



Early Years Quality Improvement Team's Weekly Bulletin

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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Advertise your job vacancies for free

www.lancashire.gov.uk/practitioners/supporting-children-and-families/childcare-and-early-years-settings/ complete this [Form](#)

New Manager/Deputy 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).

19th May

4 to 5pm

7th July

9.45 to 10.45am

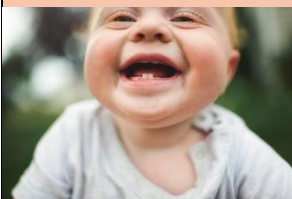
We will chat to you about all sorts of elements of practice as well as giving you the opportunity to ask questions.

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

Your sector representatives

Please contact your PVI representatives on the Early Years Consultative Group, **Rafael Schiel** rafael@giantleapchildcare.co.uk or **Sharon Fenton** sharon@risingstarslancaster.co.uk if you have any comments or questions that you would like them to take forward to the County Council on your behalf.

Something to do this week – support children's oral health in national smile month



National smile month is here! Running from the **11th of May to the 11th of June**. Find out all about it and find fun resources and activities to use with the children and share with parent. [Join Our #Smile50 Display](#)

Did you know that 11 % of 3 year olds in England have visible tooth decay (3 teeth on average) and this rises to nearly 25% of 5 year olds. In the Early Years we can do a lot to support parents and children to understand how to look after their teeth.

This week consider how you are meeting your responsibilities in the EYFS Statutory Framework to promote oral health of the children who attend your setting. [Oral health - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#). As well as advice for practitioners, there are lots of resources to share with families and links to further information.

Visit the Lancashire County Council website and share these resources with parents: www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/mouth-and-tooth-care/

Lead Practitioners – Lancashire needs you!



We would like to invite all **childminders, PVI and Section 27 leaders** to apply to join our inspirational lead practitioner programme from the Autumn term 2026.

If you have elements of excellent effective practice that you would be willing to share more widely to support us in our mission to improve outcomes for all children, please complete the application form attached by the **30th June 2026**.

You can find more information, including the criteria to apply and the application form, in the **attached applicant pack**.

Send your completed application to:

Annette.Shepherd@lancashire.gov.uk

Best start in life practice card



Collect and share the latest card for practitioners working with 2 year olds.

The topic this week is '**Follow my hands**' and the card is attached for you to use in your setting and share with parents.

Watch this [short video](#) to find out more about our **Best Start in Life Campaign** and how your setting can get involved

National Year of Reading Webinar for Early Years leaders and practitioners

As part of the National Year of Reading, this flagship event is a brilliant opportunity to reflect on your current provision and take your reading culture to the next level

We know that fostering a love of reading early on has a lasting impact - supporting language development, wellbeing and future learning so this is not one to miss.

Join this [National Literacy Trust Webinar](#)

23rd June 2026
9:30 to 10:30am



This session is designed for leaders and practitioners who want to:

- Develop a strong *vision* for reading for pleasure
- Create and sustain a reading-rich culture across their setting
- Explore how leadership, strategic decisions and whole-setting approaches can help reading thrive
- Gain practical ideas, tools and examples from a range of early years environments

Find resources here: [Resources for early years, primary and secondary schools | National Literacy Trust](#)

Stronger Practice Hub



Please find attached the May newsletter.

It includes an opportunity to **work for the Hub as an Early Years Learning Lead.**

Are you an experienced Early Years Leader or Setting Manager ready for your next professional challenge?

We are pleased to share new Department for Education roles coming to Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs from September 2026. These new Early Years Learning Lead roles are advertised below, strengthening sector-led support and professional practice in three key areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): **Communication and Language** (4 days per week), **Mathematics** (3 days per week) and **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** (2 days per week).

Please see the newsletter for further details.

DfE fully funded SENCO training places

As part of the government's **Best Start in Life** strategy, to break down barriers to opportunity and improve early identification and support for children with SEND, the Department for Education is very pleased to announce that Best Practice Network (BPN) has been selected as our delivery partner to provide an additional 9,500 Early Years SENCO training places from **April 2026 until March 2028.**

Training is available across England and is open to Early Years educators currently working as, or due to start working as, a Special Educational Needs Coordinator in their setting.

The first cohort of trainees commenced in April 2026 and recruitment is open for future cohorts now. For further information, including eligibility and to complete your application, please see [Early Years SENCO - Level 3 | Best Practice Network](#).

Armed forces covenant fund trust

Under this programme the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust will award grants of between £5,000 and £80,000 on behalf of the MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years programme, towards projects lasting up to two years, which help enhance early childhood education and childcare settings to meet specific needs of young children from armed forces families.

Closing date: 15 Jul 2026

Full details are [here](#)

Inclusion team newsletter

Please follow to link to read the newsletter:

[Inclusion Newsletter \(schools and settings\) 12 May 2026](#)

Health Protection team bulletin

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

[Heads Up from Health Protection - May 26 Bulletin](#)

Our team is committed to raising awareness and providing valuable information to help you stay healthy and safe. We work to ensure that you have access to the resources and knowledge to help you make informed choices in order to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Safety alert - viral "Squishies" trend causing burns

Dear colleagues,

We want to bring to your attention a recent safeguarding alert relating to a viral online trend that is placing children and young people at risk of serious injury.

The trend involves children microwaving soft "squishy" toys (such as NeeDoh or jelly cube products) after viewing online content suggesting this will make them softer. When handled after heating, these items can burst and release extremely hot contents, which has reportedly resulted in serious burns to hands and faces.

There have been reported incidents in both the UK and internationally, including a recent case in Bristol.

We would ask all partners to:

- Share the linked safeguarding alert across your networks where appropriate
- Consider how this information is disseminated to relevant staff, volunteers, and practitioners
- Promote awareness with parents and carers, particularly as this behaviour is likely to occur in the home environment (draft content to share with parents/carers is available below)

Please access the full safeguarding alert and supporting resources here: [SAFEGUARDING ALERT: Viral Trend Risks Causing Severe Burns to Children - Ineqe Safeguarding Group](#)

It is important to note that guidance advises avoiding direct searches for this trend on social media platforms, as this can increase its visibility through platform algorithms.

Thank you for your continued support in sharing timely safeguarding information and helping to reduce risks to children and young people.

Parent/Carer statement

Safeguarding Advice for Parents and Carers: Viral “Squishy Toy” Trend

We are aware of a viral trend circulating online where children are encouraged to heat soft “squishy” toys (sometimes called Needoh or jelly cube toys) in a microwave.

This is extremely dangerous. When heated, these toys can burst and release hot contents, which may cause serious burns to the hands, face and skin.

What you can do:

- *Talk to your child about the risks of copying online challenges or trends*
- *Remind them that not everything seen online is safe or accurate*
- *Ensure squishy toys or similar items are never heated or microwaved*
- *Encourage your child to come to you if they see something online that concerns them*

If you would like more information and practical advice, please see the safeguarding alert here: [SAFEGUARDING ALERT: Viral Trend Risks Causing Severe Burns to Children - Ineqe Safeguarding Group](#)