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# Newsletter

# January 2026

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## **Welcome to our 2026 Early Year Stronger Practice Hub January Newsletter**

Happy New Year to our existing subscribers and new subscribers who have joined us in the last month. As always we are delighted to offer exciting opportunities for Early Years Educators across the Liverpool City Region and Beyond area. As a reminder our Early Years Stronger Practice Hub is here to support you with high-quality, evidence-informed training designed to strengthen practice and improve outcomes for our youngest learners.

Our aim in 2026 is to continue to empower early years educators with the tools, knowledge, and confidence when working with young children. Through collaborative learning, practical strategies, and expert guidance from colleagues across our 10 Local Authorities, we aim to help you create high quality learning environments where children thrive.

In this edition of our newsletter, you'll find details of upcoming training sessions, resources to enhance your practice, and ways to connect with a network of passionate professionals. Whether you're looking to deepen your understanding of child development, explore innovative approaches, or share best practice, Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub is your gateway in 2026 to enhance your professional growth further. We look forward to working with you.

### **Learning Walks...**

We have learning walks in January at the following settings:

**Reddish Vale Nursery School**, Stockport on **Tuesday 20th January 9.30-11.30a.m.** on Winter as a Learning Landscape: Promoting Physical Activity Outdoors.

**Evelyn Street Primary Academy and Nursery**, Warrington on **Thursday 22nd January 9.30-11.30a.m.** on Mathematics.

**Duke Street Nursery School**, Chorley on **Thursday 29th January 9.30-11.30a.m.** on Exploring Reading.

**We will begin** our series of STEM related sessions in February 2026,

starting at **East Prescott Road Nursery School, Liverpool on February 3rd 9.30am – 11.30am**. This STEM themed learning walk will explore the indoor and outdoor environment and hear from practitioners how they plan for STEM in the early years and the impact this has on children. This will be followed by an online network and webinars to look at different topics related to STEM.

If you would like to attend the learning walks please email [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk)

We are looking for settings across our 10 Local Authorities to offer **learning walks**, be part of training sessions such as communication and language, early literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. These can be recorded online or live online or face to face. Please contact

Please email [SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk) if you can offer your setting to be involved in sharing practice to other early years colleagues.

Finally remember to check our national website:

<https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/nw/liverpool-city-region-and-beyond-ey sph>

Please see our national website for learning walks with childminders:

<https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/nw/liverpool-city-region-and-beyond-ey sph/resources/professional-development-offers>

**SAVE THE DATE: Tuesday 17th March 2026** – play conference 9.45a.m. to 2.30p.m. at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre. If we receive requests, we are going to offer a half day Play conference on **Saturday 21st March 2026** 9.45a.m. to 12.15p.m. at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre.

If technology allows we are aiming for an online session too one evening re shorter event or a Saturday morning. Could you email [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk) to let us know which would be preferred re face to face at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre full day or half re week day or Saturday or online weekday or Saturday. Many thanks.



**Are you looking for Mathematics inspiration?** Unlock the Building Blocks of Early Mathematical Development!

✨ Join us for an exciting CPD training series designed to explore the fundamental skills that spark a lifelong love of maths — tailored for children aged:

👶 2–3 years

👦 3–4 years

👧 4–5 years

### **What to Expect:**

- Dive into the theory behind key mathematical principles with a clear, evidence-based approach
- Explore real-life examples and learning in action through focused learning walks
- Tackle gap tasks in your own setting, then share and grow through group networking and feedback
- Boost your CPD portfolio with enhanced, hands-on experiences
- Share evidence of learning through bespoke case studies, showcasing progress and inspiring practice.

