you would like to run an event or have a proposal for another activity which would connect with the wider research community of children and youth researchers please get in touch.

News and enquiries

If you have a proposal for an event or want to make an enquiry about any aspect of the Centre's work, please [submit an enquiry via our webform](#).

During the academic year, we promote events and activities through our news bulletin. This is on hiatus for the summer but from September you will be able to submit news for circulation via our [news, events and publications webform](#).