



Early Years Quality Improvement Team's Weekly Bulletin 11th December 2025

Welcome to this week's bulletin, recent bulletins can be found [here](#)

Keep in touch



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New Managers / Deputy Manager Academy

Are you new to the role of the manager or deputy manager at a PVI nursery?

Perhaps you have only been a manager for the last 6 months or so or have recently become a deputy manager. Let us know and we can offer you some additional support whilst you fully find your feet (no charge).

One of the Early Years Project Officer's will meet with you virtually to discuss your current challenges and offer advice and guidance and you will also be invited to termly, virtual group meetings to network with other new managers for peer support.

What next: just complete this [Microsoft Teams form](#)

New Practitioners Academy

Are you training or been in early years for less than a year?

Join our new practitioners' academy by completing this [FORM](#) and we will be in touch before each session to share the links with you.

These are free to attend and will help you in your new or future role (there is no need to book, just complete the form).

23rd September	4 to 5pm
18th November	9.45 to 10.45am
20th January	4 to 5pm
10th March	9.45 to 10.45am
19th May	4 to 5pm
7th July	9.45 to 10.45am

We will chat to you about all sorts of elements of practice as well as giving you the opportunity to ask questions.

We are really looking forward to meeting you and welcoming you to the best profession in the world!

Something to do this week! Are you making the most of your membership?



Lancashire's Early Years Membership – Your pathway to Quality and Support

Your **Lancashire Early Years Membership** is packed with resources, training, and support designed to help you deliver the best for children and families. But are you making the most of everything available to you?

For nurseries and out of school clubs

- **Professional Development:** Have you explored the full training programme from Lancashire County Council? From EYFS updates to leadership courses, these sessions keep you and your team skilled and confident in practice and being a member means you get two for the price of one (exclusions apply)
- **Termly sessions:** Two places at each 'Manager's time to talk' sessions (cluster meeting for out of school club managers)
- **Members practical workshops:** Unlimited staff places on the live virtual workshops
- **Support:** Email and telephone support from your named consultant (Development officer for out of school club)
- **Free subscription to the termly Spotlight magazine:** Packed with articles, information and case studies from the sector and news from across Lancashire.

- **Boost Your Business:** Are you using the Teams channel to get access to the manager's document bank and termly updates?

For childminders

- **Access Tailored Support:** Are you accessing support from your Development Officer?
- **Childminder portfolio including policies and procedures:** Are you using your dedicated childminder resources
- **Flexible Training Options:** Have you booked onto our online or face-to-face courses for childminders? Topics include SEND, child development, and parental engagement. Childminder members get discounts on selected training and publications.
- **Connect and Share:** Are you part of local networking opportunities? Being involved means your voice is heard and your practice benefits from meeting other childminders and sharing ideas.
- **Boost Your Business:** Are you using the Teams channel to get access policies and procedures and up to date information?

Extra Perks for All Members, including Universal membership

- **Weekly bulletins** with the latest news and opportunities.
- Access to the **Early Years Professional Development Centre** for training and advice.
- **Support for expanding** your provision or setting up new services.
- **Recruitment:** Use our services to advertise your vacancies
- **Home Learning Resources:** Are you using our family-friendly online tools to support learning at home? They strengthen your partnership with parents.
- **School readiness:** Are you accessing the resources online for children making the transition to school?
- **SEND resources:** Have you accessed the SEND pages of our website and used the toolkit and other resources?

Your membership gives you so much, it's there to support you for success.

Make sure you're using the benefits available to you.

Visit [Early years packages of support - Lancashire County Council](#) to explore your resources today.

Five minute business tips for childminders



Childminders, are you looking for quick, practical advice for your childminding business. Take a look at the ***Five minute business tips for childminders*** on YouTube. Each video is packed with simple, actionable strategies to help you stay organised and be confident with the **business side of childminding**.

Watch the latest video on 'Business planning' here:

<https://youtu.be/gbjWzFnDdlQ>

Foundation Years

Ofsted reform and entitlement regulations



On 10th November 2025, Ofsted introduced their new **inspection framework** and **report cards** with a five-point grading scale following the government's commitment to remove overall effectiveness grades. These **changes to inspection outcomes** for all types of early years providers mean several early years regulations require updating so local authorities can continue to secure free childcare at safe, high-quality provision.

This includes the regulations that;

- **enable** (but do not require) **local authorities** to refuse or withdraw early education and childcare entitlements funding from providers who receive specified Ofsted grades, and,
- **require local authorities** to secure the provision of information, advice and training to early years providers registered with Ofsted that have been judged less than 'Good'.

On 3rd December 2025, the Department for Education laid a statutory instrument in Parliament updating these regulations and this is due to come into effect from 1st January 2026.

Subject to Parliament approving the changes, we can confirm the new specified grades will be as follows for inspections taking place on or after 10th November 2025.