**See it. Do it. Master it.** Join a community of practitioners committed to making maths magical for young learners! We are offering a network of 5 sessions for you to attend at Evelyn Street Primary Academy and Nursery, Evelyn Street, Warrington, WA5 1BD. See the dates below. Email the Hub to book a place on any of the sessions [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk)

	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Learning Walk and Face to Face training</b>
<b>January 2026</b>	Teaching and modelling how to make comparisons and connections	Thursday 22nd January 9.30-11.30

**February 2026**

Facilitating  
mathematical  
language

Thursday 26th  
February 9.30-11.30

**Don't forget to join our Leadership Network online:**

This will be held the first **Tuesday of each month** on Workplace

**Zoom**

**3.45pm – 4.30pm**

**Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902**

**Passcode: 005369**

**The same ID and passcode for every monthly Tuesday meeting.**

**February 3rd**

**March 3rd**

**We also have a SEND/Early Years Network:**

This will be held the first Thursday of each month on Workplace  
Zoom

**6.00-7.00pm**

**Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942**

**Passcode: 774607**

**The same ID and passcode for every monthly Thursday meeting.**

**February 5th 2026**

**March 5th 2026**

Please contact [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk) to book  
place.



# Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network



Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub are launching an Early Years Professional Development Network for the Early Years Sector

The aim of this network is to offer bitesize training, legislation and policy updates, a safe space to ask questions to other professionals and share best practice.

**Audience: Childminders, early years educators and those working in practice with under 5s**

This will be held the first Thursday of each month on Zoom starting  
**Thursday June 5<sup>th</sup> 2025 6.00-7.00pm**

**Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942**  
**Passcode: 774607**

- **September 4<sup>th</sup>**
- **October 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **November 6<sup>th</sup>**
- **December 4<sup>th</sup>**
- **February 3<sup>rd</sup> 7:00pm – 8:00pm**  
**2026 (Ofsted speaker)**
- **March 5<sup>th</sup> 2026**



## EYFS Leadership Network

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub are launching an Early Years Leadership Network for the Early Years Sector

The aim of this network is to offer, legislation and policy updates, updates on training for your staff teams, a safe space to ask questions to other professionals and share best practice.

**Audience: School leaders, EYFS Coordinators, Nursery Manager, Childminder Leads, LA reps**

This will be held the first Tuesday of each month on **Zoom** starting **Tuesday June 3rd 2025 3.45pm – 4.30pm**

**Topic: Early Leadership Network**

**Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902**  
**Passcode: 005369**

- **September 4<sup>th</sup>**
- **October 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **November 6<sup>th</sup>**
- **December 4<sup>th</sup>**
- **February 3<sup>rd</sup> 7:00pm – 8:00pm 2026 (Ofsted speaker)**
- **March 5<sup>th</sup> 2026**

# Baby Room Vision-Building Online Workshops

Kayla Halls

Research Fellow

Middlesex University

[www.thebabyroom.blog](http://www.thebabyroom.blog)

## Baby Room Vision-Building Online Workshops

Come join us at a FREE online workshop for baby room teams and nursery managers! This will be an interactive, imaginative space to create a vision for your baby room. Join us for one of the following dates:

Tuesday 3rd February  
9.30-10.30 AM

Wednesday 11th February  
9.30-10.30 AM

Thursday 12th February  
4.30-5.30 PM

Friday 27th February  
9.30-10.30 AM



There are limited places, so sign up now:  
<https://eu.surveymonkey.com/r/KMYDTGT>

My name is Kayla Halls, and I am a researcher working on the Nuffield Foundation project 'Achieving high-quality provision in the baby room of English nurseries.' This project aims to bring together evidence on what high quality provision looks like for babies (i.e., children aged 0-2 years old) in nurseries in England. You can see a bit more about our project on the Nuffield Foundation website, linked [here](#).

As part of this research project, we are putting on free Baby Room Vision-Building Online Workshops for baby room educators and nursery managers working in group-based provision. This is an amazing opportunity to create a clear, meaningful vision for their baby room that feeds into a wider understanding of what high quality provision looks like for babies.

