



Early Years Quality Improvement Team's Weekly Bulletin Thursday 26th February 2026

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

Keep in touch



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www.lancashire.gov.uk/early-years-support-and-training/



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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).

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!

Early Years Central Retention and Block Transfer

Following consultation with the Early Years sector in the autumn term, the Schools Forum agreed to allow the Council to retain 0.75% (£1.7m) of the Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant in 2026/27, which will be used to meet the statutory duties around early years quality assurance and sufficiency. This will support the significant administration related to the recent increases in the Early Years entitlements.

Further to the 0.75% central retention, an additional 1% (£2.25m) will be set aside from the Early Years Grant and held within the High Needs Block to support HNB/SEND initiatives in Early Years, which will be ring-fenced for early years settings only.

2026/27 Budgeted Expenditure		£m
a) Allocated to settings	Base rate funding for Under 2s, 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds	214.357
	Maintained nursery school supplementary funding	5.406
	Deprivation for all entitlements	7.132
	SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) for all entitlements	1.650
	Contribution to High Needs Block, ring-fenced for Early Years	2.271
	EY Pupil Premium (EYPP)	3.054

	EY Disability Access Fund (DAF)	1.103
b) Central budgets	EY Central budgets	1.703
Total		236.676

The 1% transfer to the HNB does not require Schools Forum approval and has been a decision by the Council with permission from the Department of Education in line with the grant conditions, as this money will still benefit children in early years settings, but has been allocated in a different way to target those children more effectively with the highest needs. This is in line with the direction of travel for settings to be more inclusive and to receive proportionate funding to more effectively enable this.

The rates for your setting will be sent to you by the end of the week, all rates have been increased and taken account of inflation.

Something to do this week! Share the safer sleep message

Safer sleep week is 9th to 15 March so now is the perfect time to review your sleep and rest arrangements for children in your care. Safer sleep isn't just for babies at home, it is vital in early years settings too.

Top tips for safer sleep at your setting:

- Check the temperature: aim for a room temperature of between 16 and 20°C. Use lighter bedding and open windows to keep the environment comfortable if it gets too warm.
- Look at the space from their perspective. Lie down in the sleep area, what do children see and feel? Is the space calm, safe and soothing?
- Inspect equipment. Make sure that mats, cots and bedding are in good condition, clean and used correctly.
- Review your policies: compare your arrangements with **Safer Sleep guidance** and your own risk assessments.



Where to find guidance:

- Lancashire CSAP have excellent information and guidance to support you. Including advice for professionals, parents and grandparents.
<https://lancshiresafeguardingpartnership.org.uk/p/toolkits/safer-sleep-1>
- Don't forget to share advice to parents and carers including information from the NHS
www.what0-18.nhs.uk/parents/carers/sleep
- The Lullaby Trust are hosting Safer sleep week next week to raise awareness amongst professionals and families. www.lullabytrust.org.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/safer-sleep-week/



The Lullaby Trust tells us around 200 babies die every year that is around 4 babies a week because of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in the United Kingdom.

There were ten infant and child deaths where unsafe sleep practices were found reviewed by the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) in Pan-Lancashire in 2020/21. Unsafe sleeping arrangements are a feature in the majority of SIDS deaths in Pan-Lancashire.

On the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) website there are lots of useful resources available for use by professionals and that can also be shared with parents/carers. The information is mainly on safer sleep arrangements for babies, however there is also detail on safer sleep for older children and for children with additional needs. Many of the resources have been translated into a variety of languages too.

How you can help parents/carers

Sometimes developing a family friendly information share display can help in ensuring important safety messages reach and are understood by parents. Below is an example of a knowledge check activity you could share within your setting.

Have a look at these and the wider resources to help promote the safety messages from the CSAP website.

[Lancashire Safeguarding Partnership - Safer Sleep](#)



Did you spot them all?

1. Baby is only 3 months old and is in their own room. They should be in the same room as the parents until 6 months.
2. Side sleeping- Baby should be placed on their back to sleep
3. Baby does not have their feet to the foot of the cot. They could wriggle under the covers and overheat
4. The bedding is too loose meaning their head could become covered
5. The baby is asleep in a pod. These should not be used as it can lead to overheating
6. Baby should not be wearing a hat indoors as this is where they lose their excess heat
7. Soft toy in cot can increase risk of head covering and of accidents
8. Baby is next to the radiator which can cause baby to overheat



The Lullaby Trust is also great for resources. They have a Safer Sleep Awareness guide specifically for Childminders, Foster Carers, Nannies and Nursery Settings.

