



Series 2. Episode 4
Turning *Little Stones* show notes.
Featuring Hannah Ayre as our guest

Episode 4
**The choices we make for
our children (1)**

What a topical podcast for November/December!

Hannah articulates the thoughts and questions that families around the country are considering ahead of applying for primary school places on behalf of their pre-school children.

We all must make important decisions affecting our children, whether to move, which nursery, school, activity group to choose... this is something we can all relate to as we make considered choices affecting our children.

The key is to know our child as best we can. *Delving a Little Deeper (Set 1) Getting to Know You* helps us do just that!

Introducing Hannah

Hannah's parenting story began when she gave birth to her firstborn, Rory. This coincided with when the first COVID 19 lockdown restrictions were being imposed. Hannah and her husband had little external influences and followed their own parenting instincts, together with some childcare input offered through some online information offered through a friend.

She expresses that "in some ways, I'm grateful for this"; as a couple, they had the opportunity to really think about how they wanted to parent their children. Social restrictions limited the time Rory could spend with people other than his parents, something that has left a legacy, especially around separations and transitions.

The idea of separating from Rory to resume her career came as a huge challenge. Having visited a day nursery, she concluded that this was something she "just could not do" and they began to explore the possibility of being a stay-at-home Mum. She realises this is an option and a privilege that few have.

Separation anxiety & transition

Hannah explains something of her own mental health and her separation anxiety.

Rory in turn finds any transition difficult, something that was became evident when he began at the local pre-school, aged 2.

She celebrates how the setting understood both her and Rory. The care they showed through a long period of transition, "was incredible!"

The things I value about pre-school.



Series 2. Episode 4
Turning *Little Stones* show notes.
Featuring Hannah Ayre as our guest

Episode 4
**The choices we make for
our children (1)**

At the village pre-school, children are grouped together in mixed ages and abilities. Children have freedom of choice as to what to do and who to play with. With small staff: child ratios, practitioners can support children's emotional development.

Hannah explains how this is important to them at home, where they want to create an environment where he can "safely be angry, safely be sad, safely be happy".

However, no sooner had Rory settled into pre-school, they found they were having to think about school!

Questions, questions, questions...

Hannah shares some of the questions she has as she contemplates the approach of formal education.

School rules and the need to conform. She understands that all schools must impose roles for everyone to follow, but children are so young and impressionable, and she worries that her child's unique personality may be suppressed.

Children start school so young in the UK. She cites European and Scandinavian countries where children begin formal education so much later than in the UK. (*In Delving a Little Deeper (set 1), we look at how the needs of children in first 6 years of life differ from the next phase of childhood.*)

The whole transition processes. Hannah talks about how she needs to be assured how much Rory needs to be supported through any transition. (*Caroline adds how much care primary schools and early years settings take to support children through transition.*)

Friendships. Hannah explains how Rory's friendships are important to consider. Where his close friends go to school is a consideration. (*Caroline adds how often children surprise adults when they re-configure friendships in their early days at school*)

Weighing up what is offered at different provisions. Hannah celebrates much about their local village school provision - Forest School, structure, science, the adjacent playpark, its locality...

And then there are...

External influences. Worries about bullying, pandemic, industrial action, safe schools. Some family members have had to make difficult choices which have been influenced by some of the above.

The wider impact. Any decision will affect the whole family... do we choose a different school for each child? Do we drive them to school? When do I return to the work?

Current options under consideration

Hannah and Will currently:

Intend to re-visit their local primary school.

Apply to a primary school (to be decided).



Series 2. Episode 4
Turning *Little Stones* show notes.
Featuring Hannah Ayre as our guest

Episode 4
**The choices we make for
our children (1)**

Possibly defer the entry for a term or two. (legally, in the UK, formal education must begin the term before their 5th birthday).

Look further into the Home Education option with, local groups and provisions.

Managing the transition...

Hannah knows that whatever their final decision, she will support Rory as early as possible. This is likely to include,

getting to know the setting/school/group

growing friendships

attending taster sessions

as much overlap as possible.

Caroline adds...

It is important for every child to hear *positive* messages that they can relate to about the next step. Try walking past (Hannah can go to the adjacent playpark) and talk about whether the teacher is reading *their* favourite story to the children, singing *their* favourite song, has *their* favourite play activities...

Avoid any 'big school' references – anything children *cannot* yet understand. They may begin to cope by regressing into being 'little children' again.

Make sure home continues to be a reassuring and safe place to be. A supportive loving home is *the* most important thing for children facing any transition and change.

"It's not finding the perfect solution; it's about finding the best solution for you, your family and for your child".

Key messages from Hannah...

There is no perfect setting, school or family. Making choices is about making the best choices you can in your context.

Be as open minded as possible. Hannah, Will and Rory are joint decision makers!

Further information, practical guidance and advice are available through,

**Turning Little Stones &
Delving a little Deeper (Set 1)**

See website for details.