This free workshop will be:

- Interactive- It will be a dialogue driven session meant to generate lively conversations about the baby room.
- Creative- We will work through a series of imaginative visualisation prompts to picture an ideal baby room.
- Designed for teams- We want the nursery manager from settings in your area to attend alongside a baby room educator or baby room leader.
- Part of our ongoing research on the baby room- To see all the latest updates on the project, visit <https://thebabyroom.blog/>. Because this is part of our research, we will be recording the workshop, but we will only be transcribing the discussion and sharing anonymised quotes.

We would appreciate you circulating this free opportunity to the nursery managers and baby room educators in your network by sharing the sign-up link: <https://eu.surveymonkey.com/r/KMYDTGT>.

Please do let me know if you have any questions about the project or the workshops, and I would be more than happy to answer them.

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**In this month's  
blog...**



We hear from the team at *Talking Time*® and Alycia Duff, the Early Years leader at Four Oaks Primary School in Liverpool, about the universal oral language intervention, *Talking Time*®. The Education Endowment Foundation worked with the Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, along with three other Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs, to fund settings' access to *Talking Time*® and evaluate the programme.

*Talking Time*®



**Enhancing children's oral language skills through high-quality conversations**

Oral language is a foundational skill underpinning children's literacy, wider academic development, social relationships and even employment opportunities in later life (APPG on Oracy, 2021). Many practitioners are concerned over the number of children struggling with communication and language (Speech and Language UK, 2022), a challenge which has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic (Ofsted, 2022). Children who struggle with their oral language when they start school often find it hard to catch up and are at risk of poorer outcomes throughout their lives. Investing in support for oral language is more important than ever, to build strong foundations - not just for literacy and academic success, but for children's social and emotional wellbeing.

Settings within our region have been supporting children's language by participating in a recent EEF and SPH-funded trial of *Talking Time*® - an evidenced-based, oral language intervention for children aged 3-5 years. *Talking Time*® combines a universal classroom intervention for children with high-quality professional development for staff.

The 20-week programme was developed by leading academics at the University of Oxford and UCL Institute of Education, working closely with speech and language therapists and early education professionals. Previous studies have found that *Talking Time*© enhances both children's oral language and staff practice (Dockrell *et al* 2010; Dockrell *et al* 2023).

## ***How Talking Time* © works**

All children take part in two short, small-group activities per week, during normal class time. There are three engaging activities each designed to promote **high-quality adult-child conversation**, which research shows is one of the most powerful contexts for language learning:

- **Story Conversations** - joint storytelling and conversation, designed to promote comprehension, narrative skills, higher order skills (e.g. prediction, inference) and vocabulary
- **Word Play** - games and guided play designed to develop vocabulary breadth and depth
- **Hexagons** - creating and re-telling stories based on familiar, real-life situations, helping children develop narrative skills and vocabulary

The programme is flexible and can be adapted for individual children and settings. The *Talking Time*© training and mentoring programme supports practitioners to deliver the activities but the main aim is to develop confidence and expertise with intentional language-supporting practice and equip staff to adapt and embed the programme longer-term. This builds capacity within settings to enhance the oral language skills of future cohorts.

## ***Talking Time* © in practice**

Last year, Four Oaks Primary School in Liverpool took part in the *Talking Time*© trial. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the Nursery teacher received training and implemented the intervention with all nursery children in small groups.