The updated specified grades at which **local authorities** are able to **refuse or withdraw entitlements funding** will be where one or more of the following apply:

- All entitlements – where the 'Safeguarding' standards are 'Not met'
- 30 hours childcare for eligible working families and the universal 3- and 4-year-old entitlement – where 'Leadership and governance' has been graded as 'Urgent improvement'
- The entitlement for 2-year-olds for families receiving additional support – where 'Leadership and Governance' has been graded as 'Needs attention' or 'Urgent improvement'

The specified grades for entitlements funding **apply to all types of early years providers inspected by Ofsted**, including some independent schools. Where an independent school is inspected by an independent inspectorate, the specified grade is where either 'Safeguarding' or 'Leadership and governance' are 'Not met'.

Childminder agencies and providers registered with childminder agencies are not affected by these changes. **Local authorities** retain the ability to terminate funding for these providers where the agency is **awarded a grade of "ineffective"** in its most recent inspection report, or the agency notifies the local authority that, in its reasonable opinion, the childminder has ceased to provide childcare of satisfactory quality.

The updated specified grades requiring **local authorities** to secure the provision of information, advice and training to early years providers registered with Ofsted will be when '**Safeguarding**' standards are '**Not met**' or '**Leadership and governance**' is graded as '**Needs attention**' or '**Urgent improvement**'.

An updated version of the **Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance** will be published in early **2026**, ensuring these updates are accurately reflected in guidance for local authorities. However, **local authorities** can take action in reliance on the new specified grades from **1st January 2026** when the updated regulations take effect. Where providers were last inspected before 10th November 2025 under the previous inspection framework, the previous specified grades continue to apply. Should Ofsted publish a report before 1st January 2026 and the inspection took place on or after 10th November, local authorities may be able to rely on the terms of their provider agreements if they wish to take action before the updated regulations take effect.

Providers should be aware **local authorities** may need to review and update their **provider agreements** in light of these changes.

These changes are to ensure **local authorities** can continue to take action where **quality concerns** have been **identified** following an inspection and do not represent a change in policy.

With regard to entitlements funding **local authorities** have power to refuse or **withdraw funding** if they consider it appropriate, but they are not required to do so. Local authorities should work with providers to ensure children receive high-quality early education and childcare, giving the best possible start in life.

There were also **updates** made to the **Experience-Based Route eligibility criteria** to come into effect from **1 January 2026**. This is to set out the requirements for early years providers with the new Ofsted inspection framework and for independent schools inspected by an independent inspectorate. Please see the [Early years qualification requirements and standards](#) for more information.

Continuous professional development journey maps – early years setting



We're excited to introduce our new CPD journey maps for early years settings! These resources have been designed to support you in finding your feet in your journey in the early years. They can also be used to understand different roles in your setting to support progression. They include links to essential and recommended training, key documents, professional development and networking:

[Manager's journey](#) (PDF 220KB) – Tips for leading your setting, meeting statutory requirements and supporting your team effectively.

[Room leader's journey](#) (PDF 293KB) – Practical tools and links to training to help you manage your room, plan learning, and lead staff confidently.

[Practitioner's journey](#) (PDF 190KB) – Essential information and links to training to understand the foundations of your role and strengthen your knowledge of child development.

Continuous professional development journey maps - childminders

We're excited to introduce our new Childminder and Childminder Assistant Journey Maps! These resources have been created to make your role easier by bringing together everything

you need in one place, from lists of essential training and key documents to tips for networking and professional development. Whether you're just starting out or looking to refresh your knowledge, these journey maps will guide you step by step, helping you feel confident and supported in providing the best care for children and confidently navigate your role and continue to grow in knowledge and expertise.

- [Childminder journey map](#) (PDF 134KB)
- [Childminder assistant journey map](#) (PDF 114KB)

You can find the Journey Maps here [Leading your setting - Lancashire County Council](#)
They are also attached to this bulletin email.

Updates on the review process for continuation of inclusion funding for childminders

Attached is a letter from the Specialist Teaching Service – Early Years Team on the key changes for review arrangements of Inclusion Funding. Any review requested will no longer be accepted by paper-based methods and the link contained in the attached letter should be used to request continuation of inclusion funding.

Action required: Autumn Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Lancashire Children Looked After (CLA) in Your settings



The PEP is a statutory document that **MUST** be completed EVERY term to ensure the regular monitoring and review of ALL Lancashire CLA. It is the joint responsibility of the social worker and the setting to produce a thorough, well thought out education plan for the term that meets the individual child's needs and moves them towards school readiness. **The Autumn term deadline has now passed.**

All autumn PEP meetings for CLA age to 2 years - 4 years should have taken place by now.

- Please check you Portal using this link <https://professionalportal.lancashire.gov.uk> and the email address used to register the account by the Virtual School and complete any PEPs awaiting your attention. Save the document as you go and save a PDF copy before submitting the document.
- If the PEP meeting has not been arranged, contact the child's social worker and request the meeting is arranged urgently.
- If the meeting has taken place but the form has not been delegated to you, please contact the social worker to request delegation.
- All PEP documentation must be completed and submitted within 2 weeks of the PEP meeting taking place.
- Please state any concerns you have around the child's development and what is being done to support the child within the PEP.

