

- Child development

Kids' early years a critical window for development

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eating can impact obesity can be turned into bite-sized information to help parents teach their children healthy eating habits.

Apart from the knowledge, collaboration is key, she said.

"To truly have collaboration, we need to... look holistically, understand the ecosystem, who are the players in the ecosystem, what is available, what is the true gap, and what is the true value that we can bring into that space," she added.

At the same fireside chat, Minister of State for Home Affairs and Social and Family Development Sun Xueling said families spend a lot on tuition when their children go to primary school, but the early years of life are actually a critical window of development. She highlighted the research from Gusto that showed that infants who watch more than two hours of television a day have lower-than-average IQs, and said emphasis should be placed on pre-school learning.

"It's about how we're encouraging our children to learn – outdoor play, being creative, having more free time of their own... learning through interacting with other children. It's not about... learning multiplication tables in the early years," said Ms Sun.

Child, a multi-agency effort set up in 2021, brings together experts from across a range of disciplines, including health, education, sociology, psychology, artificial intelligence and data analytics, to put the findings in the Gusto study into practice.

Its inaugural biennial conference, held at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, is a platform for early childhood stakeholders to discuss challenges and solutions.

Professor Adrian Sandler, executive director of Child, which is based at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, said on Thursday: "We aim to speak for the science of child development, to accelerate the translation of research into policy and practice and to improve outcomes especially for the disadvantaged."

The conference ends on Friday.