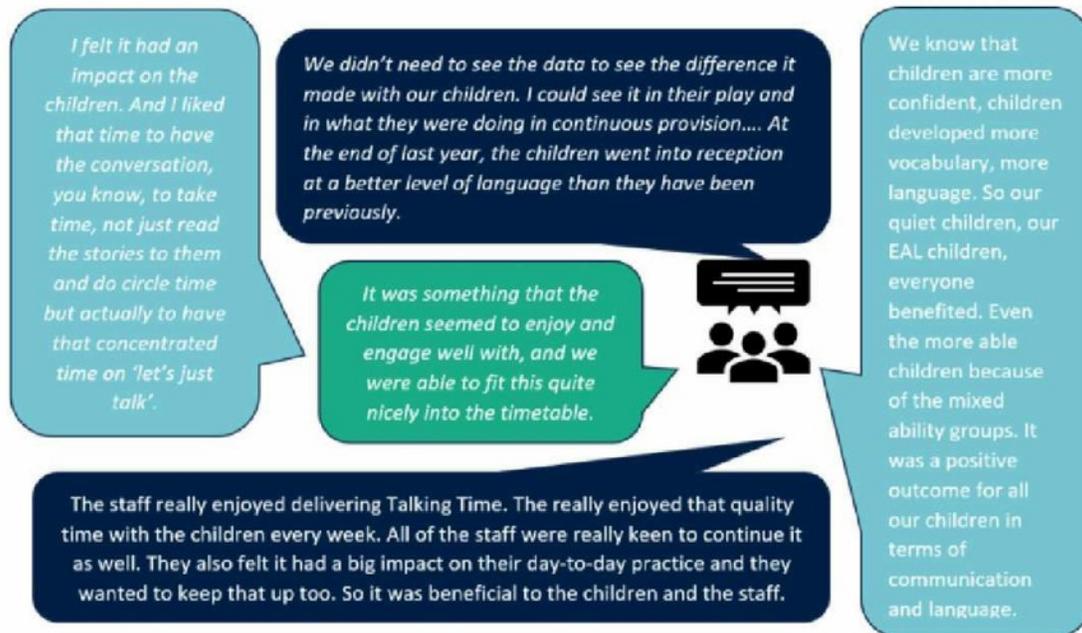
Alycia Duff, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader at Four Oaks Primary School said:

'When reflecting on Talking Time as a team, we felt that it had a positive impact on staff knowledge and understanding about how to support communication and language, therefore a significant positive impact on children's talk in groups and children's vocabulary.'

'At the beginning, many of the children were shy and reluctant communicators but by the end of the intervention they were confident and wanted to tell you lots of information using vocabulary that had been previously taught. Our children particularly enjoyed 'hexagons' as it linked with their real life and during these sessions children would use a wide range of vocabulary that had been previously introduced and modelled by adults.'



Practitioners in a previous *Talking Time*© trial said:



## ***Interested in learning more about Talking Time©?***

- Please visit the *Talking Time*© website [here](#) for more information on the programme.
- Look out for the report of the current *Talking Time*© evaluation study, due to be published this spring on the [Education Endowment Foundation's](#) website.
- For more information on current offers from the Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, please visit our website [here](#).

## ***References***

Dockrell, J. E., Stuart, M., & King, D. (2010). Supporting early oral language skills for English language learners in inner city preschool provision. *Br J Educ Psychol*, 80(Pt 4), 497-515.

Dockrell, J.E. et al. (2023) *Empowering staff to enhance oral language in the early years: Cluster randomised trial: Final report*. Available at: <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Dockrell-Talking-Time-final-report.pdf> (Accessed: 5 January 2026).

Ofsted (2022) *Education recovery in early years providers: summer 2022*. Ofsted. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-recovery-in-early-years-providers-summer-2022/education-recovery-in-early-years-providers-summer-2022> (Accessed: 5 January 2026).

Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group (2021) *Speak for Change: Final report and recommendations from the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry*.

Please find below the link to the **Childminder Network Padlet**, Childminders can access this centralised resource it at any time to fit around your busy schedules and is updated weekly or when latest information is released.

<https://forms.gle/EPBVXAxTvAfiRiBiGA>

It is a versatile resource and includes:

- OFSTED updates
- EYFS Framework
- EEF Resources showcasing evidence-based research and showcases good practice
- Food Safety
- Business Matters
- Childminding legislation and Publications
- Safeguarding
- Professional Development
- Evidence based programmes
- Support and signposting
- training opportunities
- Specific LA information

This Padlet will support all your childminding needs in one user friendly space using versatile content through videos, text, links, recommendations and documents. Its showcasing creativity and good practice and created to support you through all your childminding practice.