Inspire early years success with the maths champions programme



The Maths Champions programme is strengthening early years maths practice across the UK by building practitioner confidence and improving outcomes for children.

Independent evaluation shows that settings taking part achieve an average of three months' additional progress in maths and language compared with non-participating settings.

Children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium make up to six months' additional progress, supporting early closure of attainment gaps.

The twelve-month programme offers flexible online professional development, practical resources and expert support to help practitioners embed high quality maths into everyday play and routines. Maths Champions lead reflective practice within their settings, sharing learning with colleagues and promoting consistent, effective approaches to early maths.

Your insights and experiences help drive improvement across the sector.

Take action today

Register your interest or apply now to become a Maths Champion and make a lasting difference to early maths learning.

<https://ndna.org.uk/champions-programmes/maths-champions-early-years-maths-training/>

Guidance for the allocation of Pupil Premium Grant + for looked after children. 2026-2027

Please find full details from the Virtual School, attached.

Team Around the School and Settings (TASS)

Please find attached the latest news from across the county in our 'TASS What's New' document.

Giving children in Early Years Settings a Best Start in Life



- **Welcome to our Best Start in Life Toolkit**, supporting practitioners to ensure that Lancashire's children have the best start in life from conception to reception.
- Our aim is to ensure that every child in Lancashire is ready to embrace the next step in their learning journey when they begin reception.
- Through our consultation with the sector we know that supporting two year olds learning and development is where you would like us to focus first. In subsequent years we will expand the toolkit to spotlight on other age groups from within the early years age ranges.
- You can dip into this Toolkit at any time. We will add to it regularly, throughout the year, building a great resource to support you in your work.

Get started

- Watch this [short video](#) to find out more about our Best Start in Life Campaign and how your setting can get involved
- Download your Commitment Pledge to display in your setting and share the information for parents (attached)
- Decide who will be your Champion. Find out more about the Champion role attached.
- Follow us on Facebook so that you are aware of new content as it appears @LancashireEarlyYears
- Find out about the National Best Start in Life campaign <https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/> and share the information with your families

Know every child and respond

In order to support children's learning and development effectively, it is really important that your assessment is accurate AND useful. You have to know where children are up to in order to plan for and facilitate their next steps in their learning.

It is also really important to know what typical development looks like for each age and stage. Some tools to help you to know if children are working at typical levels, along with what to do if they are not and they have gaps in learning emerging are:

- [Development matters in the early years](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>)
- [WELLCOMM WellComm - Lancashire County Council](#))

In Lancashire we ask early years settings to undertake their Statutory Two-Year-Old Progress Check as close to the child's second birthday as possible. This is so that you can identify any gaps in learning that are emerging quickly and put the help and support in place to support each child's learning and development. You can also share the information from your check with Health Visitors if you have parental permission in place. This will be helpful as they also undertake a progress check at age two with families. This is called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and is often undertaken at around thirty months.

You can find out more about these two year old statutory assessments here [Two year old progress check and Lancashire's integrated review pathway - Lancashire County Council](#)

Tuning into and understanding two year olds

Collect and share our downloadable cards for practitioners focusing on:

- Listening and attention skills
- Physical development skills
- Self-regulation and executive functioning skills
- Key routines

We will release a new card every two weeks. Practitioners may also want to share these cards with parents to support their home learning environments.

Find our first card about **bed time routines** attached

Look out for future ones in our weekly bulletins.

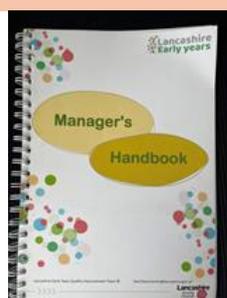
Training for March

We are pleased to share the training list for March attached to this email.

Full of engaging and informative courses designed to support your ongoing professional development.

Take a look at what is on offer!

Manager's Handbook publication



This bumper 95 page handbook has been designed to support nursery managers in carrying out their role and responsibilities. It contains information and advice to help lead a team and provide the very highest quality of provision to families and children. It has been organised so that different topics can be dipped into at any time according to their priorities or challenges.

There are 10 chapters which explore:

- **essential threads**
- **environments**
- **legislation and obligations**
- **leadership**
- **staff practice**
- **development and training**
- **parents as partners**
- **safeguarding**
- **recruitment**
- **inspection**

The bank of self-reflection at questions at the start will help to identify strengths and areas of development to enable you to focus on your priorities. Reflecting and evaluating your own personal strengths as well as areas and tasks that you find challenging, may help you in deciding what approach to take.