- Please ensure all education targets are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound) and that EYPP spending links to the child's targets (EYPP is issued for vulnerable children by the authority based on your termly head count).
- Support and new quality assurance standards can be found at [Personal education plans \(PEPs\) guidance - Lancashire County Council](#).

If you are experiencing technical issues or need to make amendments to your portal account, please contact pepqueries@lancashire.gov.uk as soon as possible for support.

The EYs consultant at the Virtual School is required to attend 1 PEP meeting for all CLA due to start reception in Sept 26. Please email sharie.mayren@lancashire.gov.uk with the date of the next PEP for these children in your setting, or if you require any support.

Starting school is a huge moment for children, especially those who are looked-after (CLA), previously looked-after (PLA) and those who may have a social worker. These children have often experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or trauma and may need more support with this important transition.

Why do we need to consider this cohort of children?

- These children are likely to be behind their peers during their early years and this gap may widen over time.
- ACEs can affect attendance, learning, behaviour and wellbeing
- In 2018, 50% of children who had a social worker (CWSW) in the last six years were able to achieve GLD at the end of reception compared to 72% who never had a Social Worker
- Children with a Social Worker are more than 3x more likely to be persistently absent from school, and 2-4 times more likely to be permanently excluded

For ideas to support vulnerable children with the transition of starting school, please see [Pre-school to Reception - Lancashire County Council](#) and don't forget to enter any actions in the Transitions action plan on the PEP.

View the Virtual School's free training offer [Training and events by the Virtual School - Lancashire County Council](#)

Signpost parents/carers of CLA, children with a social worker, children previously looked after, adopted or kinship care [Parents and carers of children looked after \(CLA\) previously looked after children \(PLAC\) and children with a social worker \(CWSW\) - Lancashire County Council](#) for information, educational resources and free training.

You will find supporting documents attached:

- Questions to ask of the PEP targets – we expect to see 3 targets linked to the child's development areas. Please ensure all elements of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound) are in the target setting
- PEP Checklist – please check your PEP against this list before pressing submit
- PEP QA standards – so you know what we are looking for when quality assuring the PEPs.

Thank you for your continued support of Lancashire's vulnerable children.

Safeguarding – Continuum of need threshold guidance updated

Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire

Levels of Need – At a Glance

Are you routinely using the **Continuum of Need and Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire** resources to help keep the children in your care safe? They work best when used together as the booklet has indicators of what we may notice at each level of need and therefore can be used when we are assessing vulnerability.

The booklet has been updated slightly using more relevant terminology. You can find the latest version at this link: [working-well-with-children-and-families-pt-1-2-v6.pdf](https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/working-well-with-children-and-families-pt-1-2-v6.pdf)

Safeguarding – Operation Encompass is rolled out in Lancashire

We are delighted to announce that from **1st December 2025**, Lancashire County Council rolled out **Operation Encompass** to all Maintained, Private, Voluntary and Independent early years settings for children who are taking up Funded Early Education (FEE) places. This important initiative enables us to work together to safeguard and support children who may be experiencing domestic abuse.

What is Operation Encompass? Operation Encompass is a partnership between police and education, designed to ensure that when a child has been exposed to domestic abuse, the setting’s Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is notified promptly. This allows you to offer timely and sensitive support to the child, helping to safeguard their wellbeing and development.

Why is this important? Research shows that children who experience domestic abuse can face significant and lasting challenges. By working together, we can make a real difference in their lives, providing the support and care they need to heal and thrive.

All relevant providers have now been emailed instructions on how to sign up so please do this as soon as you can. We will review how things are going early in the new year with a view to Childminders then being able to register for notifications.

Thank you for your continued commitment to safeguarding children in Lancashire. We look forward to welcoming your setting to Operation Encompass and working together to make a positive difference.

A copy of the **emailed instructions to sign up are attached** to this bulletin email.

New Potty Training Guide

A new 'Potty Training Guide' has been produced, linked to the Best Start in Life initiative and work from the Kindered2 survey on starting in Reception. It has been produced by the same team behind the Starting Reception definition.

You can find it here: [The Potty Training Guide - Starting Reception](#)

Heads up from Health Protection – December 2025 newsletter



Please see the link below for the latest Heads up Health Protection bulletin.

[Heads up from Health Protection - December 2025](#)

The Health Protection team is committed to raising awareness and providing valuable information to help you stay healthy and safe. They work to ensure that you have access to the resources and knowledge to help you make informed choices in order to protect young children.

Selected DfE Updates 3rd - 8th December 2025

- [Access to early SEND support through Best Start Family Hubs](#)

Best Start Family Hubs to act as one-stop-shop for parents with SEND professional and services to support speech and language development confirmed. Updated: 4 December 2025