The rising pressure and costs of children's birthday parties

Most of us remember the time when children's birthday parties involved jelly and ice cream and balloons. Where parties where held at home, you played games and everyone went home with a slice of cake.

What changed? Why now do so many parents feel under so much pressure to hold expensive parties for their children, sometimes so expensive they risk getting in to debt for.

Many parents that Home-Start supports have sadly fallen into that trap- worrying so much about holding lavish parties, often in order to keep up with their children's friends parties that they are willing to struggle with the financial pressure this puts on them.

Is social media to blame? TV advertising? Marketing and pester power? What parents tell us is that they worry about proving their worth and ability as a parent- "If I don't do this for my child, what will others think of me?"

Do children care as much as we think they do? From our experience children aren't that fickle at a young age, so is it about teaching them that most things in life cost money, things cannot be expected. Do parents need to have these conversations more with their children, rather than worry about what others think?

We know that is easier said than done, marketing companies thrive on getting to children first, through tv, social media… now more than ever before children are subjected to advertising which trickles down through the 'pester power' route and plays into the conscience of the parent.

But, something that we all need to remember from time to time is that actually where children thrive the most is in a loving and supportive home environment. Having meaningful experiences with friends, and families, it doesn't matter what food is served, what the entertainment is, and how fancy the party bags are.

We urge all parents to remember this, next time they feel overwhelmed by children's birthday parties and how they are going to afford them.