There are also some templates which will support you with environmental audits, action planning and supporting staff with coaching and development. **Cost: £22**

You can view a video showing the content of the handbook here: <https://youtu.be/ltGWfxa4ZQo>

Explore our full selection of publications designed to inspire, inform, and support your professional journey in early years education. Whether you're looking to deepen your understanding, refresh your practice, or spark new ideas, these reads are perfect for your CPD toolkit. For full details and to purchase any of our publications please visit [Publications for sale - Lancashire County Council](#)

Childminder and out of school cluster meetings

Childminders and out of school club members – please find attached details of your cluster meetings for this term.

NDNA free quiz: Brilliant babies



Children in the first two years of life experience rapid development. Through their experiences, they forge strong pathways within their brain that will inform the rest of their lives. Test your knowledge on supporting the development of babies in your early years setting with NDNA's free quiz. You can take the quiz online or print off a copy for your notice board or staff room. You can access the quiz here:

[NDNA quiz - Brilliant Babies - NDNA](#)

90th birthday celebrations



Happy birthday to Lee Royd Nursery turning 90 years old this April. They are holding a special day to celebrate this amazing achievement, everyone is welcome. See attached flyer for details.

Invitation to join the EEF funded programme Early Skills for Life



Your setting is invited to express interest in Early Skills for Life, a new project funded by the Education Endowment Foundation. The programme is designed to strengthen children's early PSED skills, with a particular focus on self-regulation.

What is the Early Skills for Life programme?

Early Skills for Life is a play-based programme aimed at improving the personal, social, and emotional development of 3–4 year olds.

It supports children—especially those most vulnerable—to develop the emotional, social and self-regulation skills needed to be 'school ready'.

Developed by the Partnership for Children team, the programme draws on both research evidence and practical early years expertise.

Why take part?

The programme aims to:

- help children understand and manage their feelings, develop self-control and build independence and confidence
- provide practical tools and professional development for practitioners
- offer settings the opportunity to help shape an emerging evidence informed model

What participation involves

By taking part, your setting will receive free of charge resources and supporting materials for a play-based programme grounded in early years pedagogy and evidence.

You will also receive training sessions and online support, reflecting key messages from the latest educational research.

All settings will receive book tokens (£100) to purchase up to 10 books recommended to use as part of the programme and a contribution towards staff costs (£7.50 per hour per practitioner) for time spent taking part in professional development activities.

If you would like to express your interest in being part of this programme, please complete the expression for interest form which you can find in both the setting information sheet and project flyer.

Free upcoming early years workshops and educational psychology consultations

We continue to deliver **group consultations online**, where EY SENDCo's can come and take part in group problem solving with other SENDCos facilitated by an EP. Consultation is a way of thinking through any concerns about individual children or groups of children. This can be related to learning, emotions, their experience of their environment etc. Through consultation, SENDCos and the EP will aim to identify a way of moving forward using solution-orientated frameworks. Strategies and approaches will be created in collaboration utilising all of the expertise in the room to create change based on psychological formulation. Next steps are agreed based upon what will work best for you and the children you are working with. Feedback from SENDCo's who have attended these has been really positive. The next session is on **Friday 6th March 9.30 am- 11.30 am**. You can book your place on this or future sessions here [clickDelegate Early Years Online Group Consultations](#).

Additionally, our next session in the Collaborative Journey's series is on **Wednesday 4th March 9.30 am- 10.30 am**. The topic will be **Effective Early Years Intervention in Supporting Autism**. Anyone working in the early years and Parent Carers are welcome to join these sessions. Places are bookable here [clickDelegate Collaborative Journeys: Topic: Effective early years intervention in supporting autism](#).

We also have our next Parent Carer workshop on **Wednesday 18th March 6 pm- 7pm**. This workshop will focus on **Supporting Co-operation and Kindness in the Early Years**. Parent Carers

can book their place here [clickDelegate Growing Together: Empowering Parents for Early Childhood Success. Topic: Promoting kindness and co-operation](#)

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to let us know. We hope to see you there!

Selected DfE Updates 23rd - 24th February 2026

[Statistics at DfE](#)

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The Department for Education publishes official statistics on education and children.

- Updated: 24 February 2026
[Ventilation and air quality in education and childcare settings](#)

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How schools and other education and childcare providers should monitor and manage ventilation and air quality.

- Updated: 24 February 2026