

THE CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT - DO THE RIGHT THING LOCAL PROJECT

WHAT CHILDREN NEED

In their discussions children identified what children need in their lives to be **safe**, **healthy** and **happy**.

As discussions developed children were introduced to the idea that some things children need are so important that they should be a **right**. The children were encouraged to think that when a need becomes a right it has some power, a sense of urgency, and something that children should have.

To help identify needs children worked with two characters; Jack and Chloe. They plotted on their prop the things that Jack or Chloe would need, from when their Mum was pregnant through to 12 years old.

The children highlighted that some of the things a child and young person need are specific to a particular age, but many are things that children need throughout their lives. Firstly, in terms of the more age-specific needs participants in the workshops saw the need for these things:

Before birth: The children saw pregnancy as an important time for both the child and the mother. They were adamant that pregnant women should avoid smoking, illegal drugs and alcohol whilst also ensuring they eat well. Access to medical services including midwives was thought to be important, as was avoidance of stress.

As a baby: As babies children need practical things like a cot and nappies. Children also saw the need for a child to have a name and a family and lots of attention and cuddles. Medical care continues with the provision of vaccinations and for good health breastfeeding was seen as an important need.

As a toddler: Children of 2 and 3 years old need to learn things like potty training. This is the time when they also need to be supported by adults to learn and the children saw the need for stories and to have opportunities to go to nursery or playgroups.

As a 5 year old: At 5 children need to have friends and when they start school they need things like a school bag and uniform. Children identified that when you go to school you need support from your family to help you learn.

Many of the needs children have in the early years have been discussed by children in another CP project. Find out more about **the best start in life** here: <http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/consultations/early-years>

As an 8 year old: At 8 you need to learn to take some more responsibility for yourself or for pets. You need to have hobbies and get involved in activities. You need more freedom. You need to be able to do your homework.

As a 12 year old: At 12 you need privacy and space. You might need more stuff like computers or phones to keep in touch with your friends. You need to be able to say what your opinion is about things and to make choices. You need friends and to feel included. You need to get enough sleep.

At all ages: Throughout their lives children and young people identified the need for some key things:

- **Every child needs a family who give you care, support and love**
- **To be healthy:** This comes from good medical care, healthy food and clean water and the chance to get involved in exercise and sports.
- **To have friends and to play:** Every child needs to have fun, play outdoors and play sports
- **To be safe**
- **Respect**
- **To have someone to talk to:** particularly when you have a worry or a problem.