For more information contact:

Tracie Dowling

[traciestreasureschildminder@gmail.com](mailto:traciestreasureschildminder@gmail.com)

Tel 07772176159

**‘Let’s Talk’ Childminding Network** every 2nd Saturday of each month.

Next date: Saturday 10th January

Topic: Bespoke Training needs and support.

We will look at topics for the next six months to ensure it is relevant for your Childminding needs.

This is a monthly Zoom meeting for childminders to have a ‘safe space’ to discuss ‘Childminding Issues’ and gain Peer support and foster a Childminder community to building connections.

Each month we have a specific lead topic, invite guest speakers, signpost for further support, recommend CPD and resource recommendations.

**Meeting ID: 81654991912 Pass: 369243**

‘Maths Crusaders’ Network’

A Monthly 1hr zoom Network o includes Childminders and their children. It is an interactive session supported by the ‘PEEP’ <https://www.peeple.org.uk/> evidenced based Programme and is Maths based. Each session we investigate different mathematical concepts to include activities, stories and singing to make it fun. Childminders will be signpost to further evidence-based information, training where needed and resources. The session will support your setting to include parents by encouraging home learning activities initiated by the children. Information and certificates will be emailed monthly, and a WhatsApp group can be accessed for on-going support.

Limited spaces please contact Tracie on [traciestreasureschildminder@gmail.com](mailto:traciestreasureschildminder@gmail.com) to book a place

# Maths Champion



## Maths Champions Information Sheet

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) are delighted to have secured funds to deliver the Maths Champions programme through the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Department for Education (DfE). The 12 month online programme has been evaluated by the EEF with York and Durham University and has been proven to boost children's Maths and Language attainment by an average of 3 additional months.

### About the Programme

The programme aims to improve maths attainment of children in an early years setting by training a Maths Champion and Deputy Maths Champion (MC and DMC) in key mathematical concepts and increasing staff confidence. After completing a live induction and online training modules the MC will lead on completing a staff confidence and nursery environment audit and action plan to improve the mathematical learning environment and confidence of all staff. They will also lead on implementing 10 or more core activities with children that build on the key areas of maths learning. MCs will then be able to revisit their audits and review the outcomes of the core activities. Throughout the 12 months the MC and DMC will have access to ongoing one-to-one support from an Early Years Expert as well as regular webinars on arising topics.

As part of this DfE-funded scaled delivery, the programme will be available at no cost to participating settings.

### Programme steps:

- ▶ STEP 1: Initial Tasks
- ▶ STEP 2: Reflective Learning Journal
- ▶ STEP 3: Online Training
- ▶ STEP 4: Children's Observational Assessment
- ▶ STEP 5: Self Assessment Audits
- ▶ STEP 6: Action Plans
- ▶ STEP 7: Core Activities
- ▶ STEP 8: Measuring Impact
- ▶ STEP 9: Case Study

### To take part in the programme you must:

- Be a private, voluntary, or independent (PVI) nursery, maintained nursery school or children's centre, or state funded school-based nursery with children accessing 3- and 4-year-old places attending for at least 15 hours per week
- Be able to nominate a level 3 practitioner to be the Maths Champion, who will run the programme in your setting and nominate another level 3 practitioner to be the Deputy Maths Champion, who will support the Maths Champion.
- Not currently be using the NDNA Maths Champions programme or have taken part in the programme in the last two years
- Be committed to completing the mandatory steps of the programme over the 12-month period to the best of your ability
- Have onsite access to a computer with internet connection
- Be based in England
- Be ready to begin on programme between February and June 2026.

Delivery will commence from February 2026. For more information on the programme please visit the [NDNA website](#)

To register your interest please follow the link [here](#) or scan the QR code below to complete the short Expression of Interest form. If you meet the criteria above you will then be sent the full registration materials.

Please note: Where MOUs are received from settings with more than 10% of children in receipt of EYPP these will be prioritised to the programme.



EEFAF MC 25-26 Information sheet I



As part of NDNA's recruitment of settings for the Maths Champions programme, we are holding a number of information sessions. Led by our team of expert Early Years Advisors, these sessions will provide a comprehensive explanation of the programme, the eligibility criteria for settings to take part, and the commitment involved. There is also an opportunity for settings to ask direct questions to the Early Years Advisors, followed by clear instructions of next steps and how to sign up.

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## Experience Based Qualification Route

Eligibility criteria for the Experience-Based Route has been updated and comes into effect 1 January 2026.

For more information,

please see [Early years qualification and standards document: to come into effect 1 January 2026](#).

## Early Years Training

### Prevent Duty

The Counter Extremism team have launched a [new training package](#) for Early Years practitioners.

The objectives of this training are:

- to understand your role as an Early Years practitioner in relation to Prevent
- to understand the importance of referring to Prevent and the legal duty
- to recognise the tools available to help you
- to understand what Ofsted might expect to see in relation to Prevent

to recognise how to build resilience to radicalisation by promoting Fundamental British Values

Training for Early Years Practitioners can be booked here:

Session date 2025 to 2026

Register on Eventbrite

Monday 19 January 2026: 6pm to 7:15pm

[Register](#)

Wednesday 29 April 2026: 4pm to 5:15pm

[Register](#)

Tuesday 16 June 2026: 6pm to 7:15pm

[Register](#)

Training for designated safeguarding leads can be booked here:

Session date 2025 to 2026

Register on Eventbrite

Tuesday 10 February 2026: 3:30pm to 4:45pm

[Register](#)

Wednesday 22 April 2026: 3:30pm to 4:45pm

[Register](#)

Tuesday 23 June 2026: 3:30pm to 4:45pm

[Register](#)

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## **CPD RECORDED SESSIONS**

Here is a list of some of our recorded sessions.

**EARLY WRITING** 25 minutes with Laura Johnson, Early Years Teacher from Duke Street Nursery School, Chorley.

**SELF REGULATION AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION** 25 minutes with Emma Doran, Early Years Co-ordinator from Whitefield Primary School, Liverpool.

**CELEBRATING DIVERSITY, PROMOTING INCLUSION, AND ANTI-RACIST CULTURES IN THE EARLY YEARS** 25 minutes with Sian Phillips - Anti-Racism Advocate/ Researcher/Consultant.

**MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF PUPIL PREMIUM IN THE EARLY YEARS** 20 minutes with Kaya Doyle, Programme Manager.

**INSET SESSION 1 TEACHING AND MODELLING LANGUAGE:** 30 minutes with Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant). This has an accompany written sheet of activities to support this recorded Inset session.

**Please contact our sph email** if you are interested in accessing other recorded sessions for your setting.

[sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk)

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- The latest [Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data for 2024-25](#) shows a small continued rise in the proportion of children achieving the “good level of development” (GLD) to 68.3%. As in previous years, a higher percentage of female, autumn-born, and children not eligible for free school meals had a good level of development than male, summer-born and children eligible for free school meals, respectively. The percentage of children with SEN support or an EHC achieving the GLD increased slightly, but an enormous gap remains compared to children without SEND (20.6% v 76.5%). There is also an 18.7% gap between children in the highest and lowest IDACI deciles.
- As part of the roll out of Best Start Hubs in every local authority next year, councils are being tasked with recruiting an all-new [dedicated SEND practitioner in every hub](#) to provide direct, family-facing support.
- Ofsted have published their [Annual Report](#), including summary data on early years inspections for 2024-25.

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**Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice  
Hub  
Feedback Form**

If you have attended any of our conferences or face to face training, please scan the QR code and send us feedback. Many thanks.



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